

Blueberry Lane Herb Farm Advocates for Rescue and Adoption

Chapter One

Sniffle, Sniffle, boo hoo, hoo, hoo

Curious sounds stirred Rasmus from his afternoon nap. The sounds repeated, and repeated. He stretched out his hind legs. He stretched his neck up from under the living room chair and yawned. Pedro was cat napping on the sofa. He woke up just in time to see Rasmus's two front teeth glisten from under the brown fur that trimmed his lips. "Senor Rasmus, what was that noise?" Rasmus turned his tall ears, in usual fashion, this way and that way.

Boo hoo, hoo, hoo. Sniffle. Sniffle.

Pedro and Rasmus quietly tippy pawed to the dining room. There was Guinevere sobbing over a map. It was spread across the dining room table. Tilly was a flutter trying to pull tissues from the tissue box. Tilly got stuck in the tissue box in the process while tears dampened Guinevere's long guinea pig fur. Feathers were flapping as the box was tipping and tapping. Pedro ran to Tilly's rescue. He chewed a wider opening in the box to help her out. Tilly popped up with another tissue for Guinevere.

A concerned Rasmus asked, "Guinevere, what has you so upset? The map is wrinkly and wet from your crying! Oh, I see, this is a map to Peapack."

Sniffle. Sniffle.

Guinevere could barely speak. She had to catch her breath. "Oh, Raa-Raa-Rasmus, I'm sad for all the animals in shelters. I remember how lonely I was until Coral Bell adopted me. I was thinking about how we eat dinner every night around this table. Animals in shelters eat all alone, and they have no one to love them. And they have no one to love back. Let's think of a way to help get all the animals adopted on Saturday at the Peapack adoption fair. Can you all help me think of ideas?"

Tilly chirped, "Can you keep a secret? Oops-a-daisy, never mind."

Guinevere perked up. "What secret? If it's a secret, then you can't tell us! Or maybe you can? I think you can. We are all trusty troopers. Hey, Pedro, go out to the barn and bring in some hay to snack on. Take my basket and stuff it full of timothy." Pedro, being a polite chinchilla, obliged and went straight to the barn.

"Pedro can't keep a secret to save his life. Now that he's busy, what's the secret Tilly? Come on, I cannot be left in suspense, it makes my fur uncurl. Tell me, tell me, tell me," Guinevere insisted as she stroked Tilly's feathers. Tilly felt unsure about revealing a secret. She fluttered from the dining room chair to the curtain rod to preen her feathers. "I'm considering it Guin. It could be classified information."

Rasmus stomped his rear leg. "Ladies, it's not right to spill the beans. You must not ever betray someone by telling their secret. It's not up to you to tell. However, if someone didn't tell you that the news is a secret, then it's not a real secret. According to the dictionary, a secret is something kept

hidden, like a mystery. Or a secret is something kept from others or shared in private. I suppose in this case that Tilly's information is not a real secret."

Pedro dragged the basket of into the dining room, just in time. Tilly was flying circles around the chandelier, debating what to do. She screeched, "Rasmus, since you are very smart, I trust that you are right about secrets. Now, everyone calm down. The secret is, well, we are going to the rescue fair in the pony cart!"

Everyone jumped up and down. They held hands and danced around the dining room table in glee. Pedro piped up, "Oh, my! Now I know why there's a horse in the barn. Oh, I guess the cat is out of the bag now." Pedro rolled on the floor laughing at his joke, and the others stood in surprise. "A CAT!" shrieked Guinevere. "I don't like cats! It will chase me, and my fur will get tangled!" "No, no, no" said Pedro. "It means she spilled the beans, silly. More importantly, there's a horse in the barn!"

Tilly screeched again, "I'll be right back everyone, I have something important to do."

Tilly flew to the barn and perched on a hay rack in Boulder's stall. She bobbed side to side with enthusiasm. Boulder was gazing at the view to the pasture. His big brown eyes looked peaceful, as though he was in dream land.

"Boulder, Boulder Hill. Hello. It's Tilly. Remember me? We met when you first came here. I brought you an apple slice. Remember? I hope you like our farm. Anyway, did you know we are all going to the Peapack rescue fair? Coral Bell said you will take us with the pony cart!"

Tilly's gusto made Boulder curious, in a happy way. He turned to the hay rack; Tilly was still bobbling. "Boulder, can you keep a secret? I always wanted to ride a horse. All my life, I always wanted to, really, I have. May I ride you to the rescue fair? Do I need a saddle? How would I hold on? Am I too heavy? Do I need a riding hat? Oh Boulder, this would make my dream come true! What do you think?"

Boulder was overwhelmed with Tilly's lively questions. His brown eyes widened with delight. He whinnied. He shook his head. His tail swooshed back and forth. He whinnied again. Then a deep voice spoke. His tone was soft and calming:

"Hello Tilly. Pleased to see you again.
I remember you. I remember the apple slice.
It's hard to be the horse who's new, and you were very nice.
You may ride me to the fair. I will pull you in a cart anywhere.
You may sit on my withers, you may sit on my back.
Saddles are for people, so I need little tack.
I do not know if you need a hat, I do not know things like that.
I will walk a steady pace. After all, it's not a race.
It will be my delight. Ahh, my new home is feeling quite right!"

Meanwhile, in the dining room, Rasmus, told everyone to prepare a speech about their adoption story. Pedro was most unhappy about the idea. "Senor Rasmus, perdóneme, but what do you know? You were born on Blueberry Lane Herb Farm. No fair. You won't have to habla en inglés when you think in Español", blurted Pedro. His knees wobbled as he thought about speaking in front of strangers, so he

scurried to find a fidget stick to nibble. Rasmus thumped, he felt dismayed. He wiggled his whiskers. He huffed and puffed.

Tilly returned and comforted Pedro. “Pedro, your English is getting better. My Spanish is getting better from listening to Coral Bell’s tutoring lessons. I will help you write your speech.” “Oh, Senorita Tilly, eres un buen amigo. Te amo por eso!” “What did he say Tilly,” nose Rasmus asked. Tilly chirped, “Pedro said I am a good friend and that he loves me for that. Rasmus, you better mend your fence with Pedro and figure out what special thing you will do for the adoption fair!”

Chapter Two

Rasmus hopped back under the living room chair to think. Tilly, Pedro, and Guinevere wrote their speeches. They practiced them in front of each other. They timed each speech to make sure they were equal in length. They practiced and practiced. They even helped each other select outfits to wear to look their best. Finally, they had a dress rehearsal.

Pedro sported his favorite red and white stripe sweater in honor of the Peruvian flag. Tilly selected a purple hat and cape. Guinevere chose her favorite pink dress. “Oh Tilly, can you please put my fur up in a fancy furdo?” You can add the sparkly pink doodads Coral Bell gave me for Christmas. That way, I can show off how well pets are taken care of when they get adopted.”

Thump. Thump Thump Thump

Rasmus was listening from under the living room chair. Thumping signaled his disapproval of Guinevere’s ideas. “Guinevere, for parsley sake, you better not over dress! Think how bad it will make the animals feel if you show off a fancy outfit. What’s this nonsense about a furdo with sparkly doodads? They will feel so forlorn. And what if some don’t get adopted? Sometimes it’s best to be plain. A plain Jane. That’s it Guinevere. Be a plain Jane.” Guinevere stomped her little paw in protest because she loved to be glamorous and glittery, a real girly girl.

Tilly and Pedro agreed with Rasmus. Tilly talked Guinevere into wearing a plain jumper instead of a glamorous dress. After some pouting and protesting, Guinevere decided to cooperate with everyone. Then she demanded to know what Rasmus would do to promote rescue pet adoptions.

Rasmus explained that Coral Bell gave him permission to make up coupons to give to pet parents. He showed a sample of how it would look:



Everyone clapped with approval. Rasmus went to work making the coupons on colorful paper. Pedro and Guinevere helped by cutting and folding. With her beak, Tilly neatly packed the coupons in a sack. When they finished, Rasmus had his own dress rehearsal. He tried on the sack. He placed it over his head; the strap rested on one shoulder and the pouch was on the opposite side. He hopped about to make sure the sack was secure. But it dragged, and it dragged. It caused him to stumble.

"I have an idea," Tilly exclaimed. "I can fix that. I watch Coral Bell sew. I spied a needle and thread in a pin cushion. I will fly upstairs to the sewing room and get it." With her beak, Tilly worked the needle in and out of the burlap strap with precision. Up and down, in and out, she worked while Rasmus held the strap steady for her.

Rasmus tested the burlap sack again. When he stood on his hind legs, he could reach into the sack for the coupons. "Thanks Tilly! Your adjustment was perfect, and you are always so helpful. Now we are all ready for the fair on Saturday. This will be our first ride in the pony cart and I'm so excited!"

Boo hoo, hoo, hoo. Sniffle. Sniffle.

"Guinevere, now what's the matter?" Rasmus huffed in exasperation. Pedro darted underneath the sofa. "Ut-oh," he mumbled to himself, "I'm in trouble." Tilly cackled in laughter. "My fur, my long beautiful fur. Look at it! Just look at it on the floor. Pedro cut it off! Pedro, how can you mix up my fur for paper? You're gonna get it!" Just as she ran off after Pedro, Rasmus caught Guinevere and hugged her. "Guin, it's OK, you still look pretty even though you have stickie up bangs. Remember, you're not in a shelter, and that's what this is all about. Tilly, stop giggling at Guinevere, this instant!"

Chapter Three

Jingle Jingle Jingle.....Jingle Jingle Jingle

That Saturday was a chilly February morning. Light snowflakes flurried about. Coral Bell prepared Boulder Hill to pull the cart to the fair. The chestnut horse looked regal in his blue blanket. Coral Bell embroidered it with his name: "Boulder Hill, Blueberry Lane Herb Farm". Sleigh bells jingled on the harness and it made the occasion extra festive. One by one, Coral Bell cozied up her adopted family with a warm blanket in the cart. Tilly's dream of riding a horse finally came true. She perched on top of Boulder's leather halter to steady herself while she held a rein that Coral Bell made just for her. It was the precise size for her to hold with her beak.

Off they went, rolling along in the cart while singing songs.

*Over the river and thru the woods to Peapack we go.
Boulder knows the way to carry the sleigh thru the light and gentle snow, oh.
Over the river and thru the woods to the fair we go,
We'll brave the crowd and speak out loud that pet adoption is the way to go!*

When they arrived, they were greeted by local rescue organizations for cats, dogs, hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, rabbits, chinchillas, ferrets, and mice and rats. Coral Bell assisted the shoppers. Rasmus, Guinevere, Till, and Pedro socialized with the adoptees.

The crowd gathered to hear the speakers. Guinevere and Tilly went first while Pedro gnawed on his notes. They received applause, and one guest even whistled. Pedro was hesitant. As he approached the microphone, he shook. He cleared his throat and took a deep breath to start his speech. His inner voice told him to be his little Peruvian self, and that other people may appreciate hearing his home language too (*English follows*):

¡Hola Damas y Caballeros! Me llamo Pedro, y soy un chinchilla de Perú. Fue un largo viaje para llegar a los Estados Unidos. Extraño mucho a mi familia en Perú. Se suponía que iba a vivir con un niño acá en los Estados Unidos. No sé qué pasó, pero terminé en un refugio de animales no deseados. No tenía amigos, ni familia. Me encontraba en una jaula fría con un piso de alambre que me lastimaba los pies. No comimos bien en el refugio. No podía darme los baños de polvo que necesitaba. No tenía juguetes. Me dormía llorando cada noche. Me parecía que había estado allí por millones de años. Una mañana temprano, la Señorita Coral Bell vino al refugio. Pidió permiso de levantarme. Ella olía rico. Sus caricias eran cariñosas y suaves. Yo quería acurrucarme con ella. Por primera vez, no tenía ganas de esconderme. Ella me miró a los ojos. Entonces, me preguntó si quisiera ir a vivir con ella en su granja. Me dijo que tendría un hermano Rasmus, y dos hermanas, Tilly y Guinevere. Todo me parecía tan romántico. Me dio miedo decirle que “sí,” así que asentí con la cabeza. Así fue como vine a vivir en la granja de hierbas llamada Blueberry Lane. Ahora tengo un trabajo muy importante. ¿Ves aquel caballo bonito? Es el nuevo miembro de nuestra familia, y se llama Boulder Hill. Mi trabajo es hacerle sentir como en casa y hacer que sepa lo mucho que lo queremos. Coral Bell dice que nos amará hasta el cielo y más. Cada noche, me acuesto sabiendo que soy amado. Y lo que es mejor, tengo una familia a quien puedo corresponderle el amor, también. Esta familia no se parece a mí. No hablan mi idioma. No son chinchillas. Pero son especiales. Tilly, la papagaya, me ayuda con mi inglés, y los ayuda a todos siempre que pueda. Rasmus, el conejo, es muy listo y, ¡nosotros los chicos somos muy unidos! Guinevere, la cobaya, pues, ella me hace reír mucho. Boulder Hill y yo estamos apenas llegando a conocernos. Él tiene un alma gentil. Lo más importante que aprendí de mi adopción es que un corazón que ama es algo que se puede regalar a familiares y amigos todos los días.

A huge surprise! Someone in the crowd stepped forward and translated Pedro’s speech for the people who didn’t speak Spanish!

“Hello Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Pedro, and I am a chinchilla from Peru. It was a long journey to the USA. I miss my family in Peru a lot. I was supposed to live with a little boy in the USA. I do not know what happened, but I ended up in a shelter. I had no friends, no family. I was in a cold cage with a wire floor that hurt my paws. They did not feed us well. I didn’t get many dust baths. I had no toys. I cried myself to sleep every night. It felt like I was there a million years. Early one morning, Miss Coral Bell came to the shelter. She asked to hold me. She smelled pretty. Her pets were soft and loving. I wanted to snuggle with her. For the first time, I didn’t want to hide. She looked into my eyes. She asked me if I would like to live on a farm with her. She said I would have a brother Rasmus, and two sisters, Tilly and Guinevere. It all sounded so romantic. I was too afraid to say yes, so I nodded my head. That’s how I came to live on Blueberry Lane Herb Farm. Now I have a very important job. Do you see that handsome horse? That is our new family member, and his name is Boulder Hill. My job is to make him feel at home and let him know how much we love him. Coral Bell says she will love us all to the moon and back. I know I am loved every night I go to bed. What’s even better is that I have a family to love back. This family doesn’t look like me. They don’t speak my home language. They aren’t chinchillas. But they are special. Tilly, the parrot, helps me with English, and she helps everyone any way she can. Rasmus, the rabbit, is very smart and us boys stick together! Guinevere, the guinea pig, well, she just makes me laugh a lot. Boulder Hill and I are just getting to know each other. He has a

gentle soul. The most important thing I learned from being adopted is that having a loving heart is a gift you can give to your family and friends every day.”

The crowd was in tears as they applauded Pedro. Boulder Hill whinnied with delight. Pedro’s story motivated everyone to adopt, on the spot, because he was so inspiring!

While Rasmus gave out the coupons, Coral Bell shared information about the Small Pet Select company. She talked about how the website hosts educational information, food, toys, blogs, and lots of fun info. She praised the Small Pet Select transport team for enabling relocation for adoptees from other States in safe and healthy conditions.

Coral Bell reminded visitors of the benefits of adoption, such as:

- Animals may already be spayed/neutered, and possibly microchipped
- They may be socialized by shelter volunteers or in a foster home
- Their personality profiles are known
- Animals are likely to be litter box trained already
- First veterinary exams are done
- Post-adoption support provided by the shelter or rescue
- Adoption always includes the knowledge that irresponsible breeding and animal mills are not supported.
- Adoption helps ease the over population of companion animals (and less animals in shelters)

At the end of the day, every animal at the fair went home to their forever homes. The fair was a marvelous success due to everyone’s help.

Jingle Jingle Jingle.....Jingle Jingle Jingle

The bells jingled a lot brighter on the way home. Boulder Hill was very proud to take the family home to the farm. He trotted with his head held high and a heart full of gratitude for he himself was rescued and he realized the special family he is blessed with.

The End

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