

## The Goat Story

My family is the joke of our neighborhood.

I live in a middle-class suburban neighborhood in a small town called Sykesville, Maryland. I've lived in the same house my entire life. When I was born we had one cat. That made a lot of sense. Now, we have two cats, two *large* dogs, two goats, and an entire horse. I could go into the long, convoluted story of how I ended up buying a dutch warmblood horse that once cost upwards of \$300,000 for just one measly dollar, but the real reason our neighbors make fun of us is NOT because of the breathing garden gnome that eats all of the grass in our small backyard. No, we are the cosmic joke of town because of "the goat story."

So, why, you may ask, would my family feel the need to add goats to our peculiar assortment of animals? Well, one cold winter day, two years ago, my mom looked over at me and said "do you think he gets lonely?"

"Do I think who gets lonely, mom?"

"Your horse."

And that was all it took. Without telling anyone else in the family (much to my father's despise) we hopped in the car at 8:00 pm in the middle of November with a dog crate in the trunk and went to get a goat. Unfortunately, my mom and I are both the type of women who think everything will just work out with limited preparation. So, relying on a smidge of common sense and absolutely no knowledge of goats we rolled up to a friend's farm and said "hey, you got a goat?"

Inside the small barn, there was a mom goat and six kids running around. Most of the kids were either completely white or completely brown except one who was a perfect mix of the two. Obviously, my mom and I looked at each other and said "we'll take that one" and the farmer gave us a dubious look and said, "are you sure, she's a real handful." Meanwhile, this goat is standing on top of like five bales of straw, elevated at least eight feet in the air, looking down on us like a hawk surveying unsuspecting mice in a field.

After a huge, squirming ordeal, we managed to get her into the dog crate and started driving home. Whew, the hard part is over.

Sike.

Everything else happened in rapid succession. We pulled up to the makeshift barn in our backyard, opened the trunk, this 6-month-old goat charged the crate door, easily vaulted over my mom's shoulder, ran across the yard, parkour leapt over the 6-foot fence, and disappeared into the night before my mom and I could even say "SH\*T!"

Horried, we went straight into panic mode. Ran into the house yelling “we lost our goat, we lost our goat!” To which my dad and brother replied “what f\*ing goat???” Scrambling, we grabbed flashlights, rope, and carrots and took to the streets. Then we all looked at each other. How the hell do you find a goat that is six months old, has no name and is completely lost. My mom, ever the quick thinker started, uh, I think you would call it “bleating.” Like saying “maa maa maaaa” and running through the streets of our neighborhood. Next thing you know, porch lights are coming on and neighbors are running out of their homes as our family hopelessly tries to explain the situation we have found ourselves in.

We all went to bed that night distraught and goatless. The next day we put “LOST GOAT, REWARD \$200” signs all over town with a poorly drawn sketch of something that resembled a two-tone dog with horns. My mom told the farmer we got her from what had happened which resulted in the farmer bringing the baby goat’s mom to our house so that maybe the little goat would hear her mom and come back. Yet, that night we went to bed distraught and goatless again. And the next night, and the next. Every once in a while we’d get a call saying “I saw a goat, just about 7 miles from here,” or “I saw a goat on a highway” and we’d look at each other in disbelief because there’s no way that goat could be out there all by herself traveling miles and miles at just six months old. The mom goat stayed in our backyard screaming her head off as the neighbors looked over at us in half sympathy and half bewilderment. We all began to give up. I know I’m making light of this situation but in the moment I was crushed and felt absolutely horrible for losing this poor little goat.

And then, TWO WEEKS LATER, at 9 pm, we get a call from a neighbor down the street. “Um I might be mistaken but there’s a herd of deer in our front yard and it looks like your goat is with em.” Shut up. I RAN outside, rope in hand and my pockets stuffed to the brim with treats.

Spotted. Baby goat rendezvous with the deer, as we approached, her head shot up. She eyed us wearily, in spite of her own mother’s obvious pleas for her to return home. It was then I knew, my sympathy had been misplaced these past two weeks because, in the eyes of this goat, I did not see fear -- I saw mischief with a twinge of vengefulness and pure evil. She had not been lost running up and down highways for weeks, she was too busy galavanting with her new family of deer and plotting her revenge on me and my mother for putting her in a dog crate. I knew what I had to do, very slowly, hiding the rope behind my back I approached, careful to not make eye contact, and just as I was in arm’s distance I saw her body tense -- ready to flee-- and I pounced.

Pretty much, I body-slammed this poor goat like we were in the WWE on my neighbor’s lawn with EVERYONE watching. I looped the rope around her neck and claimed victory as she proceed to plant her front hooves on my thigh and attempt to kickflip herself out of captivity. The entire neighborhood cheered as I led her to our backyard. If I wasn’t so damn happy to finally have captured the source of my anxiety for the past two weeks I would have been horrifically embarrassed. Finally, I put her with her mother in the extra stall, fed them some hay, and went to get my first full night’s sleep in weeks.

And then I woke up.

“SIERRA, THE GOAT IS OUT AGAIN”

Yes, we now have a scapegoat but with an “e” as the first letter. I named her Dini, after Houdini, and she smirks at me and proceeds to do whatever the hell she feels like because apparently, no structure can hold her. Thankfully she does spend most of her time hanging out with her mom, who we ended up keeping, and my horse. But ever so often we still get a call from a frazzled neighbor telling us that our goat is out munching on the bushes in their garden or off in a field hanging out with a group of deer.