

Clara's Best Banner

“Oh, another show,” said Clara. She was settling into a freshly made bed of shavings and munching on hay. Clara had previously won both the National Western and the American Royal. Now, she was in Louisville for the North American. If Clara won this show, she would complete the Triple Crown. That was her goal, and she was determined to be the first Charolais heifer to accomplish this feat. The only heifer Clara was remotely worried about was a fall yearling heifer named Ruby. Ruby always came in second to Clara due to Clara's added style and superb fit job. “She's getting a little stale anyway,” thought Clara who was obviously trying to get Ruby out of her mind.

About 20 minutes later, Clara walked to heifer check in. She made sure to hold her head high and prance gracefully. “Everyone must see what a Triple Crown female looks like,” she chuckled. A little too pleased with herself, Clara stepped up onto the scale to be weighed and measured. “Thirteen hundred and twenty,” said the processing agent. Just then, Clara's eyes grew double in size. She wasn't shocked by her weight. She was in perfect condition and had already weighed at home. What startled Clara was a beautiful white heifer on her way to the wash racks. “Is she a Charolais, and will she ruin my show career,” thought Clara.

Clara worried all night long. In the morning, as soon as she was fed, Clara went in search of the heifer. Clara's show wasn't until 2:00, so she had plenty of time. She searched and searched. Clara looked through every barn that could possibly house Charolais cattle. Time was running out. Clara couldn't imagine what she would do if she didn't find that heifer.

Suddenly, Clara had a very sick feeling in her stomach. She spotted a sign that read “S&S Shorthorns.” Then, she saw the white heifer resting beneath a purple banner and a name tag that said “SS Priscilla, Breed: Purebred Shorthorn.” “Oh no,” thought Clara, “I’ve spent all morning looking for a heifer that is actually a Shorthorn.”

Clara hurried back to her stall. It was already 1:30, and Clara hadn’t even begun getting ready. As she ran, Clara noticed Ruby looking as lovely as ever. Ruby worked very hard to grow her hair and wasn’t stuck up like Clara. Clara realized this, and suddenly felt ashamed of her previous behavior. “How silly I must have looked with my nose so high in the air that my neck was stretched out of proportion,” she thought.

Clara worked very hard to get ready in time for the show. She managed to be ready enough to be presentable, but it was by far the worst fit job she had ever worn. Clara was even hollow looking because she had ran so fast and hadn’t had time to drink.

Somehow, Clara managed to win her heifer class. Outside the ring as she waited to go back in for the championship, Clara noticed other heifers giggling as they discussed her hastily made fit job. “Phooey on them,” she thought, “they are jealous because they didn’t even win their classes.”

Just then, Ruby walked out of the showring as happily as ever. She had won her class. “She’s always so thankful for her ribbons,” thought Clara. Ruby came up to Clara as earnest as ever and congratulated Clara for her win. She then wished Clara luck in the championship drive before calmly walking to her place in the lineup.

Immediately following Ruby's departure, the heifer who won the youngest age class came up to Clara. "Hi," the youngster said bashfully. "Congratulations," said Clara who usually didn't give others the time of day. "What's your name," asked Clara. "Priscilla," replied the younger calf. Surprised at the coincidence, Clara was once again ashamed of her earlier behavior. "I want to be just like you one day," said young Priscilla. "No," thought Clara, "Ruby is the one we both should strive to be like." She thanked the calf for the compliment and was ushered into the ring for the championship drive.

As deeply humbled as Clara was, she still had one more lesson to learn. The judge went to the microphone and announced that he would now select the Grand Champion heifer. At that, he did a final walkthrough before slapping Ruby as the Champion.

Clara smiled at Ruby and silently congratulated her. Then, like a true champion, she held her head high and tried for Reserve. Much to her surprise, many of the others were being sulky and had quit showing. Then, she noticed Priscilla, the young heifer she had spoken to earlier. The calf looked at her and immediately, Priscilla picked her head up and continued showing.

At the end of the day, Clara was crowned reserve. She congratulated Ruby and as they talked, a friendship was formed. Then, before Clara loaded up to go home, she noticed Priscilla the Shorthorn heifer strutting a strut that Clara had once walked. Clara chuckled to herself and thought, "One day she'll learn that the color of the banner is far less important than the attitude held by its owner."