

The World of Effie is not much like the Earth. Our planet is about 70 percent water-covered, but Effie has much more solid "land" than seas or lakes. Only one side of Effie has been thoroughly explored; the other side is the "unknown." A discernible population of Effie does not appear to exist, although insects swarm on the surface and in the air from time to time. Effie does not revolve around a source of light or heat. Instead, movement appears sometimes to be random, but twice a day moves in a specific direction. While we humans gobble up the nonrenewable assets of our planet, Effie seems to be more in balance. Just enough is used to keep Effie going at the same rate year after year.

Effie has bays and peninsulas, islands and archipelagos. But, mostly, the brown-red of the "land" predominates. I pull a stool up to Effie every morning, reach under the white of the ocean, and begin to milk. Ever since I began to milk Effie, several years ago, I have been fascinated by the colors on the right side of her body--the place I sit when I milk. She is, to all appearances, a beef cow of Hereford breeding. And, she is probably half Hereford. The shorthorn half, however, and some good genetics on her white-faced mother's side, as well, have made her a fine family cow. At least half of the sixty pounds of butter in our freezer, our winter's supply, have come from Effie's milk. The rest is the gift of our other family cow, a shorthorn we call Buttercup.

But, Effie's side, at least in my view, looks like a map of an unknown world. For one thing, the area where the brown and white merge is a narrow band of mixed color, much like the "shallow water area" on a map of our planet. In the white seas are many islands of brown, each surrounded by that blending of colors that means the boundary between land and water. There is a nice sharp peninsula that runs down her front leg, and I imagine, as I sit and milk, that it would be a good place for habitation--a high promontory overlooking the water.

I never look closely at the other side of Effie. As I milk the right half of her udder, her calf, a fat heifer, sucks on the other side. I don't interfere with her, and she leaves me alone--for a time. Now, though, since she has grown considerably since she was born in June, she is not satisfied with "her" side, and it isn't long before she is reaching under,

demanding more milk. I let her have it. Soon, she will get it all to herself, and we will cease our milking for another season. If all goes well, Effie will have her tenth calf next summer, and once again, I will sit by her side every morning, filling my pail with foamy milk that we will run through the hand-cranked cream separator. We will churn most of that cream into bright, yellow, grass-made butter that will supply us with healthful, organic fat for another year. The garden and our family cows produce nearly everything we consume during the year. And, I don't think better food can be found anywhere.

Sitting and milking Effie each morning is never boring. My mind wanders around the world that is Effie, and as I contemplate the isles and seas and the mega-continent that cover her body, I can't think of a better place to spend a few minutes each day.