

Blue Moose

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MR. BRETON HAD a little restaurant on the edge of the big woods. When winter came, the north wind blew through the trees and froze everything solid. Then it snowed. Mr. Breton didn't like it.

Mr. Breton was a very good cook. Every day people from the town came to his restaurant. They ate gallons of his clam chowder. They ate plates of his beef stew. They ate baskets of his homemade bread. The people from the town never talked much, and they never said anything about Mr. Breton's cooking.

A FURIOUSLY
FROSTY
HOT PEPPER
FROSTICLE?



WHAT DO
YOU THINK?



MM, MM-
GOOD!

“Did you like your clam chowder?” Mr. Breton would ask.

“Yup,” the people would say.

Mr. Breton wished they would say, “Delicious!” or “Good chowder!” All they ever said was, “Yup.”

Every morning Mr. Breton went out behind his house to get firewood. He wore three sweaters, a scarf, galoshes, a woolen hat, a big coat, and mittens. He still felt cold. Sometimes raccoons and rabbits came out of the woods to watch him. The cold didn’t bother them. It bothered Mr. Breton even more when they watched him.

One morning there was a moose in Mr. Breton’s yard—a blue moose. When Mr. Breton went out his back door, the moose was there, looking at him. “Shoo! Go away!” he said to the moose.

“Do you mind if I come in and get warm?” said the moose. “I’m just about frozen.” He brushed past Mr. Breton and walked into the kitchen. His antlers almost touched the ceiling.

The moose sat down on the floor near Mr. Breton’s stove. He closed his eyes and leaned toward the stove for a long time. Wisps of steam began to rise from his blue



WAAA HOOOOO!
HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT



fur. After a long time the moose sighed. It sounded like a foghorn.

“Can I get you a cup of coffee?” Mr. Breton asked the moose. “Or some clam chowder?”

“Clam chowder,” said the moose.

Mr. Breton filled a bowl with creamy clam chowder and set it on the floor. The moose dipped his big nose into the bowl and snuffled up the chowder. He made a sort of slurping, whistling noise.

“Sir,” the moose said, “this is wonderful clam chowder.”

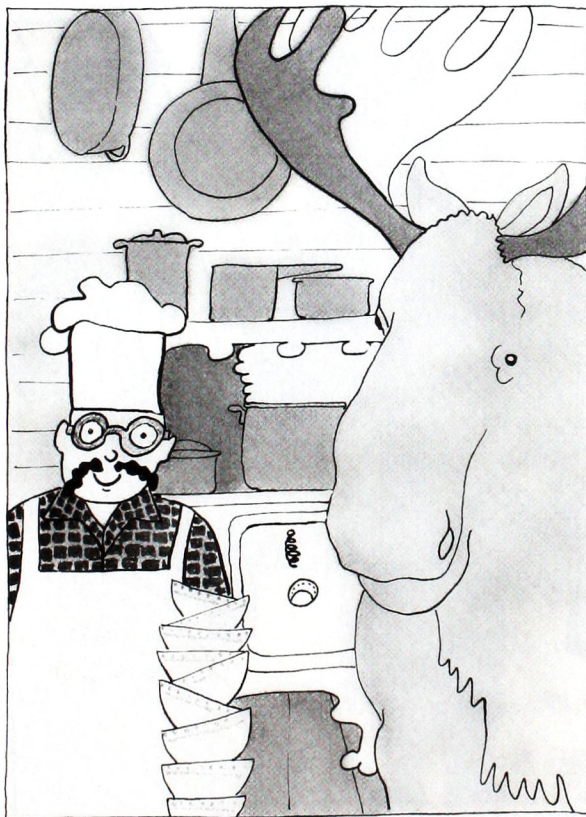
Mr. Breton blushed a very deep red. “Do you really mean that?”

“I have eaten some very good chowder in my time,” the moose said, “but yours is the very best.”

“Oh my,” said Mr. Breton, blushing even redder. “Would you like some more?”

“Yes, with crackers,” said the moose.

The moose ate seventeen bowls of chowder. Then he had twelve pieces of hot gingerbread and forty-eight cups of coffee. While the moose ate, Mr. Breton sat in a chair. Every now and then he said to himself, “Oh my. The best he’s ever eaten. Oh my.”



AND COLD COLD COLD!



IMPRESSIVE,
BUT NOT AS
POWERFUL AS
MY WALRUS BLUBBER
À LA PEANUT BUTTER
SNOW CONE.

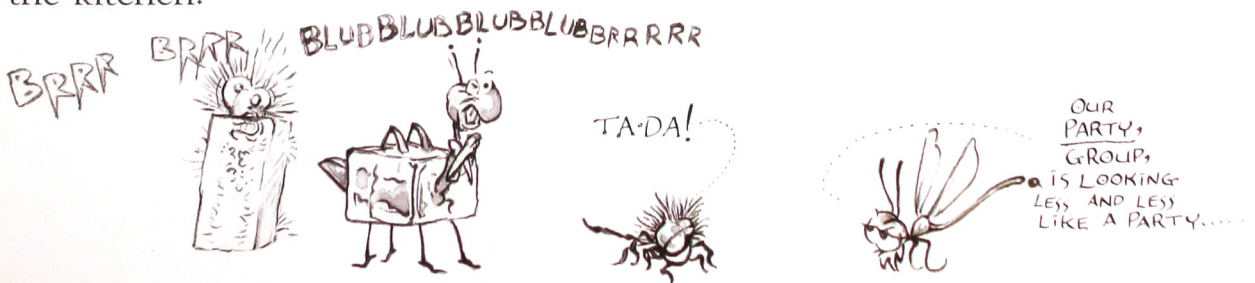
WALRUS BLUBBER?
MY FAVORITE!





Later, when some people from the town came to Mr. Breton's, the moose met them at the door. "How many in your party, please?" the moose asked. "I have a table for you; please follow me."

The people from the town were surprised to see the moose. They felt like running away, but they were too shocked. The moose led them to a table, brought them menus, looked at each person, snorted, and clumped into the kitchen.



The people were whispering to one another about the moose when he clumped back to the table. "Are you ready to order?" he asked.

"Yup," said the people from the town. They waited for the moose to ask them if they would like some chowder, the way Mr. Breton always did. But the moose just stared at them as though they were very foolish. The people felt uncomfortable. "We'll have the clam chowder."

"*Chaudière de clam*; very good," the moose said. "Do you desire crackers or homemade bread?"

"We will have bread," said the people from the town.

"And for dessert," said the moose, "will you have fresh gingerbread or apple *jacquette*?"

"What do you recommend?" asked the people from the town.

"After the *chaudière de clam*, the gingerbread is best."

"Thank you," said the people from the town.

"It is my pleasure to serve you," said the moose. He brought bowls of chowder balanced on his antlers.

At the end of the meal, the moose clumped to the table. "Has everything been to your satisfaction?"

"Yup," said the people from the



OPHELIA'S
TOO EASY.
SHE GETS COLD
BY JUST LOOKING
AT A SNOW PEA.



THIS IS
THE COLDEST
SNOWPOP
EVER!



NOT AS
COLD
AS
MINE!

town, their mouths full of gingerbread.

"I beg your pardon?" said the moose. "What did you say?"

"It was very good," said the people from the town. "The best we've ever eaten."

"I will tell the chef," said the moose.

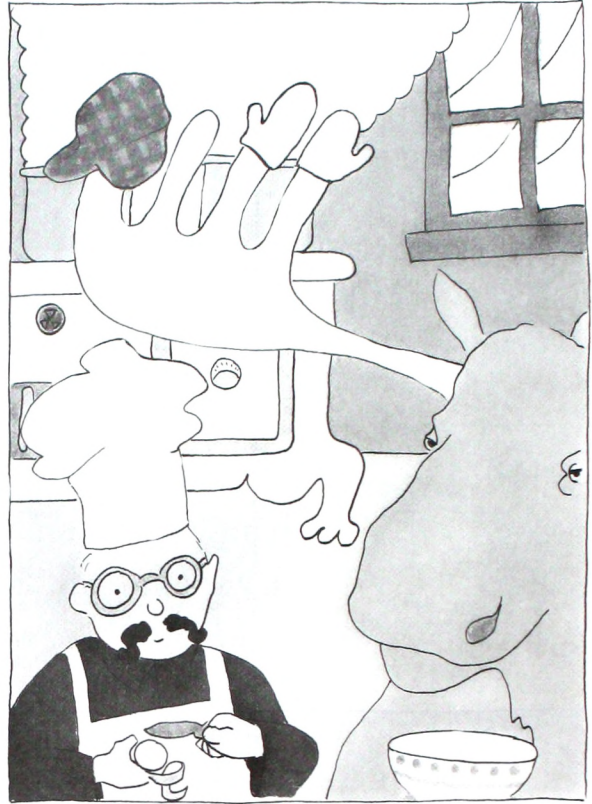
The moose told Mr. Breton what the people from the town had said. Mr. Breton rushed out of the kitchen and out of the house. The people from the town were sitting on the porch, putting on their

snowshoes. "Did you tell the moose that my clam chowder was the best you've ever eaten?" Mr. Breton asked.

"Yup," said the people from the town. "We said that. We think that you are the best cook in the world; we have always thought so. Why do you think we walk seven miles on snowshoes just to eat here?"

The people from the town walked away. Mr. Breton sat on the edge of the porch and thought it over. When the moose came out to see why Mr. Breton was sitting outside without his coat on, Mr. Breton said, "Do you know, those people think I am the best cook in the whole world?"

"Of course they do," the moose said.



When spring finally came, the moose grew moody. He spent a lot of time staring out the back door. Flocks of geese flew overhead, returning to lakes in the north.

“Chef,” said the moose one morning, “I will be going tomorrow. I wonder if you would pack some gingerbread for me.”

Mr. Breton baked a special batch of gingerbread and packed it in parcels tied with string so the moose could hang them from his antlers. When the moose came downstairs, Mr. Breton was sitting in the kitchen, drinking coffee. The parcels of gingerbread were on the table.

“Do you want some coffee before you go?” Mr. Breton asked.

“Thank you,” said the moose.

“I shall certainly miss you. You are the best friend I have,” said Mr. Breton.

“Thank you,” said the moose.

“Do you suppose you’ll ever come back?” asked Mr. Breton.

“Not before Thursday or Friday,” said the moose. “It would be impolite to visit my uncle for less than a week.” The moose hooked his antlers into the loops of string on the parcels of gingerbread. “My





uncle will like this.” He stood up and turned toward the door.

“Wait!” Mr. Breton shouted. “Do you mean that you are not leaving forever? I thought you were lonely for the life of a moose. I thought you wanted to go back to the wild, free places.”

“Chef, do you have any idea how cold it gets in the wild, free places?” the moose said. “And the food! Terrible!”

“Have a nice time at your uncle’s,” said Mr. Breton.

“I’ll send you a postcard,” said the moose. 🐌

