

Chapter One

KID

There once was a small goat who lived on a farm, not far from a rugged mountain. The farm had five grassy paddocks separated by wire and timber fences. Cows and sheep grazed on the grass, and in a pen beside the main barn lived a family of pigs. Next to the pen was a chook yard, with a big log for perching and a wooden henhouse in the middle. It was a busy yard. All day long the hens bustled and flapped and scratched the ground. It was here, among

the feathers and squawks, that the small goat lived.

He was barely taller than the hens, and not just because he was young. He was a small breed of goat – a miniature – so even when fully grown he would hardly peek over a bale of straw. For now he was still a kid, with gangly legs, ears that stuck out and two bumps on top of his head. He couldn't see them but he knew they were there, and he dreamt that one day they would grow into big curved horns, strong and majestic.

The hens had never known the goat's name, so they all called him Kid.

‘Good morning, Kid.’

‘What're you doing there, Kid?’

‘Look out, Kid!’

He got used to the name and he liked living with the hens. The yard was a rough

rectangle, bordered by a strong wire fence with a timber railing, and it was long enough for him to reach a gallop. Most of all, he loved the hollow log that lay beside the henhouse. It was the trunk of a tree that had fallen long ago, an ancient timber beast, patched with moss. He used it as a tunnel or a shady place to take a nap. Some days he tried to climb it, but he always fell down in a clumsy bundle of legs.

Late one afternoon, he eyed the log from across the yard. Something felt different. Had his legs grown longer? His bumps a bit bigger? He stamped a hoof, bucked on the spot and charged at the log. He ran through the crowd of hens, who flapped out of the way, scuffing up dust. He reached the log, kicked off from his back legs and flew through the air. He landed with a clatter on top.

‘Hey, look at me!’ He stomped and called out to the hens. ‘Look where I am!’

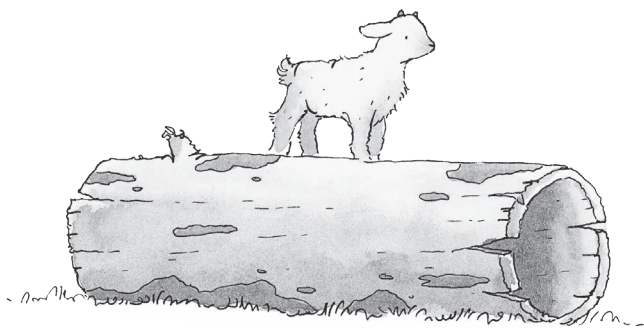
A few of them clucked but they kept their heads down, pecking at the dirt.

‘Audrey!’ he shouted at one hen. ‘Hey, Audrey!’

She peered up at him. ‘Well, look at you, my dear.’

‘I did it!’ He chanced a small bucking jump.

‘You sure did.’ She shook her feathers. ‘You look like you’ve conquered a mountain. But you’ll have to get down, you know. It’s almost time for bed.’



The hens bobbed and scratched their way to the henhouse. They clawed up the wooden ramp in twos and threes until the only animal left in the yard was Kid, perched on the log.

‘Conquered a mountain,’ he said to himself.

His hooves click-clacked as he turned and gazed at the real mountain not far from the farm. It was covered in trees, with rocky patches and steep sides near the top. The peak was a jagged point piercing the sky. What would it be like to climb something that big?