

From Mayhem to Mother's Day

Blueberry Lane Herb Farm

Chapter One

Bang Boom, Boom!!

"Squawk.....squawk squawk," Tilly shrieked. She rolled over her perch so fast that her bird cage swung uncontrollably. "Uh oh, what was that," she wondered, then she found her sea shell had shattered. Guinevere pushed her homework aside and ran to the window to see what the commotion was all about. The excitement woke Pedro from his nap in the sewing box. The peaceful Sunday afternoon ended abruptly with the three of them spying from the third-floor window.

Coral Bell greeted a young man by his pickup truck. After putting on his work gloves, he pulled four crates off the tailgate. One by one, he handed them to Coral Bell. She carefully carried each one into the coop. The spying trio was so intrigued, they tried to guess what was happening. Guinevere bet that it was a delivery of plants for the herb garden. Tilly replied, "Nope, no way. First, she grows everything from seed. Seeds don't come in big crates. Second, I saw her sweeping the coop last week. Third, a feather flew out of one of those crates." Pedro chimed in, "I hope those are crates for building a playground! They look delicious to nibble on."

Guinevere couldn't take the suspense any longer. She had to see for herself what was going on. With lightning speed, she raced down two flights of stairs and out to the coop. She ran so fast that she skidded on the fresh bedding and slammed into a chicken feeder. Chaos erupted. From her perch, Tilly screamed "Chaos in the coop, chaos in the coop!"

Guinevere was stunned to find one flustered hen and a gaggle of baby chicks flapping their fuzzy wings.

Cluck, Cluck, Cluck, Cluck, Cluck!

Chicks were skittering about in a panic, and Mama Matilda would not have it. Coral Bell tried to settle everyone down. Rasmus appeared in the doorway. He sat up and turned his ears this way and that way to survey the situation. Then he gave a booming thump with his rear leg to command attention. As always, that did the trick. The chicks huddled under Matilda's wings, and Coral Bell brushed the dust from her hair. Guinevere was wide-eyed and speechless. She could barely stand up because her long guinea pig fur was tangled around the chicken feeder!

"Guinevere, that's one way to make an entrance, but not the nicest way to introduce yourself. Perhaps we should consider charm school young lady," Coral Bell said with frustration. By this time, Pedro was peeking over Rasmus's shoulder. Tilly swooped around the coop showing off tricks in front of Matilda. Coral Bell impatiently dismissed them all. They were to wait on the porch until further notice.

Chapter Two

Stomp, stomp, stomp

Guinevere paced around on the porch having a fit, "Rasmus, did you know that big fat chicken and her babies were coming here? What were you doing in the barn while the rest of us were in the sewing room? Why didn't you tell us about this? It's a big deal. Chickens, just think, chickens! Oh my stars, who needs chickens on an herb farm anyway?"

Rasmus nibbled from the basket of parsley and casually replied, "I heard Coral Bell making arrangements on the telephone, but I didn't hear the details. Hey, none of your business why I was in the barn! If you must know, I was testing the hay. I was checking it, you know, for freshness. It's my job to make sure it's safe for everyone to eat. I hope you finished your homework, Guin. You got yourself in a pickle when you should have been studying. So, I'm not helping you figure out your math later."

Pedro piped up, “Perdóneme Señor Rasmus. Yo no entiendo. ¿No hay pollos en una granja de hierbas? A veces me todos confunden. (*Pardon me Mr. Rasmus. I don’t understand. No chickens on an herb farm? Sometimes you all confuse me.*)

When the delivery man left, Coral Bell joined the foursome on the porch. She told them all about Matilda. “She is a very beautiful Barred Rock chicken. That is her breed. Did you notice the pretty pattern in her feathers? Matilda lived with a young man from Maywood, but he cannot keep her because he is moving far away. She is a good egg layer, and her hens will grow up to lay eggs too. If there are extra eggs, they can be sold at our farm stand.”

Coral Bell continued, “On Wednesday, I will introduce you to Matilda. By then, she should be calm and feeling settled in. Just be yourself. There’s no need to do tricks to impress her. Afterall, she is a mother, and all moms know a trickster when they see one. Keep in mind how you felt when you first came to Blueberry Lane Herb Farm. Do you remember how you appreciated feeling welcomed and wanted?”

By the time Wednesday arrived, Tilly realized that she was being a show off by doing flying tricks. Being a show off is boastful, and that’s not nice. She really wanted Matilda to know that she is a kind parrot. She decided the shattered oyster shell in her bird cage would be a thoughtful gift for Matilda. Even though the shell was special to Tilly, she wanted to share it. Knowing that chickens like oyster shells for the extra protein, she wrapped the broken shell shards in a silk pouch. She tied it with a fancy bow for an extra special touch.

After school Wednesday, Guinevere, Pedro, and Rasmus were anxious, in a nervous way, to meet Matilda. Tilly styled Guin’s long hair in an furdo and pinned fresh pansies in it. Rasmus and Pedro preened themselves to look gentlemanly. With their best manners, they were ready to formally meet Miss Matilda and her 10 baby chicks.

Chapter Three

Coral Bell escorted the foursome to the chicken yard. Matilda was roosting on top of the iron gate while keeping an eye on her chicks as they tootled around. Her black and white speckled feathers glistened in the sun. She looked very regal, yet motherly at the same time.

The first introduction was Rasmus. He sat up on his hind legs with his ears tall and straight. When introduced, he bowed politely. Pedro was very nervous, so much so that his knees knocked together. He cleared his throat before speaking, “Hola Matilda de Maywood, soy Pedro de Perú. (*Hello Matilda from Maywood. I am Pedro from Peru.*) He was so nervous that Spanish slipped out.

Tilly came to Pedro’s rescue. She asked Matilda to excuse his mixed-up language and explained that Pedro speaks English well when he is not nervous. Impatiently, Guinevere pushed Tilly out of the way. She curtsied as though she were in front of the Queen of England. From where she was, Matilda appeared to sit high up on the gate. To impress her, Guinevere batted her eyelashes, tilted her head to the side, and introduced herself, “Hello, I am Guinevere. You’ll know me by my long fur. By the way, I can baby sit for you when I’m not in school or taking care of my luxurious fur.”

Tilly nudged Guinevere aside and formally introduced herself. When she presented Matilda with the silk pouch of oyster shells, Matilda bobbed her head in appreciation. Then along came Boulder Hill.

Clippity Clop Clippity Clop Clippity Clop Clippity Clop

Hello Miss Matilda. Pleased to meet you.
Boulder Hill is my name.

I am the only horse
We’ll be friends of course

Come and visit me in the barn
Welcome to Blueberry Lane Herb Farm!

Matilda took charge. She clucked up, "Mighty nice to meet you all. I can see that Rasmus is a gentleman. Pedro, you're a harmless little fellow. Tilly, thanks for offering me a gift of oyster shells. I sure like them a lot. Boulder Hill, I will visit you in the barn, and thank you for welcoming me to the Farm."

"Now Guinevere! You best watch yourself around me Little Miss! I don't need no long-haired guinea pig poking around in my chicken business. I tell you, my business is chickeny alright. Chickeny I said. I don't need you getting that mop o'fur all tangled up in the feeder either. And another thing, you scared my baby chicks! I'll take care of my chicks just fine, thank you. Where I come from, we all mind our own business. Chickeny business that is. Anyway, I like a peaceful place. It helps me do my job better, and my job is to be a good egg layer. Are you all straight on how things are going to work in MY chicken yard?"

The foursome was startled by Matilda taking charge; she was quite intimidating. They shook their heads to acknowledge Matilda and scampered to the secret meeting place by the pond. Boulder Hill trotted along.

Chapter Four

Boo hoo, boo hoo hoo

Guinevere sat in the tire swing and sobbed, "Why was she so rude? She said I am nosey and scary! I don't like her. She can stay in her coop and never come out. I hope she rusts on top of that old gate!"

Rasmus sat up tall, his ears pointed directly toward Guinevere. With a thump he commanded her attention, "Guinevere, you are not thinking clearly. Matilda must protect her chicks, it's her duty as their mother. We are new and strange to her. We must earn her trust, little by little. Once again, that long fur of yours got you in a pickle. Tilly will cut your fur this summer when school is over. Better to have plain and simple fur." Guinevere shrugged her shoulders and stomped her paw to be taken seriously. The kind of serious that Rasmus shows when he thumps. The problem is that little thumps from little paws can barely be heard.

Boo hoo, boo hoo hoo

Rasmus grumbled, "Pedro, you're whining too? What's wrong? Oh, the drama around here," Pedro sniveled and said, "I just remembered that Mother's Day is coming. The baby chicks are lucky, they have their real mama. I miss my mama in Peru. What shall we do on Mother's Day so we don't feel so sad?" Tilly wrapped her soft green wings around her buddy. He loved her cuddly hugs.

Rasmus turned his tall ears this way and that way. He hunkered down under the oak tree. This was his usual position for rabbit thinking even though it looked like he was napping. This was important thinking because Guinevere, Tilly, Pedro, and Boulder Hill were rescued and adopted. Their feelings were tender, and Rasmus knew he had to be sensitive.

"Ah hah. I have a plan," Rasmus finally said. "Gather round. We'll take a vote on the best way to work it out." Tilly perched on Boulder Hill's withers, so she could keep an eye out for unexpected visitors, such as Coral Bell. Pedro and Guinevere sat on the tire swing together. Boulder Hill grazed on spring grass. Together, they worked out the details of Rasmus's idea for Mother's Day. It was a top-secret mission.

Over the next week, everyone worked on their assigned tasks. Pedro was so nervous about the surprise that he couldn't stop snacking. He couldn't keep enough hay in his stash under the sofa cushion. He nibbled the edges of his school books. He even ate every single Strawberry Rose Snacker in the pantry. Only when he had a full tummy did he have the courage to do his task: sneaking Matilda's eggs out of the egg basket. One by one, an egg here and an egg there. He hid them in the picnic cooler.

Rasmus got up in the early dawn hours before school. He hopped through the dewy grass to the corner of the pasture. With excellent digging skills, he dug a hole. It was wide and deep. It was hard work, but he was determined to do a good job. He was very neat. He dragged the upheaved clumps of grass to the woods. He used his rear paws to scatter the loose dirt so nothing looked any different. When he was done, Rasmus took extra care to preen so his fur and paws were clean for school.

Tilly collected pieces of ribbon from Coral Bell's sewing room and hid them in the barn rafters. Each day she chose a different patterned ribbon. There were ribbons of plaid, polka dot, and stripes. They were in rainbow colors.

Guinevere's only job was to call Aunt Pinkie and have a private, top secret, conversation. Calling Aunt Pinkie would be tricky. She had to wait for a time when she would not be busy at Penny Square Inn. She also had to wait for a time when Coral Bell would be outside, so she could not over hear. Eventually, Guinevere hid in the attic to make her top-secret call.

Chapter Five

Mother's Day morning arrived. Coral Bell saddled up Boulder Hill and rode to Aunt Pinkie's for breakfast. It was an opportunity to see Daisy, her rescued bunny, and meet the guests visiting from faraway places. They celebrated with a selection of fresh quiches at Penny Square Inn. While Coral Bell was having breakfast, the secret plan was put into action.

A delivery truck arrived. Two men quickly went to work.

When they left, Tilly carried the ribbons from the barn and tied them securely with her beak.

Guinevere dressed up with a straw sun bonnet with her fur tucked underneath.

Pedro picked a bouquet of wild flowers and nervously nibbled on the bundling twine.

Rasmus supervised from the porch swing. Matilda from Maywood cackled in the background.

Clippity Clop Clippity Clop Clippity Clop Clippity Clop

Boulder Hill carried Coral Bell home. Following directions for the secret plan, he trotted through the gates of Blueberry Lane Herb Farm and went to the pasture. Everyone was gathered under the canopy of a flowering apple tree.

"Surprise, Happy Mother's Day! We love you Coral Bell!" they all shouted. Rasmus and Pedro hopped around while Guinevere danced. Tilly fluttered through the festive ribbons swaying from the tree branches.

"My goodness, how did you get this tree here," Coral Bell blushed. Guinevere gave the details. "It was Rasmus's idea. He told Pedro to pilfer Matilda's eggs, and I sold them to Aunt Pinkie. We earned money to buy the tree. Tilly decorated it with ribbon streamers." Coral Bell laughed, "Oh, that's why there were so many quiches at breakfast; Aunt Pinkie had lots of fresh eggs to cook with! And I suppose she helped you arrange to have the tree planted?" "Yes, but I dug an expert hole to plant it in," Rasmus replied, "Even Matilda tried to lay extra eggs for us to sell. The bonus is that we can have apples from this tree in the fall!"

Pedro sweetly said, "We wanted to give you a present that would remind you how much we love you. We wanted to honor you for being our human mom. Every year when this tree blooms, it will remind you how our hearts bloom with love for you too. Te amamos. Nuestros corazones estan llenos gracias a ti. (*We love you. Our hearts are full, thanks to you.*)

The End

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