

## *The Haven at Skanda*

### **Esmeralda's Pure Love**

When Esmeralda the Icelandic hen lost her family to illness, she became sad and frail with grief. She walked tentatively around the farm, seeming lost. Although there were other chickens on the farm, she showed little interest in them, and kept to herself. We worried about her.

Then Esmeralda found some eggs, and sat on them. She was focused, almost regal. Esmeralda sat on the eggs without moving, completely dedicated to keeping them warm. She had found a new purpose.

We saw that the eggs Esmeralda was nurturing were duck eggs, not chicken eggs. We wondered how she would react when they hatched. Would she embrace these odd-looking babies, or reject them?



When the ducklings hatched, Esmeralda fell in love!

Unphased by how different they looked from her, she nuzzled her little ducklings underneath her at night for warmth, and tenderly taught them how to eat and drink.

When they were ready, Esmeralda paraded her babies out of their house and around the farm for all to admire.

She was such a proud mom!



Esmeralda was deeply generous and loving with her babies. She supported them to grow into strong healthy ducks, and supporting them doing “duck things” even when she as a chicken was uncomfortable. When her baby ducks wanted to play in a rainstorm, for example, Esmeralda bravely stood with them, allowing herself to get drenched so that they could have fun.

(Ducks have waterproof feathers, but chickens do not!)



As Esmeralda's babies became teenagers and gained independence, she still watched over them at night, perching high on a rafter above where they slept. Esmeralda's babies always adored her, and even when they were adults, they would stop and say hello to her, and even fluff up her feathers with their beaks, a sign of affection, like in this photo.



As Esmeralda entered her elderly years, she came to adore Skanda's rescued pigs, and nestled in the straw with them during their naps. Dollop, the smallest, was her favorite.

Esmeralda's pure love knew no boundaries, no limitations, and no fear.

She loved her babies for exactly who they were, and nurtured them with a tender, open heart. She showed us what it looks like to love across differences, appreciating and embracing differences.

We are sad to say that Esmeralda recently passed away.

Her pure love was a profound gift to Skanda.

