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The Kashmir Goat

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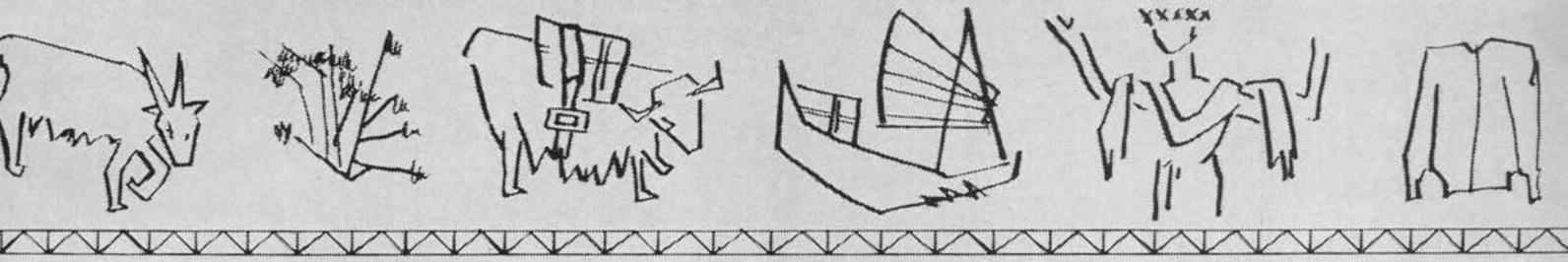


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The Kashmir Goat—

The Coat Off His Back Becomes A Sweater For You

by Norma Scholes

Textiles and Clothing Senior

A SMALL GOAT somewhere in Inner Asia scratched himself on a shrub about two years ago. Because he and the rest of his species possess this uncouth habit, it is possible for you to own your cashmere sweater.

The Kashmir goat disdains being shorn like a plain old sheep. He prefers to see man work to acquire his fleece. So he relents a little by leaving pieces of wool on his natural backscratchers. When there are many itchy Kashmir goats, this rubbing practice creates woolly trails through the underbrush. Man's job is to snatch these hunks of cashmere from each twig. Needless to say, it requires a sure foot and plenty of patience.

You can hardly blame the nimble creature for being so stingy with his fleece. Where he hails from, the climate calls for insulation plus. Therefore, one coat is not enough for our friend. An overcoat of long, coarse hair shields him from wind and rain. His fine, soft undercoat protects him from heat and cold. His two coats may be gray, brown or white. White is the rarest and most expensive.

Little cashmere comes from our goat's native province of Kashmir today. Most of it is imported from the forbidding plateaus of northern China, Inner and Outer Mongolia, Manchuria and Tibet. Yet, this hardy animal turns up his nose at any other home. In fact, he thrives best where living conditions are worst. The harder it is to find food, the colder the climate and the higher the altitude, the finer fleece he wears. Men have tried to transplant him to countries with fewer hazards (for their convenience, not his). However, he scorns such soft environment and simply refused to grow a good quality of fleece.

To return to your sweater, after the fleece is gathered, the soft undercoat must be separated from

the coarse outercoat by hand, cleaned and washed. Machines remove remaining hairs. During this operation the cashmere loses one-third to three-fourths of its original weight.

Story Book Trip To World Markets

Next the fleece is tied into bales and starts off along the Great Silk Road to the seaports. It travels on men's shoulders part of the way. Yaks carry it over the steepest mountain trails. It jolts along on the backs of camels and horses over caravan routes. It floats across rivers on inflated animal skins. When the cashmere reaches a big river, junks transport it to the China Sea ports. About a year has passed since the trip began. Then the bales are loaded onto ships and sail to world markets, where the fibers are processed into yarn.

You are always in fashion when you wear your cashmere sweater. In any season cashmere's high insulation quality (three times that of wool) enables it to ward off heat as well as cold.

Cashmere Worn Centuries Ago

In any age, cashmere is a luxury. The caesars wore it arrogantly when Rome was at its height. Kings and queens have prized it for hundreds of years. Napoleon made cashmere shawls high fashion at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even his armies could not capture the elusive Kashmir goat. Although the use of cashmere is not restricted to royalty today, the world supply is not proportionately much larger than it was centuries ago.

Meanwhile, unaware that chemists stay awake

nights trying to synthesize his fleece, our Kashmir goat contentedly scratches himself on a bush. He continues to gleefully escape the clutches of man, not knowing that the coat off his back is now a sweater for you.

Care of Your Sweater

A large amount of work goes into the making of a cashmere sweater. A small amount of work and a little extra care will keep it looking nice for a long time.

Before washing, lay the sweater on a sheet of paper and draw around it.

To wash, use cold water with a cold water soap so that shrinkage will not take place. Soak the sweater

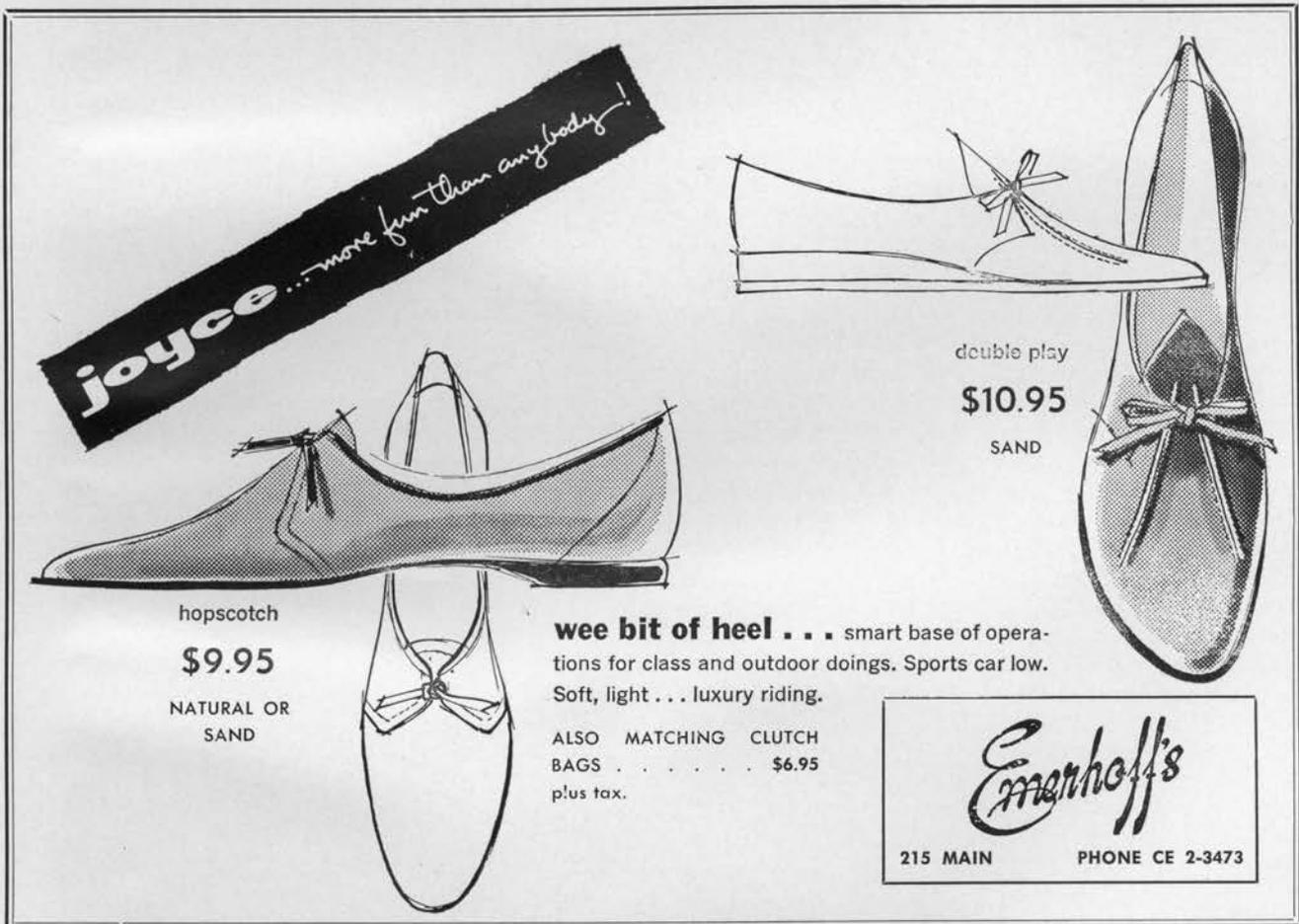
in the solution for two or three minutes to loosen dirt. Then wash it with an up and down motion, squeezing gently. Wringing and rubbing of any sort cause shrinkage and pilling. Give extra attention to areas such as the neckline, sleeve line and elbows.

Use cold water rinses until the water is free from all signs of soap. Wrap the sweater in a towel for about 15 minutes in order to remove excess water.

Lay the garment on the paper and shape it to the original outline. Place the paper on a dry towel to absorb the remaining water. Since high heat causes shrinkage, dry at room temperature, away from sunlight in case the dye is not fast to light.

For storage, the sweater should be folded as smoothly as possible to minimize wrinkles. Store it away from sunlight.

Your cashmere sweater is precious, and with proper care and handling it will remain so.



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