

Extract 1

“My name’s Babe,” he said in a jolly voice. “What’s yours?”

“Maaaaa,” said the sheep.

“That’s a nice name,” said Babe. “What’s the matter with you, Ma?”

“Foot-rot,” said the sheep, holding up a foreleg. “And I’ve got a nasty cough.” She coughed. “And I’m not as young as I was.”

“You don’t look very old to me,” said Babe politely.

A look of pleasure came over the sheep’s mournful face, and she lay down in the straw.

“Very civil of you to say so,” she said. “First kind word I’ve had since I were a little lamb,” and she belched loudly and began to chew a mouthful of cud.

Though he did not quite know why, Babe said nothing to Fly of his conversation with Ma.

Farmer Hogget had treated the sheep’s foot and tipped a drench down its protesting throat, and now, as darkness fell, dog and pig lay side by side, their rest only occasionally disturbed by a rustling from the next-door box. Having at last set eyes on a sheep, Babe’s dreams were immediately filled with the creatures, all lame, all coughing, all, like the ducks, scattering wildly before his attempts to round them up.

“Go here, go there, do this, do that!” he squeaked furiously at them, but they took not a bit of notice, until at last the dream turned to nightmare, and they all came hopping and hacking and maa-ing after him with hatred gleaming in their mad yellow eyes.

“Mum! Mum!” shouted Babe in terror.

“Maaaaa!” said a voice next door.

“It’s all right, dear,” said Fly, “it’s all right. Was it a nasty dream?”

