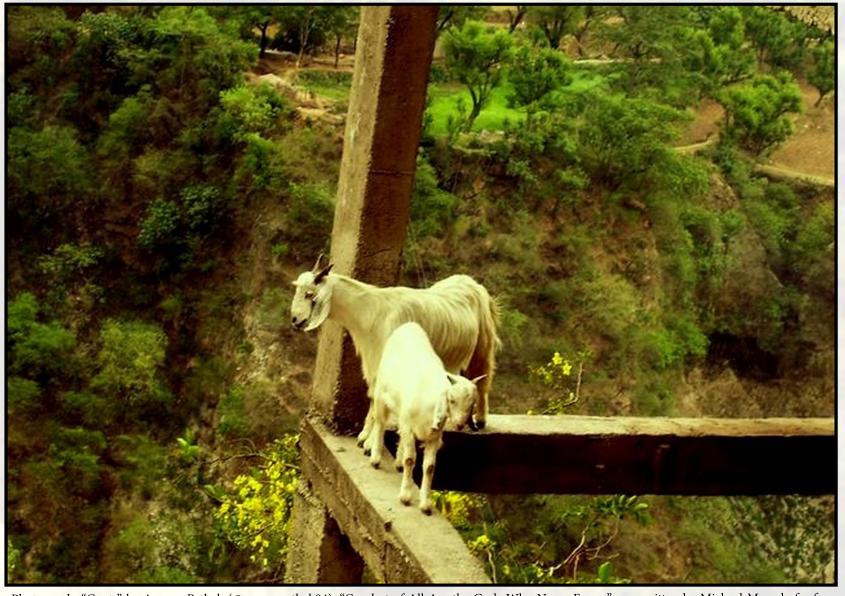
Cruelest of All Are the Gods Who Never Fromn

by Michael Meyerhofer

I am tired of goats walking on ledges how calmly they disregard their own peril, how even those nubby little horns seem less like swirls of keratin than middle fingers poised above faces that have evolved into wide, permanent grins. Maybe it's our ancestors' fault for wanting smiles on their milk cartons instead of missing children. Did you know that goats sometimes get their heads stuck in fences and have to wait until a farmer comes by to free them? It's the horns. To remove them is called *disbudding*. It takes a tool like an Inquisitor's pliers, castration bands that resemble swollen wedding rings, and a big glass of water to soak them in.



Photograph: "Goats" by Aparna Pathak (@aparnapathak04). "Cruelest of All Are the Gods Who Never Frown" was written by Michael Meyerhofer for *Rattle*'s Ekphrastic Challenge, July 2015, and selected by Timothy Green as the Editor's Choice winner.

