

The Magic of Jenkins's Farm

An original story by “Mago” (alias) at age 9,
with additional writing by his Dad

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Farmer Jenkins ate a big bowl of Frosted Toasted Super Tough Crunchy Super-powered Corn Kernels, and went out the front door of his farm house. It was an ordinary and pleasant, sunny, late spring morning. The miles of corn around his farm shimmered in the indigo light reflected from the sky, as the blazing edge of the sun roze over the flat horizon. The corn fields undulated in waves, westward, from a firm morning breeze.

He shuddered, even though he was perfectly warm. Something wasn't right. He looked a ways off, toward the barn.

No, something was really not right. He couldn't quite figure what it was. He frowned, and stared down the barn suspiciously.

“No, chickens gals are last. Gonna feed the other animals first. None a' yer' troubles this mornin'. Not when I can still enjoy the morning. No ma'ams.”

In the barn, he finished milking the cow, and sighed. He hoisted the full milk pail over by the open barn door, went back to the last cow he'd milked, fetched the stool, and took it to the barn entrance. He sat on the stool and watched the glorious orange sunlight creep over the corn fields while the sun crept up over the horizon.

“Sure miss Cali,” he said.

“Mmmm, me too,” said the cow. “Always so pleasantly warm in the late spring, perfect, just right.”

“Boy, you said it,” said Jenkins.

“You know, I think the chickens miss it *here*, though” said the cow. “You've heard how they get greedy for magic when summer arrives, and it moves inland. Always seems to us animals that more of it comes to this farm in the summer. Something about it. The corn shimmers brighter blue when it waves around in the wind before dawn.”

“Yeah—funny, I think I noticed that just this morning. Made me shudder. Something doesn't look right. Well, never mind that I always have a full harvest in late *spring*, and then three harvests after that—of course that's just, well . . . mostly unexplained. All the same—”

“The corn is just plain ol' super-powered—super nutrient powered, I'm telling you—I mean more than usual, mind you of course I know its unusual corn anyway. Great cereal you have there, that you make from it—”

“Thanks,” interrupted Jenkins—

“but the kind of sugar high you get from it when it converts in your gut,” continued the cow, “besides that sugar high—while that corn is still in the field at the first harvest, its extra . . . reflecty. Reflective? Can't find the right words for it. But you know what I mean. You saw it. Sure is beautiful when it waves around like that in the wind, isn't it?”

“Yes it is. By the way, I'm not sure I ever learned your name, what is it?”

He noticed that all the cows gave him peculiar looks, and that they must have stirred and turned to look at he and the cow he conversed with. They seemed to have expressions that mixed delight, surprise, and a bit of suspicion.

“Well, I thought you might never ask,” replied the cow, “which I must say is a bit awkward, because—well never mind. But the name's—”

Jenkins bolted up from the stool, and stood and stared at the cow.

“What?!” he said. “Wait, *what?!?*”

He slapped himself.

“I'm dreaming!” he said.

The cows all chuckled.

“*What?!?*” Jenkins repeated.

“*I'm talking to cows—to a cow—but you all look like you could talk—what?!?*”

He raised one of his fists, swung it back, and clobbered his own nose with it.

“OWWW!” he cried.

The cows laughed again.

“I'm bleeding! That hurt! I'm dreaming! Ow, my face! Oww, my *hand!*” he said, and cradled it. “That *smarts!* Wait, what?” He noticed his face felt warm. He held his hand to his nose, then held out his hand and looked at it. It had blood on it. His nose was bleeding.

“But no—” he continued—“I must be dreaming...wait—no—*aaahh,*” he said, struck by an epiphany. “The Frosted Toasted Super Tough Crunchy Super-powered Corn Kernels are messing with me! That's what it is. Must be a super-strong batch. You said it yourself, didn't you?” he asked the cow.

“No, I don't think it's the corn. Maybe you've just gotten friendly of a sudden.”

“*Of a sudden?!?*” demanded Jenkins, offended. “Why I—wait, no, I am *not* talking to cows. Even if my nose is bleeding. This is just an extra realistic dream.”

The cows laughed more.

He walked a ways out from the barn and stood, and watched the corn fields wave and billow in the wind.

“*California,*” he muttered to himself. “*When California chickens leave California, they get greedy for magic. I really hope that is NOT true.*” He shuddered, shook his head, and went back into the barn. He went over to the tub to fill it up with cold water for the hogs. He turned on the hose to fill up the tub.

“I wish he would turn the water a bit colder,” Said the oldest, biggest, hog.”

Jenkins was beside himself. “Wait, you, too? Did you just talk?!”

“Yes I’ve always talked.” said the hog.

“Okay, this is a really ridiculously stupidly stubborn dream I can't wake up from. WAKE UP, JENKINS! GET UP! YOU'VE GOT BARNYARD CHORES TO DO!” He clobbered himself in the nose again. The hogs laughed.

His face felt extra warm. He held his palm up to his face, then took his hand back off—it was covered with a lot of blood; he was bleeding even more. He could see the cows still laughing, but trying to contain their laughter, maybe out of politeness?

He went into the farm house bathroom, washed up, got some tissues and stuffed them in his nose, and went back out to the barn.

He filled the tub and went to milk the remaining cows. He got out a bucket and started milking the cow.

It was boring, and time-consuming, as ever. After a long while, his arms and hands began to get tired.

“Sure could use some music here.” said the cow.

“Did you just talk too?!” said Jenkins.

“Yes I've always talked,” said the cow.

Jenkins rubbed his eyes and finished milking the cow. Then he went to the chicken coop.

Wait! Where were the chickens?

“I saw a chicken looking around your bag a little while ago,” said a cow, one morning, as it grazed in the field.

“Wait!” said Jenkins. *“That’s where I keep the lock that supposedly has the magic ability to change form when needed! Could it be?!”*

The cow gave him a funny look.

“What?” asked Jenkins.

“Uh. I dunno . . .” said the cow.

Jenkins checked the bag, which he had attached to a leather strap hoisted over his shoulder. He was relieved to see that the lock was still in there.

Jenkins rounded all the animals into the pasture beside the barn one morning.

“Okay everyone, if the chickens really are planning to get lots of magic, this place must have lots of magic, because I’m hearing you talk.”

“Haven’t you always been able to hear us talk?” asked a cow.

“No! No one has ever been able to hear animals talk.” said Jenkins.

“What?!” answered all the animals at once.

“Well anyway,” Jenkins said, “We’re going to have to come up with a plan to keep the chickens away.”

In one month, the plan was ready. The turkeys armed themselves with dirt-flinging shovels, the hogs lined up for a controlled stampede, and the cows made giant see-saws, each with one end hidden under a trap door, to look like plain pasture ground—but when a chicken ran over that ground, the cows planned to jump on the other ends of the see-saws to catapult the chickens high, far and away . . . over a fence, and into a pen with a big sign over it that said “BUTCHER.” Just to scare them. The cows called it “see-saw and awe.”

Also, the animals said they made a “secret weapon” together.

The night before they expected the chickens to attack, Jenkins heard more suspicious noises than usual. He went and woke all the animals up.

“Everybody, I think the chickens are doing an early surprise attack. There are very suspicious noises I’m hearing.”

The animals talked and muttered together for a while, debating the question.

Jenkins made a decision.

“Take your positions!”

The animals took a few minutes to get ready for battle.

A low, frantic warbling rose up from the plains beyond the corn fields, eastward.

“Yerp,” said the Captain of the hogs.

“*Yerp?* Since when do you say 'yerp?’” asked Jenkins.

“I'm sorry, were you expecting a frightened squeal?” replied the hog.

Stalks of corn whipped back and forth eastward over the corn fields, and corn leaves flew up off of them, tattered off the stalks, in advancing rows. The warbling of the chickens rose in pitch and volume.

“Uh, no, sorry,” continued Jenkins, “I just mean—well never mind. But anyway, what do you mean by 'yerp?’”

“Yerp, them's gonna have a run-in with my chicken-dye minefield,” explained the hog.

“Your *what?* ”

“We rigged us up some mines calibrated to the weightth of large chickens. If you're heavier —“

“Uh, did you just say 'weightth?' I'm annoyed by 'heightth,' but that's a new one—“

“Whatever,” the hog counter-interrupted. “If you're heavier than a chicken, the mine doesn't set off. If—“

“Huh? How can you make a mine set off only if you're above a certain weight?”

“How can you make a hog talk?”

“Good point.”

“MMMM!” cried the Commander of the cows.

“Huh?” asked Jenkins.

“Could we have the not with the stupid yammering before the war? Isn't somebody supposed to be giving some speech about how we need to save our farm from the dangerous onslaught of vicious chickens?”

“Uh, yeah,” agreed Jenkins. “Everybody! We need to save our farm from a dangerous onslaught of vicious chickens!”

The animals all stared at him blankly.

“That was very inspiring,” said the Captain of the hogs. “I might have wept. If I was into

hogly weeping.”

“Hogly?”

“Sounds better than 'manly,' in my book.”

POOM! A large plume of pink smoke exploded above the distant tattering corn stalks, accompanied by a loud “SQQUUUAAAAWK” of a chicken, which was sent flying high overhead the plume. The chicken frantically fluttered back down earthward, and dropped back into the corn stalks.

The hog chuckled.

“Wait. What? Why was that explosion *pink*?” Asked Jenkins.

“It's a dye explosion. No, not 'die' as in 'death,' 'dye' as in color, to color something, with colored dye. Makes them easier to target.”

POOM—POOM—POOM—POOM—POOM—POOM!

Orange, yellow, pink, pink, bright neon green, and bright neon blue plumes of smoke exploded over the corn fields, each accompanied by the loud, panicked squawks of the chickens they sent high overhead, each chicken respectively powder-painted the same respective colors, and each chicken reflectively fluttered back into the corn the same as the first.

“Huh. Not bad!” said Jenkins.

The captain of the hogs smiled proudly.

“FIRST WAVE!” shouted the Commander of the cows. “POSITIONS!”

The cows ran into the corn field, and were hidden by the corn stalks.

“Everyone else wait on my command!” shouted Jenkins.

The colored blurs of charging, color-dyed chickens were visible, advancing on Jenkins' army through the corn.

Jenkins never would have imagined that cows could have jumped so high. Over the corn fields, cows launched high into the air, and as each one landed, a see-saw arm launched up out of the fields, launching chickens right into the large, fenced pen with a sign over it that read BUTCHER.

The chickens screamed in terror, and flew up out of the pen in a panic.

Chickens advanced from the pen and the end of the corn field out onto the open pasture.

Their chorus of their enraged warbling might have been terrifying if half of them didn't look like badly painted rubber chickens.

“LOOK! VICIOUS RUBBER CHICKENS!” shouted Jenkins. His army of animals laughed. “ATTAACK!”

The hogs charged, and knocked down five rows of chickens.

The turkeys catapulted huge mud balls, which knocked down two more rows of chickens.

Where is the lock?! thought Jenkins. It could help us by changing form! He checked his bag. It wasn't there!

“Where is my lock?!” he asked the Commander cow.

“Don't worry,” replied the cow, and winked. “It's not missing. We have it.”

“We can't keep this up much longer!” said Jenkins. “The turkeys are running out of mud balls and we're out of everything else!”

Suddenly, a huge group of armored bunnies wielding bazookas came marching in. They blasted *ALL* the chickens away! The battle was done. Jenkins and his animals still had the magic of the farm, and they chased all the chickens back into their underground lairs, which they stayed in from then on.

“Where did the bunnies come from?!” Jenkins asked a hog.

“The lock,” the hog answered with a wink.

THE END