The Fox and the Goat — text 2 of 2

Hard times came for the fox. Hunger overcame her, and there was nothing to eat. She wandered and wandered, looking for something to snack on; she had forgotten all about chickens and would have been glad of anything. She went out, hungry, into the field, and saw: not far off stood a basket of bread, and a jug, while off to one side an old woman was reaping rye. The fox crept quietly up to the basket and ate all the bread; she peered into the jug, and there was milk. She stuck her head in somehow and drank it all — and lo, she could not get her head back out. No matter how she struggled, nothing worked. The fox did not know how to get out of this trouble; she walked around the field, shaking her head, and kept saying to herself: "Well now, little jug, let me go, dear! Enough joking! Time to know when to stop! Well, stop it, don't be silly!" And the jug still sat tight.

The fox did manage to run away, but her bruised leg began to ache. She could neither lie down in peace nor walk; the fox wandered about, limping. And on top of that the heat would give her no rest. There had been a great drought that summer; not a drop of water could be found in the streams or ditches, and the river was far away. The fox was thirsty and did not know what to do with herself. She dragged herself to the monastery and looked, and there in the bushes a stone well was visible. The fox rejoiced, climbed onto the rim of the well, but could not reach the water. And she was so very thirsty. "Eh," she thought, "I'll sit in the bucket and lower myself down. Without water I'll die anyway. And it's not deep here; maybe I'll manage to climb out." She sat in the bucket and descended into the well. There was only a tiny bit of water in it, and still she could not get out. The fox saw that things were bad; she sat in the well and grew glum.

Past came the monastery goat, with a long beard, shaking his beard, waving his horns, wagging his tail, wandering from side to side for no reason. He was walking along, peered into the well, saw the fox, and was surprised:
"Ah, Fox Patrikeevna, my respects!"
"Hello, Kuzma Nikitich! Where are you off to?"
"Well, I might as well go to the forest, maybe it's better there, because in the stable it's such heat you could die, and the flies won't leave you alone."
"Don't even think about it, Kuzma Nikitich — the forest is no better. I just got out of there myself and came here to rest. And here it's sheer paradise! Plenty of water, it's cool, and the flies don't bother you."
"Well, it really isn't bad where you are."

"What can I say, Kuzma Nikitich! If you want, jump down to me yourself, rest in the cool, there's room enough."

The foolish goat rejoiced and jumped into the well, and the fox pounced on him: "You fool, you clumsy oaf, couldn't even jump properly! You nearly crushed me! You blockhead! Now get on your hind legs quickly and press your forehead against the wall, let me at least turn around!" The goat had no time to come to his senses; he stood on his hind legs and pressed his forehead against the wall. That was all the fox had been waiting for; in a flash she climbed up the goat's back and over his horns to the top. "Well," she said, "now goodbye, Kuzma Nikitich, rest in freedom, I haven't the time." And she was gone.

The goat sat and sat in the well, poor fellow, soaked to the bone, chilled through, and hunger tormented him. At last he began to scream at the top of his lungs, nearly tearing his throat. With difficulty the monastery grooms remembered him, found him by his cries, and pulled him out of the well. But then they gave the poor goat a beating with sticks: "Don't wander about in the forest. Don't wallow in wells."