*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic) Inter-County Leader*

**The prodigal bird returns**

Since my wife’s cats passed away, she has been very sad and quiet. I know she loves animals, but then, she agrees that cats and our home do not complement each other. Plus, our daughter-in-law is extremely allergic to cats.

So, we decided to have a pet bird instead. Birds are easy to maintain, plus they don’t pee and poop just anywhere they want. It just so happened that her son decided to give away his cockatiel as they already have four conures.

Of course, I said yes when she called and asked me if she could bring the bird home. If that would make her happy, why not?

She has bonded with Lee already. Every time when she babysat our grandson, Lee would rest on her shoulder and bite her earrings, and she would hand-feed him with whatever she was eating. So, she came home with Lee, the cage, the toys, the food, and with the biggest grin. I knew then that we made the right decision. It is indeed a match made in heaven. And to see Colleen smile again just warms my heart.

She would wake up every morning to Lee’s singing and go straight to his cage to chat with him. Meanwhile, I would get her coffee ready.

Goodness, I think my brownie points must be piling up, better go cash in soon. What should I do? Maybe a week fishing in Alaska? I can imagine catching a 25-pound salmon or a 50-pound halibut. And be able to eat Alaskan king crab every day!

Anyway, back to reality (sigh). While she was enjoying the coffee, Lee would fly and settle on her shoulder. I don’t know what they were chatting about, but he would make a good husband one day. Then he would take off and investigate the house.

His favorite place to perch is on the fan while looking down at us. He would just dive in and out and scare the daylights out of me. I asked Colleen once if we should clip his wings just to make sure that he wasn’t able to fly away and be gone. Being an animal lover, she wouldn’t even entertain the thought.

Oh well, so we will put up with Lee’s freedom. And somehow, he always finds his cage when he is hungry, which is quite often. That’s the time when I will sneak up and close the cage door on him.

Then a tragic accident happened one morning, my nightmare come true. Colleen was opening the front door on her way to her studio, without realizing that Lee was on her shoulder. With the speed of lightning, he just took off.

The louder Colleen called his name, the higher he flew. Then he just simply disappeared. Colleen was in shock, then came crying to me about what just happened. I tried to sound convincing to comfort her, but deep down inside, I knew that he was a goner. Who wouldn’t enjoy the taste of freedom — the tall trees, the cornfields, the open waters and fresh air?

Her sister advised her to bring the cage outside, and play some bird sounds; hopefully he could follow the source and find home. We did, but for three days, all we looked at was an empty cage, listening to a recording of cockatiels, praying and wishing that one of the sounds would be from Lee. It was freezing weather those few nights, with no food or water, the chance of him surviving was less than slim. Meanwhile, Colleen was teary-eyed the whole time, yet telling me that she just caught a cold.

Then a miracle came three days later. Some lady called Colleen and told her that she found Lee a few hours ago at her porch. They live in Ubet, a town five hours away; just how could this be? With help from the internet, Colleen had first posted the message on Arnell Humane Society in Amery, who has a lot of connections with many local organizations.

The power of the internet works! The lady who found Lee called Fur-Get-Me-Not, a pet store in St. Croix Falls, which then contacted Colleen. Just like that, they united; and what a relief! I always believe in miracles, but to get our prodigal bird back safe and sound, and after spending three days in the impossible wilderness, is more than just a miracle.

Our prayers worked. Thank you, Lord, thank you.