



“Hope is the Thing with Feathers...”

by Elaine Hutchinson

So begins the famous Emily Dickinson poem that celebrates a hope that is found within us all, a hope that comes out singing. Animals also feel the emotion of hope. Sometimes their inner hope is expressed with such beauty that they inspire us to find our own. The life of a Lipizzan mare is one such story—the story of a mare named *Feather*.

The Bad Time

In October 2015, authorities in Orange County, Virginia, discovered a herd of emaciated horses and other animals at a rescue facility known as Peaceable Farm. More than 81 horses were removed and placed into rehabilitative care. Feather was one of those horses.

Feather (short for *Featherana*) came to the Peaceable Farm rescue facility in the way that many horses arrive at rescues. Her owner had passed away and this Lipizzan mare needed a new “forever” home. She was one of the lucky horses because she survived her stay at Peaceable Farm. Seven other horses, including another Lipizzan, were not so fortunate.

The Healing Time

After a couple months recovering at a rehabilitative facility, Feather was released into the care of Lipizzan Rescue Foundation and her new adoptive mother, Dawn Wietfeldt. When Dawn first saw Feather, her heart broke.

“When we came to pick her up,” Dawn relates, “she was so depressed that she put her face to the back of her stall. She wouldn’t look at us.” After loading her on the trailer, they saw a change. “Her eyes came alive, as if she knew she was in a better situation,” Dawn remembers.

The first year in her new home was filled with vet appointments, farrier visits, daily wormer, and lots of grass hay. At the end of a year, she was on the road to regaining her health—and her personality. “She was so introverted when she first arrived,” recalls Dawn. “Her mare personality became more apparent as she got well.” Dawn believes that Feather’s queen-of-the-herd attitude is what saved her. “She always fights for her hay; she stands up for herself,” Dawn says. “I think that’s the reason she survived.”



Feather and her hope, Willowmina

The Good Time

Feather seemed happier in a pasture than under a saddle, so Dawn considered breeding her, but there were challenges. Her previous owner had been told that she could not carry a foal to full term, and two breedings with Dawn’s stallion resulted in no pregnancy. Feather returned to her pasture, but only for a while. She had her own agenda.

One day she broke out of her turnout, rounded up two other mares, and led them to the stallion who was stalled. She somehow got him out of there and voila! She was pregnant.

Feather gave birth to her beautiful foal, *Willowmina*, earlier this year. She came into this world so much like her mother. Headstrong and determined, at the age of three days, Willowmina was already trying to eat hay.

Feather seems to have finally found her joy. “She is the best mom,” says Dawn. “She watches over that baby so carefully.” And of course, none of this would have been possible without the loving home provided by Dawn.

Thanks to Dawn and Feather, there’s a new bit of hope in the Lipizzan world—a beautiful filly named Willowmina. Their story is proof that hope can emerge from the darkest place and find a way to shine.

The Lipizzan Rescue Foundation

- How YOU can Help -

The Lipizzan Rescue Foundation (LRF) has had the honor of helping 37+ Lipizzans / part Lipizzans over the past two years. Some have been placed in new loving homes. In other situations, we have been able to help owners through tough times or to better improve the bond between owners and their Lipizzan.

The LRF would like to be able to help every Lipizzan / part Lipizzan who has fallen on hard times. We need your support to be able to do this. Financial donations are always appreciated and put to good use. However, some of you may not be able to help financially. There is still room for you. We would like to develop a web of people around the country to network with and monitor other horse rescues and livestock auctions in their areas. If you have some time you can donate to help keep an eye out for lost Lipizzans, please contact us and we will help you get started.

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