"She's all goat," Papa was saying to Mrs. Symington, "and as such, you can't allow her too many privileges. She. . . ."

"Don't worry! Don't worry, John," the neighbor exclaimed, raising a dainty hand and gesturing ever so finely. "Bessie and I will get along fine. Just fine. Who ever heard of having trouble with anything so innocent looking
as this dear creature! Just look at her! Poor dumb goat! Why, she likes me. Actually likes me!

I stood near Papa, listening. Poor dumb goat, did Mrs. Symington say? One thing sure, Bessie was not dumb. She was smart. Too smart. Too smart. Just wait till she started acting up.

"Your dress, Mrs. Symington," I exclaimed impulsively as Bess munched contentedly on the woman's silk frock.

Mrs. Symington tittered softly. "I told you she liked me. See! That proves it. I'll take her, Mr. Schmidt."

Proved what? I mused silently. To me, it proved merely one thing: Bess was a goat. All goat; and she enjoyed the flavor of many and varied things.

"As I said before, Mrs. Symington, she's all goat." Papa's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"I know! I know! Did you forget that I know what I'm buying and what I want? If I knew where to put them all, I'd buy her three kids, too," and Mrs. Symington cast an affectionate look to the fenced-in lot where the nearly-grown kids were frolicking and cavorting gaily and merrily.

"Oh, just look at those dear, innocent little things!" she said dreamily.

They were cute, it was true, and so pretty; but innocent? Well, I had misgivings there: I knew their behavior too well.

"You'd better get sanctified, Mrs. Symington," I burst out on impulse again, my face all seriousness. "Bess will 'try' you, as Mama says."

"Now don't you worry, dear boy. Bessie and I will get along beautifully. And as for this new doctrine our pastor's preaching . . ." she drew a long meaningful sigh, "well, I don't go along with it at all. Not at all!"

"But it's not new, Mrs. Symington," Papa explained. "It's just that our other pastors failed to preach it because they themselves were not sanctified. I thank God for sending Rev. Hunsifer to us. This heart Holiness . . . a
cleansed heart... is a wonderful experience. And it works when you get it. You do remember my wicked temper... ."

"Yes. Yes," Mrs. Symington answered curtly. "And you are different, I must say. But I'm saved and that is all I need. This so called sanctification may be all right for hard headed Dutchmen like you and Rev. Hunsifer and the Fenstemachers and Schregengasts, but I don't need it. Now if you'll load Bessie for me I'll be on my way."

I wanted to tell Mrs. Symington that she needed sanctification badly, especially so since Bessie was going home with her, but I didn't Children were to be seen and not heard from too frequently, and I had already blurted my heart-felt feelings out two times I hadn't been asked, either! Shame welled up inside of me. "Peter," Papa ordered softly, "you push. I'll lead." I knew how stubborn Bess could be when the notion struck her, so I went up to her and rubbed her hard head gently. "Behave," I whispered softly into her twitching ear, "and move."

She looked at me long and fiercely, as if defying my impassioned plea, all the while munching on a mouthful of timothy hay.

"Push, Peter," Papa's voice urged.

I pushed. Papa pulled. Bess stood... glued to the spot, it seemed.

"Try again," was Papa's gentle order.

Quickly, I ran up to Bess' ear. Once again I whispered an order. She merely stared at me and gave me a silly look that made me feel silliest of all.

Blushing with embarrassment, I hurried to my assigned post.

Papa pulled. I pushed. Bess remained adamant, just like a fossilized statue, except for her defiant munching and roving eyes which seemed to be mocking Papa and me.

"Let me help," Mrs. Symington volunteered. From her purse she extracted a dainty handkerchief well saturated with sickening-sweet perfume. She fluttered it in front of Bess.
Like a lamb led to the slaughter, Bess followed Mrs. Symington right into the trailer.

Mrs. Symington beamed. "Oh, I love her! I love her! I told you she liked me. We'll get along so well."

"I hope so. I hope so," Papa said simply. "But keep in mind that she's a goat."

"Oh, you Dutchmen! You worry too much," Mrs. Symington said. "Furthermore, it's knowing how to handle a goat. Bess is mine now. We'll get along fine together. Good-day."

"Good-day, and may God bless you," Papa said, going toward the house.

"What will happen when Bessie gets one of her stubborn streaks, Papa?" I asked, worried.

"Mrs. Symington's not sanctified..."

Papa chuckled softly then patted me on my head.

"We'll wait and see, Peter. Yes, we will wait and see.

And I doubt that we have long to wait."

"But Papa, what if something dreadful happens to poor Bess! You and Mama and James and the girls and I are all sanctified. We treat our animals like sanctified people should treat them... with firmness but kindness. But Mrs. Symington..." My voice trailed to almost a whispered moan.

"I know, son. I hated to sell Bess. But the doctor ordered goat milk for Marian and we can't stand by and watch the child die. Bess is an excellent milk goat."

"But I'd have taken milk over to Marian every single day of my natural life, Papa."
"Any of us would have, Peter. But it's best this way. You see, Marian's going to be needing Bessie's milk for a long time. And Bess won't fail them if they treat her with some respect and dignity."

I sat on the edge of the garden wall and shed tears for Bess while Papa disappeared inside the house.

From my vantage point (I had a ringside seat!), I watched Frisky, Tinker, and Blue Bell, Bessie's three kids, gamboling and playing together. They were totally unaware that their mother was gone. My heart felt sad and heavy and sorry for them.

Dropping to the good earth, I crossed the yard and garden and was soon inside the enclosure that held the trio. They saw me coming and bounced to my side like giant rubber balls.

Blue Bell nudged me ever so gently to let me know she was there and Tinker and Frisky nibbled teasingly at my hands.

I flung my arms around them and gathered them close to me.

"Oh, you poor, poor orphans!" I wailed, great tears washing my face and falling on to their furry coats. All three answered with a loud, "Baa . . . aa." "You're orphans," I explained, feeling miserable over Bess' going. "Papa had to sell your mama to give milk to Marian so she won't die. But maybe we'll get her back again." A sudden surge of hope rushed through me.

All three gave me a gentle nudge then raced away across their fenced-in pasture. I felt they understood. I was satisfied now.

I missed dear old Bessie, stubborn though she was at times, and I wondered if she missed us, too. I was sure that by now she had learned the difference between sanctified and unsanctified people. Always, even when one of our animals needed to be brought "into line," as Papa would say, the whip was only hard enough for their good, and severe enough to help them remember that they were subservient to us.

Papa was a close follower of and strict adherent to the Bible. Daffy, he lived Proverbs 12:10 before his animals, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."
We were taught likewise and this became second-nature to us after each had received the fiery baptism of the Holy Ghost in sanctifying power. The suppression within our carnal hearts was all taken out, eradicated and dead, and with it went that "I could kill you!" and "I'll-get-even-with-you" feeling and desire. Oh, Holiness of heart was wonderful, and I knew Bess missed us for our "being different . . . good different," if for no other reason.

Nearly two weeks had gone by. I was settled comfortably on the garden wall, my rapidly growing legs dangling loosely down the wall, thinking about Bess. Did Mrs. Symington still "love her"? Did she still think Bess was all innocence? Dumb? And first and foremost of all, was she treating Bess like "the righteous man" in Proverbs?

"Peter," it was Papa's voice calling me. "Coming, Papa." I slid off the garden waft easily.

"Mama and I are going over to the Symington's to see how little Marian is getting along. Come with us."

I had a wonderful Papa. Though no words passed between us, he knew my longing over Bess. He could read the heart of a small boy just like a book, I thought.

The ride to the Symington place was pleasant. It always was. But this time it was made acutely so since I knew I'd see Bessie at the end of the short journey. I saw the house long before we got there. It was enormous. A solid, imposing structure, set firmly on top of a well-rounded hill. I pretended it was a castle . . . the only castle for miles and miles around.

The Symingtons had moved into our peaceful valley some ten or twelve years earlier from a large, overcrowded eastern city. Mr. Symington's life was dependent upon country air, the doctors said. He bought one of the best farms in the valley and had the farming leased out to a neighbor for shares, but lived in the lovely old stuccoed house, all the while working at the bank in town.

We followed the graveled road to the top of the hill then turned into the paved driveway. I was out of the car before Papa had time to cut the motor, running toward the barn in search of Bess.
"No need going out there, Peter!" Mrs. Symington's shrill voice cut into my happy thought of the grand reunion I would have with dear Bessie.

"But maybe you can help me to catch her. She's the meanest, foulest, dirtiest..."

My mouth opened wide. I had never heard such ranting and raving in all my natural life. "I told you, you should get sanctified," I blurted with nothing but the utmost sincerity and concern. "Anyone who has Bess needs the blessing of entire sanctification, Mrs. Symington."

"It takes more than the 'blessing' to live around that goat!" the woman wafted. "She's the most cantankerous..."

"What's your trouble?" Mama asked, making her way toward the frustrated woman.

"Problems, Mrs. Symington?" Papa asked innocently.

"Problems, did the man say! Problems!" she mocked rocking back and forth on her heels. "Why, John Schmidt, I'll kill that beast. I will! if it's the last thing I do. Take her back! Take her back!" she screamed. With clenched fists and flashing eyes, she came toward Papa like a wild woman. I thought of the demoniac who lived among the tombs and wondered if he had been worse than poor Mrs. Symington. "You sold her to me... knowing full well her destructive tendencies."

"But, Mrs. Symington, I..."

"Don't 'but' me, John Schmidt! Why didn't you tell me what a wretched creature that goat was? Why? Tell me!"

She was screaming so loudly and looked so fierce that I ran and hid behind Mama's long, full skirt. I had never seen such a violent display of temper and of carnality. Rev. Hunsifer was right, I know. He preached that the old carnal nature made you do down-right awful things. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," he had thundered from the pulpit. I shuddered involuntarily as the woman's tirade continued.
"Oh, that beastly destructive creature! She eats everything in sight. My roses are all gone. The lilies, too. Yesterday she cleaned my garden out, and today . . .?" Mrs. Symington's hand flew to her head. "Today . . . she ate Margie's cookies. What she didn't eat, she trampled to crumbs!"

"But, Mrs. Symington," Mama began softly, "certainly you didn't bring Bessie into the house."

"You can rest assured I did not!" was the curt reply. "But that goat gets loose no matter where she's put. The cookies were on the screened-in porch to cool and, well, you can imagine the rest."

"But Bess didn't cut the screen and get in!" Mother exclaimed softly

"Of course she didn't. She's not that smart. But she got in." Mrs. Symington's voice was sharp and shrill and highly agitated.

"Somebody failed to close the screen door?" Mama probed gently.

"Ye . . . yes, of course. But Bess had no right to get loose. And John Schmidt, you can have her back . . if there's anything left of her when I get through with her. I've beaten her till she'll never forget it. I'll kill her if I can. I promise I will. . . ."

I waited to hear no more. The awful threat of murdering my dear Bessie sent me off in every direction, calling, crying, pleading, "Bess, oh Bess, where are you? It's Peter. I've come to rescue you from the hands of the wicked. Bess. Bess. . . ."

I heard her then. From a near-by thicket, a welcome, "Baaa, baaa," reached my ears. "I'm coming, Bess. Are you all right? It's Peter." Again she answered. Then I saw her. On tottery legs she came to meet me. A glad light of recognition shone in her eyes.

"Bess! Bess!" I exclaimed, sobbing and throwing my hands about her furry neck which was stained with her own blood. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," I quoted. I wept hard then. Mrs. Symington told the truth... Bess would never forget the beating. Would she survive? I wondered.
"Can you forgive Papa for selling you, Bess?" I asked in her ear. "He didn't want to do it but he had to . . . so Marian wouldn't die. You understand, don't you?"

For answer, she licked my hand and nudged me gently.

"Come," I ordered, leading her to the top of the hill and the car. "Mrs. Symington said Papa could have you back. Come Bess, you're going home... with 'the righteous man' who 'regardeth the life of his beast.' "

Slowly, wobbly and tottery but obediently, Bessie followed, utterly content to be in my presence.

When we reached the top of the hill no one was in sight. "Come, Bess," I coaxed, opening the rear car door. "We'll wait for Papa and Mama in here."

Bess looked at me for a moment, a silly kind of look on her goat face, but the next minute she was safe inside. I shut the door and sat on the seat stroking her weak, blood streaked body. It was trembling.

"There she is! There she is!" Mrs. Symington screeched, coming toward the car.

Bess trembled violently at the screaming, screeching voice. A wild, frantic look was in her eyes. "I'm here, Bess." I whispered softly into her ear. "Don't be afraid. I won't let her get you. I won't. Papa won't, either." I pushed the lock buttons down on the doors lest the near-wild woman enter the car and finish her completely. "Here's the money to buy Bess back," Papa was saying. "Take it Mrs. Symington. I'm sorry you had such a time with her. We shall do all we can. . . ."

"Take her away! Just get her out of my sight! Oh-h, that goat! That goat, Bess!"

Quickly I unlocked the two front doors. Papa got into the car. "Think over what I told you, Mrs. Symington," Mama said softly, placing her hands on the woman's shoulders. "God couldn't allow anything like you have just displayed, into Heaven. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness. . . ." Mama's soft voice and her sincere spirit had a quieting effect upon the irate woman.
"I . . . I will, Mrs. Schmidt," she promised.

"And we will be praying for you," Mama said quietly, as we drove away. We were nearly home when Mama turned to smile at me.

"Th . . . the . . . goat? Why, Peter . . . Papa . . . when did she get in here?"

"I got her in," I said happily

Mama reached a kind hand back and stroked the ill-treated animal. Papa laughed a soft musical kind of laughter that told my little heart that everything was going to be all right again. "It isn't every goat that gets to ride in the back seat of a car!" he exclaimed, winking at Mama.

"Bess is a good goat, Mama. See? She's behaving like a perfect lady," I said, patting her.

"A perfectly sick lady," Mama said sadly, not at all unkind and ill-tempered like Mrs. Symington.

"We'll make her well again," I said emphatically.

"Of course we will, Peter; with God's help," Papa confirmed.

Bess was given the place of "honor" in the barn . . . the big, roomy bull pen. Big Sam had long since been turned out to pasture with the beef cattle. We doctored, fed, watered, petted, patted and coddled Bess, and soon she was as good as new and back once more to giving her usual abundance of milk. Every day we took milk over to the Symington place for Marian; and each passing day Mrs. Symington seemed more docile and gentle. I felt she was praying . . . and hard!

"James," she said to my brother one day when he and I had delivered the milk, "tell your dear Mama I got it."

"Got it? Got what?" James asked.
"Sanctified!" When the woman said the word it seemed like a carload of
glory struck her soul. She took shouting across the lawn with her face shining
just like an angel's. James and I wept for joy.

"I had to get converted first," she explained when she returned to us,
"for I had lost all the grace of God out of my heart."

"Bess would see the difference," I exclaimed impulsively, overwhelmed
with joy at the transformation.

"Bess? Ah, yes. Dear old Bess!" Mrs. Symington's words were almost
like a benediction, I thought.

"Thank God for Bess," she exclaimed aloud "She exposed my carnality;
she made me see the awfulness of my treacherous heart! And to think that I
almost killed her! That dear goat! That goat, Bess! Hug her for me, Peter, and
tell her I'm different. Whisper it in her ear. . . ."

When James and I got home, that's just what I did. "She's different
now, Bess," I told her softly in her ear, "and you would know the difference!"
Bess twitched her goat ears excitedly and munched contentedly on a bite of
tender grass in her mouth.

Satisfied and happy, I hurried to the house to tell Papa and Mama the
good news.