

Curiosity drenched the parakeet

My husband has a holiday wish – a buzzer attached to the dishwashing machine when two little feet are hanging on the racks.

Ariel, our parakeet, loves to traverse the inside of the dishwasher while my husband is loading dishes. We have a theory that he loves the echo-like chamber inside the dishwasher when dishes, pots, pans, and silverware are clanging together, being put in place for washing. He moves everywhere inside the dishwasher, absolutely curious about everything exciting in that cavernous place – for him, that is.

We have seen him hang upside down, and swinging and jumping to every frame that makes up the racks. Since my husband is the dishwashing maven, he and Ariel go through this process together every night. Well, guess what? One week ago, everything changed on that score.

Last week, my husband started the dishwasher and a couple of minutes later, he realized that he had not heard the bird talk – he's a real talker, that one, talking in five-word sentences, and has accumulated a 35- to 45-word vocabulary. Well, this time he wasn't talking at all, and that worried my husband.

"Where is Ariel?" he yelled.

I was upstairs, and yelled back that he was not with me.

Returning to the book I was thoroughly engrossed with, I then heard the door to the dishwasher crashing open and a rack full of dishes sliding out noisily.

"Oh, you poor thing!" my husband cried.

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I immediately came running down the stairs.

In his hands, wrapped in a dish towel, was Ariel, drenched like a drowned rat. I never realized how small their bodies are, but he looked scrawny and tiny. Every single feather was soaked through, lying in bunched brown lines across his entire body. You'd never know that his feathers are a brilliant green/teal color, with a yellow head. He looked just dreadful.

The amazing thing was he was not screeching or rebelling in any way; I think he was in shock, which is not too surprising, since his irresponsible owners were careening from shock, too.

Both of us were sickened in our stomachs, thinking the bird was going to die. Thank providence he was not in there for very long, because the water had not turned hot yet. His whole body was very cool to the touch.

Very gently, we tried to dry him with the towel, which was totally useless. He needed to be warmed up – and fast – so I dug out my professional salon hair dryer and thanked heaven again there were two speeds of heat, one for air drying – the other for serious hair drying.

We used the air-drying speed and gingerly moved the thing in circles to cover the bird's entire body.

You have got to know that

Ariel is a spunky little spitfire, and the fact he was not biting us or complaining in any way, made us all the more anxious and nervous.

We pulled his wings apart to dry underneath, thinking to get him warm there first. One of the wings had a little blood on it, which looked like a feather got tangled and pulled; one more stab to both our hearts.

Finally, when his feathers seemed to spread out, we knew he was getting dry. It took us a good half-hour to dry him.

Ariel doesn't live in a cage except to go to sleep at night, but we were so concerned that he not get too excited, we put him in, all the while looking for any sign of the rambunctiousness that we are so used to. We got nothing . . . for nearly two hours.

Then, he was animated again, and we breathed a sigh of relief.

So, the moral to the story is, while our bird may be something of an Einstein for his species, it might be a good idea not to rely on poor memory and forgetfulness.

Ariel is now banned from being anywhere near the dishwasher, which is too bad because he was awfully cute going on his many excursions inside of it.

I think my husband is being too hard on himself and I know he will never do it again, but I can't help but miss the antics of our pint-sized bird who loved being inside the dishwasher.

He truly is a joy and has given us laughter that we hope will continue for years to come.

Happy holidays to you all!