

The Goodness of Giving

Blueberry Lane Herb Farm

Chapter One

Ting Ting Ting

Coral Bell gently tapped a spoon on her teacup. “Guin, Rasmus, Pedro, Tilly, everyone gather in the sewing room.” All at once, they shouted, “The sewing room! Ooooh, let’s go!” They loved going there. They quickly stopped their game of checkers and raced up stairs. The sewing room always felt like a magical place. It was where Coral Bell tutored her students, worked on sewing projects, made garden plans, and enjoyed reading.

With high ceilings and pale peach wall paper, the sewing room was the coziest room in the old farm house. The sewing machine was tucked into a nook with an antique cabinet full of fabric and patterns. There was always neat stuff to look at, like sentimental doodads, glass jars with colorful buttons, spools of thread, and pin cushions. There was even a bird feather collection from the farm. Book cases held beloved books and a few trinkets. Tilly’s huge bird cage sat by one of the tall windows that looked out over the farm.

Everyone jumped on the fluffy stuffy sofa; they snuggled up across from the blazing fireplace. Coral Bell was cozied up in the matching fluffy stuffy chair. She brought the tea set, warm herbal tea, a vase of orchard hay, and a bowl of Zen Tranquility Blend herbs for snacking. What could be cozier on a cold and rainy November day?

“It’s time to plan our Thanksgiving holiday. Remember how we celebrated at home last year? What would you like to do this year? Let’s talk over some ideas,” Coral Bell suggested. They talked about inviting friends for dinner. They wondered if they would receive an invitation to be Thanksgiving guests. They wondered where they could go for a holiday weekend trip. Coral Bell noticed, “I like all of your ideas, but have you thought about giving back to our community as an option?”

Guinevere offered, “Could we invite the local shelter animals here for a feast? We could host it in the barn, there’s lots of space there.” With a mouth full of orchard hay, Pedro seconded the idea.

Tilly raised her wing, “I think we should go out into the community. That’s what community outreach is Guin. I remember one day during the summer, there were people here buying things for the senior citizens. Can we help them somehow?”

Rasmus perked up. “That’s a good idea. I like that. I saw a TV show about how lonely it is to be in a senior citizen home, or a nursing home where they might not have family or friends to visit them.” Guinevere chimed in, “Yeah, that’s a good idea, but what would we do?”

Together, the clan came up with a plan. In order to make this happen, they had to work as a team and use their time and talents to bring companionship to others on Thanksgiving Day.

Chapter Two

Brrring Brrring

“Hello, yes this is Coral Bell. Oh, this is wonderful news, my family will be very happy to know that we can help at Silver Oak Senior Residence on Thanksgiving Day. Yes, each of my family members will participate. We will finalize our plans and send you an agenda. Thank you for returning my call.”

Out on the porch, there was a debate about Tilly’s talent and Pedro’s shyness. “Tilly, no one wants to hear your opera singing. No one. Repeat, NO ONE!”, barked Guinevere. Tilly, who was perched on her favorite parsley pot, took such offense that she flew off. “Now Pedro, what are you going to do? You’re too scared to do anything. Don’t think of hiding under the sofa cushions again,” Guin barked again.

Rasmus turned his tall rabbit ears forward. His eye brows wrinkled together, and he stomped his big rear thumper. “Guinevere Margaret,” he said, “who made you talent show director? Coral Bell said to propose our ideas to her. She said that whatever it is, we must be confident doing it. You’re not being nice to Tilly and Pedro, and we need to work together. Now be nice! Go find Tilly and bring her back.” Guinevere puckered up her face when Rasmus said her middle name. Then she rolled her eyes at him, although she knows he is a sensible and logical rabbit.

Peeking through a window, Guin found Tilly in the barn. Boulder Hill was rubbing his velvety nose against her little back to console her. She saw Tilly in tears. She overheard them talking and realized they were teaming up. “Boulder, would you like to give pony cart rides on Thanksgiving? I was thinking I could ask Coral Bell to braid your mane. I can also weave garden flowers into it with my beak. Then we can decorate the pony cart with garlands. What do you think?”

Boulder whinnied and nodded his horse head up and down enthusiastically. In his usual prose, he sweetly replied,

“I like your singing Tilly
Your song is very pretty

Do not be discouraged my friend
Use your given talents and be valiant!

With Flowers in my mane
Like a daisy chain
You may ride between my ears
Everyone will give us three cheers!”

Tilly flapped her pretty green wings in relief. She needed his support. She perched on Boulder’s hay rack and sang him a tune. Meanwhile, Guinevere was stewing mad; she was feeling left out. She sternly marched back to the porch to report to Rasmus.

“Rasmus! Tilly and Boulder have a plan, and it doesn’t include me! Imagine that? How could they do that?” Rasmus swiveled and pointed his tall brown ears toward the very mad guinea piggy. He chided, “Guinevere, you were not nice to Tilly. Remember, when you are not nice, others may not want to include you in their plans. Now you will have to decide what to do by yourself.” Guinevere said, “Oh never mind! I’ll just do what you and Pedro do. What did you decide?”

Thump Thump Thump

“You will not Guinevere!” exclaimed Rasmus. “Pedro and I made plans. You think of your own ideas. There’s plenty of things you can do. Use your imagination and figure it out. Now skedaddle!”

Pedro sheepishly chimed in, “Oh, Senor Rasmus, I think Guinevere is not happy. She must learn a lesson about being thoughtful before she speaks. We must all remember to think before we speak so we do not hurt someone’s feelings. It’s a good lesson for everyone. Anyway, let’s look at the calendar and schedule our tasks for Thanksgiving Day.”

Once again, Coral Bell gathered everyone in the sewing room to present their plans. Rasmus went first. “Pedro and I would like to work together. We will make pumpkin soup again, like we did last year. Coral Bell, if you can help us package it, we would appreciate it.” Pedro chimed in, “We also would like to make festive placemats for the dinner table. We will gather supplies and use what we already have. We won’t have to shop for anything.” Coral Bell clapped in approval. “Excellent, I love your ideas and how resourceful you are. I also love that we can make soup with our fresh pumpkins and herbs!”

Tilly piped up next. “I’m here to represent Boulder Hill and myself. We would like to host pony cart rides around the Silver Oak Senior Citizen neighborhood. I’ll decorate Boulder’s mane with a daisy chain or chrysanthemum flowers. Can you help me make a garland for the cart? And we will need you to drive the pony cart. Is that OK?” Again, Coral Bell clapped in approval. “Certainly, and I like that you included Boulder. Has anyone considered including Matilda?”

Guinevere raised her paw, “Oh, I can include Matilda. We will put on a ballet show.” Everyone burst out laughing and comments started flowing. “A chicken doing ballet? Matilda in a tutu? Guin you’ll have egg on your face if this doesn’t work out!” They couldn’t stop giggling at Guinevere’s idea. Guinevere stood up and declared, “I will personally train Matilda. We will work every single day after school. That way, she can lay her eggs in the morning, and practice every afternoon. I have a week to train her, you’ll see!”

Chapter Three

Snip Snip Snip... Crinkle ... Crunch

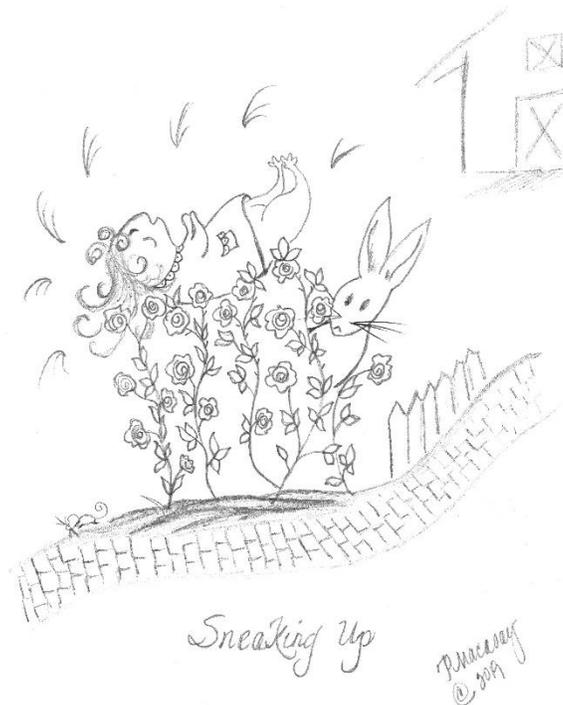
Pedro and Rasmus were very busy gathering supplies. They fashioned a handle out of string and tied it to a cardboard box. It was just the right size box to pull behind them. It was like a wheelbarrow, except without wheels. They collected wax paper and placed it neatly in the collection box. Once finished, Rasmus suggested they go outside to gather colored leaves. As they scampered down the steps, the box went bumpety bump behind them.



Outside, Guinevere was trying her best to convince Matilda that she should take ballet lessons. Matilda protested, “I’m in charge of my hen house. I have no time for dance lessons or other such shenanigans! Miss Guinevere, you and I are not exactly friends. Every time you come around to my chicken yard, there’s a calamity. Calamity Jane, that’s who you are! Yes sir, Calamity Jane. Now I’ll thank you to leave my yard. Go on, shoo! I have chickeny things to do!” Guinevere stayed put. She sat on the fence.

On their way to the maple tree, Rasmus and Pedro passed Guinevere sulking on the fence. She spied them hauling their collection box and decided to sneak behind them. Pedro said, “Senor Rasmus, this tree has very beautiful leaves. I see gold, red, purple, and yellow leaves. Isn’t it stunning?” Rasmus smiled, “Oh I agree Pedro. Nature sure gives us beautiful fall colors. I love the crispy air too. Let’s look for the prettiest leaves on the ground.” With their heads down, they diligently searched for the brightest and most colorful leaves.

When they were looking away, Guinevere tip toed along the path toward the maple tree. She ducked next to the rose bushes each time Rasmus or Pedro looked up. When she heard them rustle in the leaves, she continued sneaking along the bushes. Rasmus out smarted her. He snuck behind her and shouted, “Guinevere!” She was so startled that she jumped up high and landed in a rose bush. “Ouch, ooh, owe. Rasmus, what is the matter with you? Why did you sneak up on me? Ouch, oohh.”



Pedro and Rasmus laughed and laughed. They laughed so hard, they couldn't stand up straight. Guinevere was stuck in the thorny bush. With twigs and leaves in her fur, she was quite a sight. She got herself out of the bush and hopped on one foot. "Ouch, ouch, ouch, something hurts my paw! Rasmus, what is it," Guin begged. Still giggling, Rasmus examined her foot. "Oh dear. Oh my. Hmm. Thorns are stuck in your paw, but I think you will live." He plucked them out and gave her a guinea piggy back ride to the house.

Chapter Four

Do Ray Me Fa So La Ti Do

In the garden, Coral Bell helped Tilly make garlands for the pony cart. They used dried corn stalks, fall mums, and green and gold plaid ribbon. All the while, they practiced Tilly's voice exercises together, "do ray me fa so la ti do", so she could keep her vocal chords in excellent shape for singing on Thanksgiving Day.

....two and three and four and repeat....

The music seemed to be on automatic rewind as Guinevere attempted to practice ballet. She stretched and then tried to glide around her bedroom. She tried fancy pirouettes. She tried standing on her tippy toes in front of the mirror. She tried to look graceful. But.....this bandaged paw was a big problem!

She practiced waving her hands around gracefully. She practiced tilting her head in a dramatic pose. Then she balanced on her good paw and stretched her leg with the bandaged paw behind her. She stayed balanced until Tilly hit a high note while practicing opera. The piercing sound startled her so much that she lost her balance and fell over. Frustrated with her wounded paw, she decided it was time to talk to Matilda again.

Guinevere approached, "Matilda, you are in charge of your hen house, right? So you should be the ballet star for Thanksgiving. When you are the star, it's like being in charge. Everyone will see you are a star in charge if you dance for the senior citizens. Come on, will you," Guinevere pleaded. Matilda wobbled her head. She shook her tail feathers. Finally, she agreed to help Guinevere. Every day after school, Matilda took ballet lessons from the wounded guinea pig.

Matilda squeezed into Guinevere's tutu. Feathers poked out here and there. She tried to be a graceful ballerina, despite being a plump chicken. She tried to be a beautiful ballerina, despite losing lots of feathers from Guinevere's demanding directions. "Up and down, and one and two, and one and two," Guinevere repeated over and over. "Now, leap, turn and spin. Again, leap, turn, and spin," Guinevere added. By the end of each lesson, Matilda was worn out. "Guinevere, I cannot wait to get into my roost each night. All this ballet makes me one tired barred rock chicken!"



On the kitchen table, Pedro and Rasmus worked hard to make Thanksgiving placements. They carefully arranged various colorful leaves on the wax paper rectangles. Coral Bell helped by ironing the leaves between two sheets of wax paper which made festive placemats. Finally, they stored them all in their collection box for safe keeping. All they had left to do was make pumpkin soup.

Chapter Five

Thanksgiving eve, everyone was too excited to sleep. They anticipated their trip. They talked about spending time with the senior citizens at Silver Oak Senior Residence. They packed decks of cards and checkers to play. They packed coloring books and crayons. Finally, Coral Bell reflected on their enthusiasm, dedication, and creativity. She reminded them how proud she was of their willingness to share the holiday with others that may be alone. With that warm thought, they cozied up on the fluffy stuffy sofa and read their favorite books until they drifted to sleep.

On Thanksgiving morning, Boulder Hill was in the holiday spirit. His mane was braided and adorned with flowers. His pony cart was polished and draped with garland. He was excited to take the family to Silver Oak Senior Citizen Center. First, he surprised them with a gift of his own:

I may only be a horse
I may look like "just a horse"
I am not a race horse or a clothes horse
I never trotted on a fancy course
But.....
I AM A GIFT HORSE
I gift you my time and my talent
Because I love you, of course!
Happy Thanksgiving Day to my family!

Away they went to share the holiday at Silver Oak. They learned that seniors have many gifts to give. They are wise. They have worldly experience. They have interesting stories to tell. They know about far away lands. They are gentle souls. They appreciate the little things in life. They were thankful for the new friendships made with Rasmus, Pedro, Tilly, Guinevere, Boulder Hill, Matilda, and Coral Bell.

The End

Peggy Macasay