

Feed, Pet, and Heaven

This story is inspired by “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” written by Mike Resnick

I am Italics, I narrate this story. Before I continue, there are two things I wish to make clear of. One, this particular farm livestock in our story can actually articulate words and is somewhat intelligent. Two, a talking livestock is our second narrator. There might be expressions that only make sense to him. So, use your imagination to figure out what he is talking about. Ready?

The year is unknown, but it doesn't matter. It is the year where most animals become extinct, and meat from typical livestock becomes luxury only the rich can enjoy. Caesar MacDonald, a genetic scientist, produces a livestock called butterball. And in a dark indoor barn, a butterball has just been born...

I am just here. I can't see. I feel something in me shake.

He is hungry.

I move my little sticks I can feel under me, and find out that as they move, I move. I move to a large thing, it has some brownish tips. I open my mouth towards the brown tips, but pushed away by something my bigness. I find other tip, and suck something comes out of the tip. I drink those, and my insides don't shake. Something soft and big touches me, rubs me, and I feel warm. And I hear “I am mama.” from it. And I open my mouth to give a sound “mama”. That soft thing touch me again. I hear a sound from it, “feed you!” And when drink from it, I say “feed”. The same sound says “good?” And I say, “Good!”

These are butterballs, a solution for food shortage at this time. Mr MacDonald manipulates a certain DNA to produce these livestocks. They are engineered so that their

whole body can be eaten, even their bones are edible. They can grow fast, wean at the fifth week, mature at the sixth week, and can reproduce at the eighth week. Upon maturity, they weigh 400 pounds. So that they can supply the vastly growing population.

The butterballs look like oversized bright pink balloons. There is no neck, but large round eyes with wide pupils, ears the size of small coins, two slits for nostrils, and generous mouths without any visible teeth. They have four tiny feet, good for balance but barely capable of locomotion.

They are born blind. But soon on the third day, they can see.

I can see light, I can see colours. I see mama. She is in front of me. She is soft. She is round. She has big eyes. I see myself in her big eyes. I look just like her. I look down and I see two sticks [*he means leg*]. I move my sticks and I can move. I see a lot of little mamas [*he means his siblings*]. They look like mama but very small, like me. One close eyes and lay next to me. One bites my stick behind me. Go away! I look up, I see a line of shine among the dark. *That, my butterball, is sunlight, shining through a thin opening between the walls and the roof, for ventilation.*

Each time after some bright comes in from up, a bigger bright is in, and a two-stick is in. They only have two sticks under them. They have two sticks on their side, and the upper sticks have five more little sticks on it. They can be white. They can be Blue. They always come to see us. They stop in front of me, and they drop bright shiny ball ball with a thing they call “bucket”. Mama eat the ball ball.

Yes, human crews of the farm feed the mature butterball every morning with some gold pellets.

After mama eat, I feel shakes in me, and I move to mama and say “feed”. When there is no shine from up, we close eye, and squeeze together. Shine comes and we open eye. I feel no good on me [*he means itchy*], and I roll and feel good. Mama move hand on my top, and I feel good, and I say “good”.

And soon it comes the fifth week. The butterballs have grown, they no longer need to be fed on milk. Hence, it is time for their mother to leave.

The shine comes, and the two-sticks are here. This time, the two-sticks remove the wall in front of us, and eight two-sticks touch mama, and move her away. As they move mama, me and my brothers sisters move fast to the two-sticks and we shout “mama, mama”. Many two-sticks enter, and lift us up, and put us in a thin cold barn. We see mama put in a moving barn, and move away. After we end crying, a two-stick in white turn to us and say “Don’t worry butterballs. Calm down, butterballs.” We look at that two-stick. “Your mama is going to heaven. Hea-ven.” And we say after him “heaven”. “Yes, heaven. A good place”. The cold thin barn we are in suddenly moves.

Yes, the cold thin moving barn is a farm truck. The butterballs are being moved away from the nursery barn.

As the cold thin barn move out of the place, it is very shine. The two-stick who is sitting on top of the moving barn opens his upper two sticks and say to us “heaven!” Heaven is good. I look up and the up is pale blue. The shine is now very warm and very bright. I breathe fresh air for the first time. I feel something good. One brother next to me shouts “Heaven! Good!” and several of us squeak “Heaven! Good!” Then the two-stick say to us “Yes, Heaven! Good! Your mama is here. You can go to heaven and see mama again.” We shout in happiness “Go to heaven! See mama!” The two-stick shouts, “Now, time to see another heaven.”

Soon these one-month old butterballs are transferred into a barn and placed individually in their own area. Males in one barn, and females in another barn. Once they are settled, several crews of the farm enter.

I am in a bigger place, me, alone, in a place. Some two-sticks move to us. One two-stick with blonde top comes to me. This two-stick is white, but his white is looks gooder than other white. He has a nice scent of sweat and some smell I don't know but is good. He reaches his upper stick to touch my top, and says "head itchy?" Oh, my top is head, and the not good feeling is itchy. He starts to move his little sticks on me, and I feel good. He scratches my head says "pet" I say "pet me!" He keeps his small sticks there and says "pet you." I feel good and I say "Good! Very good!" That two-stick suddenly stops and turn to other two-sticks. I feel my inside shakes again, and I say "feed!" I really want to see mama's tips again and let her feed me. That two-stick turns to me again, his two little sticks has a shiny ball ball. Mama loves those ball balls, she eat a lot of those ball balls. I open my mouth, and wait for him to give me one of those ball balls. I swallow it, but it stuck in me, and I spit it out. I look at the two-stick.

He pulls down a white thing, and finally I see his nose and mouth. He moves his mouths with no sound and say, "chew". And he gives me the shiny ball ball again. I hold one in my mouth, and start to follow the two-stick's movement. Shiny ball ball taste great! I shout goodly "Good! Feed me! Feed me!" That two-stick takes many shiny ball balls from another two-stick, and pour all in front of me.

Average people will be scared by talking livestock. These crews seem to see too many generations of butterballs and immune to the shock that they talk.

A two-stick come in the place, and all the other two-sticks stand not doing things. He says to us "You are butterballs. We will take you away like your mama." and we shouts

“mama, mama”. After we don’t talk, he says, “you will go to heaven, to see God, to see mama. Heaven is Good!” “Heaven! Heaven!” “Good! Good!”. He walks away with our good happy shouts.

Each day, crews of the farm enter, pet the butterballs and feed them golden pellets alongside many other foods. The golden pellets are chemicals which help them digest any substance. They taste good to the butterballs too. Then MacDonald’s assistant Cotter will enter to give the speech about heaven and mama, as well as conducting bodycheck for them. Such a routine repeats for eight months. Soon the butterballs mature and they grow bigger than the owners who feed them.

And in the eighth month, they start to have a strange feeling. It is mating season.

I am big and very big [he means bigger and bigger. Butterballs don’t learn comparatives]. The two-sticks are small and very small. But I start to feel some not good in me. One stick at my back feels like other two sticks. It is hard. This thing is here when I am small. Now I feel it is big. I rub on the floor, and still don’t feel good. I want to see a female on the other side. I really want to break my place and run to her. Climb on her.

Yes, he is matured and is ready for reproduction. However, a livestock as round as butterball is not capable of reproduction on their own. They need artificial reproduction.

A two-stick come to me. I say, “pet me”, the little sticks are on my head, and I say “good”. I don’t say, “feed me”, but I have food pour in front of me. I eat, and the two-stick move next to me, and I cannot see him. [He is right behind you, inspecting you.] I feel not good, someone touch my new stick. I feel it hard as my other sticks again. I feel a thing wrap around my stick, and move up and down on it. I feel good and not good the same time. I give out a moan, and move my four sticks uncontrollably. At a point my stick is so hard, and it is

so good. I scream out “very good”. And then my stick feels a bit strange, and it pee. This pee is not like other pee, this pee is hard. My new stick is soft now. That two-stick move back to my front, hold some white water in a bucket, saying not in a good way, “good heavens”.

Heaven? This is heaven! And he move to the barn next to me.

The extracted semen would be transported to the female barn. Thanks to DNA manipulation, there will be new bunches of butterballs several weeks later.

On the next day, after the regular feeding, a man enters the barn. He presses a button by the gate and the gate opens, showing a glassy track with a building at the end. That human points at the structure at the very end and shouts to the butterballs, “Today is the day. There is heaven. Who wants to go to heaven?” The butterball rejoices “Go to Heaven!” With a click of a button, all barn doors are down and the butterballs are released.

I feel so good. That, is heaven. I smack my body to the ground, and I end up jumping. I jump in the line of many others, we are all shouting “Heaven! Heaven!”

I rush to outside, pushing others on my way. I long for this a long time. The air is cool and fresh, unlike the air in the barn. It is tasty, I can even eat food from the air. The long yellowish things tickle as we slide on them. The great shiny, bright and warm. We bounce all the way, to the grey thing.

Little do they know, they are bouncing to their end, the slaughter house. Or as MacDonald’s assistant Cotter puts it, process plant.

We move close to the grey thing, and move in the barn. We are in. But I feel something good, I move faster. The ground is moving under me. It moves us faster to heaven.

That is the rails, delivering the butterballs to the slaughter section.

I am on the side of the moving ground. I shout, “Heaven!” Suddenly I am pushed by another one shouting “heaven”. I roll down to a not moving ground, and stop at a surface.

He rolls out of the rail, and rolls all the way to the side of a building where he can look above and see everything.

I look up, and see that my brothers are jumping to a group of things. As they bounce to a place, some moving shining sticks hold them up, and a flat stick slice one on the top, some smelly dark water comes out.

He doesn't know, those are called blood. A metallic craw stable the butterball, and slice it on the head, right horizontally through the head. Because butterballs have no clear heads for them to cut.

“Not good! Not good!” the others scream and run back, but the moving ground is suddenly fast. The gate is closed. They all be slice and more smelly dark water comes out. The place smells not good and the colour is not good. I see after they slice, the shiny sticks move their body and drop several dark things.

The metal claws pressing on the butterball moves to reveal the cross-section of it. Then they move to drop all the innings, the lung, the heart, the stomach. These three are the only things too poisoned for humans to eat.

The body go to another gate, and with two loud clanks they become bits.

The metal claws move the husk to a cutting area. The factory machines chop the husk vertically and horizontally into numerous pieces of meat.

I move my eyes with the bit of body, and see them fall into a large place.

The chopped meat drops to a few conveying belts, and drops to a container. They are then classified and packed to be sold. The slaughter house can produce ten thousand pounds of butterball meat with one batch of butterball.

I move more and see a place, a few two-sticks are sitting in it. A two-stick in white take one bit of the body, put it in a shiny bucket, and some good scent comes. The sitting two-sticks eat them. They eat them!

Well yes, some butterball meat is then transferred to the tasting area, where they are boiled, fried or baked and tasted by selected persons in the transparent lab. Our butterball happens to see it.

I feel a new thing, not very good. [It is fear:] I shout, “Not heaven, not heaven!” a two-stick from up sees me, and shouts “hey, why are you here?” He moves down trying to catch me. “Come here.” He moves his stick with five little sticks to me. I open my mouth and bite his stick. He shouts. A few lines of smelly dark water comes out from his stick.

Butterball attacks a process plant worker, biting his hand.

I see a road to a shiny, large shining, and it is becoming smaller and smaller. I bounce up to that shine, and bounce to the outside.

Butterball is able to escape the slaughtering plant.

I bounce back to barn. I shout “Not heaven! Not heaven! Cannot see mama! Don’t! Don’t eat me!” I feel something very bad. I don’t see shine. I close my eyes.

Of course, the farm sends a hunting group to chase after him, and they shoot with an anaesthetic bullet, putting him to sleep.

He is sent to the deepest darkest corner of the barn to wait for the drugs from the gun to wear off, with a new batch of butterballs fresh from the nursery.

The new butterballs are here, saying “feed me” “pet me” whenever seeing the two-sticks. One time, some new two-sticks come. These two-sticks are colourful. A two-stick walks to a place, and touch one saying “pet me”. She then pet herself when that one say “feed me”. She sees me, and moves to me with her two sticks, and moves her stick to me. I move to a corner, and I say “Don’t eat me. Please, don’t eat me.” That she-two-stick looks shocked, and she moves quickly away.

The DNA combination of a butterball is never disclosed. Report indicates that 20% is from chicken, 30% pig, and the rest is unknown. Some conspiracies suggest that the other 50% contain humans. They might not be far from the truth.