

## The Funny Farm

The barnyard was full of animals. There were cows, chickens, horses, and even billy goats. Sounds like a typical farm, right? Wrong. These animals were special and they could do something no other animal could do. I should know because I am their friend, Sadie Belle.

I was on my way to milk, Jesse our Jersey cow, when I heard voices coming from the barn. I started looking all over the barn for the voices, but I found no one there. I found this really odd. *I did hear voices, right?* I finally gave up and sat down to milk Jesse.

"How are ya today, Miss Jesse?" I asked her real friendly like.

"Well, I'm as fine as frog hair!" a voice answered. There it was, that voice again! I figured it had to be my brother Jeffrey trying to play a trick on me, so I said, "Stop your foolishness Jeffrey! I know it was you." There was no answer, so I quickly got back to milking Miss Jesse. I had just about filled the tin pail full when Jeffrey came through the barn door shouting.

"Ma wants to know if you are about through milking the cow?!" he asked.

"Her name is Miss Jesse and I am about through!" I answered feeling my anger bubble up inside of me. I quickly finished filling my pail and started walking toward the house with the fresh milk. Ma was in the middle of making us breakfast and the fresh milk was needed for what she was preparing. I felt bad for getting mad at Ma and Jeffrey when I saw what they were doing. They were preparing my favorite, homemade biscuits and gravy.

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Ronnie Rooster looked around the barnyard and saw no humans in sight, so he thought it was safe to talk.

"Now Jesse you just about blew it for us there!" he said as he strutted his stuff. He

was just about the purttest rooster anybody had ever seen. He had red and green feathers, long spurs, and a comb that never flopped over, so he could be a bit self-centered.

"It was an accident," Helen Hen said with a cluck. "I don't think she realized that she was talking."

"Yeah, I'm with Helen!" Donnie Duck said while shaking the water out of his feathers.

"I know she didn't mean to, but she is going to have to be more careful," Ronnie said.

"Ronnie, I think that it is high time that we tell Sadie Belle about our secret. She has loved us, cared for us, and even told us some of her deepest secrets thinking that we were not able to repeat them," Jesse said as she looked around the barn to see what everybody thought about her suggestion. "I know how we can decide what to do. Let's take a vote! All in favor of telling Sadie Belle our secret say I, she paused to see all that had answered and then said, "Ok, now all of you that are against telling Sadie Belle our secret say nay." The only person heard saying nay was Ronnie. "Well, I guess that means the ayes have it. We are going to tell Sadie Belle our secret!" Jesse said overjoyed.

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I finished my biscuits and gravy and ran outside to play with Jeffrey who had already inhaled his breakfast.

"What do ya wanna do, Sadie Belle?" Jeffrey asked, while rubbing his shoes in the dirt.

"I know what we can do, Jeffrey!" I said, with nothing but pure excitement in my voice. "We can go play in the mud down by the barn."

"That sounds like fun, but what will Ma say?" he asked.

"Aww. Don't take the fun outta it by goin' and asking a question like that. Let's just go!" I said, already running toward the huge mud puddle in front of the barn.

I jumped in the mud and all that could be heard was a loud, *Squishing* sound.

"Are you comin' in or not?" I yelled to my brother while picking up mud and letting it run through my fingers.

"I'm comin'!" he said. "Gimme time!"

At that moment, he took a run and go and landed flat on his rump in the mud. I was happy that he decided to play in the mud because the only thing more fun than one person in the mud is two people in the mud. We began to sling mud at each other and when that got old, we made mud pies.

"I bet ya' Ma can't make a pie like this," I told Jeffrey, giggling.

"I think ya' are right on that one, sis. I don't think she can," he said, joining in on my laughter.

We splashed in the mud a few more times before Jeffrey finally said that he was tired of being in the mud. He said that he was going to go to the water pump and rinse off before he went in to see Ma. I told him that was probably a good idea because Ma didn't like it much when we came into the house after wollering in the mud. I decided to go check on the animals before going inside myself.

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"QUIET!! Everybody here she comes toward the barn," Ronnie yelled, trying to warn the animals that Sadie Belle was coming. "We don't want to be talking when she comes in.

We want to wait until she says something to us before we say anything to her."

"Excuse me, Ronnie, but I don't think that whether we talk now or later makes no difference. FOR PETE'S SAKE WE ARE TALKING ANIMALS! That is not something humans see every day," Pedro the bull said with a huff.

"I guess you're right," Ronnie admitted, "but please try not to talk until she talks to you, Ok?"

"OK," all the animals said in unison, "we will try to let her talk first before we say anything."

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"Hey Guys!" I said, while checking to see if the animals had enough food and water.

"Hey, Sadie Belle!" the animals, said all together. *Wowww! This could be just my biscuits and gravy talking, but I could have sworn that I heard those animals talk.*

I could not believe my ears. I decided to ask them something else to see if I had really heard them speak.

"How ya'll doin' today? I asked, waiting to see if they were really going to talk.

"Mighty fine. What about yourself? Pedro asked.

*WOW!* I said to myself. *I am not crazy, those animals just talked to me!* I tried to pull myself together. I was excited and scared at the same time. *How long have they been able to talk? Why are they able to talk?* The only way I am going to find out the answers to these questions is to just ask them to the animals.

"How long have you... have you been able to talk, Jesse?" I asked, still a little

nervous and scared about what was going on.

"I have been able to talk since the day that I was born in this barn," Jesse said.

"Why have you never said anything before?" I asked Jesse with a hurt look on my face.

"Well...We were never sure how you would feel about having talking animals, so we decided against talking to you," she said, trying to make me feel better. "We don't want anyone else to know about us being able to talk, so we are trusting you to keep our secret."

"I won't tell a livin' soul, I told Jesse while crossing my heart. "I think that it is kinda cool havin' a secret. I better get back to the house. Ma will send Jeffrey outta get me soon," I said, sad that I had to leave.

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"What have you been doing all this time, Sadie Belle? Your brother came in a long time ago," Ma said with a stern look on her face.

"Well....I...uh...have been fetching the animals some feed and water," I told her with a little too much quiver in my voice.

"Since when does it take you that long to fetch the feed and water for the animals? Well, no matter," she said. "But, I can tell ya' one thang ya' better get yur hide outside and wash some of that mud off!" Ma said with every vein in her forehead sticking out.

"Yes, Ma. I will go get myself cleaned up," I told Ma, as she swatted my backside with her apron.

I got to the water pump and began rinsing my face with water trying to get the mud off. It took a lot of scrubbing. I don't know if you know anything about mud, but it is hard to get off

once it dries and cakes on your skin. Finally, I managed to clear the mud off of my face and hands, but I still had to somehow get it scraped out of my fingernails. That was the worst part about playing in the mud, I muttered to myself, cleaning yourself up afterwards. I managed to get myself clean and went back inside.

"Now, that's more like it, Sadie Belle!" Ma said, smiling. "Go set the table and get it ready for dinner."

I walked to the table and laid out three plates and forks, but my mind was still thinking about all my talking animals. *What would Ma say if she found out we had ourselves some talking animals? I betcha Ma will make me sell em' to the circus or something. I just know that she would only see em' as money in her apron pocket.* I quickly changed my train of thought. I just couldn't get rid of my animals they were my friends, NO, they were my family.

"Sadie Belle, get your brother it is time for dinner," Ma hollered.

Jeffrey, Ma, and I were all sitting at the dinner table and after we said thanks to the good Lord, we dug into Ma's delicious cooking. She had made fried chicken and cornbread. I quickly stuffed mine

down my craw and hurried outside to check on the animals, but what I didn't know was Jeffrey has followed me outside.

"Hello Animals!" I said. "Does anybody need anything?"

"I reckon' we are all doin' fine," Ronnie answered.

Jeffrey was hiding behind the barn door listening to me talk to the animals and quickly ran back inside to tell Ma what he had witnessed.

"Ma come quickly! In the barn the animals are talking!" Jeffrey said a little out of breath.

"You're just yanking my chain, Jeffrey. Animals don't talk!" Ma said, clearly, not believing anything that Jeffrey told her.

"I know Ma, it sounds far-fetched, but I just heard it with my own ears. Please, will you come out to the barn and listen for yourself? He asked.

"Fine! Ma, said with a huff. "If it will make you be quiet. I will go see whatever it is that you are wanting me to see."

Ma and Jeffrey stood there watching me and the animals talk.

"So, that is what took you so long today!" Ma said, letting me know that she had caught me red-handed. "Since when have they been able to talk?"

"Jesse told me today that she has been able to talk ever since she was born. She also said that she didn't because her and the rest of the animals didn't know how we would take to the animals," I said, trying not to cry. "What are you going to do to em' now that ya' know their secret?"

"I am gonna sell em' to one of the traveling circuses! They would be the perfect act for the circus,' Ma said. "I don't have any need for no talking animals and I see this as the perfect opportunity to make us some money."

"I knew you would feel this way, Ma. That is why I didn't want to tell you! If you get rid

them, you will be getting rid of a piece of me also!" I said, trying not to cry.

"Aww.... you don't mean that Sadie Belle. You want to make some money just as much as I do. Ya' just don't know it yet!" Ma said, with the dollar symbols in her eyes.

Ma went inside and called an agent to one of them traveling circuses and told him that

she had some talking animals that he would be interested in. The agent told her that he would be over right away to see this amazing sight. After about an hour a blue pickup truck pulled into our little driveway. I just knew that it had to be the agent, so I ran into the barn and told the animals that he was coming.

"Everybody there is an agent here to possibly buy ya'll to be a part of their circus!" I warned them.

"What are we going to do?" the animals said, all worrying together.

A light bulb went off in Sadie Belle's head.

"What if when he comes to see you guys and you don't say a word. This will make the man think that Ma has lost it and maybe we will get to keep you!" I said, hopping from one foot to the other.

"That sounds like a plan!" Jesse told all the animals. "It might not work, but it is sure worth a try."

The agent came in at that time with Ma and Jeffrey. All was silent.

"Ma'am I don't see anything special about these animals," the agent said, with a frown on his face. "I hope you did not make me drive all the way out here for nothing."

"Talk to them Sadie Belle. They are your friends they will talk to you," Ma said, getting a little aggravated.

"Ok," I said. "I will try to get them to talk for ya' Ma, but I don't think that will happen," I said, as if I were talking to a baby. "Animals don't usually talk, but I'll see what I can do."

"What is she talking about?!!!" the agent said, getting kind of angry. "I thought you said



these animals could talk?"

"Oh. Don't listen to her she is just mad because I am trying to sell her friends to you. Now, Go ahead Sadie Belle," Ma said, through gritted teeth, "GET THEM TO TALK!"

"How are you doing today, Jesse?" I asked the Jersey cow. The cow answered with a loud, *MOOO!!*

"I don't know if you realize this Ma'am, but that is the sound a cow is supposed to make. She didn't just talk!" the agent said, very sarcastically.

"I know that! Well, Sadie Belle try talking to that rooster over there," Ma said, pointing her finger at Ronnie. "As proud as he looks I am sure that he must have something to say."

"Ok," I said. "How are you doing today, Ronnie?" The rooster stuck out his chest and let out a big, *COCK A DOODLE DO!*

"This is your last chance lady! Either you get one of them "special" animals to talk or I'm outta here," the agent said, pointing his finger right down Ma's nose.

"OK, Sadie Belle!" Ma said, clearly mad as a hornet. "Try talking to that duck over there. I betcha he has been waiting for you to ask him how he is doing."

"Ok," I said, again. "How are you today, Donnie?" The duck started *QUACK, QUACK, Quacking* and flapping his feathers.

"Lady, I think you have lost it! These animals can't talk," the agent said, storming out the barn door.

I looked over at Ma and I could tell that she was not happy with me. Not only had I cost her lots of money, but I had also made her out to be a crazy person.

"Ma, I had to do it!" I said, trying to make her understand. "I love these animals.

They are a part of our family."

Ma looked at me real hard and I could tell that she was starting to break.

"Well, I guess you are right," Ma said, sighing. "They have lived here on our little farm for years and it would be a shame to get rid of them now," She said, with her arms open wide.

I ran into Ma's arms and hugged her tight.

"Thanks, Ma for letting me keep the animals. You will never know how much this means to me," I said, with tears in my eyes.

As my mother, brother, and I were walking back toward the house I turned around and gave the animals a wink.