



Mark the Goat

MY LEG WAS BOUNCING, AND MY FINGER was tapping against the mouse on my desk, as I scanned the paragraph on the computer screen in front of me. I was in a rush to get everything finished in time and was deeply focused – or at least trying desperately to be. The phone on my desk rang, piercing the silence in the room, startling me out of the deep concentration I was trying so desperately to cultivate.

“Hello.”

“Hey Blythe,” said Naomi, our office manager. “You’ve got some visitors up here.” Visitors? I scanned through my mental Rolodex of the possibilities of who it could be. I didn’t have any appointments scheduled that afternoon, and anyone who knows me comes straight back to my office, bypassing the front desk, so that left only one category: the dreaded unannounced “I was in the neighborhood and thought I’d stop by” visit of an unknown.

“Ughhhh,” I said, letting out my best passive-aggressive sound of irritation. “Do they look normal?” I wasn’t in the mood to chit-chat if a flock of odd ducks decided to stop by.

“Yes, yes they do,” she said before hanging up. I felt a wave of irritation as I abandoned my project and stood up from my desk. The thought of having to walk through the office and all the way across the hall to our other suite seemed too much to bear at that point.

I approached from behind and through the glass door could see two individuals standing at the front desk. One was toting a large bucket in their left hand, and the other was wearing a hat with a giant stuffed wolf protruding off of her head. This didn’t look promising, I thought.

I pulled open the door and walked through, determined

to get through this meeting as quickly as possible and get back to the work on my desk, the work I could practically hear calling my name.

“Hi, I’m Bly—” I stopped mid-sentence as the two turned around and I saw it—a baby goat cradled in the arms of the woman wearing the stuffed wolf cap. A baby goat? This was triggering something in my mind. I scanned through the reasons for a baby goat in our lobby. Was I writing a story on petting zoo animals? No. Did I know anyone who owned a goat? No. Then I saw the logo on the T-shirts they were both wearing: Wishing Star. It all came back to me. It was Wishing Star’s “Send a Friend a Goat” fundraiser. The concept is simple: pick a friend to send a goat to, and the goat and its team show up at the person’s office. In order to not be trapped with a goat for the rest of the day, they have to “buy” their way out of goat-sitting, by making a financial contribution to Wishing Star, a non-profit organization that grants wishes to children with life-threatening illnesses.

“This is Mark,” said the woman in the wolf cap. Turns out, Mark was sent to me as part of the fundraiser from my friend Kim and her co-workers at Buck & Affiliates West.

Mark lifted his little head and gently stretched his lower jaw in a silent yawn, briefly leveling his gaze at me. I melted. Gone were any thoughts of the project back on my desk, or the looming deadline that had been such a source of stress all week. My unjustified irritation at being interrupted mid-afternoon by unknown visitors was instantly replaced with delight at the sight of a sweet innocent, tender little creature staring back at me.

“May I hold him?!” I asked the woman in the wolf cap. She gladly handed him over to me as her partner gave me the goat spiel, telling me how my contribution to Wishing Star would not only keep me from having to goat-sit, but also help a child’s wish come true. I wanted to say, in the words of *Jerry Maguire*, “You had me at hello.” At that point, I would have paid anything to *keep* Mark, and help a child.

With his ears bent in two different directions, and his front right leg stretched out straight, Mark the goat snuggled closer against me and settled into my arms. His gentle breathing was soothing, and I felt relaxed as I snuggled him, finding myself rocking back and forth as if holding a baby. He rested comfortably in my arms as we toured the office, where everyone who saw him let out with an “Ohhh!” or an “Ahhhh!” Mark was a big hit!

I know I wasn’t the only one to get a goat that day, and I know I wasn’t even the only one to get Mark, as he had a busy day raising money to help local children. I do know though, that sometimes we need to set aside the stresses that we allow to determine the path of our day, and embrace the little, warm things that can bring us joy. Though I can’t provide a baby goat for each of you, I do hope the stories you read in this issue will bring you a bit of joy and warm your heart.

Happy reading, little goats!

Blythe