



Straight Talk

by Muriel Sluyter

Sabotaging the Coach

10 February, 2004

Greetings, Gentle Reader,

This is for all who remember when courts didn't turn violent criminals out on the streets to kill our little girls.

It's also for those who insist that American life always has been this brutal. They're wrong. Though I can't speak for other parts of the country, that's not how it was out here.

We have shed our tears, and we desperately need a break, so let's look backward for relief:

My husband came from the barn, announced that he had wet socks and guessed it was time to get his 5-buckle boots out of storage. He put them on the hearth to warm - last year's dried manure firmly attached - spreading that familiar barny odor throughout the house.

As we laughed over the vicissitudes of life with livestock - including the recycled hay on his boots - I remembered a story from past years.

Years ago, a family of kids, all girls, did the milking (by hand) each morning before school. They were often late, which earned them a tongue-lashing from the coach, their first-hour teacher. He railed on them mercilessly. They patiently explained that they had to milk the cows, then make their way to the school, which was some distance. It didn't help. By now, the pattern seemed set in stone.

One day, as the coach repeated his seemingly ritualistic chastisement, he added that, as a youth, he had milked cows before school, yet had made it on time. Then he made the mistake of adding a challenge. He would come to their house and help them do their milking the following day, thereby proving that there was no excuse for their chronic tardiness.

Now, is there any farm kid out there who does not know what this guy had done to himself? He should have been smarter than this!

Some animals are hard to milk, some are easy. Some are obnoxious, some are docile. Additionally, there seems to be a natural law that the worst cows give the most milk. I didn't make the law, but I can testify to its veracity.

Milking started early because they had many cows, and the route truck, which picked up the milk cans, came very

early. When the truck got there, the milk had to be ready. No excuses.

The girls knew which cows were a royal pain, and they were "lying in wait," as it were, for their coach (Revenge can be sweet!). They split the cows evenly, giving the coach his fair share. He didn't know they had given him the worst, hardest to milk cows. He had no easy ones, the kids had taken 'em all!

The girls went at their task with considerable gusto, milking those easy cows in record time. The coach did the same. At least he tried to do the same. The kids finished, cleaned up and left for school. They were on time. The coach was not. He was still in their barn, milking the worst cows in the county.

After some time - considerably after the tardy bell had rung - the coach showed up. He said nothing. He made no explanations, but never again did he rail on those kids for being tardy.

It is likely he never discovered how they had sabotaged him. If he did, he kept it to himself. It would have been too humiliating to admit that they had gotten him good!

To this day, those dignified ladies who were "the kids" tell the story of how they set up their coach. We always laugh, because it never stops being funny, no matter how many times we have heard it.

Ah, yes! Revenge can be sweet!