

THE DAY OF FALLING COWS

(Poem by Tom Paxton (c) 2002)

The Russian cargo plane sat on the tarmac,
Somewhere in Siberia, waiting to fly.
The crew, who thought that they were wild cowboyskis,
Had stolen all these cattle - they weren't sure why.
They drove their stolen herd aboard the airplane;
The plane roared down the runway in the dawn.
The Russian rustlers gave each other high fives,
And soon the herd of stolen cattle was gone.

The cattle-bearing cargo plane kept climbing,
And finally leveled off at cruising speed.
The herd began to show some signs of panic;
The herd began to threaten to stampede.
The crew tried singing cowboy songs to soothe them -
It only seemed to scare the cattle more.
And now the crew themselves began to lose it,
And someone opened up the cargo door.

The cattle had been milling around in terror
Round the cargo hold they trampled about.
They saw the cargo door begin to open,
And, cattle being cattle, they ran out,
Mooing like a herd of Texas longhorns,
Out the cargo door of the plane they ran,
But, instead of the frozen soil of old Siberia,
They were five and a half miles over the Sea of Japan.

Meanwhile, on the tranquil sea below them,
On the shimmering waters of green and blue,
Bobbed a busy fleet of Japanese fishermen,
Casting nets and doing what fishermen do.
All at once, the fishermen were frozen
If you had been there, you'd have been frozen, too
To hear a sound all fishermen hear with horror:
The sound of falling cattle going "Moo!"

The cattle started hitting the troubled waters;
They'd hit the Sea of Japan with a water "Splat!"
But someone happened to be beneath a big one;
It went right through and sank that sucker flat.
The eland fears the roar of a hungry lion;
A mouse goes weak at the sound of a cat's meows,
But these days, Japanese fishermen live in terror,
And listen for the sound of falling cows.