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Waiting For Spring

Emilie Poulsson

The cows on Solberg Farm were restless and uneasy. All winter they had been in the barn without a chance to stretch their legs, as it were, and with nothing to eat but a little hay and leaves. Oh, yes, they had been glad of the warm barn in the bitter cold weather, and of the hay, but now their thoughts were of spring when they should be free to go to the forest and eat green grass and drink from the brook. It was already time to be out and away. Every cow in the barn from Dagros, who was the most experienced, to Blackie, the youngest, was sure that spring had come long ago, though the stupid herdsman had not let them out.

Whenever the door was opened at an unusual time, the cows that were standing would bellow and stamp in their stalls, and those that were lying down heaved themselves up with one spring and joined in the uproar. Now they should be let loose, but, no, it was only a boy whom the mistress had sent to the barn for a bucket, or a herdsman looking in to see that all was well. Even when the mistress herself came to pat the cows or milk them with her soft, gentle hands, they were disappointed, and if they could have spoken, they would have said, "Open the door, good mistress, for spring is surely here."

Then one morning when they had almost given up hope, they distinctly heard the sound of bells outside the door. It could be nothing else, but they scarcely dared to believe their own ears. But—yes—the sound came again; the barn doors were opened, and there stood the men with the cowbells in their hands.

One of these was a fine new bell. This was to be given to the cow chosen as leader of the herd, and now the mistress came to make the choice. The four oldest cows were Red Top, Brown Dolly, Kranselli, and Dagros. Which should be chosen? The mistress had no doubt about this, however.

"Put the big bell on Dagros," she said at once. Well, that was only right. Dagros was a wise cow and could be trusted. She was proud of the honor, too. No sooner was the bell hung on her neck than she shook herself so that the other cows might hear what a fine, clear sound it had.



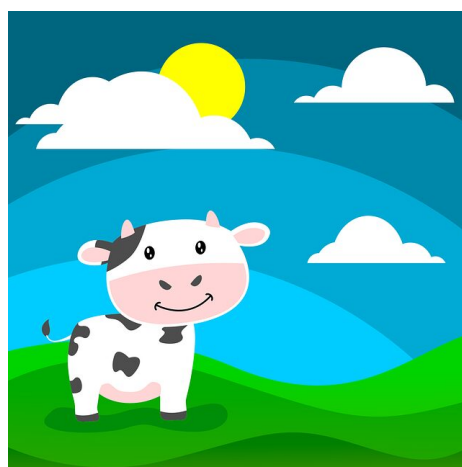
After the leader was selected, the herdsman hung bells on all the other cows, and they shook themselves and bellowed besides. The mistress gave each of

them a bunch of hay. What in the world was she thinking of? Did she imagine that any of them would care to eat hay when the green grass was waiting for them? Out they would go now, this very minute, or they would knock the whole barn down!

The men made haste to bring halters, which they fastened to the collars of the cows before loosing them from the stalls. Every cow wished to be the first one to get out, so they all tried to hurry forward, but this only hindered everything.

Soon the commotion was greater than ever. The cows bellowed and pulled and jerked and tossed their heads; they kicked and pushed and were as unruly as cows could be; but at last, all were led from the stalls and let out of the barn one at a time.

When they were finally out in the brilliant sunshine, it seemed as if some of them were fairly crazy. They did all sorts of strange things—raised themselves on their hind legs, then on their forelegs, and sniffed and snorted. Huff! That strong, fresh air! That beautiful field of young green grass! A couple of the cows began to eat, but the men tugged at their halters, and they soon understood that they were not to stay here but to go up to the forest pasture. That was near the saeter. Dagros led the way, and the others followed, with bells tinkling and jingling in a jolly chorus, as the cows began to run. Now was the winter ended! Now it was spring again! And summer would soon be here! Who wouldn't be thankful for that?



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