

Miss Lillie Meets Her Match – Peter the Peacock

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Illustrated by Olivia Vaughan



Miss Lillie came to Reed Valley Farm in 2011. Karen, our special needs daughter wanted a mule. When we arrived at Crossroads Donkey Rescue, the very first mule we met walked right up to Karen and laid her head on Karen's shoulder. That did it, the choice was made . . . by the mule!

In the years that have followed, we have been entertained, annoyed, chal-

lenged, and filled with total joy and love, it depends on which day it is! Miss Lillie has an unconditional love of people. She cannot seem to get enough of us humans, but she has an inane desire to chase anything smaller than herself. Don't get me wrong, she has never hurt any other animal; she just considers it a sport. When she catches them, she quits chasing.

A new neighbor moved into a house

close to the end of our pasture. They happened to have a small puppy who easily wiggled under our fencing and was happily running all over our horse pasture. That is, until Miss Lillie noticed the little thing and then the chase was on! Luckily, we caught her in the act as she gently and playfully kicked the puppy down the pasture in front of her. We yelled and stopped her, of course, and she truly looked

guilty and sorry about it; but I think she was faking the sorry part. Meeting the new neighbors with their muddy and shaking puppy in our hands wasn't our plan; I think a plate of cookies would have been better.

Our horse herd is regularly allowed in our farm's front yard to graze. When our new septic system was installed, we decided to replace the grass with hay. From the road you can't really tell the difference as it's green. We believe it's a win-win as we feed our herd and we get to mow a lot less often!

Our friends stopped by as the horses were grazing and we were having a good time with them, which is probably why I didn't think about what I was doing. Our Mastiff, Goliath, asked to come out of the house. I just simply walked up to the door and opened it to let him out while I finished talking to my friend. Goliath no more than hit the yard when Lillie perked up her ears and put her hooves into action. The race was on! Goliath ran around and around the house as I stood on the back porch calling his name trying to get him back into the safety of the house. The second time around, the horses and donkey decided that it looked like a lot of fun and joined in the fray. All of a sudden, I'm trying to save our poor Goliath from six equines chasing him around and around and around! After about five or six rounds, Goliath finally realized that I was yelling his name. He ran up onto the porch and came immediately into the house. That was a

few years ago; but he still exits the back door, looks each way to make sure they are in the pasture, and then leaves the porch for the yard.

Miss Lillie also likes to be the center of attention, sharing affection isn't on her mule menu. Zoe, our boss mare, was lying down in the pasture. My husband, Wes, decided to go out and lie down with her. I'm not saying I recommend this, but Wes does it all the time as he knows our herd. Lillie noticed and watched for a few minutes, then she crept forward one step at a time until she was standing with her hooves between his feet. Equines "talk" all day long with their body language. Wes used his body language when he placed his feet on Lillie's hooves, and she backed away so that he could stand up. He then petted her neck as she wasn't naughty, just asking for love.

Our peacocks normally avoid the pasture area, but one summer day, Peter decided to check it out as he flew and landed next to the round pen by the barn. Lillie spotted him immediately and thought her chase was on. What she didn't expect was Peter's response to her arrival. He didn't fly away, he opened up his display and shook his feathers at her. If you have ever been around peacocks, you know the very loud rustling sound that they make. Lillie came to a screeching halt leaving deep trenches in the dirt behind her. I believe our mouths were open and dropping by the minute. We were all prepared to yell at Lillie, but quickly discovered

that Peter didn't need our help; he was extremely capable of controlling Lillie all by himself!

We had a strong desire to bring a miniature donkey to our farm but had always been in fear that Lillie would hurt one; so, had put it off for a couple of years. Because of what we witnessed with Peter, we decided to give it a try. We adopted Miss Lillie from Crossroads Donkey Rescue, so we contacted them about a miniature donkey. They found one in a kill pen in Kentucky. We wanted him and they transported Tator Tot to Michigan. It was the first equine that we bought without meeting them and checking out their personality first, so of course we were a little nervous. We met the horse trailer as it arrived at our farm. When Tator Tot was unloaded, he walked right over to me and started rubbing the side of his face against my leg. I looked at my husband and said "You know what? I think we are all going to be just fine!"

Oh, yes, Miss Lillie felt the need to chase him for a short time. Because Tator Tot was only two, he had so much youthful energy and speed that she couldn't catch him. It wasn't long before she decided to give up and accept him as the newest member of the herd. Many times, we catch Lillie and Tator Tot playing together in the pasture . . . just the two of them. She decided that he's alright. We are so thankful that Peter showed us how to make our dreams come true by letting us know that Miss Lillie can be a good girl.

