

GOAT By Jeremy Taylor

They arrived in a jeep. It was an open-topped jeep so that everyone in the camp could hear their ghettoblaster pumping out Purple Rain. In fact everybody from Cairo to Dahab had heard either Prince, The Ramones or, Clayton's favourite at the moment, the music from the Batman movie.

"We wanna room!" shouted Howie, louder than Prince, at a Bedouin man sitting next to a wall.

The Bedouin knew this kind of American well. He looked at the three boys, all wearing mirror sunglasses and chewing gum aggressively.

"You hear us, mister?"

"Yes, I hear you."

"Well, you got rooms or not?" said Curtis, beginning to lose his patience with the stupid guy in front of him. He should know better than to mess around with Curtis P. Hammerman.

"Yes, I have rooms," said the Bedouin, leading them to a corner of the camp where few other guests were staying. "You want one room or three?"

Curtis, Clayton and Howie looked at each other. "I'm feeling kinda lucky today. I reckon I'm gonna need my own room," said Clayton. "Not that I'll be on my own for long," he added, together with a few pelvic thrusts in case the others weren't sure what he meant. Curtis and Howie knew **exactly** what Clayton meant. They weren't stupid. The boys took a room _____¹.

February is normally a quiet time for Dahab on the East coast of Sinai. The fact that when Curtis, Clayton and Howie arrived, there was a war going on in the Middle East, meant that the number of tourists in Dahab was down to about fifty rather than the usual three or four hundred for this time of year. Still, fifty

¹ each, individually or alone?

was enough. There were certain to be three _____² just waiting for three hunky guys. In a couple of days the sun would turn their skins nice and brown. (Clayton also hoped that the sun would get rid of the acne on his cheeks). Three guys, a jeep and a ghetto blaster, how could any woman resist them?

Their first day was spent on the palm-fringed beach in their designer swimming trunks. Howie noticed that lying flat out with his arms stretched over his head, his _____³ shrank. If he breathed in at the same time it disappeared almost completely. The trouble was that it was not easy for him to lie stretched out, breathe in **and** watch the chicks walking by. Maybe tomorrow he would think about dieting.

Being tough American guys meant that they didn't need to use sun cream. In fact Curtis couldn't wait for the time when he had _____⁴'s feet next to his eyes like the guy on the cigarette advertisement. Being pale-skinned Northerners meant that they **should** have used sun cream and that evening the boys had to rub cream into their shoulders and legs.

"I reckon they put chemicals in the water down here," complained Clayton. "Normally I go as brown as hell in an hour or two."

"Me, too," added Curtis. "I only need look at a candle and I go brown."

Had Curtis stuck to candles, he wouldn't have been a glowing red colour that evening. Still, a bit of sun burn was not going to put the boys off. They slipped into their Levi's jeans and white tee shirts and set off for a night on the town.

Dahab night life was not quite what the boys had expected: The disco was boarded up, half the restaurants were closed and those that were open had no more than three or four customers. More importantly, to Howie, Clayton and Curtis was the distinct _____⁵ of available chicks. The cafés played Cat

² A word which means 'young birds' is also a derogatory word for attractive women.

³ a large stomach – N.B. we often use the word stomach to refer to the abdominal region, not only the muscular bag in your digestive system.

⁴ a large black bird

⁵ insufficiency, lack or want?

Stevens and Tracy Chapman and people lay around playing backgammon and (the guys back in Boston would never believe this) they were drinking tea! The boys found it very hard to cope with the fact that here were a bunch of young people thinking that they were having a good time drinking tea and playing kids games. Well Curtis P. Hammerman, Clayton L. Weisskopf and Howie T. Franks III were going to change all that.

The following morning, the three boys had _____⁶ and were still suffering from the effects of the chemicals in the water. They had spent the evening playing poker, drinking rum, smoking and shouting at the young Bedouin waiter. At about 4 o' clock they had crawled, chickless, into their respective rooms where they half dozed and half froze until ten o' clock.

They were awoken by a bleating outside their rooms. A small _____⁷ of hungry goats had wandered into their camp and found that designer swimming trunks, while not *haute cuisine*, were palatable.

Howie was the first to wake. He opened the door of his room and immediately recoiled at the bright sun that greeted him. Slowly, his eyes grew accustomed to the light and were able to focus on the diners in front of him. “**What the...**” Howie staggered forward, cursing and kicking at the surprised goats.

The people staying in the camp were also quite surprised to see Howie running around in his underwear, trying to kick the goats. When he was lying down, stretched out and breathing in, Howie's belly was not very noticeable. However, when Howie was in a vertical position, unstretched and breathing like an asthmatic hippo, his flabby folds were at liberty to bounce around with every step that Howie took.

_____⁸ breakfast, Clayton and Curtis continued cursing the goats

⁶ after a night of heavy drinking you may well have one of these in the morning. Don't forget to use the plural form for the three boys.

⁷ what collective term do we use for goats (as well as cows, elephants, buffaloes etc)?

⁸ above, below, over or under?

where Howie had left off. “Seventy four dollars I paid for them!” wailed Curtis. “Them goats could eat in a five star restaurant for that price.”

Clayton went to the toilet and was sick. Maybe out of disgust at the _____⁹ of his swimming trunks but quite possibly due to the quantity of rum that he had drunk the night before.

The boys spent the day snorkelling along the reef near the lighthouse. Well, half a day as on their third dive Curtis had shouted “_____”¹⁰!

Struggling to reach land as quickly as possible, Clayton had hit his leg on some coral. He spent the afternoon sipping ice cold beer and showing off his bandaged leg to anyone who came into the café.

After the sun had gone down and the temperature dropped, Clayton limped into the camp. In their corner, Curtis and Howie were playing Frisbee to the sound of Nirvana. In the opposite corner, a group of people sat chatting while one person played guitar and sang.

“Hey you guys, turn that thing down, I got some **news** for you!”

Curtis turned down the music a decibel or two and Howie jumped onto the _____¹¹ of the jeep against which Clayton was leaning. “You found some chicks?”

“Naaa, but I got a great idea.”

“Yeah, what is it?”

“I heard about some guys who went off with some Bedouin and a goat into the mountains. They took some wood, made a fire, then...”

“They sacrificed the goat?”

“Right on! They killed it, skinned it, chopped it _____¹² and roasted it over the fire.”

⁹ ‘to lose’ is a verb, what is the noun?

¹⁰ a kind of fish with big teeth that sometimes eats people.

¹¹ the front part of a car, in American English it is called the hood

¹² about, down or up?

“Wow!” chorused Curtis and Howie together. The idea of sacrificing a goat, particularly after what had happened that morning, appealed to them all.

The following day, after a lazy morning, they prepared themselves for a night in the mountains. They collected some wood from the beach, bought some potatoes to roast with the goat, borrowed a sharp knife from the Bedouin who _____¹³ their camp, took blankets from their rooms and finally went to the man in charge of the goats. After some debate they chose a young kid, black, with white patches and an ear missing.

Back in the camp, the other residents were sitting around a fire, doing their best to ignore the three Americans who were doing their best to persuade some of the girls to go with them. Curtis _____¹⁴-talked a blonde Dutch girl while Howie and Clayton worked their charms on two dark-haired Italian girls. Bambi, as the boys had named the goat, was paraded around on a leash made from a piece of clothes line to entice the girls, (should they need any **more** enticing!) Bambi being just **one** of the delights that awaited them in the mountains.

Minutes later, the boys left, chickless, for the mountains. Curtis and Howie in the front, while Clayton looked after Bambi in the back. The Dutch girl was _____¹⁵ and Howie and Clayton were convinced that the two Italian girls were lesbians.

In the mountains, Clayton got the fire going while Curtis and Howie sat on a small peak discussing the best way to sacrifice Bambi. “I reckon we ought to hang him up high then cut his throat and watch the blood spurt out everywhere,” suggested Curtis.

“Or we could break his neck and then drain the blood afterwards,” said Howie.

¹³ hiked, ran or walked?

¹⁴ the opposite of ‘rough’

¹⁵ someone who doesn’t eat meat.

_____ ¹⁶ methods were very appealing. It was a shame they didn't have two goats or they could have tried them both. When they returned to the fire, Clayton and Bambi were missing.

"Clayton?"

"Over here!"

Clayton was sitting on a large rock while Bambi defoliated a desert shrub.

"You gone soft or something Clayton? Taking Bambi out for a walk?"

"Me? No way, my uncle's got a farm back in Kentucky. I've killed more animals than you've had _____ ¹⁷."

"So who's gonna have the pleasure of sacrificin' our little friend here then?" asked Curtis.

"Well I'd love to," said Howie, "but I got my camera with me and I want a shot of all that blood."

"So I guess that means he's all yours, Clayton."

"Sure," said Clayton. "We'll do it later, when it gets cold."

By a quarter past ten when a thermometer would have told them it was minus two degrees Celsius, Clayton told them that it was still quite warm.

"What's wrong with you guys?"

"We're cold and we're hungry," said Curtis.

"An' I'm waiting for my picture."

It was five to eleven before Messrs Hammerman and Franks could persuade Clayton that Bambi's time was _____ ¹⁸.

"Okay you guys, I'm ready now. Don't rush me. Right, I'm gonna break his neck then Curtis, I want you to hold him up by his back legs then I'll cut his jugular vein and we'll drain the blood out of him, okay?"

"Right on!" said Howie, who was busy focusing his camera.

¹⁶ all, both or some?

¹⁷ 'all the tea in China', 'fish in the sea' or 'hot dinners'?

¹⁸ down, in, out or up?

“Right Curtis, get ready!”

Clayton sat down next to the hapless goat and put Bambi’s neck between his _____¹⁹ and upper arm. “Ready?”

“Ready!” came the reply.

Clayton jerked his arm backwards and grunted loudly at the same time. Howie’s camera flashed. Clayton looked down. Bambi looked up and bleated in Clayton’s ear. “Shit,” said Clayton. “It’ll be better if I use the knife.”

It was while he was looking for Bambi’s jugular vein that Clayton removed Bambi’s clothes line collar. Once again he was sitting down with his arm around Bambi’s neck. “Ready?”

“Ready!” came the reply.

Clayton was just about to bring the knife down when Bambi pulled his head out from Clayton’s embracing arm. “Catch him Curtis!”

Curtis grabbed Bambi’s leg, Bambi bit Curtis’s hand and Curtis squealed, rather like Bambi would have done, had he not wriggled away.

“Damn, he got away!”

“Got away? You let him go!”

“Me? You had hold of his leg.”

“Yeah and he bit me!”

The argument continued until well after Midnight. Clayton and Curtis eventually blaming Howie for not having the courage to kill Bambi and then for not making any attempt to block his escape. It was a cold wind that eventually persuaded them that it was time to sleep. Despite lying close, but not **too** close to each other, they froze and their teeth chattered until sunrise.

The following morning, it was a subdued _____²⁰ that drove back into the camp. The other residents of the camp were sitting around breakfasting

¹⁹ the part of your arm between your wrist and your elbow.

²⁰ solo = 1, duo = 2, _____ = 3

on pitta bread and white cheese.

“So how was your trip to the mountains?” asked Valeria, one of the Italian girls.

“Real neat!” replied Curtis, surprised that she was speaking to them.

“So what does goat meat taste like?”

“Uh, it’s kinda like beef, only different,” said Howie.

“So you had no difficulty killing, what was his name?”

“Bambi. Oh no. I killed him,” said Clayton proudly. “A quick cut through his jugular vein was all it needed.”

“You should have seen the blood, it went everywhere!”

A new confidence came to the boys as they described the events that should have happened.

“I skinned him and then chopped him up into steaks,” said Howie, eager not to be left out.

“He was **de**-licious!”

“Finger-licking good!”

“Well it appears Bambi has made a very good recovery,” said Valeria. “He’s over there eating your shirts.”

Curtis P. Hammerman, Clayton L. Weisskopf and Howie T. Franks III left Dahab that morning. It is unlikely they will ever return.

2156 words

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