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At four, Lasse and Pelle were dressed and were opening the cow-stable doors on the field side. The earth was rolling off its white covering of night mist, and the morning rose prophetically. Lasse stood still in the doorway, yawning, and making up his mind about the weather for the day; but Pelle let the soft tones of the wind and the song of the lark—all that was stirring—beat upon his little heart. With open mouth and doubtful eyes he gazed into the incomprehensible as represented by each new day with all its unimagined possibilities. "To-day you must take your coat with you, for we shall have rain about midday," Lasse would then say; and Pelle peered into the sky to find out where his father got his knowledge from. For it generally came true.

They then set about cleaning out the dung in the cow-stable, Pelle scraping the floor under the cows and sweeping it up, Lasse filling the wheelbarrow and wheeling it out. At half-past five they ate their morning meal of salt herring and porridge.

After that Pelle set out with the young cattle, his dinner basket on his arm, and his whip wound several times round his neck. His father had made him a short, thick stick with rings on it, that he could rattle admonishingly and throw at the animals; but Pelle preferred the whip, because he was not yet strong enough to use it.

He was little, and at first he had some difficulty in

making an impression upon the great forces over which he was placed. He could not get his voice to sound sufficiently terrifying, and on the way out from the farm he had hard work, especially up near the farm, where the corn stood high on both sides of the field-road. The animals were hungry in the morning, and the big bullocks did not trouble to move when once they had their noses buried in the corn and he stood belabouring them with the short handle of the cattle-whip. The twelve-foot lash, which, in a practised hand, left little triangular marks in the animal's hide, he could not manage at all; and if he kicked the bullock on the head with his wooden shoe, it only closed its eyes good-naturedly, and browsed on sedately with its back to him. Then he would break into a despairing roar, or into little fits of rage in which he attacked the animal blindly and tried to get at its eyes; but it was all equally useless. He could always make the calves move by twisting their tails, but the bullocks' tails were too strong.

He did not cry, however, for long at a time over the failure of his resources. One evening he got his father to put a spike into the toe of one of his wooden shoes, and after that his kick was respected. Partly by himself, and partly through Rud, he also learned where to find the places on the animals where it hurt most. The cow-calves and the two bull-calves all had their particular tender spot, and a well-directed blow upon a horn could make even the large bullocks bellow with pain.

The driving out was hard work, but the herding itself was easy. When once the cattle were quietly grazing, he felt like a general, and made his voice sound out incessantly over the meadow, while his little body swelled with pride and a sense of power.

Being away from his father was a trouble to him.

He did not go home to dinner, and often in the middle of his play, despair would come over him and he would imagine that something had happened to his father, that the great bull had tossed him or something else; and he would leave everything, and start running homewards crying, but would remember in time the bailiff's whip, and trudge back again. He found a remedy for his longing by stationing himself so that he could keep a look-out on the fields up there, and see his father when he went out to move the dairy-cows.

He taught himself to whittle boats and little rakes and hoes and decorate sticks with patterns cut upon the bark. He was clever with his knife and made diligent use of it. He would also stand for hours on the top of a monolith—he thought it was a gate-post—and try to crack his cattle-whip like a pistol-shot. He had to climb to a height to get the lash off the ground at all.

When the animals lay down in the middle of the morning, he was often tired too, and then he would seat himself upon the head of one of the big bullocks, and hold on to the points of its horns; and while the animal lay chewing with a gentle vibration like a machine, he sat upon its head and shouted at the top of his voice songs about blighted affections and horrible massacres.

Towards midday Rud came running up, as hungry as a hunter. His mother sent him out of the house when the hour for a meal drew near. Pelle shared the contents of his basket with him, but required him to bring the animals together a certain number of times for every portion of food. The two boys could not exist apart for a whole day together. They tumbled about in the field like two puppies, fought and made it up again twenty times a day, swore the most fearful threats of vengeance that should come in the shape of this or that grown-up

person, and the next moment had their arms round one another's necks.

About half-a-mile of sand-dunes separated the Stone Farm fields from the sea. Within this belt of sand the land was stony and afforded poor grazing; but on both sides of the brook a strip of green meadow-land ran down among the dunes, which were covered with dwarf firs and grass-wrack to bind the sand. The best grazing was on this meadow-land, but it was hard work minding both sides of it, as the brook ran between; and it had been impressed upon the boy with severe threats, that no animal must set its foot upon the dune-land, as the smallest opening might cause a sand-drift. Pelle took the matter quite literally, and all that summer imagined something like an explosion that would make everything fly into the air the instant an animal trod upon it; and this possibility hung like a fate at the back of everything when he herded down there. When Rud came and they wanted to play, he drove the cattle up on to the poor pasture where there was plenty of room for them.

When the sun shone the boys ran about naked. They dared not venture down to the sea for fear of the bailiff, who, they were sure, always stood up in the attic of the big house, and watched Pelle through his telescope; but they bathed in the brook—in and out of the water continually for hours together. After heavy rain it became swollen, and was then quite milky from the china clay that it washed away from the banks farther up. The boys thought it was milk from an enormous farm far up in the island. At high water the sea ran up and filled the brook with decaying seaweed that coloured the water crimson; and this was the blood of all the people drowned out in the sea.

Between their bathes they lay under the dunes and let

the sun dry them. They made a minute examination of their bodies, and discussed the use and intention of the various parts. Upon this head Rud's knowledge was superior, and he took the part of instructor. They often quarrelled as to which of them was the best equipped in one way or another—in other words, had the largest. Pelle, for instance, envied Rud his disproportionately large head.

Pelle was a well-built little fellow, and had put on flesh since he had come to Stone Farm. His glossy skin was stretched smoothly over his body, and was of a warm, sunburnt colour. Rud had a thin neck in proportion to his head, and his forehead was angular and covered with scars, the results of innumerable falls. He had not full command of all his limbs, and was always knocking and bruising himself; there were blue, livid patches all over him that were slow to disappear, for he had flesh that did not heal easily. But he was not so open in his envy as Pelle. He asserted himself by boasting of his defects until he made them out to be sheer achievements; so that Pelle ended by envying him everything from the bottom of his heart.

Rud had not Pelle's quick perception of things, but he had more instinct, and on certain points possessed quite a talent in anticipating what Pelle only learned by experience. He was already avaricious to a certain extent, and suspicious without connecting any definite thoughts with it. He ate the lion's share of the food, and had a variety of ways of getting out of doing the work.

Behind their play there lay, clothed in the most childish forms, a struggle for the supremacy, and for the present Pelle was the one who came off second best. In an emergency, Rud always knew how to appeal to his good qualities and turn them to his own advantage.

And through all this they were the best friends in the world, and were quite inseparable. Pelle was always looking towards "the Sow's" cottage when he was alone, and Rud ran off from home as soon as he saw his opportunity.

It had rained hard in the course of the morning, in spite of Lasse, and Pelle was wet through. Now the blue-black cloud was drawing away over the sea, and the boats lay in the middle of it with all their red sails set, and yet motionless. The sunlight flashed and glittered on wet surfaces, making everything look bright; and Pelle hung his clothes on a dwarf fir to dry.

He was cold, and crept close up to Peter, the biggest of the bullocks, as he lay chewing the cud. The animal was steaming, but Pelle could not bring warmth into his extremities, where the cold had taken hold. His teeth chattered too, and he was shivering.

And even now there was one of the cows that would not let him have any peace. Every time he had snuggled right in under the bullock and was beginning to get a little warmer, the cow strayed away over the northern boundary. There was nothing but sand there, but when it was a calf there had been a patch of mixed crops, and it still remembered that.

It was one of two cows that had been turned out of the dairy-herd on account of their dryness. They were ill-tempered creatures, always discontented and doing some mischief or other; and Pelle detested them heartily. They were two regular termagants, upon which even thrashing made no impression. The one was a savage beast, that would suddenly begin stamping and bellowing like a mad bull in the middle of grazing, and, if Pelle went towards it, wanted to toss him; and when it saw its opportunity,

it would eat up the cloth in which Pelle's dinner was wrapped. The other was old and had crumpled horns that pointed in towards its eyes, one of which had a white pupil.

It was the noisy one that was now at its tricks. Every other minute Pelle had to get up and shout: "Hi, Blakka, you villainous beast! Just you come back!" He was hoarse with anger, and at last his patience gave way, and he caught up a big stick and began to chase the cow. As soon as it saw his intention, it set off at a run up towards the farm, and Pelle had to make a wide circle to turn it down to the herd again. Then it ran at full gallop in and out among the other animals, the herd became confused and ran hither and thither, and Pelle had to relinquish his pursuit for a time while he gathered them together. But then he began again at once. He was boiling with rage, and leaped about like an indiarubber ball, his naked body flashing in loops and curves upon the green grass. He was only a few yards from the cow, but the distance remained the same; he could not catch her up to-day.

He stopped up by the rye-field, and the cow stood still almost at the same moment. It snapped at a few ears, and moved its head slowly to choose its direction. In a couple of leaps Pelle was up to it and had hold of its tail. He hit it over the nose with his cudgel, it turned quickly away from the rye, and set off at a flying pace down towards the others, while blows rained down upon its bony prominences. Every stroke echoed back from the dunes like blows upon the trunk of a tree, and made Pelle swell with pride. The cow tried to shake Pelle off as it ran, but he was not to be got rid of; it crossed the brook in long bounds, backwards and forwards, with Pelle almost floating through the air; but the blows continued to rain down upon it. Then it grew tired and began to slacken

its pace; and at last it came to a standstill, coughed, and resigned itself to the thrashing.

Pelle threw himself flat upon his face, and panted. Ha, ha! *That* had made him warm! Now that beast should— He rolled suddenly over on to his side with a start. The bailiff! But it was a strange man with a beard, who stood over him, looking at him with serious eyes. The stranger went on gazing at him for a long time without saying anything, and Pelle grew more and more uneasy under his scrutiny; he had the sun right in his eyes too, if he tried to return the man's gaze, and the cow still stood there coughing.

"What do you think the bailiff will say?" asked the man at last, quietly.

"I don't think he's seen it," whispered Pelle, looking timidly round.

"But God has seen it, for He sees everything. And He has led me here to stop the evil in you while there's still time. Wouldn't you like to be God's child?" The man sat down beside him and took his hand.

Pelle sat tugging at the grass and wishing he had had his clothes on.

"And you must never forget that God sees everything you do; even in the darkest night He sees. We are always walking in God's sight. But come now, it's unseemly to run about naked!" And the man took him by the hand and led him to his clothes, and then, going across to the north side, he gathered the herd together while Pelle dressed himself. The wicked cow was over there again already, and had drawn a few of the others after it. Pelle watched the man in surprise; he drove the animals back quite quietly, neither using stones nor shouting. Before he got back, Blakka had once more crossed the boundary; but he turned and brought her back again just as gently as before.

"That's not an easy cow to manage," he said kindly, when he returned; "but you've got young legs. Shan't we agree to burn that?" he asked, picking up the thick cudgel, "and do what we have to do with just our hands? God will always help you when you're in difficulties. And if you want to be a true child of God, you must tell the bailiff this evening what you did—and take your punishment." He placed his hand upon Pelle's head, and looked at him with that unendurable gaze; and then he left him, taking the stick with him.

For a long time Pelle followed him with his eyes. So that was what a man looked like, who was sent by God to warn you! Now he knew, and it would be some time before he chased a cow like that again. But go to the bailiff, and tell of himself, and get the whip-lash on his bare legs? Not if he knew it! Rather than that, God would have to be angry—if it was really true that He could see everything? It couldn't be worse than the bailiff anyhow.

All that morning he was very quiet. He felt the man's eyes upon him in everything he did, and it robbed him of his confidence. He silently tested things, and saw everything in a new light; it was best not to make a noise, if you were always walking in the sight of God. He did not go on cracking his cattle-whip, but meditated a little on whether he should burn that too.

But a little before midday Rud appeared, and the whole incident was forgotten. Rud was smoking a bit of cane that he had cut off the piece his mother used for cleaning the stove-pipes, and Pelle bartered some of his dinner for a few pulls at it. First they seated themselves astride the bullock Cupid, which was lying chewing the cud. It went on calmly chewing with closed eyes, until Rud put the glowing cane to the root of its tail, when it rose hastily,

both boys rolling over its head. They laughed and boasted to one another of the somersault they had turned, as they went up on to the high ground to look for blackberries. Thence they went to some birds' nests in the small firs, and last of all they set about their best game—digging up mice-nests.

Pelle knew every mouse-hole in the meadow, and they lay down and examined them carefully. "Here's one that has mice in it," said Rud. "Look, here's their dunghill!"

"Yes, that smells of mouse," said Pelle, putting his nose to the hole. "And the blades of grass turn outwards, so the old ones must be out."

With Pelle's knife they cut away the turf, and set to work eagerly to dig with two pieces of pot. The soil flew about their heads as they talked and laughed.

"My word, how fast we're getting on!"

"Yes; Ström couldn't work as fast!" Ström was a famous worker who got twenty-five öres a day more than other autumn farm-hands, and his example was used as an incentive to coax work out of the labourers.

"We shall soon get right into the inside of the earth."

"Well, but it's burning hot in there."

"Oh, nonsense, is it?" Pelle paused doubtfully in his digging.

"Yes, the schoolmaster says so."

The boys hesitated and put their hands down into the hole. Yes, it was warm at the bottom—so warm that Pelle found it necessary to pull out his hand and say: "Oh, my word!" They considered a little, and then went on scraping out the hole as carefully as if their lives depended on it. In a little while straw appeared in the passage, and in a moment the internal heat of the earth was forgotten. In less than a minute they had uncovered the nest, and