

A Going-Away Gift for Chef Ryan Ruffell

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It was a warm and dusky morning at the Rype & Readi Farm. The temperature was neither too hot nor too cold, the wind was but a gentle breeze, and the sparse cloud cover served to filter and darken the sun's early rays so that they were not truly as oppressively blinding as they could have been.

In short, the weather was absolutely perfect for the joyous act of sleeping in late into the afternoon. Many an animal was taking full advantage of this weather to indulge in a few minutes more dreaming, but only one of the farm's many and varied animals was of true import at the moment.

The sleeping animal in question was, in fact, the youngest, truly newborn arrival on the farm: a female calf by the name of Cognac. Cognac was a young calf that was only a few days old, with light brown fur and a pink nose that she had inherited from her mother, Vinnie, and shared with her older brother, Vinno.

Now, the reason that the focus of the current story is on Cognac is that, out of all the animals on the farm, she was the only one who was being gently shaken awake.

"Cognac... Cognac... wake up, Cognac," a soft voice prompted patiently.

The young calf snuffled and grumbled rebelliously for a minute, but ultimately she sat up and yawned tiredly, rubbing the sleep from her eyes as she glanced at her wakers in surprise.

"Wha... Momma? Bro? Why'd you wake me up? I was having a nice dream..."

Vinnie smiled kindly as she stepped back and gave her daughter some space. "Sorry, Cognac, but I have something very important to tell you, and it couldn't wait. Now, don't overreact, but-!"

"Uncle Ryan is leaving!" Vinno blurted out hastily.

"WHAT!?" Cognac yelped, suddenly all too awake. "Uncle Ryan!? Leaving?! But he can't, but that's, that's not-!"

"Leaving for *awhile*, Cognac," Vinnie cut in hastily, shooting a sidelong glare at her snickering son. "Chef Ryan is leaving the state *for a while*. He's just going on a short trip, and he'll be back before you know it."

"Oh... well, that's all right then," Cognac sighed in relief as she relaxed, shooting her own glare at her brother before looking back at her mother in confusion. "So... is that all you wanted to tell me?"

“Well, not quite, no,” Vinnie shook her head in denial. “See, before he left, I was thinking that the three of us could work together and get him a going away present. Do either of you have any ideas?”

The calves both thought long and hard before perking up eagerly.

“A mudpie, a mudpie! They’re really really neat!” Vinno offered eagerly.

“No, no, a bale of hay!” Cognac retorted with just as much enthusiasm. “So that he has a snack for the road!”

Vinnie smiled endearingly at her calves. “Those are both wonderful ideas... but I don’t think they’ll work. Because!” She cut them off with a raised hoof when they tried to protest. “Chef Ryan isn’t you. When you’re getting a gift for someone, you have to think about what *they* would want, not what *you* would want. Understand?”

The calves mulled it over for a few seconds before ultimately nodding their consent. “Yes, Mama...”

“Glad to hear it. Now then...” She leaned in with a conspiratorial grin. “Let me tell you *my* idea.”

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The next day, the sun rose to find almost every inch of Chef Ryan’s truck absolutely festooned with freshly picked flowers.

It was a bit of a hassle to remove them so that the vehicle could be driven properly... but not once through the whole thing did anyone complain.