

A cow of a day

By Berwyn Lewis

The weekend in the country started on a happy note. Boxes of food, bottles of wine and a few clothes were piled into the car and we sped off down the coast to a friend's holiday house. We'd offered to help clean it up after years of neglect. In return we'd have unlimited access for the summer.

The next morning, we cheerfully donned work clothes and rubber gloves and ripped into the grime and detritus like pigs in recycling heaven.

Newspapers, rotting curtains, broken furniture, chipped crockery and years of junk mail were stashed into bags and boxes, loaded onto a trailer and transported in a series of trips to the local tip.

Glacial formations oozed from the old refrigerator as it grumpily defrosted. It stood beside the back door where there was a step and a metal grate for wiping muddy boots. No one noticed the frayed electrical cord in the puddle of melted ice near the back door.

The dog, a basset hound called Jeeves, appeared at the door, one foot on the

metal grate, one in the puddle. Jeeves suddenly appeared to fly, his ears flattened against his head, before landing on his back, legs stiff in the air.

Jeeves' owner rushed to him, cradling the dog's motionless, electrocuted head against her cheek. Jeeves jerked several times, foamed at the mouth, surged back to life again and bit his owner on the nose. As she screamed there was a knock at the front door. At that moment, my friend, the man who owned the house, toppled, legs astride, off the wooden stool he had been standing on as he cleaned out a top cupboard. His toothy grin, I soon realised, was a grimace as he clutched his groin and shot his eyes skywards in a spasm of pain and, no doubt, prayer, that a branch of his family tree had not been savagely pruned.

Jeeves howled, his mistress screamed, my friend cursed and someone managed to attend to the banging at the door. It was opened revealing two members of the local constabulary. One held a crumpled, soggy letter in his hand. The letter was addressed to my friend. The other police person had a summons in his hand.

It transpired that on the way to the tip, a plastic bag of our rubbish had fallen out of the trailer and blown into a paddock. A cow had eaten the bag, choked, collapsed and died with the above mentioned, saliva-soaked letter in its mouth. The farmer had found his unhappy cow and contacted the police. After exercising a modicum of detective work, following up the address on the envelope, they were led to the scene of the crime and the culprit who was currently assessing his reproductive future.

Foaming at the mouth, Jeeves roared down the hallway towards the police, followed by his blood-soaked and screaming mistress. The owner of the letter brought up the rear, staggering towards the front door clutching his groin.

The police took notes, a vet, a solicitor and a doctor were contacted and by the end of the weekend, the country cottage was neat as a pin, Jeeves and his mistress recovered and the law and order of recycling were fully restored.

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