Thomas Eldredge

"Long Walk"

"Long days call for long walks", thought Bessy as she meandered out of the gate leading to open pasture. She was a lonely cow but she'd spend a lot of time learning how to keep herself entertained with mental imagery. Her imagination was so profound that the regularly imagined herself as other animals; snakes, dogs, squirrels, birds, even men. Today she though she would spend some time as a mountain goat.

Fortunately for Bessy she knew a fantastic setting to practice her goatness. It would take her three hours to walk there and three hours back. Three hours was a perfect amount of time to get into character, then she could spend a few hours pretending to be a goat, then three walking back remembering how to be a cow. By the time she got back she would be a cow again and she'd arrive just in time to enjoy the best part of being a cow – eating. Tomorrow morning she'd wake up, enjoy an utter massage, loose some milk-weight, and decide what to do with her powerful imagination for the rest of the day. It was a good life.

Two hours into her long walk she began to think of herself ambitiously as a true goat. Bessy could feel the goatness swelling within her and impulsively expelled a commanding "Mehehehaaaaoooooo <gag> kheh kheh <swallow> mooooh <cough> Meh ehehehe!" which in goat translates roughly to "Mountain goats rock harder than a geologist at Woodstock."

As it would happen, a very old, very unfriendly mountain goat was within earshot. He reacted to Bessy's statement before he considered the content.

"Shut up ye stupid Heifer." The goat called out.

"Oh, Mr. Goat, I'm sorry, I didn't see you there." Bessy replied kindly.

The mountain goat suddenly comprehended the statement he had just overreacted to. "What did you say about Woodstock? Was that a shot at goats or geologists?"

"Oh neither, I was just practicing my Goat-ese. I've decided to be a mountain goat today."

"You – decided? If I decided to be a cow today you think I could go plug an utter into a freezer and squeeze out some ice cream?"

"Of course not – you're a male you don't have utters." Bessy informed him.

The goat swiveled his head to check his undercarriage. "Sure enough."

"I'm Bessy. What's you're name Mr. Goat.?" Bessy asked politely, though she thought herself horribly rude for such a delayed introduction.

"Billy." Said the goat.

"Of course. May I ask you something Billy?"

"You just did."

"Indeed, well may I ask you a follow-up question?"

"You just did."

"Indeed, well may I ask…"

"Get on with it you crazy cow?" Billy barked. His words stung Bessy, for over the past couple of hours she had begun to think of herself not as a crazy cow, but as a pleasantly eccentric goat.

"Excuse me Billy, I only meant to ask how a goat, such as one of us," she stressed their camaraderie in goat-kind. "might go about learning to climb mountains?"

Billy laughed sadistically at what he considered a deeply disturbed bovine. Bessy maintained a proper smile and did not allow the goat's rudeness to infiltrate her demeanor. When Billy laughed himself out he stood up, realizing the mad-cow must be serious.

"How did you learn to make milk?" Billy asked rhetorically.

Bessy's intellect collided with a stone wall. She'd never considered such a thing. How would one learn to make or not make milk? The goat's unintentional koan had set off a firestorm of activity in her mind. She dismissed herself politely if awkwardly from the goat and continued walking, thinking as hard as she could about cowness, goatness, and what it means to make milk.

Bessy arrived at the place where she had come to practice her goatness. It was a steep cliff. Staring over the edge of the cliff into oblivion, Bessy's mind became a place of whiteness, clean light, pure thought becoming intelligence, becoming awareness, becoming reality. She knew the answer. She had found enlightenment. She knew how she had learned to make milk and how she would learn to climb mountains; by doing it

Moments later a car collided with a 600lb cow, who only an instant before, had been a true mountain goat.