

tír na nóg

stories

Satchmo IV and Bonzo the Bull

tales for younger children david white

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Dedicated to my children and grandchildren
and all the children who have been to Camp in the New Forest from 1965...

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Satchmo IV and Bonzo the Bull

Satchmo IV

Satchmo IV is a Friesian cow. And that means a black and white cow. But Satchmo IV, with her grand name, as we shall see, is no ordinary cow — not even ordinary in the way that she is black and white: for if you look at her from one side, she looks like a white cow with black patches; and from the other side she looks like a black cow with white patches! How unusual.

Satchmo IV comes from a long line of Friesian dairy cows. Her mother, Satchmo III, came from a dairy farm in Chillaton, Devon, which was famous for its clotted cream. But Friesian cows are well known not only for the quality of their creamy milk, but also for the *quantity* of milk they produce: during a milking season, the cows from the Satchmo line would each produce enough milk, in a single day, to fill sixty-four pint bottles!

Satchmo IV and the Children at Camp

Satchmo IV lives with a herd of cows in the fields of a dairy farm on the edge of the New Forest. Every summer lots of children come to camp for their annual holiday in the fields on the farm. Some of the children have been lucky enough to watch Satchmo being milked in the milking sheds on the farm. The remarkable Satchmo IV has learned the

children's names over the years, when they called to each other as they played in the fields or in the woods on the farm.

Satchmo IV has an amazing memory — she remembers every one of the children who has been to Camp, even those whose names are mentioned just around the camp fire, when she has been chewing the cud, with the herd in the next field. And I am sure she will remember those yet to come.

Bonzo the Bull: His Story Begins...

Once upon a time, on a wintry day, just before the Spring arrived, Satchmo IV gave birth to a baby calf, a bullock, called Bonzo the Bull — to give him his full title. Like his mother, Satchmo, Bonzo was black and white; and like his mother, he was black on one side with white patches and white on the other with black patches; but unlike his mother, his black and white sides were opposite to hers. So Bonzo was like a smaller mirror image of his mother!

Bonzo, like all newborn calves, was able to stand on his own four hooves on the very day that he was born. Mind you, when he tried to stand up, it was a big effort: he had to get his front legs up, but slightly bent, next, push with all his might with his hind legs, then, once he was up, try to steady himself and keep his balance on his four wobbly legs. Often, he would lose his balance in the process, scramble frantically, stumble, causing him to fall over onto the soft piles of straw, which covered the floor of the barn where he lived with his mother. Satchmo would give him a comforting lick and encourage him to try again a bit later. Not to be defeated, he would try again and again to get up. With an occasional helpful nudge from Satchmo, he was able to get up on his four shaky legs, and remain standing. Then he would take a few, rickety steps forward or sideways only to collapse in a heap once again. Well, it was his *first* day alive on the planet.

On the day after he was born, he was already able to totter from one end of the barn, to the far end, a distance of thirty *long* metres. And Bonzo, like most young bullocks, was curious, insatiably curious. That day, he got up, his legs trembling under his weight, and while Satchmo, his mother, was asleep, wandered, more and more steadily, around the barn, intent on exploring every nook and cranny. Eventually, he came to the door of the barn, where he could see through the cracks in the door how bright it was on the other side. And, of course, on the other

side of the door, unbeknown to Bonzo the bull (and as he was about to discover) lay the large field surrounding the barn — beyond that the farm, and beyond that, lay just the whole wide world.

Bonzo the Bull Sets Forth

In his eagerness to see more through the cracks in the door, Bonzo stumbled, fell against the door and it started to open. Encouraged by seeing something new and very different from the already familiar inside of the barn, his curiosity egging him on, he straightened up, pushed the barn door some more with his nose, and it swung open, slowly, with a shuddering cccrreeeaak!

Bonzo, dazzled by the brightness, turned his head away. He took another look outside the door, his eyes more used to the glare, and all that he could see was completely white countryside, shimmering in bright wintry sunshine. Excited, he sniffed the white ground — there was no smell to it. Baffled, he licked it with his tongue, and jumped back in astonishment — it was so-oo cold. Bonzo, used only to his mother's warm milk, had had his first taste, literally, of the freezing cold snow. Not to be put off by the shock of the snow on his tongue, he put his best hoof forward into the six-inch deep snow, until he could feel and trust the solid ground beneath, then planted another hoof. Slowly, he moved out into the snow.

Shivering with the nip in the air, slipping a little here and there, he made his way, gingerly, through the snow-covered pasture. Bonzo was becoming a more confident young bullock with every new step. His balance improved. Stretching his legs, he moved faster. A hop, a skip and a jump — so far so good. He tried running, just a few steps at a time. He slipped over once, the snow cushioned his fall and he was up again in a flash. Suddenly, it was easy. Now, he was really travelling!

Bonzo the Bull: This Way and That

Before long, he was kicking the powdery snow into the air with his hind legs, shivering with delight each time he put his nose into the snow, bbrrrrrrh! Exuberantly, he shook his head, and trumpeted a lively "Moo-oo" to remove any traces of snow on his nose. Then off he charged, raced *this* way and *that* way, round and round chasing his tail — just like

a kitten does, circled a large tree twice, jumped across an imaginary stream and, finally, headed off across the snowy meadow as fast as he could go.

At long last, exhausted, he collapsed in a heap in the snow, which, he discovered, was as soft and as comfortable as the straw in the barn. He lay there to take a well deserved rest, rolling over playfully in the snow.

Bonzo the Bull Longs for Home

It began to snow. For a moment or two, Bonzo enjoyed sticking out his tongue to catch the falling flakes of snow to feel them melt in his mouth. But it was clouding over. Then the sun went in; Bonzo's mood changed. Despite all the fun, the high jinks, the excitement of this his first adventure, Bonzo started to feel cold and tired. It was now snowing heavily.

The best place for him to be right now, he thought, was inside the warm, straw-filled barn with his mother. But when he turned back, the barn was nowhere to be seen. For a start, the barn door had shut. It presented a white snowy exterior to anyone outside. But worse still, wherever Bonzo turned, he could barely see more than twenty metres through the falling snow. Worried, he mooed plaintively for Satchmo. There was no reply. Bonzo the bull, not yet two days old, was lost. Lost in a snowy wilderness.

He managed to get up, after slipping over a few times in the snow. He headed for a shadowy outline in the distance of what he hoped might be the barn, mooing loudly as he went. He longed to be with his mother in the warm barn the only home that he knew.

Bonzo the Bull: No Way Back?

He trudged on for what seemed forever, then, suddenly, trod into much deeper snow, forcing him to tumble into a ditch, which the drifting snow had covered up. Try as he might, Bonzo could not climb out of the ditch. He was stuck fast, lay there feeling sorry for himself, and mooed desperately for Satchmo. To make matters worse, the winter chill began to bite Bonzo's nose and eyes, and even his ears. He closed his eyes. It

was growing dark, Bonzo was afraid. All alone. Lost. And now trapped in the cold snow. Bonzo was very afraid.

Satchmo, meanwhile, had been snoozing to recover her strength after giving birth to Bonzo the day before. Now she was suddenly awake, and instantly alert when she realized her precious baby calf, Bonzo, was no longer lying beside her. Bonzo she mooed, loudly, Come over here to me! No reply. There was no Bonzo. Satchmo clambered up, and started to search desperately every inch of the barn, calling for Bonzo again and again. Still no Bonzo. She marched to the door of the barn, butted it open with her horns, and stepped out into the crisp snow. She looked all around. She was tempted to rush out mooing for Bonzo, hoping that he would hear her or she would see him, his black patches standing out against the snow. No sign of Bonzo, neither hide nor hair.

Satchmo IV: To the Rescue

Satchmo, as we have said, was no ordinary cow. She stopped, and thought coolly. I have to act quickly, she thought, as it is cold out there, it's snowing and it is starting to get dark. I haven't much time to find him. Satchmo looked this way and that. Here and there. Near and far. Up and Down. And, glancing down, she noticed something in the snow.

What do you think it was? Yes, hoof prints. A track of prints that Bonzo had left as he played in the snow. What do you think Satchmo decided to do? Yes, to follow the tracks that she hoped would lead her to Bonzo. And that is exactly what she did.

First, she went *this way* and *that way*, as Bonzo had done. Then round and round (but not chasing her tail). After circling the big tree twice, she crossed Bonzo's imaginary stream, before heading off across the meadow. All the while mooing Bonzo urgently, as she followed closely his tracks in the snow. At last, she heard a faint mooing far ahead. She quickened her pace in the direction of the pitiful mooing, which grew fainter and then stopped altogether. She hurried on.

Satchmo IV Finds a White Calf

It was quiet, not a sound, as she followed the tracks into deep snow. She waded in to reach a small, motionless white calf, its eyes closed, but breathing puffs of vapour into the air. A white calf? There are no

black patches at all, she thought to herself, how can this be my Bonzo? She was puzzled. She had followed the tracks, but they had led her to this white calf that she didn't even recognize as one of the calves on the farm.

The calf's head was covered in snow. She licked the unknown calf's forehead to revive it, and to get a better look. As she cleared the snow from its head, it remained white underneath, but as she licked across its face, a black edge appeared, leading to a black patch on the other side. She was now looking at a smaller mirror image of herself – it had to be her Bonzo! The white Bonzo, who by now had been smothered in snow, opened his eyes, recognised Satchmo straight away, and greeted her with a moo of delight. Reunited with her Bonzo at last, Satchmo was overjoyed.

The End of the Adventure

But the danger was not over yet; there was not a second to lose. Satchmo knew they had to get back to the barn before the snow, which was still falling, filled in their tracks, or before it became too dark even to see what was left of the tracks which could lead them safely home. She helped Bonzo up. Standing still, he looked like a calf version of a snowman. She got behind him and pushed him up out of the ditch. Satchmo, with Bonzo at her side, set out quickly to follow the long line of tracks.

How did they go? Yes, back over the meadow, across the imaginary stream, circling round the big tree twice, round and round, *that way* and *this way*. At long last, they arrived safely back at their warm, welcoming barn.

Once inside the barn, Satchmo licked him into shape, removing all the snow that covered this white calf, to reveal her very own black and white Friesian bullock: Bonzo the bull. Bonzo snuggled up to Satchmo, and took a long drink of Satchmo's warm milk. It wasn't long, before tired and weary, he fell fast asleep.

Bonzo had had his first big adventure, when he was just one day old! And his clever, resourceful mother, Satchmo IV, had come to his rescue and prevented his first big adventure from turning into a disaster. What would his next big adventure be?

THE END

Illustrations for this story

If any children of whatever age would like to draw or paint some sketches of Satchmo IV or Bonzo the bull, or of any scenes in this story, I will be happy to include some in this story for when I publish it. You can send them to me by email or on paper by post as I have a scanner.

