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Opening extract from

Shaun the Sheep On the Ball

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Chapter One

BIG DAY OUT

In the trailer behind the Farmer's car, Shaun and the Flock bounced along green and leafy country lanes on a hot summer's day. As swallows dipped and swooped around them, the sheep bleated and hung their heads over the sides of the trailer, enjoying the breeze and taking in the sights of the open road.

Shaun's favourite sight was the Farmer's bald head banging against the roof of the car to shouts of "Ooo-aaaargh!" and "Bah!"

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every time the car hit a bump in the road. Beside the Farmer was Bitzer, his head stuck out of the window and with one paw on his hat to stop it blowing away. His tongue fluttered in the wind like a pink flag.

Shaun held on tight as the wheels hit an especially big bump. The Flock bleated to one another. With every mile, their curiosity grew. Where was the Farmer taking them on such a beautiful day?

Timmy was dreaming of the seaside. Shirley hoped they were going out to lunch at a restaurant with a dessert trolley so large that it took three waiters to push it. The Twins wanted to go to a rock festival to see their favourite band, **THE REVOLVING CUCUMBERS**.

Nuts was sure they were going to the theatre. He'd even brought some chocolate-covered raisins he'd found sprinkled over

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the floor of the rabbit hutches to share out during the interval. He peered into the paper bag. The rabbits were mad to leave perfectly good chocolate-covered raisins lying about like that.



Nuts' thoughts were interrupted by an excited bleat from Shaun, who was leaning over the side of the trailer and pointing a hoof. Through a gap in the trees, Nuts caught

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a glimpse of something that was deep blue, sparkling and dotted with white. The Farmer wasn't taking them to the theatre.

He was taking them to the seaside!

The Flock bleated delightedly as the car clanked over the top of a hill. The sea spread out before them, stretching to the horizon. Even better, in the distance were the stripy tents, helter-skelters and roller coasters of a funfair. The breeze smelled of candyfloss and suntan cream.

Squeezing his eyes closed in concentration, Timmy reached into Shirley's fleece and pulled out a bucket and spade. Reaching in again, he found a pair of armbands and a surfboard. Happy sheep beamed at each other. Shaun started three bleats for the Farmer: "Bleat, bleat-ooo-ooooo..."

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The second bleat turned into a wail as the car turned sharply. The Flock were thrown from one side of the trailer to the other and almost tipped out. Then, on two wheels instead of four, the car screeched through an open gate and skidded to a halt in a field.

"Bleat," finished Shaun in quiet disgust.

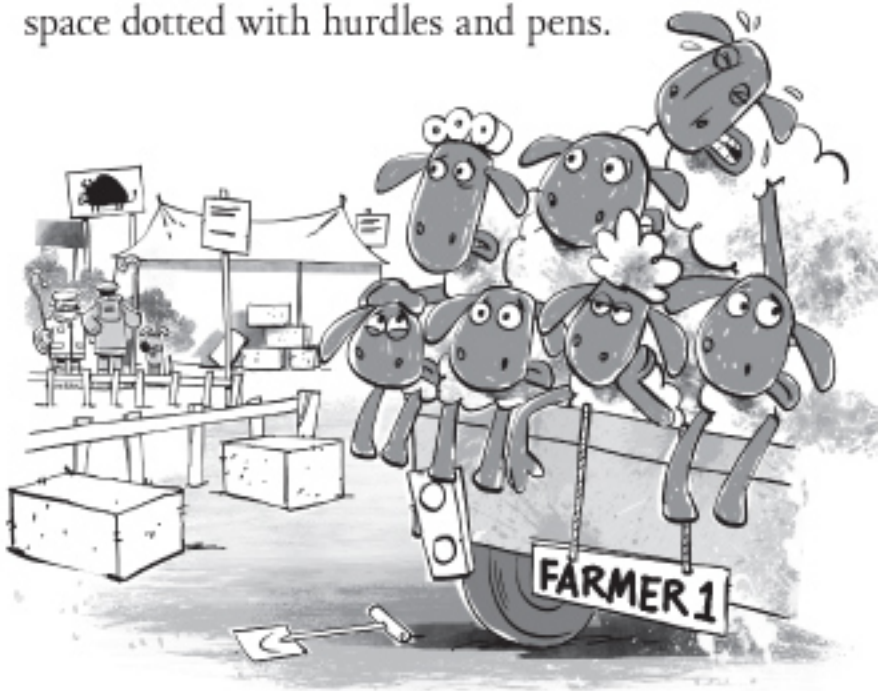
The meadow was filled with familiar sights. Farmers in muddy green coats and wellington boots stood sipping tea and eating sandwiches outside a small tent. Through the open flap of another tent, Shaun could see men poking an enormous marrow and making notes.

There were stalls selling **BARRY STILES' SHEEP DIP** and **HOOF-U-LIKE OINTMENT** and **DOCTOR ULCER'S PIGGIN' LOVELY PIG RUB**. A sign that read **"THE GREAT PIDDLINGTON-ON-SEA ANNUAL FARM EXTRAVAGANZA"** hung from the front of a trestle table, behind

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which sat three judges with rosettes pinned to their jackets.

In the centre of it all was a large green space dotted with hurdles and pens.



The Flock peered over the side of the trailer and groaned. They weren't going to the seaside after all. The Farmer had brought them to a farm show, and that could only mean one thing: a sheepdog trial!



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There wasn't even an ice-cream van.

Meanwhile, the Farmer had spotted the tea tent. "Oooyumnumnum," he cried, rubbing his hands together. Glancing towards Bitzer, he jerked his thumb over his shoulder towards the Flock and barked an order before striding away, licking his lips.



Bitzer jumped out of the car, clipboard in paw. He paused to stare dreamily at the largest

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of the gold cups on the judges' table. He had heard about this trial. It was legendary among sheepdogs. Only the best – the *very* best – could hope to win the **GREAT PIDDLINGTON-ON-SEA ANNUAL FARM EXTRAVAGANZA GOLD CUP FOR BEST SHEEPDOG**. A look of determination crossed his face. This time, the cup would be his.

But, first, he had to prepare. He unhooked the back of the trailer and blew his whistle, ordering the sheep out into the field. He tapped the clipboard with his pencil as they shoved and jostled around him. In a moment he would direct them to a holding pen to wait their turn, but now he needed to take them through a few tactics and practise moves.

Bleating and sniggering, Shaun held up a hoof. Would these be like the tactics Bitzer used at the last trial, when he had tried to

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impress the judges by wearing roller skates, and had herded the sheep straight into a toilet?



Bitzer scowled, remembering how he had also skated through a cow pat, accidentally splattering it all over the judges. Ignoring Shaun, he showed the sheep the clipboard.

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At the start of the course, they would form Bitzer Herding Formation A and then proceed in an orderly fashion to—

Scornful laughter interrupted him.

Bitzer turned round. Behind him a dog in a "TOP DOG" baseball cap leaned against a holding pen that contained sheep in perfectly straight lines. Each sheep had an electronic device clipped to one ear. In one paw, the dog held a gadget that looked like a mobile phone. He also had an expensive-looking earpiece and microphone. His eyes were hidden by mirrored sunglasses. Chuckling, he shook his head at Bitzer's clipboard and tapped the screen of his device.

Bitzer's jaw dropped as a fizzle of electricity went through Top Dog's sheep. With a startled bleat, they all jumped into a perfect circle. He tapped again...

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