
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Connor Shane: “My Little Tiger”

Connor Shane · Wednesday, August 29th, 2018

My Little Tiger

Do you like tigers?
What do you think of them,
As animals?
How they are carnivores,
Hunting only meat.
How they are solitary,
And never stay together,
Unless it's necessary.
Have you ever worked with a tiger?
Become,
Good friends with a tiger?
I have.

His name,
Was Mocca.
He wasn't even born in our park.
He was transferred there.
He was a failed smuggle attempt.
Someone was paid to go out into the wild,
And steal him away from his mother,
Way before his maturing age.
When trying to enter the U.S.,
The man was caught,
And the tiger cub,
Hidden under his car floor,
Was sent to our park.

It was our job to rehabilitate him.
That wasn't an easy job.
Mocca was a broken animal.
Stripped of any innocent childhood,
That he could've had.
All because someone wanted him as a pet.
Ignorance that could've ended the poor guy's life,

Before he even truly started one.

It was up to me and the rest of the tiger team,
To fix up Mocca, and give him the happiness,
That was stolen from him.

We had no idea of what to do.
We'd never had a situation like this before.
All of the other tigers were bred normally.

But Mocca was different.
He wasn't in our normal schedule.
Afterall we weren't expecting him.
But we wouldn't give him up either.
I wouldn't give him up.

I remember, when he was in his first few weeks at the park.

Mocca hid from all the other caretakers.
He simply didn't trust them.
Why would he?
He didn't know who or what they were.
He was never bred to trust them.
I know I wouldn't if I were in his fluffy shoes.

I got an idea.
I'd learned, from an outside source,
A trick.
A trick, that allowed me to make a similar sound,
That tigers make when communicated to each other.
Perhaps he would notice the sound,
And be familiar with it.
It was worth a shot,
When nothing else worked.

I walked up to him,
All covered up underneath a cabinet,
Scared.
I made the whistling sound with my mouth.
None knew it was possible,
But he opened up.
Mocca's ears perked up,
Like the rising sun on a fresh morning.
He crawled out of from under the cabinet,
And approached me.
Rubbing and softly purring against my leg.
I'd done it.
I'd befriended a tiger.

After that, it only grew.
Mocca and I.
We did everything together.

I fed him,
 Let him into his cage,
 Let him get used to his new home.
 But there was something missing.
 Something that no human can do,
 Only another tiger.
 Mocca didn't have another tiger,
 To grow up with,
 And play with,
 Like no human could.
 Since his mother was long gone,
 Who'd fill in?

That was when we got a new transfer.
 Recon had a mother.
 However that mother ended up catching breast cancer,
 And could no longer care for her son.
 He was sent to us,
 So we would take care of him also.
 Now we had two new cubs,
 Who needed a friend.
 It was a match made in the stars.

At first we were nervous about letting Mocca and Recon see each other.
 So we did the usual procedure.
 We let them see one another at a distance first.
 Then,
 When no conflict seem to arise,
 We let them into the same habitat together.
 Breaths held,
 We waited for the blood to spill.
 But none did.
 Only two growing tigers,
 Happily bonding.

I remember the amount of overwhelming joy,
 That filled me.
 The relief that swirled in my body,
 The thankfulness,
 That this worked.
 When it very well couldn't have.

Mocca and Recon grew up,
 Like brothers.
 Every moment a tiger could spend with another tiger,
 It was Mocca with Recon,
 That was it.
 It was great.

It wasn't meant to last.
The two tigers had finally reached adulthood,
Together.
Spent their entire lives with each other,
In our park.
Mocca and I too,
Had made a bond,
That most thought wasn't possible.

Even so, Mocca had to go.
We simply didn't have room for him.
It was set for him to be transported out of the park,
Once he was of age.
As much as we all at the caretaking center hated it.
Cried over it.
Despised it.
Mocca wasn't meant to stay here,
With us.
He never was.

It was the hardest on Recon.
Mocca's best friend.
Recon didn't understand,
Like the rest of us.
After Mocca left us,
I'd never seen Recon so depressed.
You may not think it possible,
For an animal to be so sad.
But if you ever saw Recon now,
You'd know right away.

All those happy noises and playful attitudes,
Gone.
Gone, just like water on a sunny day.
Evaporated all too quickly,
Without a choice.
Recon would never again,
Be a happy tiger.
But instead he mopes around his cage,
Wishing,
To see his friend again.

Mocca had a slightly better ending.
If you want to call it that.
He was relocated to a sanctuary.
Where his new partner, Suca,
Would be with him.
At first, it did not go so well.
She wanted to be with him,

But he did not want to be with her.
After some trials,
Mocca finally warmed up to Suca.
But I could tell,
That the vision of Recon,
Never left Mocca's eyes.
Suca was there for him,
But she'd never replace,
What his best friend meant to him.

Recon is still with us, but Mocca is not.
No longer.
I don't think he forgot about me either.
Because everytime I visit Mocca,
A certain look of joy unfolds on his fuzzy face.
The face, of my little tiger.

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