



# THE MEDIATION

By Jenny Edwards

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CHARACTERS:

Bob Ludlow - no nonsense kind of guy, husband to Patty

Patty Ludlow- presents as very reasonable

Mediator—Can be male or female, soft-spoken but firm, borders on patronizing

Skooch Fowler – Laid back, long hair perhaps

Henrietta Fowler- Perfect match for Skooch

Office in Garberville, mid afternoon, recently.

*SET: 4 chairs, two on each side of a coffee table. There is a desk with a phone on it, other office paraphernalia and a “talking stick”. Perhaps there’s a tall potted plant, like a palm, placed to offset the desk.*

*At rise, BOB and PATTY are seated next to each other, looking impatient. Mediator ENTERS carrying 4 water bottles and 4 small, plastic cups.*

MED.

Bob and Patty, greetings! Sorry I wasn’t here when you arrived; I forgot the water bottles in my car. They were in a cooler, of course! Warm water just won’t do when people are solving problems, now will it? (*Placing bottles and cups on coffee table*) There you go. So, how are you doing today?

PATTY

Fine, thank you.

BOB

Where the hell are the other two?

MED.

I’m sure they’ll be here any minute. (*A brief awkward silence*) It’s always thrilling for me to help people work through problems. To watch a dispute dissolve into a mutually satisfying solution. You know, sometimes disputing parties even become friends!

PATTY

Why, that’s wonderful!

BOB

Not likely to happen.

*ENTER SKOOCH and HENRIETTA. SKOOCH is carrying a tube inside of which is a large rolled up blueprint of a house. He places it somewhere out of the way.*

SKOOCH

Hey! How’s everybody doin’? It’s a beautiful day!

HENRIETTA

Hi Bob! Hi Patty!

BOB

You're late.

MED.

Alright, let's get off to a positive start. Skooch, Henrietta, please sit here and we will get started.

*SKOOCH and HENRIETTA hold hands facing each other for a few seconds. A brief embrace and they sit.*

MED.

So! You all know the ground rules. Shall we go over them again?

*The following 2 lines are said at the same time. HENRIETTA just emphatically shakes her head and puts her hands up in rejection.*

BOB

Oh, God, no!

SKOOCH

No, no. We got 'em. *(cheerfully pointing to his head)*

PATTY

I've got them right here, in case someone forgets. *(She unfolds a piece of paper, shows it to SKOOCH AND HENRIETTA, and smooths it out on the coffee table)*

MED.

Alright. I'll read the statement of the conflict you all agreed upon and signed. *(Reading)* Party One, consisting of Bob and Patty Ludlow and Party Two, consisting of Skooch and Henrietta Fowler, are neighbors and are in conflict concerning the crowing of a rooster owned by Party Two. Both parties have agreed to meet in mediation to arrive at a solution satisfactory to all concerned. *(All shift in their seats.)* I will be monitoring the process and will only interrupt if a rule has been broken or I otherwise deem it necessary. However, I'm sure, with the preparation we have done together, things will go smoothly. Now, who would like to begin with his or her opening statement?

SKOOCH

I would. *(He stands)*

MED.

Excellent.

HENRIETTA

Go for it, honey.

SKOOCH

*(Clears throat)* In the beginning God created heaven and earth...

BOB

Oh great! *(Stands)* Let's go, Patty. This is a waste of time. See you in court where you will lose!

MED.

OK. Time out. Mr. Ludlow, I appreciate your wanting to move things along, but, as you know, a big part of this process is being a good listener. Different people have different styles of communicating.

BOB

He's starting at the beginning of creation! It will be one hell of a long time until we get to roosters!

PATTY

Come on and sit down, Bob. Let's give it a chance. (*BOB sits*) Skooch, if you could hurry it up?

SKOOCH

Sure! Well, it all happened real fast. Out of darkness and void comes... light! Bam! Then it separates into darkness and light, which is kinda weird, 'cause darkness was already there. Then come the waters, which separate into two parts, above and below, then the dry land separates from the sea—wow! That musta been something! Then the plants come on the scene. Let's see, that's day three. You'd think someone would'a taken a break right about then, but not God! Then she manifests the sun, the moon, and the stars. Bam, bam, bam! Which is also a little weird since plants need the sun, but then they only had to go hungry one day, and we all know that if you, like, put a potted plant in a closet for a day it is absolutely fine the next. Then, on day five, she creates the water creatures and the birds, including roosters. Finally, she creates the land animals—85 percent of all the animals on earth are insects! And then, finally, she creates man, and then a little bit later, woman. Good thing too 'cause we woulda gone crazy otherwise. (*He places his hand on HENRIETTA'S shoulder or head*). Day six, and bam! It's all done! Time to rest, day seven.

BOB

(*BOB looks aghast at SKOOCH for a second*) Unbelievable!

SKOOCH

I know! Right?

BOB

Your point?

SKOOCH

Sure! Here's the point: In societies all over this beautiful planet, people connect to Mother Gaia by growing their own food and caring for their animals. Our rooster, Cockypoo, reminds us of how we are all interdependent. He is our vital connection to this great vibratory sphere made by God that we call earth. Thank you.

HENRIETTA

Beautiful, Scooch!

SKOOCH

Thank you, Henrietta.

MED.

OK, Mr. Mrs. Ludlow, which of you is going to make your opening statement.

BOB

I am.

MED.

Very well, proceed.

BOB

Your goddamn rooster wakes us up at 3:30 in the morning. It's driving me nuts.

SKOOCH

I don't appreciate your use of an expletive, Bob.

MED.

Very nice "I message" Scooch.

SKOOCH

Thank you.

BOB

You call that an expletive? You ain't heard nothing yet.

SKOOCH

It's the energy behind your words that's disturbing, Bob.

*PATTY*

*(Looking at paper.)* I don't see any rule here about not swearing.

HENRIETTA

*(Grabs paper)* Let me see.

MED.

Alright, alright. It looks like we need our talking stick. *(He goes to desk to get it.)*

BOB

*(groans)*

MED.

And a positive attitude! Now, do you all remember the talking stick rules or shall we go over them?

BOB

Oh, God no.

SKOOCH

We got 'em *(Enthusiastically points to his head.)*

*HENRIETTA nods emphatically. PATTY gets paper and looks at rules.*

HENRIETTA

*(She puts her hand out for the stick and MEDIATOR gives it to her.)* Your problem with our rooster is....

MEDIATOR

Mrs. Fowler, please use your "I sentences".

HENRIETTA

Right. I feel your problem with our rooster is a perfect example of a first world, 1 per cent, privilege-class problem.

BOB

So? (*PATTY takes stick and gives it to BOB*) So? Still a problem.

SKOOCH

(*Taking stick*) Our rooster is not just our connection to Mother Earth, but is a registered emotional support animal.

HENRIETTA

(*Grabs stick*) Yes, Cockypoo brings me much, much joy and comfort. I don't know what I would do without him.

BOB

(*Grabs stick*) Well, you'll soon find out. (*HENRIETTA gasps!*)

SCOOCH

(*Grabs stick*) Is that a threat?

BOB

(*Grabs stick*) Let's just say I've considered buying a pellet gun.

HENRIETTA

(*HENRIETTA gasps again! Stands*) You heartless man. You brute!

MEDIATOR

Please, everyone, calm down. Please sit down, Mrs. Fowler. Now, does anyone have anything constructive to say?

PATTY

I would like to put forth the first suggested compromise. (*stands*) I am going to use my "sunshine voice" and I hope everyone else follows suit.

HENRIETTA

Good for you, Patty. We women are the ones who bring reasoned calmness to the table. Go women! (*They high five*)

PATTY

My idea is to have Cockydoo...

HENRIETTA

Poo!

PATTY

Cockypoo. My idea is to have his vocal cords cut. (*HENRIETTA clasps her hands over her mouth to prevent from crying out, SKOOCH comforts her in some way*) It's a harmless operation. Cockypoo can live and do all the things roosters do, including standing just 5 feet away from our bedroom window and crowing his heart out, but instead of this (*She crows*) it comes out more like this (*She makes some kind of wheezing sound while imitating the posture and movements of a crowing rooster*)

HENRIETTA

How...dare...you!

MEDIATOR

Mrs. Fowler, try beginning your sentence with "When you say that, I feel..." Please give me the stick, Mrs. Ludlow. (*She does so, reluctantly. He gives it to HENRIETTA*)

HENRIETTA

When you say that, I feel...I feel....like hitting you over the head with this stick!

SKOOCH

(*Taking the stick from HENRIETTA, getting her to sit.*) Do you have children, Patty, Bob?

PATTY

Yes. We have a son.

SKOOCH

And would you cut his vocal cords if his crying annoyed you?

PATTY

Our son is \_\_\_\_\_years old. (Anywhere from 16 to 50)

BOB

And....and this is an important point....our son is NOT A ROOSTER!

HENRIETTA

Sunshine voice, Bob.

MEDIATOR

OK. Everyone pause and take a drink.

*PATTY pours water in her cup, if needed. She needs to leave just the right amount for the upcoming action. BOB takes a sneak-drink from a flask)*

MEDIATOR

Good. Now, how about a suggestion of compromise from the Fowlers?

SKOOCH

I have, actually, four potential solutions to the problem concocted by both my loving partner, Henrietta, and myself in the spirit of brother and sisterhood with Mr. and Mrs. Ludlow, Bob and Patty here. ((*Bob shows his impatience with the verbiage.*) One: Buy a set of the best ear plugs you can get. Bam! Done. Two: ...

HENRIETTA (*Interrupting*)

Let me do the second one. (*She takes stick*) Two: travel to Latin America and spend a lot of time in the campo. Then, when you return, you will actually miss the sound of the rooster and be grateful for Cockypoo's glorious song to the rising sun.

SKOOCH

(*He takes stick*) Three: Pack up your troubles and go live somewhere else. Or buy one of those ....winna...,winna... .

HENRIETTA

bagos.

BOB

If I may stop you before your fourth hairbrained suggestion...

MED.

Please stay courteous, Bob.

SKOOCH

(*He takes stick*) My heart shuts down, Bob, when you are not treating us or our ideas with respect. (*He places stick on coffee table with an air of sorrow.*)

BOB

Point number one. (*PATTY gives him the stick*) We have tried every ear plug on the mar.....

MEDIATOR

Excuse me, Mr. Ludlow. Do you have any feedback for Mr. Fowler?

BOB

I am giving feedback.

MEDIATOR

Not about the earplugs. About his statement that.....(*He can't remember.*)

SKOOCH

...my heart shuts down (*this is illustrated with gestures.*) when you don't...

BOB

My feedback? My feedback is man up! Seriously.

SKOOCH

(*Hangs his head in thought. Lifts it and says:* ) But what does that mean? What does it mean to truly be a man, Bob? To be a closed door? Or, to be a fully open door? Which takes more courage? More inner spirit?

*The mediator is very touched by this statement. BOB stares at SKOOCH, then at PATTY, then up..*



MEDIATOR

*(With his or her hands on SKOOCH'S shoulders.)* Now is not the time to solve philosophical or societal problems, Skooch. Let's get back to our immediate question: Cocky...boo.

HENRIETTA

Poo!

MEDIATOR

Poo. Mr. Ludlow, as you were saying?

BOB

Point number one: We have tried every earplug available, plus white noise. blue noise, all the noise colors. Your rooster cuts through them like a hot knife through butter. Suggestion number two: We are staying right here in the good ol' U S of A. Three: If anyone should move, it should be you. Take your selves and your... rooster and move far, far away. *(He places stick on coffee table.)*

SKOOCH

*(He takes stick from HENRIETTA)* You haven't heard idea four, and it's the best one yet. *(He gets the tube and pulls out blueprint and spreads it out on the coffee table.)* This, Bob and Patty, are the plans for your house. We have a great idea: By tearing out the wall between your guest bedroom on the opposite side of the house and the large utility closet, you can create a master bedroom far away from Cockypoo's roost.

HENRIETTA

And look, you can see that your master bathroom would only be down the hall, through the garage, and just past the washer/dryer.

BOB

Interesting! A very interesting proposal. We'll do it!

PATTY

Don't you think we should talk this over, Bob?

BOB

*(As he crumples the blueprint)* As long as you pay all costs plus an inconvenience fee equal to the expenses.

SKOOCH

How does it feel, like in your body, when you make sarcastic remarks, Bob?

BOB

It feels great!

HENRIETTA

I gently suggest that you try and go deeper, past the sarcasm, Bob. That's what Cockypoo has taught me to do. He's given me access into my deeper self.

PATTY

Your Cockypoo sounds like an amazing rooster, Henrietta.

HENRIETTA

Yes. He is. Thank you, Patty. I feel validated by your comment.

PATTY

I'm glad. I really am.

HENRIETTA

Why, that's so nice of you to say! You know, we should start to be real neighbors and have lunch sometime. How about this Sunday? My place?

PATTY

Why, that would be wonderful!

HENRIETTA

I hope you won't mind Cockypoo joining us. He roosts on the back of one of the chairs when we dine.

PATTY

Isn't that clever? That gives me an idea. My son is very handy and can make a perch for Cockypoo that attaches to a wall. –in your dining room, or your living room. Or your bedroom!

HENRIETTA

Why, how sweet of you! Isn't she nice, Skooch?

PATTY

I have a friend who is a very good taxidermist. My son will do the slaughtering if you'd like. And when Cockypoo comes back all stuffed and pretty, we'll set you up with the perch.

HENRIETTA

*(in horror.)* Oh!

BOB

Right on, Patty!

PATTY

Thank you, Bob. I feel validated by your comment.

HENRIETTA

Evil!

MEDIATOR

Alright, alright, let's settle down. I'm hearing a lot of passive-aggressiveness. I think it calls for a special breathing exercise I use when people are feeling extremely ...how shall I say it...

BOB

Pissed off?

MEDIATOR

Yes. OK. You breathe in for a count of 20, hold for 20, and breathe out for 20. Guaranteed to leave you in a much better frame of mind. Sit up straight so you'll have happy lungs. Count at your own speed. Ready! Begin.

*Everyone does the exercise except BOB, who watches them do it, one at a time. HENRIETTA starts to struggle. The mediator, meanwhile, is checking his cell phone, or doing the exercise with eyes closed.. Eventually HENRIETTA passes out.*

SKOOCH

Henrietta? She's passed out! Henrietta! He pats her cheeks.

MEDIATOR

Everything OK over there?

HENRIETTA

(Weakly) Cockypoo? Cockypoo? I want Cockypoo.

SKOOCH

I need to get her home. Cockypoo knows what to do in such situations. He kind of clucks softly and gently whaps her temples with his wattle.

HENRIETTA

(Coming around) I had a vision where one day neighbors with roosters and neighbors without roosters would live in harmony. Where love would conquer hate. Where...

PATTY

(PATTY picks up her glass, stands and splashes HENRIETTA with water.) Oh, shut up!

MEDIATOR

Mrs. Ludlow!

PATTY

That was just feedback.

MEDIATOR

Everyone stop! Sit down. Now, relax and close your eyes. Good. Now I want each of you to go to your happy place, a place where you feel safe and contented. We'll spend just a few minutes in our happy places and then resume in a peaceful and respectful manner.

BOB

(After a couple of beats) Can I smoke?

MEDIATOR

Please, Mr. Ludlow!

*Everyone but BOB follows the instructions and gradually begin smiling. BOB takes out his cell phone and sends a text. SKOOCH begins to bob like he's listening to music. HENRIETTA, as if in a daze, slowly rises and stands on top of her chair and acts like a rooster, eventually letting out a majestic cock a doodle doo. SKOOCH gently guides her back to sitting.*

BOB

I don't believe it.

MEDIATOR

Alright, let's resume. Mr. Ludlow, in the agreement you signed it said, "No cell phones are to be used during the mediation process."

BOB

I was going to my happy place. Besides, I remembered today's the deadline for signing up for classes at CR.

PATTY

Why, that's great Bob. What class are you going to take? Is it that "Improve Your Marriage" class we talked about?

BOB

No. As a matter of fact, it's...falconry! *(As he says this he makes talons out of his hands and grabs at HENRIETA who squawks and begins running around in a panic, flapping, and runs out the door.*

SKOOCH

Well, now you've done it. Good work, Bob.

BOB

Thank you.

SKOOCH

*(He runs after her)* Henrietta! Henrietta! (EXITS)

*BOB and PATTY high five and make celebration noises.*

MEDIATOR

Why are you celebrating? The mediation totally failed.

BOB

Not really. I just texted my son, who's been on standby. The problem is solved.

MEDIATOR

I don't get it. How is that?

PATTY

Let's just say he's been busy over in the Fowler's back yard, and Bam! It's done.

MEDIATOR

Are you saying....?

BOB

Let's go, Patty. I'm hungry. What's for dinner?

PATTY

I'll give you one guess. Fire up the barbeque, honey. We're having us a feast!

*BOB and PATTY exit. The MEDIATOR looks blankly after them.*

*A last as-they-leave/offstage cock-a-doodle-doo from Bob and Patty then LIGHTS OUT.*