

Chicken Chatter!

Ronald and Duane used to feed the chickens together, but not anymore! Speakin' of birds, there are times havin' a "*hawkephant*" for a sister comes in handy. Case in point: a strange, unfortunate event occurred a couple of months ago. Just like a hawk hoverin' over its prey, Diane *spotted* the whole ordeal from the hill overlookin' the hen house. She tuned in with her big ears so as to *remember*, like an elephant, all the details.

Early in the mornin', the boys went into the hen house to feed the chickens. Daddy was workin' in the garden nearby. Suddenly there was a loud snap followed by a lot of cacklin', flappin', cryin', 'n screamin.'

Accordin' to "*Miss Hawkephant*," Daddy made a beeline straight for the hen house. Feathers flew as the frightened fowls almost knocked Daddy down. The boys were *gettin' a talkin' to*. Diane could only make out Daddy raisin' his voice and hollerin,'

“Ronald Eugene Friend!!”

Uh-oh! When your parents use your first name, your middle name, and your last—you know what that spells.

T-R-O-U-B-L-E! TROUBLE! T-R-O-U-B-L-E!

The *good* thing about that time – *I* wasn't the one in trouble!



Diane heard three loud pops. Appearin' in the doorway, Duane grasped his right hand to his chest, cryin' to beat the band. Ronald followed with tears flowin' down his cheeks. His hands were busy rubbin' his other cheeks (*if you know what I mean!*). Ronald had trouble written all over him. Daddy came out last, holdin' the chicken feed buckets in his hands.

Once inside, Ronald headed straight to his room. Nurse Momma cleaned and wrapped Duane's hand in gauze. He kept it in a sling for over a week. My parents know exactly what happened. I'm convinced the "*undercover angel*" knows, too! But every time I've asked questions – *not a peep* – **not one peep!**

Now where was I? Oh yeah! It's *hay* day down on Friendly Acres. Hair rinsed and combed, Daddy headed out the back door dressed in overalls. First rule of balin' hay is long sleeves and long pants. No matter how hot the weather, you *hafta* make sure the hay doesn't touch your skin. Otherwise, hay stickin' to your body can cause a lot of itchin' 'n scratchin' later on down the line.

Properly dressed, I ran downstairs to find Grandma ironin' pillow cases, t-shirts, and underwear. I walked outside, makin' sure to close the door all the way. Seein' Grandma through the screen door, I winked, then giggled, "Grandma, I wasn't born in the barn, and yes, I don't want birds to fly in the house ever again. I've had enough *pandemonium* for one day!"

Grandma smiled.

It's only been a few weeks since I started feedin' the chickens with Duane, and yet every mornin', it's the *same old, same old*. Duane meets me at the hen house and hands me the feed bucket filled to the brim. I tell him that I don't need that much, but he always says that he'll put back what I don't use. Then Duane makes it a point to say, "Ronda, make sure you put your hands *way down* to the bottom of the bucket, grab a big handful, then scatter it all over the ground so the chickens don't congregate in one spot!"

I've heard Duane's advice too many times already. This time, I looked around to make sure "Miss Hawkephant" wasn't spyin' and shouted, "*Birdbrain*, you don't *hafta* tell me what to do! You're not the boss of me! I know how to feed the chickens."

Duane just smiled – not a peep! I thought to myself, "What's up with that? Oh well, I guess I shut him up!"

I *love* chickens, maybe because they love to talk. They cluck, cackle, pick and peck, cluck, cackle, pick, and peck - over 'n over again. Daddy calls it "*chicken chatter!*" Chickens are even more comical dancers – 'specially when you sing to them while you're feedin' them.

*They rock 'round the Friend feeders all day long -
Hoppin' and a-boppin' and a-singin' their song -
All the little hens livin' down on Friendly Acres
Cacklin' and a-peckin' - what great egg makers!*

*Chicken Chatter! Cluck, cackle, pick, peck!
Chicken Chatter! Cluck, cackle, pick, peck!
Happy hens please lay me lots of eggs!*

Those hens' cackles were deafenin'. It was as though they were tryin' to tell me in *chicken chatter* what really happened in the hen house.

Eggs collected, I handed them to Grandma Brombaugh. She asked, "Wouldn't it be fun to make sense of all that *chicken chatter*?"

I responded, "More than you'll ever know, Grandma - *more than you'll ever know!*"

