

Cattle – station – church – meadows

by Samantha Hosea

Cattle... station... church... meadows. The world passed by as if it were a day like any other. With the soft drumming of the train, her mind raced with similar speed. Like a whirlwind, thoughts went through her head, without an aim, randomly, but with a purpose; to confuse everything around it. She felt like a little girl who was wandering down a path and now had reached a crossing. If she decided to turn left, there was a great chance all would end in disaster, but there was also the chance of reaching a beautiful place with things she never even dreamt of. If she would turn right, she would surely reach her destination. However, she was not sure anymore that the destination she set for herself a long time ago, was the right place to be. It may be her destination, but was it also her destiny?

In a desperate wave of inspiration, she decided to let fate take its course. Looking out the window of the train, she saw the world pass by and thought 'let all the things in the world help me take this decision. It is not only mine to make. I will count the number of sheep in the meadows until the scenery changes. If it is odd, I will take my left path of opportunity and never look back. If the number will be even, I will go to the right and reach my destiny.'

Happy in this resolve she started counting. But the sheep were flocked together and it was hard to know for sure how accurate her counting was,. After some minutes of simple concentration, the scenery changed from a meadowy landscape to an urban environment. She had counted 35 sheep. An odd number. This meant she should leave her original plan and go into a new direction. Not feeling totally confident that this was actually the right decision to make, she wondered 'But I am not sure I counted the sheep right.

There were many and they were moving around. I could easily have missed one or double-counted. Better to try again, just to be sure.'

The train reached a station. A good opportunity to count the people getting on the train. This should be easier to count. The train pulled to a stop and some (she counted 5) people got off the train. 6 people took their places. 6. An even number.

'OK' she thought. 'That means that I will not take the exiting route and can feel safe and satisfied with what I have always had.' Before she could let it sink in, she heard a woman asking:

"This train headed to Lorsville?"

"No" a fellow-passengeer replied "only the .48 and .18 ones stop there".

The woman burst out laughing.

"Guess I took the wrong train then. Silly me..."

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She was shocked. Did this mean that really only 5 people were supposed to get on this train a minute ago? Was she supposed to make the other decision? Confused, she looked around for something else to base her decision on. A church was to be seen in the distance. This was simple. The number of minutes will be odd or even. Nothing to it.

A doom-scenario struck her. What if the church clock was broken? What if the minute arrow would go back and forward between two minutes? It would ironically reflect her confused state of mind and ambivalence... odd... even... odd... even... The thought was so compulsively sarcastic that she almost thought it had to be real.

The church came closer. Squinting her eyes, she tried to make out the time. To her relief, the arrow was pointing to one fixed spot only and also it stayed there while she was looking. The time was 17.47. Odd. A wave of panic struck her. It was 2 against 1. She had to give up everything she thought she'd ever be and go for a new life. Why did this distress her so much? Every heroine in every book would have chosen this left path without hesitation. 'Ok. Well, ok. Let's do that, then.'

Se sat back and closed her eyes, having made the decision. But an undeniable restlessness was upon her. She could not help but feel that it was not right. 'Did I not feel a tang of relief when there were 6 people getting on the train? Does that not say more about what I should do? Or am I just afraid of any change at all?'

Opening her eyes, she looked out the windows. Meadows once more. She tried to imagine what she would feel if her decision were the opposite. If the numbers would have turned out even... Safe. Secure. Content. No adventure, but satisfying. It was a choice. Slowly a peaceful serenity came over her. She smiled and knew now what was the right thing to do.

'Thank you world, for showing me that. And I promise, from now on, no more counting!'

