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Opening extract from

Shaun the Sheep – Tales from Mossy Bottom Farm
The Flock Factor

Written by

Martin Howard

Illustrated by

Andy Janes

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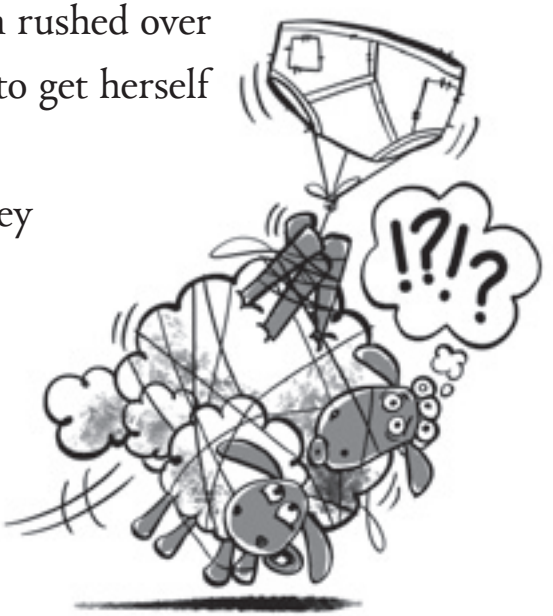
Chapter One
TA-DAH!

Shaun sniffed the pong wafting from the pigsty and leaned against the wall. It was a lovely day on Mossy Bottom Farm and for once no one was getting into trouble. Well, not serious trouble, he thought as he spotted Mowermouth the goat munching through one corner of the barn. Exasperated, Shaun nudged Bitzer. Last time the goat had chewed a hole in the barn, pigeons had staged a midnight robbery, stealing wool to line their nests. Poor Nuts had been left almost bald.

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Bitzer, however, was lost in music. Eyes shut, he rocked out to the tunes coming from his headphones.

In the meadow, Timmy was tangled up in the string of a kite he had made from a pair of old underpants. Hearing his bleats, Timmy's Mum rushed over and managed to get herself tangled too. Before long they both looked like they'd fallen into a plate of spaghetti.



Chuckling, Shaun nudged Bitzer again. There was goat-chasing, barn-patching and sheep-untangling to do.

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Bitzer opened one eye and sighed. A sheepdog's work was never done.

At that moment, the Farmer opened the farmhouse door. With a long "Ahhh," he took a lungful of fresh air. After unfolding a creaking deckchair, he slurped a mug of tea and then opened a copy of *The Mossy Bottom Gazette*, grumping as he read the front page. **"BUDGIES IN DISGUISE,"** read the headline. Mr Sweetly had been charged with fraud after selling budgies disguised as miniature parrots at the village jumble sale.



The Farmer tutted. What was the world coming to?

Suddenly, he sat up straight in his chair. Then, sloshing tea, he jumped to his feet with a loud "A-ha!"



Bitzer and Shaun's heads popped up over the wall. The Farmer's

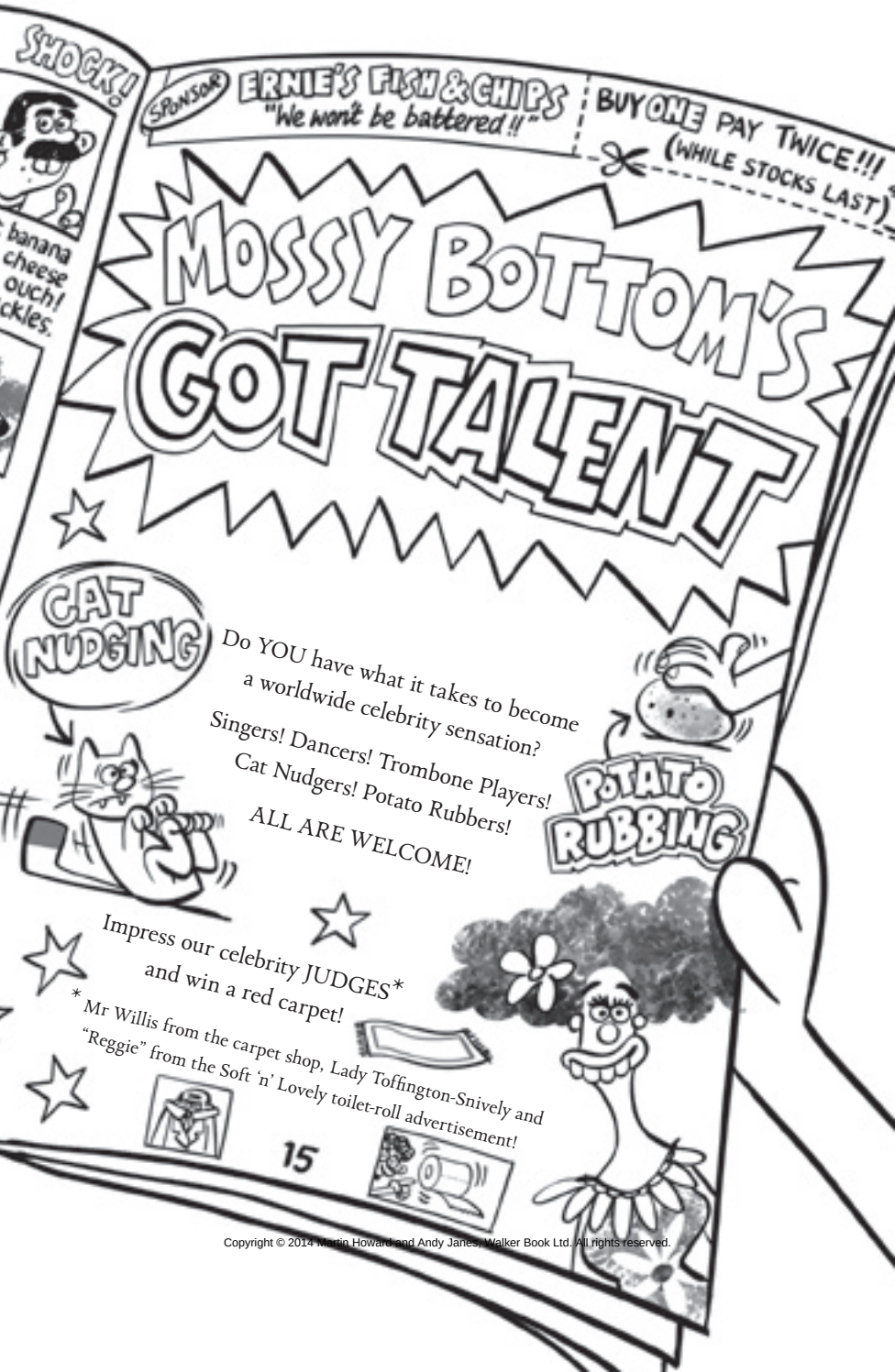
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eyes twinkled with excitement as he peered at *The Mossy Bottom Gazette*. "A-HA!" he said again, jabbing it with a finger. After dropping the newspaper, he hurried into the house.

Shaun's eyes lit up with curiosity. What had the Farmer been reading to make him rush off so quickly? He nudged Bitzer again and pointed.

Bitzer fetched the paper. Shaun pulled it out of his mouth and flicked through a few pages. **"PIGEONS STEAL MR GRAVELLY'S WIG."** He turned the page. **"HAVE YOU SEEN THESE PIGEONS?"** Underneath were pictures of six, identical pigeons. Frowning, Shaun turned another page. "Baaaa," he muttered. This must be it. The newspaper rustled as he and Bitzer leaned closer.

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Shaun hid the newspaper as the Farmer returned with two glittering, sequined jackets: one gold, one silver. "Hmm," he muttered, holding up first one, then the other.



After tossing the silver jacket away, he pulled the gold one on over his old jumper. "Ta-dah!" he shouted.

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Shaun and Bitzer grinned at each other. The Farmer was going to enter the contest! Both of them sniggered. Whenever he took a bath, the Farmer sang like a cow with an upset stomach. And he danced like a pig on roller skates!

The Farmer's antics were attracting attention. One by one, the Flock peeked over the top of the wall. They were joined by curious chickens.

The pigs peered over their wall and pointed as the Farmer fumbled through the pockets of his golden jacket. "Ta-diddly-a-tum-bah-DAH!" he announced, holding up a packet of balloons. He pulled out a pink one and stretched it, giving the rabbits a smile. "Ba-ba-ba-buuuum," he mumbled, pushing one end into his ear.

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The rabbits' jaws fell open. Half-eaten carrots dropped to the floor.

The long, pink balloon was growing bigger. Red-faced and panting, the Farmer was blowing it up with his ear!

The grin dropped from Shaun's face. He and Bitzer blinked at each other and then stared at the Farmer. He had a talent, after all! An amazing talent.

"TA-DAAAAH!" the Farmer cried, holding up a balloon model of a small dog. It had a wonky head and only three legs, one of which was twice as long as the others. Or maybe it wasn't such an amazing talent, after all, Shaun thought.

The rabbits stared, completely bewildered.

The pigs started snickering.

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When the Farmer noticed that his model looked like an accident in a sausage factory, he harrumphed, threw it over his shoulder and stomped back inside.



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