

Thanksgiving: A Turkey's Perspective

How a Thanksgiving Turkey Can Live a Longer Life: One Turkey's Funny Story

by R. Renée Bembry

I have my whole life ahead of me. Understand? My "whole" life! Not a cutup and eaten life inside multiple human bodies. Not a hand me down table scrap life for dogs and cats to lick their chops over. My whole life. My intact life—and I want to live it!

"What was the point in cracking out of my eggshell?" I asked my hen mom after entering the world, drying my feathers, and finding out my tom dad was gone. A human had taken my dad to the big house, Mom told me. But not until after the man bled dad, plucked all his masculine feathers from his skin, and forced the guts from his insides.

"But, why Mom," I asked.

"It's the human way," she said. "It's just the human way."

"But what does that mean?" I pleaded.

"It means that turkeys eat grains and humans eat turkeys," she said real matter of fact like.

Well, as anyone could guess, I didn't like the sound of that turkey eating statement. No... I didn't like it one doggone bit. I didn't agree with it either. Nope. Didn't agree with it all. Didn't want to listen to it anymore. Which was quite befitting for me, because I don't know why, but for some reason, I was born with a bit of a hard head. Yeah, I know it's small. But it's hard as a golf ball.

After my mom finished telling me all about how turkeys eat grain and humans eat turkeys, I told her I was going to make those humans love me so much they wouldn't even think about eating me. Needless to say, Mom told me there was nothing I could do about it—that I was too small and frail and too helpless against tall two-legged humans with weapons that swing, stab, and shoot.

Needless to say, my hard head would not let Mom's words sway me one bit. No...not one bit. The way I saw things, I had nothing to lose for at least trying to live a turkey lifetime. I put my thoughts to thinking and hashed up a plan to make those humans just as grateful to have me as they were to have their dogs. Since wild turkeys could live as many as ten years, almost as many as dogs, I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't get to live ten years instead of a mere two or three—granted I would be lucky enough to live that long if I didn't fight back.

A few months passed by and I got big enough to run near as fast as a dog. Then, one day that tall human with the deep voice and dirty scrappy hat came outside and told that four-legged Fido to round-up the sheep. I'd seen Fido round sheep before so I knew just what Scrappy Hat meant. Next thing I knew, my little legs were spinning like that roadrunner cartoon character all the *Turkey Club* members were always talking about. I had never seen that roadrunner character, but I sure saw my legs turning like speeding spinning wheels the way the club said Roady's did.

Fido started barking at the sheep while he ran around the field. So I started clucking while I was running. Only thing was, of all the times for my voice to decide it was going to crack like a throat entering puberty or something, it had to happen during my first steed chasing moment. I didn't care though. That Fido kept running and barking like he was sounding the national alarm. So I kept road running and cracking like I was sounding the country fire alarm.

After awhile, all the sheep were inside the pen and the scrappy hat guy locked the gate. Then he turned around and stared at me. He even took his pipe out from between his teeth while he gave me the once over. Then he said, "You are one crazy turk."

I was certain he meant "crazy turk" in an affectionate kind of way because he showed his teeth when he said it and his teeth didn't look like they wanted to bite me. I ran to the barn and told Mom.

"Don't get too happy," she told me. "You are still a turkey and smirk or no smirk, someday that human will be ready to chew you up and swallow you down."

"That's right," said Aunt Wild Feather, "who happened to be sitting with Mom when I showed up. "And you're about to find out all about it because Thanksgiving Day is right around the corner and one or more of us has got to go."

"You mean to the big house," I fretted.

Neither Mom nor Aunt Wild Feather said another word. There was no need to. Mom had told me the story often enough. I went to bed wondering how humans would like it if turkeys started catching, beheading, and hanging them upside down for hours on end and then plucked the tiny fuzz that didn't even qualify for feathers from their skin. I wondered what they would do if all of a sudden turkeys decided they'd rather eat humans than eat that corn mealy stuff humans always made us turkeys eat.

The sun came up and went down a few more times and then, sure enough, the scrappy hat pipe human and some other human with a puberty sounding voice like mine came out and started chasing turkeys. Mom told me to come inside because she wanted to spare my feelings. I insisted on watching though—told her I wanted to gain a better understanding of what had happened to my dad.

After it was all over, I became more determined than ever to win those humans' hearts; and in the end, I managed to make those humans like me enough to keep me around for several more years. But not only did they let me live, they kept breeding me—talking about they could use a few more like me. That I rounded up sheep good as any dog but didn't cost near as much to feed.

Unfortunately, Mom didn't get as lucky as me. Next time that Thanksgiving Day came round, they caught her, and plucked her, and ate her up. When the dog came outside with one of her thighbones, I grabbed it when he wasn't looking and buried it in the barn. That way, even if I didn't get to live for ten whole years like some dogs and wild turkeys do, at least I'd be able to go to sleep at night and close my eyes next to my mom.

Last thing I remembered before I died and went to turkey heaven a few years later was that eventually, when one of those Thanksgiving days came along, I went to sleep next to Mom's thighbone and had a horrible dream. Mom was like a human wearing a long black dress down to her ankles—you know like one of them gown things. She also wore a big round collar round her neck and a long white apron. A little white cap covered her head and her claws were encased in little black heel shoes.

"Mom," I said, "I am so glad to see you. But why are you dressed like one of those humans?"

"Your time is up Turk," she told me. Then she started growing tall. She grew taller and taller and taller until she was human tall. Before I realized I was night-maring and jerked out of my sleep, Mom reached for me with hands that looked like human hands. Soon as I opened my eyes, I saw Scrappy Hat standing over me. "You've been a good turk," he said. "But you're getting old now. I'm afraid your time has come." Then scrappy swung something at me and that was all she wrote.

Sure hope all you celebrating humans have a nice Thanksgiving Day.

But mostly, I wish yaul didn't have to eat us turkeys to celebrate..

Oh how I love vegetarians....