Clover Creek Farms Wholesome Chocolate Hazelnut Butter. That had to be it! They were on weed when they came up with the idea -- Buford, Beau, Tennyson Jack and Deacon Dan out at the concrete knotty head fish passing a joint.

“There is little commercial use,” said Beau, croaking the words so as emit sound and no air. He breathed out a cloud. “They make flour out of it. They flavor stuff with it. They make chocolate peanut butter out of it. They don’t do much else.”

“There’s pralines,” said Cletus. “They make pralines out of hazelnuts.”

“Those are pecans,” said Buford.

“Southern pralines are pecans,” said Cletus. “Belgium pralines is made out of hazelnuts.”

“Cletus, you’re the dumbest person I ever met,” said Buford. “We ain’t in Belgium so our pralines is gonna be southern pralines.”

“It may be that if people are gonna buy Belgium candy they’ll want them to come from Belgium, or at least be packaged so they look like they came from Belgium, so I don’t think a locally sourced Belgium praline would really fly.”

“What about the hazelnut flour?”

“Maybe. I suspect we could sell some. Niche market though. Don’t think we’d sell much. I think Daddy probably was thining he’d start some new trend, something that would catch hold, you know, like the bean bammock.”

“The hazelnut peanut butter?”

“Could be. There’s one out there that’s already pretty popular.”

“Nutella, it’s called.”

“Yeah, I think it’s an Italian company.”

“Shit, Jack, with your ignorance, I don’t know how you and me got to be in the same family. First you want us to sell Belgium pralines and now it’s Italian peanutbutter.”

“Now hold on Cletus,” said Buford. “That peanutbutter might be made by an Italian company, but it’s not necessarily and Itally-associated product in the mind of the consumer. Not in the same way a Belgium pralines is associated with Belgium. People wouldn’t object to buying a locally sourced hazelnut butter. They’d be glad of it, in fact.”

“That dog, Bandigo, he come from Italy!”

“Yes,” said Jack. “So he did, why?”

“Don’t you see? That’s the connection between them Hazelnuts up there that dad planted and that chocolate Italian peanut butter.”

“I suppose,” said Jack, doubtfully.

“It can’t be a coincidence,” said Buford. “Dad was going to go into competition with an Italian company that makes choclolate Hazelnut peanutbutter and so he brought in an Italian dog to help him to do it!”

“By God, Buford, I think you’ve nailed it,” cried Deacon Dan.

“That Buford can come up with some shit,” said Cletus.

“Now, my Wes, he has a way with them animals and he can train them to do about anything he wants. There’s not one of them dogs will chase a chicken and Wes never had to hit even a one of them with a dead one to keep them from it. He can get Bandigo to be in a commercial. Sit up and beg for some chocolate peanut butter. Or just set and look at a jar all slobbery and longing-like and a voiceover man say something about how he loves his chocolate hazelnut peanutbutter that aint made in Italy or any place foreign but right here at Clover Creek Farm.”

“Lord, if those dog’s is never been hit with a dead chicken then they ain’t properly chicken trained. And that’ll come back to haunt you someday.

“You speak true,” said Beau. “You must catch the beast in the act, then end the affair by dispatching said fowl with a suitable firearm.”

“Shoot the chicken?” asked Buford. He knew the process but asked the question just to hear Beau explain it.

Then you seize the offending animal and beat it soundly with the dead chicken. Apply this treatment with the greatest of diligence and vigor.”

If the chicken has a single feather left on it when you’re done, then you’ve not done a bit of good. You’ll have to do it all over again.”

“Really,” said Beau, “it’s best to continue until the head comes off in it’s entirely.”

“This will not harm the dog, and indeed, the chicken will benefit as well. A chicken tenderized in this manner, though unsuitable as a fryer, will make a fine in a soup.”

“Even if that works,” said Buford, “and even if it wouldn’t traumatize my boy to the point that he’d wake up screaming and cussin’ his dad, it’s not practical. What are the chances of me being near a gun just when a dog is chasing a chicken?”  
“It’s for just such occasions that the Lord in his wisdom has instructed me to always carry a sidearm. For such things as deranged shooters, government thugs, chicken-chasing dogs and runaway horses.”

“Runaway horses?” asked Buford.

“Yessir,” said Beau. “If a horse is running away with a rider, the worse thing you can do is chase it on you own horse the way they do on the movies. That will only cause the pursued equine to run that much faster and increase the danger to the rider. If action is absolutely necessary, then the correct thing to do is shoot the horse.”

“Wouldn’t it increase the danger to the rider if his horse was shot out from underneath him? And wouldn’t falling off a horse that’s been shot hurt just as much a falling off a horse for some other reason?”

“I said, ‘when action is absolutely necessary’. Of course you don’t try to shoot a horse out from under a rider as a default. For instance, if the rider is being dragged by his stirrup.”

Buford looked at Beau as if seeing him for the first time. That actually made sense.

“Alright,” said Buford. “I think we’ve got a good plan for what to do if a dog chases a chicken or a horse is dragging somebody by the stirrup. Now, what about this hazelnut peanut butter and our dog commercial?

Horace’s death ushered in a brief era of cohesion among the Hooper siblings that ended badly when threatened to eat his sister’s seeing-eye pig.

There were among Buford’s siblings ardent advocates of corporal punishment who faulted Buford for withholding it but were nonetheless would have been horrified to see it applied. The other attendants

“That boy ain’t been spanked enough, if you ask me,” said Cletus. “When

The advocacy of corporal punishment was a split

Wincey and Blind Marnie were skeptica”l of the plan.

“It doesn’t make sense,” said Wincey. “Dad can’t have intended some mass production of a product with a four-acre hazelnut orchard.”

“What then? And why Bandigo? From Italy?”

Wincey didn’t know, but agreed that it might be possible to have a small production and disstibute through local stores and local commercials was something they could attempt and still preserve some of the family fortune.

“Whose going to do all the work?” asked Blind Marnie. “I think creating a product, bringing it to market is a lot more effort that you want to take on, Buford, even if you had the ability.”

“Ervine Carter would help us,” said Arwin. “Dad liked him. Knows production and distribution.”

“Ervine Carter!” cried Buford. “I used to play poker with him. He was always going on about how we should do something with the money Dad made and get a business going again. Of course he’ll help!”

The enterprise nearly along the traditional faultline between lBuford and Blind Marnie over the shape of the jars. Blind Marnie wanted a patterned French sqare or hex and Buford insisting that a fancy jar projected lack of confidence in the product within, and insisted on a plain round vessel. The issue consumed the family and

*Figure out what the commercial is with wes and Bandigo*

*Introduce the term spore display. Get into Bandigo’s nose. Grimwalt believes his nose is talentd. Bandigo is the last to see the spider. His nose isn’t as good as Bangle’s, although Grimwalt believes his nose is talented but undeveloped.*

Bandigo faced Wes.

“Who loves Clover Creek Farm Home Made Praline Butter?,” asked Wes, holding out a treat...

Bandigo’s eyes lifted. His head tilted.

“Line?” he called.

“For the hundredth time, said a yellow cat perched on a rail post, “you don’t have any lines, and even if you did, nobody but Wes would know you were saying them.”

“Just bark,” said Calla the goat.

“Alright,” said Wes. “Let’s take it from the top.”

The men set up a camera and some lights and other equipment some of which were some of which were connected with cables and cords. The air worked it’s magic on the smell of gear oil and lense cleaning solution combined to create a smell that was a bit like spider venom and so their noses fashioned the entire scene into a great spider web and the instsruments and objects within were objects that had become trapped there.

The director himself was a great lanky spider and, indeed, this manifestation would have seemed proper to the humans in attendance for Snidenbaum was an angular, fuzzy man with expressionless eyes and protruding bones.

Buford approached Wesley cheerfully. Wes, sensing

“OK, son,” he said. “I’ve seen you do it a hundred times. Now let’s go capture it on camera!”

Bandigo trembled. He was terrified of this web and of the upright spider who ruled it and would have no part of whatever sort of capturing it was that occurred within.

“I .. I can’t,” said. “The spider!”

“The spider?”

“It’s awful.”

“It’s Okay, Bandigo. There’s not really a spider. That’s just something your nose has made up. Come on, please.”

“I can’t! I can’t! Oh, please don’t make me.”

Wes looked to the other dogs for support but saw that they were terrified, too. He sighed.

“Okay,” he said. “You don’t have to go.”

A groan from the Hooper siblings. Snidenbaum gave Buford a look.

“Now wait a minute, Wes,” said Buford. “Now just hold on. Everybody’s here. Everything’s all set up. We can’t just give up like that. We have to coax him a little bit. He’ll be fine. You’ll see.”

Buford took Bandigo by his collar. Bandigo

“Dad, don’t,” said Wesley.

Bandigo writhed and yanked back. Buford clasped him between his shoulders and rib bones. He dragged Bandigo about four on his haunches. Bandigo whimpered and left a trail of unine.

“Leave him alone, you fucking ass wipe!” Wesley howled.

Mosey gasped. The dog bolted. Buford faced Wes. The color drained from his face then returned to it in a remarkable way that the none in the family had witnessed before or since. A horizontal line of read appeared on his skin at the collar of his shirt and rose along his neck so that all his flesh below the line was beat red and all above was ash white. The line rose to his chin and cheeks and the top of his balding head. When all of his head was beat red, Buford’s hand went to his belt and Wes turned to run.

Buford snatched him and wheeled him round, and gave him three or four solid whacks with his belt. Wes fled wailing to the farmhouse. Buford’s siblings were roughly divided on the subject of corporal punishment but all were equally horrified to see it applied in such a public fashion. It was an ugly affair. Wes was of an age and size where it required some effort on Buford’s part to overpower him and the struggle he put up was mighty. Furthermore, Bufford was a man who needed his belt. The altercation caused his pants to sag far down his waste and the viewing audience was treated to a near full view of Buford’s tighty whities.

Buford hitched up his pants and cinched his belt. He walked the the front porch and pulled the flask and drank.

“This farm is a much more peaceful place when Wes is with his mom,” said Tennyson Jack.

Ferdinand the Wonder Pig, no longer the object of attention, was now attempting to open the jar of hazelnut spread by holding the jar between his cloven-footed forelegs and twisting the lid with his mouth. But he couldn’t adequately secure the jar and it turned with the lid and failed to open.

“Look what that pig is doing!” said one of the crew members.

“Don’t mind him,” said Cletus. “He’s just a pig.”

“What’s he doing,” asked Blind Marnie, and when it was explained to her, she smiled. She extended her hand and said, “Here, Ferdinand. Let me help you.”

Snidenbaum had been seated in his directors chair massaging his exoskeletal temples. But now he watched with rapt attention, wondering if the pig would really carry the jar to the woman and place it in her hand. Now the object of attention again, Ferdinand made the most of the moment. He gave a small flick of his head and now the jar was no longer in his mouth but balanced on his nose. It rested there for a bit as Ferdinand kept it aloft by shifting his nose under it with delicate precision. Then he gave another flick of his head to send the bottle sailing end over end into the air. It landed on Blind Manie’s palm with a soft satisfying slap.

Snidenbaum’s jaw went slack and is eyes filled with wonder. His features softened and his bones sank down to comfortable positions inside of himself.

“Places, everyone,” he whispered.

Karen came to the porch and sat beside Buford. She put her arm around him. Her wavy copper locks pulled back into a bun and her sunglasses worn across her scalp like a whatever is is you call those plastic things woeman wear across the tops of their heads to hold their hair. It was unnesseary

Karen came to the porch where sat her desolate huspand. Her wild copper locks corralled into a bun by a toothed clasp and further secured by a pair of sunglasses she wore now as a whatever you call those plastic things women wear across the tops of their heads. She put her arm around Buford. He didn’t move.

“I’m sorry.” She said.

“You must be pretty embarrassed by me,” said Buford.

She kissed him and rested her head on his shoulder.

“I know how much you love that boy. It’s one of the things I love most about you.”

“Do you know where he is now?”

“Down at the bridge with the animals.”

“Someone should go talk to him. I just can’t right now. Will you go?”

Karen stiffened.

“Honey, I …”

“Nevermind,” said Buford. “I’ll go.”

“That goat is with him. You know I’m scared of that goat!”

“I said, ‘never mind’.”

Buford returned his flask to his vest pocket, gave Karen a cursory kiss and rose.

“You should do something about that goat. It’s mean. Maybe place it in a home somewhere. A petting zoo, maybe.”

“That goat doesn’t like me, either,” said Buford. “But she loves Wes. And Wes needs more love than just mine.”

“I love Wes,” said Karen. “I do! But he has a mamma. She can talk to him on Monday.

When Buford ended his marriage to Susan, Wes was barely three and the marriage only a little older. Susan was a prim, high strung woman who came into Buford’s life at a time when Buford felt it was time for him to marry. Susan was from a respected family wellknown and liked in her community but with no close personal friends. She was demanding of validation and went into moroseness if she suspected Buford was less than deeply in love with her. As their relationship progressed, Buford became increasingly concerned. But he thought of the many relationships in his past that he had ended and regrated. As Buford’s misgivings grew he decided it was then just as easy to marry her and see how things went as to break it off at this point.

How did he meet Karen. What about their marriage.

“I’m sorry I’m not a better step mom.

“You’re a good help to me,” said Buford. “My life is better because your in it.

“I’ll fix him!” said Calla the goat. “Someday when his back is turned I’ll come up behind him and I’ll but a couple of horn prints on his ass. Wait and see if I don’t.”

Wessley smiled at her.

“I’m okay,” he said.

“It’s my fault,” said Bandigo. “I should’’ve just gone into the web and let that spider capture me.”

“It is your fault!” said Floydarina.

“It’s not your fault,” said Calla.

“Come on. Let’s go on a snipe hunt.”

The dogs could not contain their excitement. They capered and danced with great excitement.

“Oh, boy, a snipe hunt,” cried Bangle.

Even staid Grimwalt could not contain his joy.

“We’re going to find a wirehaired, silver tufted Pea Snipe,” he pranced like a much younger dog.

“Snipe hunt! Snipe hunt!” howled Bandigo.

This was the dog’s favorite activity. Tennyson Jack invented it as a means of occupying Wes when he was underfoot. He invented the a fowl with long, emu like legs and could instantly disappear underground by leaping into the air on its great emu-like legs and diving into the earth. Wesley had long ago figured out the creatures were fake, but he could not convince the dogs.

Grimwalt claimed he could smell a sent in the fall that he thought might well be the birds, coming from the orchard in the fall. But he couldn’t quite get on the scent. He didn’t know where the snipe lived the rest of the year. Possibly the Silas Marsh but the animals were afraid to go there. There was a scent there Grimwalt didn’t like and would not describe.

“Just stay out of the Silas Marsh,” he would say.

Bandigo has a very poor nose. But shows signs of having a talented nose but undeveloped. Often has trouble assembling the nose into spore display.

“A goat and a bridge,” said Floydarina. “We’re just a troll away from a fable.”

On cue, Buford arrived.

“What do you want, Dad?” Wes asked.

“I wanna talk to you,” he said.

Buford sat on the bridge beside Wesley and allowed his feet to dangle over the pool of water about 5 feet below. *(Find out more about the creek. What kind of plants grow*)

“You can count on one hand the number of times I’ve spanked you, son. That’s the only time I’ve ever spanked you in anger and I wish I hadn’t done it.”

Wes: “Just nevermind. Forget it”)

*Stuff about Wes and Buford’s relationship. Maybe this is a time for Wes to ask about driving the Willis and we find out about Wes’s accident. Maybe Buford agrees to teach Wes to drive it, or give Wes permission to start driving it. Maybe we learn more about Wes’s Mom. Buford’s relationship with his new wife.)*

Buford blamed Wesley’s mother, a prim intelligent woman of a good family who came into his life at a time when Buford thought it was time to marry and he had already doo many good relationships go to seed. So he cast aside his misgivings and they were married. He had been not quite four when Buford left his mother.

Buford blamed her for turning Wesley against him.

Jack and Deacon Dan pull up in the Willis. Buford gets up to leave. He places himself in a position where he is bent over with his ass toward Calla the Goat. This is too much for her to resist. Wes know’s what’s about to happen so he shouts for Calla to stop. She does not. She plants her horns on Buford’s rear. He goes headlong into the creek.

Jack and Deacon laugh. Jack has to support himself on the hood of the Wills to keep from falling down with laughter. Deacon Dan goes into a state of distress. Hcan’t get a breath and his face turns purple.

Buford stands up in waste deep water. Sputtering and cursing.

“I am gonna fix that damn goat!”

“Don’t you hurt Calla!” cried Wes, clutching the goat.

*The story of Blind Marnie’s powers, blindness. An aereal wraith made of starlings destroyed the corn field.*

Weeks later, Buford on his couch watching football. Then the commercial break and the familiar music signaled Wesley.

“It’s on again!” he called.

Mosey came in from the kitchen, Wincy from the living room and Tennyson Jack from upstairs.

“Not again,” muttered Buford.

Blind Marnie’s voice on the TV.

“Let me help you with that.”

Whisling and whooshing supplied by a sound editor as the jar spins end over end before landing in Blind Marnie’s hand. Thanks again to the sound editors, the jar makes a pleasant pop when Blind Marnie opens it.

She looks at the camera.

“If pigs had thumbs, they could eat what they want. And that would be Clover Creek Farms PrailineButter.”

For the hundredth time, Mosey, Wincey, Cletus and Tennyson Jack cheered.

“Oh, don’t act like it’s the first time you ever seen it,” said Buford.

“I’m glad it’s working out OK. It’s just not a very good commercial. That about pigs having thumbs, you barely have to use your thumbs to open a jar.”

“Fair enough,” said Tennyson Jack. “Next commercial we can change it from ‘if a pig had thumbs’, to ‘if a pig had prehensile appendages.’ Would that settle your hash?”

“No,” said Buford. “The whole idea of a pig promoting food at all. People wanting to go out an buy something because a pig will eat it. People feed pigs table scraps, watermelon rh

“Your missing the point,” said Wincey. A pig eats all those things because that’s what people gives it to eat. But if a pig had a choice, and the opportunity ..”

“It’s not, ‘Buy Clover Creek Farms Hazelnut Butter because pigs will eat it’, it’s ‘Buy Clover Creek Farms Hazelnut Butter because pigs are cute’, and it’s working. Our product is flying off the shelves. We’ll need to order more soon.”

Indeed, the ‘If Pigs Had Thumbs’ campaign was a stunning success. The grocery stores sold out in within a few weeks of the commercial’s release and another 10,000 jars were on order. Blind Marnie and Ferdiand had become local celebrities. The director guy did shots of Ferdiand doing a bunch of other tricks and got them aired on national television shows. Made money that way.

Merchandizing around that became a revenue stream. T-shirts.

“That pig got in the bathroom once and ate a bar of soap. Ate some carpet padding once.”

“That was the goat,” said Cletus.

“From what I understand of Wesley’s grades, Ferdinand has been eating all of his homework,” said Blind Marnie.

Buford was furious.

“You know what? If you wanna think back about how that pig come into this family, you may recall that he’s actually my pig. I bought him from old Hoyle Atchley and I have a bill of sale around here somewhere I can probably find, and even if I can’t, old Hoyle certainly can.”

“That’s silly,” said Wincey. “What does it matter if you bought him. You don’t have any use for him and Marnie does.”

“Why, a pig’ll eat rat poison!”

“Most anything’ll eat rat poison. People with advanced degrees design rat poison so things will eat it.”

“But I do have a use for him,” said Buford.

“And what’s that?” she asked.

“The use I had for him when I got him.” Buford reared back. He crossed his arms and batted at the flask in his vest pocket with his thumb. “A freezer full of pork.”

“He don’t mean it,” said Cletus. “I can’t tell you how I know, but I know he don’t mean it.”

Blind Marnie was ashen. “That’s the most awful thing I’ve ever heard! I’m going to use all my fame and influence to make sure you’re the most reviled man in the state.”

Marnie had become a regular guest on a weekly radio broadcast called Spirit of the Hills that aired weekly on the local public radio station.

“Poor Ferdinand is destined for the dinner table,” she proclaimed.

“What?”

“That’s right. He’s exercised his right of ownership and taken my beloved familiar …, er, service animal from me and now intents to brutally butcher an eat him.”

“A service animal? His own sisters?”

“There’s nothing to be done,” said Blind Manie.

Buford had not heard the broadcast. He piddled at the old farmall tractor that morning and listend to sports talk instead. He begain receiving phone calls from unknown numbers and ignored them. After a while, he heard a vehicle pull into the driveway. It was Hoyle Atchley. He was carrying the bill of sale for Ferdianand.

“Here it is, Buford. The bill of sale for that pig.”

“What’s that for?” Buford hadn’t thought about the conversation of the night before where he’d threatened to eat Ferdinand.

“Well, sir. I don’t figure you for being what you might call a fussy record keeper, so I figured I’d bring this by so you’ll know someone’s got one in case you should ever have a need of it. I support you a hundred present when that pita crowd shows up. We all do.”

“Pita crowd?”

“Yes sir. They’re coming to protest that pig.”

“Pig murderer!”

Jaws swollen with chew. Overalls and flannel. Baleful.

“Listen, ya’ll, there’s been a misunderstanding. I can’t really slaughter that pig. It’s my sister’s service animal.”

“What’s the matter, you aint a vegetarian are you?”

“What? Vegetarina? No!”

“Where do you think bacon comes from? It’s alright to kill some pig I don’t know, but Lord, don’t let nothing happen to no pig I’m personally acquainted with. That right there would be murder.”

“A man’s gotta right to eat! To feed his family!”

Seeing the look on their expectant, chaw-swollen faces, Buford succumbed to the lure of leadership.

“Well, by God, a man does, don’t he?”

“Hell yeah, he does.”

“Pigs was put here in a devine transaction with the lord for the purpose of turning \* and spend still mash into pork chops. A deving transaction with the lord Hisself, and if a man make an exception just because he has a personal acquaintance with one particular pig, well, then a man aint no man he’s a … he’s a … a vegetarion.[

“That’s right!”

“Come wintertime, we’re puttin’ an apple in that animal’s mouth and putting him on a spit. And ya’ll are invited. We’re going to have us a pig roast right here on Clover Creek Farm and the whole community is invited!”

Cheers and whoops.

The farm was situated off scenic mountainous section of US Highway 129. At the driveway was a long flat roadside table where Horace P. Hooper himself had posted a sign that read “No Parking, No Turning Around, No Nothing.” It was here that Arwine Hooper was constructing his 30 foot concrete knotty head fish and it was here that the animal rights activists set up their demonstration. The more virulent among them decorated the fish with obscenities and, at great risk to themselves, attempted to knock it over. Arwine had jacked it up and it was resting on six by six blocks in preparation for moving to a trailer and hauled to an interior location on the farm in compliance with a cease and desist order that had come from complaining neighbors, the state now having designated that section of US Highway 129 a scenic corridor.

The protestors painted obscenities on it and some of the more virulent members of the group attempted to knock it over, going after the blocks supporting it with sledge hammers. They did this at great risk to themselves, for the fish was extremely heavy and could have easily crushed a large number of them. With great effort, they knocked out the block that jostled the fish and caused it to list violently to an angle. Fortunately, that did not cause the fish to fall, but it did cause the head to fall off and it narrowly missed a woman in a sundress who was playing the guitar and singing a song she had written for the occasion and instead pinioned a large, mylar banner held at either end by two demonstrators who collapsed towards each other and onto the head.

Cooler heads intervened and the assault on the fish ended. The protest continued peacefully for a while and a group of demonstrators arrived from town with cans and cans of spray paint and worked at the fish to cover the obscenities and create a pig motif while others waved placards and banners and invited passing motorists to honk.

Later that afternoon, things turned ugly again and protesters stopped traffic on 129.

Blind Manie addressed them.

“Thank you all for coming out. I am moved by your effort on behalf of myself and my reliable and useful minion.”

The activists looked at each other.

“That is, my loving and affectionate animal compatriot. But please, let’s please protest peacefully!”

“My foolish brother, in a fit of jealousy because his spoiled brat son couldn’t train that mut to sit still long enough to be filmed for a thirty second commercial.”

“Wait, you were going to have a dog in a commercial for a chocolate product?”

“Chocolate is poison to dogs!”

“The dog wasn’t going to actually …”

“What kind of people are you?”

“Boycott!”

“I have brought for you several jars of Clover Creek Farms Hazelnut Spread which is available at local grocery stores.

Blind Marnie had unleashed forces she could not control.

“Any publicity is good publicity,” said Blind Marnie.

“Boycott!” they shouted. “Boycott!”

“Boycott? What? No!”

The boycott was successful. Clayhill County was not normally a community to hold with the causes of animal rights activists, but this was a service animal, and for a blind woman, no less. Clover Creek Farms Hazelnut Butter stopped selling and the stores that carried it lost customers. Store managers removed the product from their shelves and requested the that the company drive vehicles that did not have Clover Creek Farm logo when they came to pick it up.

Much of the remaining product was donated to food banks and was a tax write off but a thousand jars or so came to the farm and was stored in the shop.

After a few weeks, Beau’s civil war regiment and Hoyle came to help paint over the fish to hide the obscenities. To their surprise, some of the animal rights protesters also arrived to help. They felt bad and painted a beautiful mural of a pig fashioned out of triangles and squares.

All agreed it was the best pig motif they’d ever seen painted on a concrete fish. Buford told the regiment that he wasn’t really going to be able to roast the pig. Farmer Hoyle said he hadn’t really wanted to come to a barbecue with that pig because a boar that old was not tasty unless it had been castrated, and he thought everyone knew that.

Hoyle said he has a pig that would be a better candidate for a spit, but Buford said if it was the same with everyone else he’d just pick up barbecue already made at some restaurant, and the vegans said if they did that, and if there was some vegan options, if they didn’t call it a pig roast but a potluck, then they’d be glad to come.

Buford in the kitchen. A mess. He’s in over his head. Wesley helps him and prepares vegetarian hamburger patties. Describe the kitchen.

Buford and Wesley worked side by side in the kitchen. Buford, not a bad cook himself, allows Wesley to take the lead and serves as assistant chef. Wesley needs a food processor. Buford thinks there are at least four in the workshop, which, since Horace’s death, has become storage for items no one wants but no one wants to throw away.

Outdated wallpaper and wallpaper glue that Mosey found and purchased at a price that was too low to resist. Bedframes and footboards that go with a type of rail that no longer in use and are therefore without use. Treasures bought at deep discount and are thus irreplaceable, at least not at the price she paid for them. Somewhere, four food processors.

Buford quickly came to the conclusion that they were not worth excavating and purchased a new one.

The baked beans were easy. Divided them into and add bacon to half and leave the other half without.

Guests came in and the field was soon full of pickup trucks, hippie van, hybrid-electric. They set upon the table Buford and Wesley laid out little interaction between the two groups. Wesley’s vegan burgers turned out well. They looked more appetizing that the real ones. The vegans invited

Putting on a vegan friendly pig roast proved more difficult than Buford had anticipated. Main dishes were not a problem. Tofu Skewer, found a food processor to pulverize the walnuts that went into his mashed up black bean hamburgers. Easy enough to add bacon to one bowl of baked beans and leave it out of another.

Mayonaise out of soy milk and apple cider vinegar and another potato salad out of regular mayonnaise.

He knew there were four food processors stored in the shop somewhere but it wasn’t worth the excavation it would take to uncover them, so he just went out an bought one.

It came off pretty well. Bufford laid out two tables. The vegan dishes ended up looking better than the non-vegan so the cavalry kept raiding their table.

One of the vegans pulled out a banjo and a man from the regiment a fiddle

The black bean burgers looked better than the regular burgers and the vegans insisted the regiment try some and insisted they were happy to share. They had a few bites for the sake of curieousity and

A rousing “Give Peace a Chance.”

“Yeah,” said Wes. “it’s a good party.”

A car pulls in.

“Oh, good,” said Buford. “Hoyle Atchley made it. I believe he’s brought us something.”

“What?”

“Chicken, but not for the table. I’ve been thinking about what you said about getting another chicken. So he’s bringing us one of his.

Wes smiled. “One of the Hombergs?”

“Now, Wes. You know what I’ve said about those Homberg’s! They’re ornamental birds. They’re job is to go pecking around the farmyard for people to look at. This is a farm. What we have here is good layers!”

“So another white one?” Wess’s voice was flat. “I guess that’ll be fine.”

Hoyle exited his truck. Tucked in his arm was not a white Leghorn but the silver spangled Homberg we was hoping for. His eyes brightened.

“But, you said …”

“I know. But I also know you really wanted one. The other chickens will probably pick on her for a while, but they’ll settle down.

A commotion outside cut off Buford's answer. Barking, snarling squaking. Wes was shouting from the open window of his room.

“Bad dogs! Klutin! Bangle! No!”

But all was Klutin and Bangle yes! They were, indeed, given over to their predator hearts, and they chased after the new hen with abandon.

Bangle howled and called and snapped at the chicken's tailfeathers as she disappeard beneath Bufford's truck. Klutin wriggled in behind her, his tail disappearing under the truck just as the chicken emerged out the other side. From underneath the truck came a racket of metallic banging and struggling dog. When Klutin emerged from the truck with its muffler attached to him. He had become entangled in it and the wire that had secured the muffler to the truck now secured the muffler to Klutin. But he could not give up the chase, and the muffler swung wildly behind him. Bangle rounded the truck and was closing the distance on her as they both disappeared into the barn.

From the barn, siilence. A diturbming hollow metalic thumping came from beneath the truck, along with the quiet whimpering of the dog.. Wes rushed to the truck to render aid.

Then a long, omnious wooden creak from the barn caught Wes's ear. Even the dog under the truck fell silent. The creak was followed by concussive crash that shook the ground beneath Wes's feet. A tower of headboards and footboard more than 70 high had toppled over onto the particle board shelving. Witnesses would later claim that the entire barn lifted a foot off the ground then settled back down on its foundation. Rusty cans of spray paint hissed and exploded.

Out the door came a silver spangled blur. Close at heal was Bangle, now multicolored with dripping paint, and trailing a long streamer of floral patterned wallpaper of mauve and seafoam green. Grease-smattered, Klutin extracted himself from the undercarriage of Buford's truck and joined the chase. He had become entangled in the baling wire that supported the muffler and was now dragging the wire and the muffler behind him.

Buford emerged from the house, shotgun in hand. He fired in the air but neglected to exit the porch first. Bits of the ceiling landed on his head.

The hen's churning legs carried her up the steps to the deck, across the length of it, and down the steps at the other end. These lead the porch of the Praline Cottage, disrupting a skirmish between Mosey and Buford over control of the shotgun. Klutin and Bangle followed. Bangle left metallic blue footprints across the deck. The muffler swept back and forth behind Klutin, knocking over lawn chairs and the iguana's vivarium.

Calla the goat, always looking for a way to be of help, joined the chase. So did Cerio the turtle, although you wouldn’t have been able to tell. The dogs and the goat bowled over Mosey and Buford as they disappeared into the Praline Cottage. Mosey followed, and then Buford, still holding the gun.

Inside the Praline Cottage, china cabinets fell. Pantry shelves gave way. Two more shotgun blasts. A plaintive bleating. Two dogs emerged from the Praline Cottage, but no goat. Klutin and Bangle, festooned with cinnamon-scented pine cones, ran tails tucked and wailing in different directions.

The Praline Cottage was silent except for the settling of debris and the soft creaking of an overhead light fixture swinging from its wiring.. The laying hens mumured softly.

Tennyson Jack and Elmer exited the Prailine Cottage, climbed the steps to the deck. Tennyson Jack slumped into a chair at the inron-mesh patio table. Elmer righted the vivarium and joined him.

“Did you see where the dogs went?” asked Tennyson Jack.

“Bangle went up the hill through the orhard. Klutin looked like he was headed for Silas Marsh.”

The soft vocalizations of the laying hens swelled briefly into an anxious murmuring crescendo, then softened again.

“They'll come back soon enough,” said Tennyson back. “Hopefully, they'll be the better for the experience.”

“I guess this was their aversion training,” said Elmer.

The silver spangled hamburg fluttered out a broken window of the Prailine Cottage. She joined the laying hens

“She is a strking bird,” said Tennyson Jack. “I wonder what Wes will name her?”