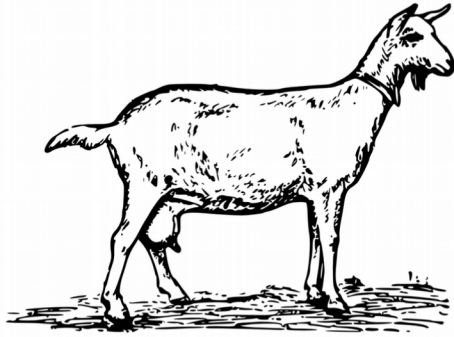


Super Shorts Mini Zines

SFF Short Stories
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Roast Goat by Larry Heyl



Mikhael ran swiftly through the dawn, knees lifted high, feet barely tapping the ground. He swerved quickly avoiding rocks and sticks without thinking or looking. The cold air cut his lungs as he gasped deeply.

He entered the house running through the kitchen door and was brought

The Sargeant snapped his bayonet back onto his rifle. "Your children

can eat after we've gone", he said.

Mikhael stood by his wife in front

of the children. "You'd best do as

he asks", he said.

Elena took the half cooked soup out

into the yard and then retreated

back into the kitchen scared by the

ravenous soldiers. The sargeant

went out to eat with the men.

Mikhael went and stood by the

Sargeant. "Can you stay then. I'm

afraid those other soldiers will be

coming back. If you want me to I'll

kill this goat."

The Sargeant ignored him. After the

last potato was gone he led his

men out of there.

"Let's make some time." he shouted.

"They are expecting us in

Springfield in the morning."

he said. "We need to camp and

recuperate."

Mikhael thought fast. "The other

soldiers wiped us clean. You know the

ones", he said and he spat on the

floor.

"When were they here?" asked the

Sargeant glancing out through the

door.

"Just last week. They said they'd be

back. I wish you would stay and

protect us.", Mikhael answered. The

sargeant gave them a worried look.

Out in the yard a soldier shouted,

"We found this old goat. Should we

start a fire and roast him?"

"We can't stay long enough for

that", ordered the sargeant. "You!",

he pointed at Elena, "Take that soup

out to the men."

"Can I feed my children?" asked

Elena.

up short by the table. He leaned on it unable to catch his breath or speak. His wife, Elena, brought him some water. The children ran down the stairs sleepybugs still in their eyes. One look at their mother told them they'd best be still.

"I saw them. The soldiers. Over the hill." he panted out. "We've got to hide the goats. They'll be here soon."

Elena spoke sharply to the eldest boy. "Jackson, you and Kelly take the dogs and herd the goats into the back woods. You know where to hide them in that thicket."

"Leave the old billy," said Mikhael. "If the soldiers find him they might not look for the others. I'll tell them we had to eat the others because of the hard winter."

with pride and spit and polish. Now

they looked a ragged bunch with

hunger in their eyes.

There were less than a dozen men

led by a Sargeant. No officers. That

worried Mikhael.

He met them in the yard. "It's been

a hard winter", he said to the

Sargeant.

The Sargeant didn't respond

ignoring Mikhael and signaling his

troops to check the barn. He walked

to the house and into the kitchen.

Mikhael followed.

Elena met them at the door. "You

must be hungry." she said. "I am

fixing soup for my family but you are

welcome to it."

The Sargeant snapped his bayonet

off his rifle and stabbed a potato.

It was still raw but he ate it anyway.

"Don't you have any real food."

Jackson and Kelly flew out the door and were gone in a flurry of waving hands, barking dogs, and running goats. Elena set the younger children down at the table and pulled out her largest pot quickly filling it with water, turnips, and potatos. Mikhael went out to the barn where he hurriedly hit the feed bags and his newer tools under the hay. He took the billy into a stall and fed him from the remaining bag of feed what he feared would be his last meal. The winter had been hard and the soldiers would be hungry.

Back in the house the water was barely boiling when the soldiers came over the top of the hill. They weren't marching smartly and looking sharp like they had a few years back. Before the battles they bristled

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trudge off in the distance.

Kelly. Then she came and stood

beside Mikhael watching the soldiers

to the back woods for Jackson and

Elena sent the younger children off

trusting."

old boy or you wouldn't be so

can't understand what I just said

whispered to the goat, "I'm glad you

scratching the old billy's ears. He

Mikhael watched them leave