

Out With the Goats

by Johanna Spyri *from Heidi*

Heidi is the story of a young girl who goes to live in the mountains of Switzerland with her grandfather. She makes friends with Peter, a neighbor boy who herds goats. In this passage, Heidi is with Peter when he takes the goats to the pasture on the mountainside. Two of the goats are named Greenfinch and Snowflake. Heidi has just shared her lunch with Peter.

All of a sudden Peter leaped to his feet and ran hastily after the goats. Heidi followed him as fast as she could, for she was too eager to know what had happened to stay behind. Peter dashed through the middle of the flock towards that side of the mountain where the rocks fell perpendicularly to a great depth below, and where any thoughtless goat, if it went too near, might fall over and break all its legs. He had caught sight of the inquisitive Greenfinch taking leaps in that direction, and he was only just in time, for the animal had already sprung to the edge of the abyss. All Peter could do was to throw himself down and seize one of her hind legs. Greenfinch, thus taken by surprise, began bleating furiously, angry at being held so fast and prevented from continuing her voyage of discovery. She struggled to get loose, and endeavored so obstinately to leap forward that Peter shouted to Heidi to come and help him, for he could not get up and was afraid of pulling out the goat's leg altogether.

Heidi had already run up and she saw at once the danger both Peter and the animal were in. She quickly gathered a bunch of sweet-smelling leaves, and then, holding them under Greenfinch's nose, said coaxingly, "Come, come, Greenfinch, you must not be naughty! Look, you might fall down there and break your leg, and that would give you dreadful pain!"

The young animal turned quickly and began contentedly eating the leaves out of Heidi's hand. Meanwhile Peter got on to his feet again and took hold of Greenfinch by the band round her neck from which her bell was hung, and Heidi taking hold of her in the same way on the other side, they led the wanderer back to the rest of the flock that had remained peacefully feeding. Peter, now he had his goat in safety, lifted his stick in order to give her a good beating as punishment, and Greenfinch seeing what was coming shrank back in fear. But Heidi cried out, "No, no, Peter, you must not strike her; see how frightened she is!"

"She deserves it," growled Peter, and again lifted his stick. Then Heidi flung herself against him and cried indignantly, "You have no right to touch her, it will hurt her, let her alone!" Peter looked with surprise at the commanding little figure, whose dark eyes were flashing, and reluctantly he let his stick drop. "Well, I will let her off if you will give me some more of your cheese tomorrow," he said, for he was determined to have something to make up to him for his fright.

"You shall have it all, tomorrow and every day, I do not want it," replied Heidi, giving ready consent to his demand. "And I will give you bread as well, a large piece like you had today; but then you

must promise never to beat Greenfinch, or Snowflake, or any of the goats.”

“All right,” said Peter, “I don’t care,” which meant that he would agree to the bargain, and let go of Greenfinch, who joyfully sprang to join her companions.

Questions

1. What does *contentedly* mean here: “The young animal turned quickly and began contentedly eating the leaves out of Heidi’s hand.”
2. What did Peter promise Heidi?
3. What did Heidi say she would give Peter in exchange for his promise?
4. What does the story tell you about Heidi as a person?