

## Coq a Doodle Do

Damn French! No wonder they chose this bird as their national symbol. When you think of whining and complaining, who else comes to mind? It all started when Joe moved in with his new wife Barbara. “Joe, please do something about that bird.”

Joe grunted and pulled off the covers. “I’m getting my air horn.”

Barbara said “No, not that, you’ll wake the neighbors.”

Joe stumbled to the door. “OK, the hose then.”

Joe emailed the local police, explaining the situation. They showed up the next day. “Mr. Mariani, did you send the email about a rooster keeping you up?”

Suddenly Joe felt nervous. “Yes officer, every night there’s a rooster waking us up at 3:00 am. I was hoping the town might round him up.” The officer took out his pad. “It’s been going on each night for a month. Every time a car would drive by, the rooster thinks it’s sunlight. And not just car lights. Fire trucks, police cars, ambulances, every lunar phase except a new moon and even lightning sets him off. It started with fireworks on the fourth. That was the longest night ever.”

The officer feigned concern. “Tell me where this rooster is exactly?”

Joe gestured him to come in. “Back here” and they walked to the backyard. Then Joe pointed out the vacant county land, over the fence from his bedroom.

“Sorry, sir. You’re going to have to contact the county.” Needless to say, Joe’s attempt at finding the county official in charge of stray roosters was unsuccessful.

Barbara’s son Jim stopped by to see if he could catch the rooster. He ran fast, but he couldn’t change direction or dive under brush like the bird could. Jim got out his rifle and Pow!

Joe jumped up and ran outside. “Jim, you’re gonna get the cops out here.”

Jim lowered his rifle. “Sorry Joe, I had a clear shot.”

Joe gestured that it was ok. “Did you get him?”

Jim looked back at the bird running. “Almost, they’re very fast you know.”

That night Joe and Barbara were relaxing in the hot tub on the deck, trying to forget about their confused animal alarm clock. Joe was giving her a back rub. Both of them had their eyes closed. Candlelight around the Jacuzzi set the mood. Then they heard a rustling sound, like squirrels at the bird feeder. When they looked up, the rooster was in the driveway, bobbing his head and walking toward them. Incredulously, the bird walked up the deck stairs and stopped just ten feet from them. Joe looked at the bird. The rooster tilted his head and squeaked. Barbara gaped and whispered. “Throw some hot water on him.” Joe scooped up a handful and let it fly. But the rooster was quick and headed back off to his den, like the roadrunner-evading coyote.

Joe had had enough. He went downtown to the animal control office. “Do you pick up stray animals?”

The girl behind the counter replied. “Yes, of course, is it a dog or a cat?”

Joe stammered “a rooster, it’s on county property and comes up to our house every night and wakes us up.”

The girl frowned. “I’m sorry sir, but roosters aren’t covered in our charter. You can rent a trap though.”

Joe saw the traps. “All right, then you’ll take the bird if I bring it in?”

Another disappointment. “Sorry, we don’t take roosters.”

Joe took out his money. “OK, give me the trap” and he headed home. He’d worry about what to do with him if he caught him.

Joe lugged the big trap out to the field, put it inside a garbage bag and left a trail of food for ten feet up to and into the trap. How do you catch a French bird? Joe put out French toast and French fries, figuring it would bring literary good luck. That night, Joe and Barbara went to bed hoping to be woken up by something other than ‘Coq a Doodle Dos’.

3:00am. This time it wasn’t the midnight crowing, but a scream, like a dog had the bird in his mouth. “Barbara, I hope the rooster isn’t in a fight.” The screaming continued for minutes, then silence. Joe and Barbara gave each other a worried look.

The next morning, Joe walked out to check the trap. Silence. He pulled the garbage bag off the trap. There in beautiful red and brown colors sat the animal. “Oh no, I caught a fox.” But when he picked up the trap, the bird came to life and Joe dropped the cage from the surprise. Luckily it didn’t open. He practically ran back to the house. “Barbara, I got him.” Now what to do with him?

Jim drove up. “Hey Joe, you got him.”

Joe interjected. “Yes, but the city won’t take him.”

Jim had an idea. “I’ll take him out to a winery. Should be a safe place for him to crow.”

A week of restful sleep did wonders for Joe and Barbara. Now that the rooster was gone, they got back to their normal routines, including intimate dinners and movie nights. Barbara even made French food and rented Casablanca for the evening. Jim stopped by to update them. “Jim, sit, down have some dinner.” French hens with country vegetables and wine sauce. Tempting fate, they even had napkins with rooster heads on them. Joe and Barbara were embracing the French now that the bird was gone.

“Delicious mom, but I have some bad news. The bird was doing fine for a while, then one of the vineyard workers found a coyote dragging the carcass away.”

Barbara put down her fork and left the table. “Suddenly I’m not very hungry.”

Joe looked at Jim. “That news could have waited.”