

# Goat Attacks and other Mighty Warrior Joys

Last week, writing away on my work in progress, it became necessary for a lead character to be subjected to a goat attack. This happens every minute of the day to a writer somewhere in the world. Hard-working writer is chugging along with a Work in Progress, and suddenly s/he needs to know the ins and outs of goat attacks.

Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy. Research trip! (Think of the boys from Animal House announcing Road Trip! And when it's truly a Research Field Trip, oh, my . . . but that's for another blog.)

Research -- even the stay-at-home kind -- is one of my favorite parts of writing. Right up there with hearing voices and not being sent to the loony bin (yet.)

For those thinking it's because adding to my store of knowledge is its own reward, uh-huh. For those thinking, actually, it's because it gives me enough background in the world I'll be writing in to start shaping the story, you're right. For those thinking it's because it provides me with those telling details that bring characters and settings to life for readers, yup, that's it.

For the rest of you, now we can get down to the truth: Research is a legal, cheap, non-fattening, no-hangover buzz.

Just the memory of securing a copy of the privately published diary of a woman who traveled a somewhat obscure route I'm writing about in the year I'm writing about, gets my heart beating faster. Mighty Warrior Researcher home from the hunt with my booty - hear me roar!

Sometimes the roar sounds suspiciously like laughter.

Don't get me wrong, all those serious reasons for research are true, and I take it seriously. I do a workshop and have written articles on researching [http://patriciamclinn.com/pdf\\_articles/dig.pdf](http://patriciamclinn.com/pdf_articles/dig.pdf) and [http://patriciamclinn.com/pdf\\_articles/format-dig-hints.pdf](http://patriciamclinn.com/pdf_articles/format-dig-hints.pdf). Research does add to my store of knowledge. It is necessary to provide the landscape of the world I'm writing about. And it is essential for making characters and settings both interesting and believable.

It's also a hoot.

If I'm bogged down in a WIP, my most successful cure is to do more research. Especially if I can find a person who's enthusiastic about whatever it is I'm researching. For this, I particularly like talking to people on the phone. Enthusiasm is contagious, and when it also provides a tidbit that makes a character or setting sing, it jazzes me no end. I return to the WIP with ideas effervescing.

So, last week, I set out to research goat attacks.

To start, I found more accounts of goats being attacked (poor babies) than attacking.

Then I found that where my story is located there are a lot of pygmy goats. Hmm, a grown man attacked by a pygmy goat didn't have quite the effect I had in mind. I'm not going for high drama, but pin-prick bruises around his ankles weren't going to do the job.

And goat raiser after goat raiser insisted that goats were gentle, loyal, loving pets, though even these partisans acknowledged that breeding males can stink to high heaven. Having this grown man knocked over by the smell wasn't going to cut it either.

Then I encountered a goat raiser willing to let her imagination run wild. Not that any of *her* goats would ever attack, of course, but a neighbor had one famously ill-tempered old goat . . . and thus my fictional attack goat Gandy was born!

To flesh out Gandy, I did more noodling around the Internet. Found a number of videos of specious goat attacks. (Did enjoy the video of a border collie rounding up AWOL goats in a village ... but I digress. It happens in research.)

Got a little excited at a citation for Attack Goat . . . then discovered it was trying to sell a sign that proclaimed:

Caution: Area Patrolled by Attack Goat Security Co. <http://www.signsup.com/product.asp?cl=14&ct=774> (Oddly, part of the sales pitch was that the sign is "safe.")

I then was detoured to the site StraightDope.com for contemplation of why Satan is often depicted as goat-like. I first got some chuckles from the site's masthead, which proclaims: "Fighting Ignorance Since 1973 (it's taking longer than we thought.)"

Then I read the "Classic" Q. and A. on the topic "If everyone in China jumped off chairs at once, would the earth be thrown out of its orbit?"

After wiping my laughter-streaming-eyes, I forced myself back on the straight-and-narrow goat track.

And then I found it. The piece de resistance in legal, cheap, non-fattening, no-hangover research buzz: The Childhood Goat Trauma Foundation website. <http://www.goat-trauma.org>

The Childhood Goat Trauma Foundation's home page brags "Through its programs and workshops, individuals from all walks of life have been able to live happier and more fulfilling lives, without the ever-present ghosts of their personal goat traumas. Some have even made such progress that they have been able to put their traumas completely behind them and rejoin mainstream society."

As I explored the site, I again laughed till I cried.

"Goats have learned to climb trees and drop down onto unsuspecting people. . . . Be especially aware in any treed, goat-infested areas." <http://www.goat-trauma.org/victim.shtml> Or "If a child is traumatized by a goat before age five, he/she is five times more likely to become some form of social deviant." <http://www.goat-trauma.org/stats.shtml> Or "Goat Trauma in Action <http://www.goat-trauma.org/action.shtml> - a picture is worth a thousand words."

You can also purchase a coffee mug <http://www.cafepress.com/cgtf>. . . to protect your coffee from goat attack trauma.

Since my research foray, I've not only written the goat attack scene, along with the goat attack set-up scene (because no writer would want to spring a goat attack on the reader without some foreshadowing), I've also returned to the WIP with renewed enthusiasm, more ideas, and the challenge of working in the Childhood Goat Trauma Foundation.

Oh, yes, and I've found some presents for my brother for next Christmas. You gotta love research.

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<http://www.ninc.com/blog>