

Farmer Hicks and His Two Horses

Farmer Hicks had two horses. One was named Surly and the other Softly.

Every day the farmer would feed the horses. Every day he'd brush the horses. And every day the farmer would exercise the horses.

Surly was strong. But, he didn't like being brushed. He didn't like getting exercise either. He was unfriendly. In fact, sometimes he'd bite and kick Farmer Hicks.

Softly was sweet and appreciated everything Farmer Hicks did for her.

One day a stranger came to the farm. The horses saw him talking to Farmer Hicks.

"What do you think they're talking about?" said Surly. "I don't like the look of that stranger."

Softly shook her head. "He seems okay. Let's move closer to them so we can hear what they're saying."

The two horses went around the barn and moved as close to the men as they could.

"That's close enough." Softly tilted her ears forward. "Be quiet and listen."

"So, how much do you want," said the stranger.

"Well, he's a worker. And he's very strong," said the farmer. "You can have him for \$10. I think that's a fair price."

The stranger thought a minute. "I have lots of loads to be carried and pulled. If he's really strong, then okay. Let me see him."

Farmer Hicks and the stranger headed to the barn.

Surly snorted. "A strong worker. Do you think Farmer Hicks is talking about me? The stranger can have me for \$10? Farmer Hicks is selling me?!"

"Hmm," said Softly. She nodded her head back. "You know, you're not very nice to Farmer Hicks. You even bite and kick him. Would you blame him for selling you to a stranger?"

Surly lowered his head. "I never thought about it. Farmer Hicks has always been kind to me. I shouldn't have been so mean to him. I don't even know why I did all those things."

Softly nudged Surly with her shoulder. "If it's true, I'm going to miss you. We've grown up together."

“I’ll miss you too,” said Surly. A tear welled up in his eye.

Just then Farmer Hicks came up to the horses. “Ah, there you are. These are my prized horses,” he said to the stranger. “I’ve had them from when they were foals.”

The farmer led Bruno the ox across the yard. “Take good care of him.”

“Will do,” said the stranger. “Thanks again.” The stranger took Bruno and walked him down the road and out of sight.

Surly sniffed hard. “I . . . I guess Farmer Hicks isn’t selling me.” He sniffed again. “I’m sure happy it’s not me he sold. I love it here. I’m going to be nice to Farmer Hicks from now on.”

Softly’s tail swayed. “It’s about time. When you think you’re going to lose something, you realize how precious it is.”

Questions

1. What was the difference between Surly and Softly?
2. Why did the horses think Farmer Hicks was selling Surly?
3. Which animal did Farmer Hicks sell?
4. What lesson did Surly learn?