

Heidi

*Lessons at Home
and Abroad*

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ALMA CLASSICS

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Heidi

Lessons at Home and Abroad



Chapter 1

Going up to the Alp Uncle

FROM THE PICTURESQUE old village of Maienfeld there is a footpath that leads through green, wooded meadows to the foot of the grave, lofty peaks overlooking this side of the valley. Where the path begins its ascent, the rambler soon encounters the fragrance of short grass and strong mountain herbs wafting across from the pasture, for the way now leads steeply and directly to the alps.

On a sunny morning in June, a tall, sturdy-looking young woman of this mountainous region was climbing up the narrow path, holding by the hand a small child whose cheeks were so flushed that their glow lit up the deep brown of her suntanned skin. And no wonder, since despite the blazing June sun the child was wrapped up as if she needed protection against a severe frost. She looked

barely five years old, but it was impossible to make out her natural form, as she was evidently wearing two if not three dresses, one on top of the other, and then a large red cotton scarf wound round and round, so that her little figure was quite shapeless above her heavy, hobnailed mountain shoes as she toiled hotly uphill.

The two travellers must have had an hour's climb from the valley by the time they reached the settlement halfway up the pastureland simply known as the "little village". Here people in almost every house called out to them, from windows and doors and from the roadside, for the young woman was in the place of her birth. But rather than stopping and standing still, she responded to the shouted greetings and questions in passing until she came to the last of the small, scattered houses at the end of the village. Here a voice called from a doorway: "Wait a second, Dete. If you're going higher I'll come with you."

Now Dete stood still, and immediately the child freed herself from her hand and sat on the ground.

"Are you tired, Heidi?" asked her companion.

"No, I'm hot," answered the child.

"We'll be there soon," said the other encouragingly. "Just keep going a bit longer and take big strides, and we'll be up in an hour."

At that moment a stout, kind-looking woman stepped out of the house and joined them. The two old acquaintances then walked on and launched into an animated conversation about various inhabitants of the village and nearby dwellings. Heidi, having got to her feet, followed behind.

CHAPTER I

“But where are you taking the child, Dete?” asked the other woman. “I’m guessing she’s your sister’s girl, the orphan.”

“That’s right,” Dete replied. “I’m taking her up to the Alp Uncle. She’s to live with him.”

“What, live with the Alp Uncle? You must be out of your mind, Dete. How could you do such a thing? In any case, the old man will send you and your plan packing at once!”

“He can’t. He’s her grandfather and he has to help. I’ve kept the child till now, but you can take it from me, Barbel, I’m not giving up a post like the one I’ve been offered for her sake. It’s time her grandfather did his bit.”

“That would be fair enough if he was like other people,” said the stout woman warmly, “but you know how he is. He’ll have no idea what to do with a child, especially such a small one! She won’t be able to stand it! By the way, where is it you’re going?”

“Frankfurt, and a first-class household. The family were down at the baths last summer and I saw to their rooms, which were on my corridor. They wanted to take me back with them then, but I couldn’t get away. And now they’re here again and want to take me, and believe me I want to go.”

“I don’t envy the child,” exclaimed Barbel, throwing up her hands in horror. “No one knows what makes the old man up there tick! He wants nothing to do with anyone, he doesn’t set foot inside a church year in, year out, and when he comes down every twelve months or so with his big stick everyone takes fright and steers clear of him. With those bushy grey eyebrows and that terrible beard he

looks like an old heathen or a Red Indian, so that you're glad if you don't bump into him."

"That doesn't change the fact that he's the child's grandfather and must take care of her," Dete said defiantly. "He won't do her any harm, and if he does, he'll have to answer for it, not me."

"All I want to know," Barbel said, probing, "is what the old man has on his conscience to give him such a wild expression and make him live like a hermit up on the pastureland, hardly ever showing his face. People say all sorts of things about him, but you must have some real information from your sister. Am I right?"

"Of course, but I'm not telling! If it came to his ears I'd be in a pretty pickle!"

Barbel had long wished to know how matters stood with the Alp Uncle, why he looked so cross with the world and lived all alone so high up, and why people talked about him evasively, as if they were afraid of making an enemy of him but didn't want him as a friend either. And Barbel also had no idea why the villagers called him Alp Uncle: he couldn't be a real uncle to all the inhabitants of the place. But as everyone called the old man by this name, using the local dialect word for "uncle", so she always did too.

Barbel was a recent arrival, having moved to the village as a bride. Prior to that she had lived down in Prättigau, and she was not yet familiar with all the past and present personalities and goings-on in the village and its environs. Her friend Dete, on the other hand, had been born in the village and had lived there with her mother until the latter's death a year before. Then she had moved to Ragaz,

where she earned a good living as a chambermaid in the big hotel there. She had come all the way from Ragaz that very morning, getting a lift to Maienfeld for herself and the child on a hay wagon that a friend of hers was driving home. Barbel did not want to waste this opportunity of adding to her store of knowledge. She took Dete familiarly by the arm and said: "You're the person to say what's true and what's just idle talk. You must know the whole story. Tell me a bit about the old man. Has he always hated and frightened his fellow men so?"

"Whether he's always been like that I couldn't exactly say. I'm twenty-six years old, and he must be seventy, so you can't expect me to have known him when he was young. But if I could be certain my words wouldn't be doing the rounds of Prättigau afterwards, there's a lot I could tell you about him. My mother came from Domleschg just as he did."

"Pah, Dete, what do you mean?" Barbel retorted, a little offended. "Prättigau isn't such a terrible gossip mill, and as for me I can hold my tongue if need be. So do tell me – you won't regret it."

"All right then, but keep your word," Dete warned her.

Then she glanced round to make sure the child was not close enough to hear what she was going to say. But she was nowhere to be seen. She must have stopped following some way back, and they had been too engrossed in their conversation to notice. Dete came to a halt and looked all about her. Although the footpath twisted and turned it was visible almost as far down as the village, but there was no one on it.

“There she is,” said Barbel, pointing to a spot some distance from the path. “Can you see her? She’s climbing up that steep slope with Peter and his goats. I wonder why he’s out with them so late today. It suits me, though, because if he looks after the child you’ll be free to tell me your story.”

“Looking after her won’t cost Peter much effort,” Dete remarked. “She’s bright for a five-year-old. She keeps her eyes peeled and sees what’s going on around her, I’ve noticed. And that will stand her in good stead one day, because the old man has got nothing now beyond his two goats and his cottage on the pastureland.”

“Did he use to have more, then?” asked Barbel.

“Have more? Yes, he certainly did,” Dete replied quickly. “He had one of the best farms in the Domleschg valley. He was a first son with just one brother – a quiet, sensible lad. But all he himself wanted was to act the fine gentleman and drive about the country and get in with a bad lot, people nobody knew. He drank and gambled away the whole property, and when it came to light his father and mother died of sorrow, one after the other, and his brother, who was likewise reduced to beggary, was so sick at heart that he went into the wide world, not a soul knows where. The Alp Uncle himself, with nothing left but his bad reputation, also disappeared. At first his whereabouts were a mystery, then it came out that he had gone to Naples as a soldier, and then no more was heard of him for twelve or fifteen years. One day he suddenly reappeared in Domleschg with an adolescent boy and wanted to find a home for him among his relatives. But every door was

closed in his face, and no one wanted anything to do with him. He was so infuriated that he vowed never to set foot in Domleschg again, and then he came to the village and lived here with Tobias, the boy. The mother was a native of Graubünden that he had met most probably on his travels, and who had died not long after. He must still have had some money, because he found a place for Tobias to learn a trade, carpentry. He was a steady youth and well liked by all in the village. But no one trusted the old man, and people said he had deserted in Naples to get out of a scrape he was in, because he had killed a man – not in battle, you understand, but in a brawl. Our family did acknowledge him as a relation, though, since my mother’s grandmother and his grandmother were sisters. That’s why we called him Uncle, and as we’re related to almost everyone in the village on our father’s side they all called him Uncle too, and ever since he went to live up the mountainside he’s been known simply as Alp Uncle.”

“But what happened to Tobias?” Barbel asked eagerly.

“Hang on, I’m just getting to that. I can’t say everything at once. Well, Tobias was apprenticed over in Mels, and when he’d finished there he came home to the village and married my sister Adelheid. They’d always been fond of each other, and they got on very well together as husband and wife. But it wasn’t to last. Two years later, while Tobias was working on a house that was being built, a beam crashed down and killed him. And when her husband was brought home all disfigured, the horror and agony of it put Adelheid in a violent fever that she didn’t recover from. She’d never been strong, and sometimes she had

funny turns where you didn't know if she was awake or asleep. Just a few weeks after Tobias's death they buried her too. Far and wide people spoke of the couple's tragic fate, and they said – in whispers or out loud – that it was a punishment Uncle had drawn on himself for his godless life. Some said it to his face, and the pastor appealed to his conscience and told him he should now repent. But he grew more and more grim-faced and obstinate and wouldn't talk to a soul, and everyone kept out of his way. One day we learnt that he'd moved up to the pastureland and wouldn't be coming back, and since then he's lived there, at variance with God and his fellow men. Mother and I took in Adelheid's little girl. She was a year old at the time. And when Mother died last summer and I wanted to start earning a living in Ragaz, I took the child with me and boarded her out with old Ursel up in Pfäfers. I was able to stay in the resort during the winter; there was plenty of work as I'm a good needlewoman. And in early spring the family from Frankfurt came again, the people I'd served the previous year and who wanted to take me back with them. We're leaving the day after tomorrow, and it's a good position, I can tell you."

"And you're going to hand the child over to the old man? I don't know what you can be thinking of, Dete," said Barbel reproachfully.

"What do you mean?" Dete shot back. "I've done my bit for her, and what am I supposed to do with her now? I don't think I can take a child just turned five along to Frankfurt. But where is it you're going, Barbel? We're a fair way up the pasture already."

"I'm nearly there," replied Barbel. "I have to speak with Peter's mother; she does some weaving for me in winter. Farewell then, Dete, and good luck!"

Dete shook her friend's hand and then stood and watched as she walked over to the small dark-brown cottage situated in a sheltered hollow a few steps to the side of the path. The cottage was about halfway up the pasture, as measured from the village. It looked so ramshackle and dilapidated that its position in a small dip on the mountainside was fortunate, but even so it must have been dangerous to be inside when the föhn wind tore across the slopes with all its might, making everything rattle inside – the doors, the windows and the rotten beams. Had the cottage been high up on the pastureland on such days it would very soon have been swept into the valley below.

This was the home of Peter the Goatherd, an eleven-year-old boy who each morning went down to the village to fetch the goats and drive them to the upper reaches of the pasture, where they munched on the short, strong herbs. In the evening Peter scampered with the nimble creatures back to the village, and their owners collected them from the square on hearing him whistle sharply through his fingers. It was mainly small boys and girls who came, the goats being too gentle to inspire fear, and throughout the summer this was the only time of day when Peter saw children his own age; otherwise the goats were his sole companions. He lived with his mother and blind grandmother, but he was rarely with them, because he had to set out very early in the morning and returned from the village late after spending as much time as he

could chatting with the other children. Indeed, he only had enough time at home to swallow his bread and milk in the morning and the same meal at night before putting his head down to sleep. His father – also called Peter the Goatherd because he had done the same job in his youth – had lost his life in an accident while felling trees a few years earlier. His mother's name was Brigitte, but she was universally known by association as the Goatherd's Mother, while the blind old woman was simply called Grandmother by young and old alike in the whole vicinity.

Dete waited a good ten minutes and looked out in all directions for the children and the goats, but in vain. Then she climbed a little higher to get a better view right down the mountainside, and from this spot she peered this way and that, her face and gestures betraying great impatience. Meanwhile the children approached along a lengthy byway, for Peter knew many places with all sorts of wholesome bushes and shrubs for his goats to nibble on, and to this end he made a variety of detours with his herd. At first the girl clambered laboriously after him, gasping with heat and discomfort under her heavy layers of clothing. She said nothing, but looked intently at Peter, who jumped effortlessly back and forth in his short trousers and bare feet, and then at the goats, whose light, slender legs carried them even more easily over bushes and rocks and up steep slopes.

All of a sudden she sat on the ground, rapidly removed her shoes and stockings, then stood up again, pulled away her thick red scarf and undid her dress. She whipped it off and started unfastening a second, for her Aunt Dete

had simply put her Sunday dress over the everyday one to save time and the trouble of carrying it. The everyday dress also came off in an instant and the child stood in her light, short-sleeved petticoat, joyfully throwing her bare arms in the air. Then she made a neat little pile of her garments and began leaping and scrambling at Peter's side after the goats, moving as freely as any of them. Peter had paid no attention to what the girl was doing when she fell behind, and he grinned across his face when she came bounding after him in her new costume. He looked back, and the sight of the pile of clothes made his face crease up even more, till his mouth stretched almost from ear to ear. But he said nothing.

The unburdened girl, feeling much more at ease, started talking to Peter. He found his voice too and had all sorts of questions to answer: she wanted to know how many goats he had, where he was going with them and what he would do when they got there. Eventually the children arrived with the goats at the cottage, where Dete still stood.

The moment she spotted the group making their way towards her, she shrieked: "Heidi, what have you done? Just look at you! Where are your dresses and scarf? And the brand-new shoes I bought you for the mountain and the new stockings I made for you. Gone, all gone. What have you done, Heidi? Where is it all?"

Calmly the girl pointed down the mountainside and said, "There!" Her aunt followed the line of her finger and saw that there was indeed something on the ground, with a red dot – no doubt the scarf – on top.

“You little wretch!” she shouted in vexation. “What were you thinking of? What do you mean by taking it all off?”

“I don’t need it,” said the child, showing no remorse at what she had done.

“Oh, you cursed silly girl, are you out of your senses?” her aunt berated her plaintively. “Who’s going to go back down and fetch the things? It’s half an hour’s walk! Peter, you go for me, and be quick about it. Don’t just stand there gawping at me as if you were nailed to the spot.”

“I’m late as it is,” said Peter slowly, his hands in his pockets, not budging an inch from where he had been during her horrified outburst.

“You won’t get far by standing still with your eyes staring out of your head,” Aunt Dete exclaimed. “Come here, I’ve got something nice to give you. See this?” And she held out a new five-rappen piece that glittered before his eyes.

Instantly he perked up and made off by the shortest route down the mountainside, and before long his giant strides brought him to the pile of clothes. He gathered them up and reappeared so fast that Dete could only praise him and hand over the coin straight away. Peter promptly thrust it deep in his pocket, his face beaming from side to side, for such riches rarely came his way.

“You can carry the things up to the Alp Uncle’s house if you’re going there too,” Dete added, as she prepared to ascend the steep incline directly behind the cottage belonging to Peter’s family. He gladly did as he was asked and followed on her heels, the bundle draped over his left arm and his right hand waving his goatherd’s switch. Heidi and the goats skipped and jumped about gleefully beside him.

Three quarters of an hour later, the procession reached the top of the pastureland, where the Alp Uncle's cottage stood alone on a spur of the mountain, exposed to all winds but also to every ray of sunshine and with a clear view deep into the valley. Behind the cottage were three old fir trees with long, heavy, unlopped boughs. Beyond these the land rose up towards the grey, rocky cliffs, first over pretty expanses of grasses and wild herbs, then across rock-strewn scrub, and finally to the bare towering peaks.

Attached to the cottage and facing the valley was a bench the Alp Uncle had carpentered. Here he sat, a pipe in his mouth and his hands on his knees, and watched calmly as the children, the goats and then Dete, who had gradually been overtaken by the others, worked their way up towards him. Heidi arrived first, went straight to the old man and said, "Good afternoon, Grandfather!"

"Well, well, what's the meaning of this?" the old man asked in a gruff voice as he briefly shook her hand and fixed her from under his bushy eyebrows with a long, penetrating stare. Heidi held his gaze for some moments without blinking even once. With his long beard and the dense, grey eyebrows that grew together over his nose like some sort of thicket, her grandfather was a remarkable sight, and she had to have a good look at him. Meanwhile Dete walked up to them together with Peter, who came to a stop and waited to see what would happen next.

"Good day to you, Uncle," said Dete as she approached. "Today I'm bringing you the daughter of Tobias and Adelheid. You probably won't recognize her, as you haven't seen her since she was a year old."

“I see, and what am I supposed to do with her?” said the old man curtly. “And you there,” he called over to Peter, “you can be off with your goats – you’re late as it is. And take mine with you!”

Peter obeyed and disappeared at once, because the way the Alp Uncle looked at him made him feel uneasy.

“She’ll have to stay with you, Uncle,” replied Dete to his question. “I think I can say I’ve done my duty by her these last four years, and now it’s your turn to do something.”

“I see,” said the old man, turning his flashing eyes on Dete. “And if she starts whimpering for you and making a fuss like children her age do, then what am I supposed to do?”

“That’s your business,” Dete retorted. “I don’t think anyone told me how to look after her when she was left in my charge, just twelve months old, and me with enough to do already for myself and Mother. Now I need to go to my new employment, and you’re the child’s next of kin. If you can’t take her in, make whatever arrangement you like. But it will be your responsibility if she goes to the bad, and I should think you have enough on your conscience as it is.”

Dete’s own conscience was troubled by the whole affair, and this had made her grow heated and say more than she had intended. At her last words, the Alp Uncle got to his feet and gave her a look that caused her to shrink back a few steps. Then he raised his arm and said in a commanding voice: “Get yourself back down to where you came from, and don’t be in a hurry to show your face here again!”

CHAPTER I

She didn't wait to be told a second time. "Farewell to you – and to you, Heidi," she stammered, and then she hurried down the mountain to the village without stopping, the agitation in her breast driving her on like a steam engine. This time even more people called out to her as she passed through the village, curious to know where the child had got to. Dete was well known to them all, and they also knew who the child's parents were and what her previous history had been.

From every door and window came the cry: "Where is the child, Dete? Where have you left her?"

"Up with the Alp Uncle! With the Alp Uncle, I said!" she shouted more and more irritably.

Then she became really annoyed, because from all sides the women cried out: "How could you do such a thing?" and "Poor little mite!" and "To leave such a helpless little thing up there!" And then again and again: "Poor little mite!"

Dete rushed on and on as fast as she could, and was relieved when she could no longer hear their voices, for she felt uneasy herself at what she had done. Her mother had entrusted the child to her on her deathbed. However, she comforted herself with the thought that she could do more for her when she was earning good money, and she was very glad that her excellent new position would take her far away from all the people who were trying to interfere.



Chapter 2

At Grandfather's

ONCE DETE HAD GONE, the old man sat back down on the bench and blew out great puffs of smoke from his pipe. He stared at the ground in silence. Heidi looked contentedly about her and discovered the goat pen that had been built onto one side of the cottage. She peered in, but it was empty. Continuing her exploration, she came to the old firs behind the cottage. The wind blew so forcefully across the boughs that the treetops hissed and whistled. Heidi stood still and listened. When the noise died down a little, she went on with her circuit of the house and rejoined her grandfather. Finding him in the same posture as before, she planted herself in front of him with her hands behind her back and observed him.

Grandfather looked up. "What do you want to do now?" he asked, seeing the child still motionless before him.

“I want to see what you have inside, in the cottage,” replied Heidi.

“Come on, then.” And Grandfather stood up and led the way: “Pick up your bundle of clothes over there and bring them in.”

“I don’t need them any more,” she said.

The old man turned round and looked searchingly at the child, whose black eyes shone in expectation of what she would find indoors. “She can’t be stupid,” he said in an undertone. “Why don’t you need them any more?” he said aloud.

“I’d rather move about like the goats. They’re so light-footed.”

“So you can, but fetch the things,” Grandfather ordered. “They can go in the cupboard.”

Heidi did as she was told. The old man now opened the door, and Heidi stepped behind him into a fairly large room that filled the length and breadth of the cottage. The room contained a table and chair; in one corner was Grandfather’s bed, and in another a big pot hung over the stove. On the far side was a large door in the wall that Grandfather opened to reveal a cupboard. In it hung his clothes, with a few shirts, socks and handkerchiefs on one shelf; some plates, cups and glasses on another; and on the top shelf a round loaf, smoked meat and cheese. The cupboard held all the Alp Uncle’s possessions, everything he needed to subsist. As soon as he opened it, Heidi ran forward and thrust in her things as far as she could, right to the back behind Grandfather’s clothing, so that they could not easily be retrieved. Then she looked around the

room with close attention and asked, "Where am I going to sleep, Grandfather?"

"Wherever you like," he replied.

That suited Heidi perfectly. She rushed all over the room looking into every nook to find the best place to sleep. In the same corner as Grandfather's bed was a small ladder propped against the wall, and Heidi climbed up and went into the hayloft. There she found a pile of fresh, sweet-smelling hay and a round skylight with a view right down into the valley.

"This is where I'll sleep," Heidi called down. "It's lovely here, Grandfather! Come and see!"

"I know," came the voice from below.

"I'm just making the bed," the girl shouted as she bustled to and fro, "but please come up and bring me a sheet, because a bed needs a sheet before you can lie on it."

"Is that so?" said Grandfather, and presently he went to the cupboard and rummaged inside. From under his shirts he drew out a large cloth of coarse linen that could serve as a sheet, and he took it up to the loft. There he found that Heidi had contrived a neat little bed. At one end, where her head would rest, the hay was packed higher, and in such a way that her face would look directly towards the glassless skylight.

"You've made a fine job of this," said Grandfather, "and now for the sheet. But wait..." And he took a few more armfuls of hay from the pile and made the bed twice as deep, so that she would not feel the hard floor beneath it. "Now bring it here." Heidi quickly went to pick up the sheet, but it was so heavy she could scarcely carry it. This

was no bad thing, though, as it meant the material was too thick for the sharp blades of hay to prick her through it. Together they spread the sheet over the bed, and where it hung over the sides and ends Heidi briskly tucked it under the hay. It now looked clean and tidy.

Heidi stood and pondered their handiwork for a second, then said, "We've forgotten something, Grandfather."

"What's that?" he asked.

"A cover. When you go to bed, you crawl between the sheet and the cover."

"Really? What if I haven't got one?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter, Grandfather," Heidi reassured him. "In that case I'll just use hay as a cover." Quickly she turned back to the pile of hay, but the old man stopped her.

"Wait a minute," he said, and he went down the ladder and over to his bed. He returned with a large, heavy linen sack, which he laid on the ground.

"This is better than hay, isn't it?"

Heidi picked and pulled at the sack with all her might, trying to unfold it, but its weight was too much for her small hands. Grandfather helped her, and once it was spread over the sheet the bed looked very good and well put together. Heidi stood marvelling at it and said, "That's a wonderful cover, and the bed is perfect now! I wish it was night already so I could lie in it."

"I think we might have something to eat first," said Grandfather. "Don't you?"

In her enthusiasm to make up her bed, Heidi had forgotten everything else, but at the mention of eating she felt pangs of hunger. Nothing had passed her lips since a

piece of bread and a small cup of weak coffee early that morning ahead of her long journey. So she replied wholeheartedly: "Yes, I think so too."

"You go first, then, if we're agreed on that," he said, and he followed her down the ladder.

The old man went over to the stove, pushed away the large pot and pulled out a smaller one attached to a chain. He perched on a three-legged wooden stool with a round seat and blew the flames into life. While the pot was coming to the boil, he held a large piece of cheese over the fire on a long iron fork and turned it this way and that until it was golden yellow all over. Heidi watched what he did keenly. An idea must have popped into her head, for all of a sudden she sprang across to the cupboard, came back again, and then returned to it several more times. When Grandfather came to the table with a jug of milk and the fork with toasted cheese, he found the round loaf, two plates and two knives already neatly set out. Heidi had noticed them stowed in the cupboard and knew they would be needed for their meal.

"It's good that you can think for yourself," said Grandfather as he arranged the toasted cheese on pieces of bread, "but there's still something missing from the table."

Heidi saw how appetizingly the steam rose from the jug and ran back to the cupboard. There was only one little bowl, and for a second she was at a loss, but then she saw two glasses behind it. She returned in an instant and placed the bowl and one glass on the table.

“Good – you’ve got initiative. Now, where are you going to sit?” Grandfather occupied the only chair, so Heidi darted over to the stove, carried back the three-legged stool and sat down.

“Now you’ve got a seat, it’s true, but it’s too low,” he went on, “and mine isn’t high enough for you to reach the table either. But you really ought to get something inside you. Look here!” And he got up, filled the bowl with milk and set it down on his chair, which he then moved up close to the stool to provide Heidi with a table. He placed a large hunk of bread and a piece of the golden cheese there too and said, “Now, eat up!” He himself sat on a corner of the table and began his own midday meal. Heidi, whose powerful thirst during the long journey had now returned, seized her bowl and drank and drank without pausing for air. Then she took a deep breath and put the bowl down.

“Is the milk good?” asked Grandfather.

“The best I’ve ever drunk,” Heidi answered.

“You must have some more, then.” And Grandfather refilled the bowl to the brim and placed it before the girl. She bit gaily into the bread, on which she had spread some of the cheese, soft as butter after its toasting, and the two combined to make a good strong flavour. In between bites, she drank her milk and looked the picture of contentment. Once the meal was over, Grandfather went outside to put the goat pen in good order, and Heidi looked on attentively as he swept it with a broom and spread fresh straw for the animals to sleep on. Then he went into the shed next to the pen, where he sawed a rod into lengths and carved a flat section with holes to fit them into. The result, when

he stood it up, looked like his own chair, only much taller. Heidi stared at it, speechless with amazement.

“Do you know what it is, Heidi?” Grandfather asked.

“It’s my chair, because it’s so high. You made it in no time!” she said, still full of surprise and admiration.

“She has eyes in her head, this girl, and knows what’s going on around her,” Grandfather murmured to himself as he went about the cottage driving in nails here and there and then repairing part of the door. He wandered from one spot to another with his hammer, nails and bits of wood, adding, mending and removing as required. Heidi followed him step by step, her eyes fixed unerringly on what he was doing, and none of it failed to interest her.

Evening came. The rustling in the old firs increased, and a powerful wind blew across and hissed and blustered through the dense treetops. The sound brought a thrill to Heidi’s heart, and she skipped and leapt about under the trees in a mood of high merriment, like someone who has experienced an unknown pleasure. Grandfather was standing in the doorway of the shed watching her when they both heard a high-pitched whistle. Heidi ceased her frolics and Grandfather stepped outside. From the higher slopes goat after goat came bounding down, as if chasing one another, with Peter in their midst. Heidi shot right into the herd with a joyful cry and greeted her old friends of the morning one by one. On reaching the cottage they all halted, and two pretty, slender goats – one white, one brown – left the others. They went up to Grandfather and licked his hands, which held the salt he had ready for them every evening. While Peter made off with the rest of his

troop, Heidi tenderly stroked the two goats in turn. Then she whisked round to stroke them on their other sides, and was lost in her delight at the little creatures.

“Are they ours, Grandfather? Both of them? Do they go in the pen? Will they always stay with us?” In her happiness, Heidi’s questions came tumbling out, and Grandfather hardly had a chance to put in his “Yes, yes!” between one and the next. Once the goats had licked up all their salt the old man said, “Go inside and fetch your bowl and the bread!”

Heidi did so and came straight back. Grandfather milked enough from the white goat to fill the bowl and cut off a piece of bread: “Eat that and then off you go to bed! Your Aunt Dete has left another bundle for you with chemises and the like, and it’s at the bottom of the cupboard if you need it. I must take the goats in now, so sleep well!”

“Goodnight, Grandfather, goodnight! But what are their names, Grandfather, what are their names?” she cried, and ran after the old man as he retreated with the goats.

“The white one is Cygnet, and the brown one is Little Bear,” came the reply.

“Goodnight, Cygnet! Goodnight, Little Bear!” said Heidi, raising her voice as they both disappeared into the pen. Then she sat on the bench to eat her bread and drink her milk. The strong wind nearly blew her away, so she hurried to finish, went inside and climbed up to bed. Here she slept as blissfully as she would have done in a bed fit for a king.

Shortly afterwards, before it was completely dark, Grandfather went to bed too, for in the mornings he

was always out of doors at sunrise, which broke over the mountains very early in the summer months. In the night the wind gained such force that its gusts made the whole cottage tremble and the beams creak. It howled down the chimney and wailed like the voices of lost souls, and out among the old firs it raged so mightily that a few branches crashed down.

In the middle of the night, Grandfather got up. "She's likely to be frightened," he said under his breath. He went up the ladder and over to Heidi's bed. One moment the moon was shining brightly in the sky, then clouds chased across its face and all was black again. Now the moonlight came through the round skylight and directly illuminated Heidi's bed. As she slept under the heavy cover, her cheeks were a deep red and, with her head resting tranquilly on her plump little arm, her face appeared so cheerful that she must have been dreaming of something pleasant. The old man kept his gaze on the peacefully sleeping child till the moon vanished behind the clouds again and darkness returned. Then he went back to his bed.