

## Home Country

# Stumbling Over Words When Meeting Your Soul Mate

When Dewey realized what he'd just told the woman of his dreams, he couldn't say another thing. Struck dumb by the shock of telling her he was in cow manure, he silently handed her the flowers and looked down to see if the sidewalk would kindly swallow him.

But Emily Stickles, she of the perfect cheekbones and bureaucratic curiosity, smiled and looked at Dewey as if she'd just stumbled over a twenty-dollar bill.

"Mr. Decker," she said, kindly, "thank you for the flowers. And I'm curious ... how long have you had this condition?"

"Er ... ah..."

"Never mind. That will all come in time. Now I was just on my way to the café across the street there for lunch. Will you be my guest? That way we can discuss your problem and see if we can come to a workable solution."

"Wha ... bu..."

"Come along," she said, slipping her arm through his. "One step at a time ... that's it."

An hour later, Dewey was at the philosophy counter of the Mule Barn. The guys were there. Well, almost all the guys. When Dewey told them about how he introduced himself to the lovely Ms. Stickles, Steve, Dud and Bert suddenly had to go outside for some reason. The laughter out there made the plate-glass windows vibrate.

Only Doc was left to console Dewey.

"Well, Doo," Doc said. "Leave it to you to make a great first impression."

Then Doc had to turn his head away for a few seconds, too. Dewey pretended not to notice.

"See, the worst of it is she thinks I'm some kind of a nut with a manure fetish. I couldn't have just told her I owned a

fertilizer company. Not me. I have to sit through lunch making silly noises as she explained to me that there is always hope for an answer. I had no idea she was a graduate student in psychology, Doc.

"Doc?" Dewey's face

pleaded. "I'm a test case! I'm going to be doctoral thesis! I'm ... oh man..."

"And all that planning," Doc said. "And all that washing. And then it has to end this way. Sorry, Doo."

"Ending? No way," Dewey said, the



**Slim Randles**

slightest smile emerging. "We're having dinner at the Italian place tonight. She's bringing her tape recorder."

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