

How You Gonna Keep Him Down On The Farm?

by Larry Strattner

Chapter Eight

Milo could not say he was unhappy. Like all dogs he lived mainly in the “now,” and didn't think much about “was” or “when.” He had been visiting Rufus Ladysmith's mother's farm in west New Jersey since baby Yvette came home from wherever she came from. He had only tried to lick Yvette once, just to say hello. Arielle had clocked him over the head for no apparent reason and next thing he knew he was out here with Marylou Ladysmith.

During his first week one of the two cows, either Belle or Beulah, he couldn't tell them apart, had kicked him in the ribs when he got too close behind her. It had really hurt and he thought about savaging her but then realized, as she went placidly back to chewing her cud, that Belle or Beulah was just a bit stupid and he had triggered a knee jerk reaction. He decided to avoid startling her from the rear, which he recalled vaguely was a good strategy with any female.

Marylou ran a small bakery in Wantage Township. Her little “farm” supplied many of her baking ingredients like milk, cream, berries, apples and various herbs that made her Wantage store a must stop for the locals and any tourists who learned of it.

Marylou seldom went to the store. It was, in the main, run by her friend Melba, named after the toast while Melba's mother was having a weak moment. The arrangement worked well and Marylou was able to do the things she loved best, the nurturing and preparation. She then ran her dough, frostings, toppings and other concoctions into town, Melba popped them in the oven and out came

the next day's business. "Nice, nice!" as Melba was wont to exclaim.

Milo had to admit he was fed well and as soon as Marylou was comfortable he would stick around he was allowed the run of the property. Calling it a "farm" was a stretch but its four or five acres gave Milo a workout he appreciated. Living in SoHo with Crombi and Arielle did tend to get a bit sedentary.

Marylou sometimes sold strawberry jam she had put up at a little roadside table. There was a coffee can with a slot in its top for honor payments. She was replenishing her offering when the three motorcycles rolled up the road and stopped. None of the three riders looked happy. All three sported facial hair. Odors of sweat and alcohol surrounded them. "Are these free samples?" one sneered at Marylou.

"The price is there on the table young man," replied Marylou.

"I can't see it" said the man "I guess I'll have to assume it's a sample."

Marylou realized there was no point in a reply.

"Goodness," said the man, picking up Marylou's honor coffee can, "a collection for the needy, like me. I'm among the needy today, for sure."

Marylou said levelly, "the Sheriff might want to know you are here," taking out her cell phone.

"How will he know?" replied the man, drawing an automatic pistol.

Milo had the usual dog equipment of over 220 million olfactory receptors with a compliment of organs recognizing sexual and social behaviors. In short, he could smell an asshole from two acres away and arrived at the roadside table using it and Marylou as a screen for his approach.

When he burst from beneath the strawberry and raspberry jams into the face of the biker the man shrieked like a girl as he and his bike tumbled over in a pile in the road with Milo on top.

Marylou waved her cellphone at the other two and yelled, "The sheriff is on his way now!" They thundered off down the road, leaving their partner to be chewed upon by Milo, who seemed to be enjoying himself immensely. The only question at this point was whether Milo would eat the biker's entire gun hand or only parts of it. The girlish screaming and thrashing continued until the sheriff arrived.

Marylou stood with Milo while the sheriff's deputy and his backup loaded the shredded biker into his cruiser. "Nice job folks," the deputy said to Marylou and Milo. He seemed to be barely containing a bout of hysterical laughter. "We'll send a truck around to pick up the bike. You done good." He reached out and patted Milo whose tongue hung out. It appeared Milo was smiling.

As the two cruisers disappeared down the road Marylou picked up her honor coffee can and the fallen jar of strawberry jam. "There are going to be a pile of treats tonight," she said to Milo who was still smiling.

