

Origin of the Goat-cupine, Symbol of Synergy

Ellen Divers, Fall 2018

Once upon a time there was a goat whose name was Greta. Greta had a good life on the rocky slope where she lived and she enjoyed running and jumping and exploring the world as much as any other kid. But Greta was not like the other goats – she enjoyed being alone, which is unusual for goats. It annoyed her when the other goats followed her while she went off exploring the nearby hills, sometimes teasing her and nearly always getting on her last nerve. One day, she had had enough. As the others followed her she turned around and bleated, “Look! Over there!” Of course, they fell for it, and Greta ran like the wind, so fast that by the time they figured out what had happened she was out of sight.

Meanwhile, in a nearby forest there lived a community of porcupines. They were a peace-loving group and lived by the motto most porcupines live by: MYOB, or Mind Your Own Business (a good motto to remember if you should ever come upon one) -- except for Pico, that is. Pico was a dreamer. His secret motto was actually not MYOB, but OMBY: Over the Mountainous Blue Yonder. He wanted to see the world, but as he looked down at his stubby legs he knew he could never travel far, and so he made the best of the situation and tried to content himself with viewing what he could of the outside world from his perch in a tree.

Now, back to Greta. Having made her great escape, Greta eventually found herself in a forest. As she looked at her surroundings, she noticed what appeared to be a very unusual (and possibly delicious) variety of mushroom. She moved closer to inspect it. “OW!”, she yelped and her eyes crossed as they examined the pointed object protruding from her nose. “What is that?”, she asked herself, annoyed by the painful intrusion. “It’s a quill”, replied a small voice from the other side of the offending “mushroom”. “You got too close, but trust me, it could have been much worse. I have hundreds of these things just waiting for the next nosy target.” “Really?”, asked Greta, imagining how useful such implements would be back home. Lamenting the turn of events, Pico used his teeth to gently dislodge the quill from Greta’s nose, and not long after, they became fast friends and started spending time together every week. One day, Pico shared his travel dream with Greta. “And why don’t you just strike out on your own?”, she asked. “Have you seen my legs, Greta? My feet?”, Pico asked, enviously eyeing Greta’s long limbs and tough hooves. “Good point”, she replied, enjoying her own pun. Greta was imagining what life would be like without the freedom to wander when she had an idea. “Pico, why don’t you climb on my back – carefully, please --and I’ll take you with me. You can see the world and, while we’re at it, we can see to it those pesky goats keep their distance. So the new travel partners set out to on their journey together, enjoying new sights and adventures -- and bothered by no one.

One day the Gods, as they watched Greta and Pico make their way up a mountain, looked at each other, smiled, and asked, “Why not?”. And that, my friends, is how the Goat-cupine came to be. As they traveled the world they became legend and are today a symbol of Synergy, the interaction or cooperation of two things whose combined effect is greater than the sum of the parts. Sometimes we can accomplish more together than we might alone.