HAROLD

by

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Original short story collected from Folklore and Retold by Alvin Schwartz

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASTURE - AFTERNOON

Two cows peacefully graze amongst the wide and open grassy pasture.

A few feet away from the cows are two men, ALFRED and THOMAS. They lie in the grass, staring up at the clouds.

Alfred, 30, is very handsome with short brown hair. Thomas, 25, is also very handsome with longer, blond hair. Both are dressed in tight jeans and flannel. Real farmers.

ALFRED

What a day.

Thomas smells the fresh air.

THOMAS

Yup.

The cows begin to MOO.

THOMAS

Think we should head on home?

ALFRED

In a sec, this feel to good.

THOMAS

What does?

ALFRED

Lyin' out here. Feels good, don't it?

THOMAS

Oh, yeah.

Alfred sighs.

ALFRED

Hey Thomas, I gotta ask ya' somethin'.

THOMAS

What's that?

ALFRED

Well, I've been thinkin'. You ever think that we're better than all this?

Uh, how do ya' figure?

ALFRED

Ya' know, like, it seems like our lives are... I dunno, boring.

THOMAS

Boring?

ALFRED

Yeah, like it's always the same thing every day. Nothin' new, nothin' exciting.

THOMAS

There is nothin' boring about comin' up to this beautiful piece a' land every couple a' months.

(Beat)

Plus, we got our own place a couple minutes a' way. It's not all that bad.

Alfred reaches over and pats Thomas on the shoulder.

ALFRED

Ya' know what, my friend? Your absolutely right.

Alfred stands up. He stretches.

ALFRED

Now let's get these cows back home before they start shittin' everywhere.

THOMAS (V.O)

Hey, uh, Al?

Alfred looks down at Thomas. Thomas has his hand raised up in the air.

THOMAS

Mind lendin' a hand?

Alfred laughs.

ALFRED

You lazy sack a' shit.

They both laugh as Alfred helps Thomas to his feet.

Now, let's get on home. I'll make us some supper.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

In the moon's light, we can see a small worn down hut. On one side of the hut is a small open barn. Behind the hut is a small garden.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Alfred and Thomas sit at a small table, eating there supper.

ALFRED

Looks like the garden could use some work.

THOMAS

How do you know? We were up in the pasture all day.

ALFRED

I took a look when I put the cows back.

THOMAS

So is that first tomorrow?

ALFRED

Yeah, that's first.

Thomas yawns.

THOMAS

Think I'm gonna hit the hay.

ALFRED

Yeah, me to.

THOMAS

Night.

ALFRED

Night.

EXT. HUT - MORNING

A ray of sunlight beams down on the tiny hut. The cows are MOOING. Birds are CHIRPING. Another peaceful morning up in the mountains.

Thomas and Alfred walk out of the hut. They walk around back to the garden.

ALFRED

How'd ya' sleep?

THOMAS

Not so good.

ALFRED

Yeah, mean either.

THOMAS

Why do you suppose?

ALFRED

I dunno. Maybe...

Alfred's eyes widen when he sees the garden.

ALFRED

Shit!

THOMAS

What?

ALFRED

Look!

The small garden is infested with birds.

ALFRED

Damn birds! Get outta here!

Alfred and Thomas run into the garden. The birds quickly fly away.

ALFRED

Damn! That's the second time this week! And who knows what happened yesterday!

Thomas thinks to himself.

THOMAS

I think I got an idea.

Alfred looks over at Thomas.

Yeah?

THOMAS

How bout' we make a doll the size of a human. It'd be fun to make and we could stick it in the garden to scare the birds away. They won't ever come back.

ALFRED

Like a scarecrow?

THOMAS

Yeah, exactly.

ALFRED

What are we gonna make it out of?

THOMAS

How about those old sacks we keep in the house. We could stuff em' with straw. I've also got some ratty jeans and an extra flannel.

Alfred laughs.

THOMAS

What's so funny?

ALFRED

We should make it look like Harold.

THOMAS

Harold? You mean, Mr. Farmer Boy?

Alfred and Thomas laugh.

ALFRED

Alright, let's do it.

THOMAS

I'll get the stuff.

EXT. HUT - DAY

Tied to a pole in the garden, is HAROLD, the doll. Ratty old jeans and a flannel shirt cover the straw-stuffed sacks. Harold has a pointy nose and tiny, beady eyes. He has long dark hair and a twisted frown.

Alfred and Thomas stare at there accomplishment.

Looks pretty good.

THOMAS

Let's see if this sucker don't keep those birds away.

ALFRED

I'll be damned if it don't.

THOMAS

Yeah, me to.

Alfred looks up in the sky.

ALFRED

Well, looks like we have enough time to go up to the pasture after all.

THOMAS

Great, I'll get the cows.

Thomas runs over to the barn. Alfred takes one last look at Harold and then catches up with Thomas.

CLOSE ON HAROLD'S FACE

Harold blinks.

EXT. HUT - NIGHT

Thomas and Alfred and the two cows arrive back from the pasture. They take the cows back to the barn. They walk around back to the garden.

ALFRED

Well would you look at that. No birds.

THOMAS

I hate to say I told ya' so.

ALFRED

And I hate hearin' it.

Thomas shrugs.

THOMAS

Fair enough.

Do me a favor and bring Harold in for the night.

THOMAS

What for?

ALFRED

Case it rains.

THOMAS

It won't rain.

ALFRED

I said in case it rains. Don't argue with me, just do it.

Thomas mumbles to himself angrily as he walks over to Harold. Alfred walks inside the tiny hut.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Alfred is cooking supper. Thomas walks inside holding Harold by the neck. He throws him against the wall in frustration.

THOMAS

Ya' know Alfred, I'm gettin' real sick of this.

ALFRED

Sick of what?

THOMAS

Sick of you always tellin' me what to do. Why can't you do anything for yourself?

ALFRED

I tell you to do one simple thing and you flip out on me.

THOMAS

It's not just this.

ALFRED

Oh, no?

Alfred walks over to Harold. He picks him up and holds him in front of Thomas.

I tell you to take a sack of hay and put him inside. Thats it.

THOMAS

That's not it.

ALFRED

It is, Thomas. It is. You can be so goddamn stubborn sometimes.

Alfred punches Harold in the face causing him to fly back against the wall.

THOMAS

What the hell was that for?

Alfred stares at Harold. He doesn't say a word.

THOMAS

Well!?

ALFRED

That felt good.

THOMAS

What?

Alfred looks over at Thomas.

ALFRED

That felt really good.

THOMAS

What did?

ALFRED

That.

THOMAS

You mean takin' your anger out on a lifeless sack of hay?

Alfred pretends to think to himself.

ALFRED

Yeah. Try it.

Alfred walks over to Harold and picks him up. He tosses Harold over to Thomas. Thomas catches the doll and stares into its eyes.

Punch it.

THOMAS

I'm not gonna punch it.

ALFRED

Just do it.

Thomas sighs.

THOMAS

Fine.

Thomas punches Harold in the face. Harold flies back against the wall.

Thomas stares down at the doll. He jerks his head back up at Alfred.

THOMAS

That did feel good.

ALFRED

Told ya' so.

Alfred looks down at Harold.

ALFRED

(To Harold)

You hear that you worthless sack of shit! I'm gonna kick your sorry ass! And, you gonna like it!

THOMAS

Alfred, what the hell are you doing?

ALFRED

Releasin' some stress.

THOMAS

Come on. Don't do that.

ALFRED

Don't deny it till you try it.

THOMAS

I already punched your stupid doll. Now you want me to yell at it?

Yeah.

Thomas shakes his head. He looks over at Harold.

THOMAS

Harold, you big jerk!

Alfred laughs.

ALFRED

Oh come on! What the hell was that? Here, I'll show you.

(To Harold)

Harold, you dirty pig fucker! Drop dead!

Alfred looks over at Thomas. He holds a hand out and nods his head.

ALFRED

Now you try.

Thomas sighs. He rubs a hand over his face.

THOMAS

I don't have time for this. I'm going to bed.

ALFRED

Your not gonna have any supper then? Come on. Just try it.

Thomas looks over at Harold. He takes a deep breath.

THOMAS

Fuck you, Harold!

Alfred claps.

ALFRED

Very good, very good.

Thomas shakes his head. He forces out a smile.

ALFRED

I've got an idea.

Alfred walks over to the stew that he was preparing. He takes a big spoonful and flicks it at Harold. The stew gets all over Harold's face.

Thomas and Alfred howl with laughter. Harold GRUNTS.

Thomas and Alfred stop laughing. They stare at Harold. They can't believe what they have just heard.

ALFRED

What the hell was that?

THOMAS

I think it was Harold.

ALFRED

How can it be Harold? He's not real. He's just a sack of hay.

THOMAS

Then what was it?

ALFRED

Probably a mouse got in there or something. We're tired, let's get some sleep.

THOMAS

Let's just get rid of him. He's a creepy looking thing anyways.

ALFRED

It was your stupid idea in the first place.

THOMAS

I know but... I changed my mind.

ALFRED

Let's not do anything stupid. We really don't know what's going on. When we take the cows back down to the valley, we'll leave Harold behind. But for now, we'll just leave him in the corner and keep a close eye, ok?

THOMAS

Ok.

ALFRED

You hungry?

THOMAS

Not really.

ALFRED

Yeah, mean either. Let's just get some sleep.

INT. HUT - MORNING

Harold sits in the corner of the tiny hut. Thomas and Alfred enter the room.

ALFRED

See, there he is. Right where we left him.

THOMAS

Yeah, I guess so. But he looks different.

ALFRED

Different, how?

THOMAS

He looks taller.

ALFRED

Taller?

THOMAS

Yeah, you can't tell?

Alfred studies Harold.

ALFRED

Well, sorta.

THOMAS

Whatever, I must be imagining things. I'll just ignore him.

ALFRED

Yeah.

Thomas and Alfred head for the door. Harold GRUNTS again. They slowly turn around.

Harold is standing up. He stares at Thomas and Alfred.

Thomas and Alfred are in shock. They can't believe there eyes.

Harold begins to slowly walk towards them. In fright, Thomas and Alfred move out of the way as Harold walks outside.

They hear Harold climb up onto the roof. Rapid footsteps are heard above them.

What's he doing?

ALFRED

I don't know. But we need to get the hell out of here.

THOMAS

Yeah.

Thomas and Alfred walk outside.

EXT. HUT - DAY

Harold is trotting back and fourth on the roof, like a horse on its hind legs.

Alfred and Thomas stare at him.

ALFRED

Change of plans. We're going to the valley right now. Get the cows.

ALFRED

Alright.

Thomas runs over to the barn.

ALFRED

Hurry!

Thomas and Alfred quickly walk away from the small hut with the cows.

Harold stops trotting. He stares at Thomas and Alfred who are walking away.

Thomas and Alfred look back at Harold.

THOMAS

He's staring at us.

ALFRED

I know, I know. Just keep moving. Don't look back.

Harold jumps down from the roof. He starts to run after Thomas and Alfred.

Thomas and Alfred hear the footsteps and look back.

Holy shit! He's coming!

ALFRED

Run!

Thomas and Alfred run as fast as they can. They leave the cows behind.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASTURE - DAY

Thomas and Alfred make it to the mountain pasture. They look around to see that Harold is nowhere in site. They stop to take a break.

THOMAS

He's gone.

ALFRED

Thank god. Let's just get down to the valley. We ain't never comin' back here.

Thomas and Alfred start walking to the valley. Alfred stops. Thomas notices and stops.

ALFRED

Shit!

THOMAS

What?

ALFRED

The cows. We forgot the damn cows. And the the milking stools.

THOMAS

Forget them. Let's just get the hell out of here.

ALFRED

Those cows are all we got and the milking stools cost a fortune. We can't just leave em'.

THOMAS

I ain't goin' back there.

ALFRED

Then your gonna pay for new ones.

Hell no!

ALFRED

Alright then.

THOMAS

How bout' you go back and get em'.

ALFRED

How's that fair?

THOMAS

Cause' I don't give a damn!

ALFRED

Fine, I will. You big pussy.

Alfred runs back towards the hut.

THOMAS

Alfred, be careful!

THOMAS

Yeah, yeah.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASTURE - AFTERNOON

Thomas sits on the pasture waiting for Alfred to return.

THOMAS

(To himself)

Where the hell is he?

Thomas stands up and looks around.

THOMAS

Alfred!

Thomas waits for a response. He doesn't get one.

THOMAS

(To himself)

Shit!

Thomas runs back towards the hut.

EXT. HUT - DAY

Thomas runs back up to the hut. He looks around for Alfred but doesn't see him. He does see Harold, though. He's on the roof again. As Thomas watches, Harold kneels and stretches out a bloody skin to dry in the sun.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.