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opening extract from

Mudpuddle Farm

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Cover illustrations by Cecilia Johansson

Interior illustrations by Shoo Rayner

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For Anna

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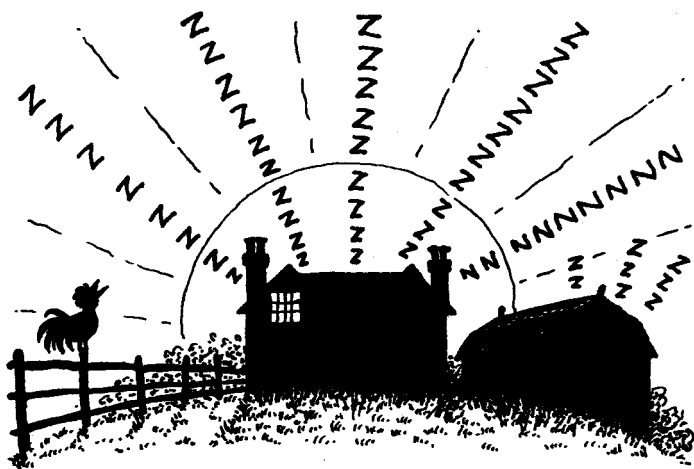
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Chapter One

There was once a family of all sorts of animals that lived in the farmyard behind the tumble-down barn on Mudpuddle Farm.

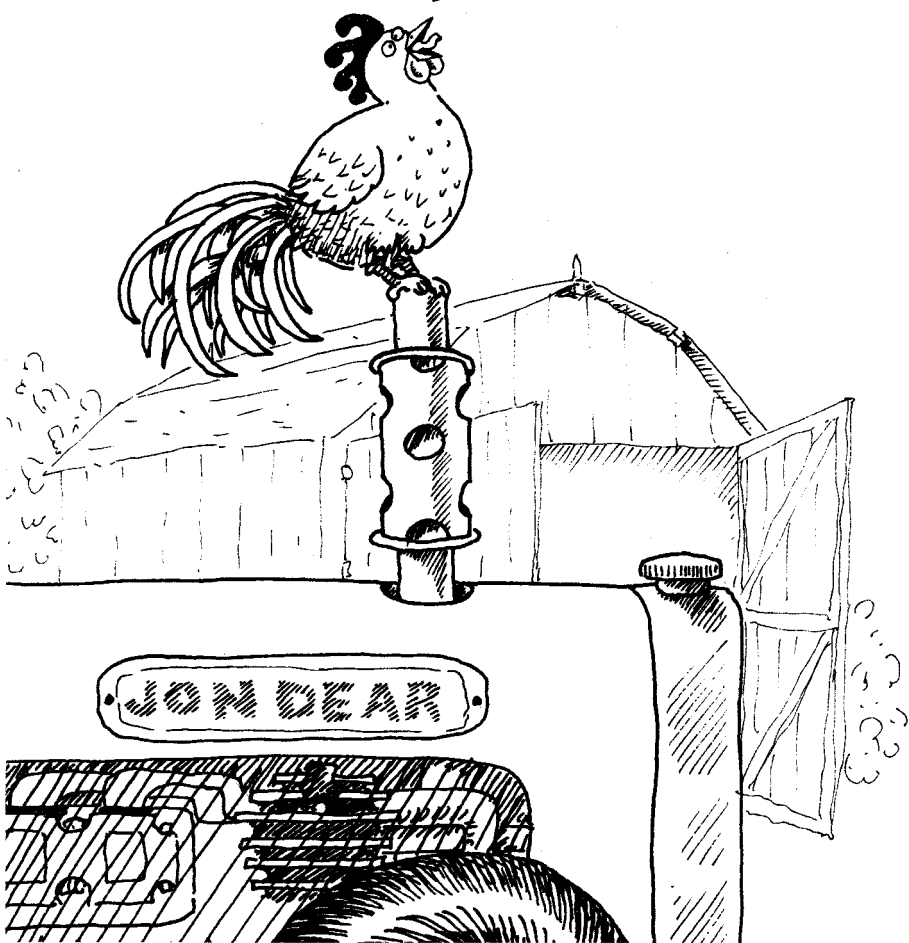


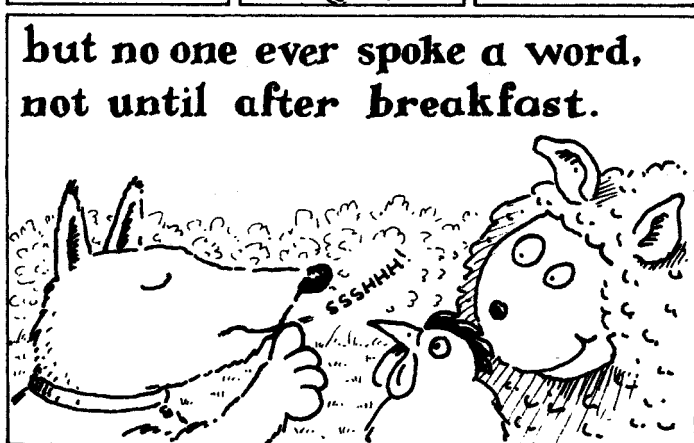
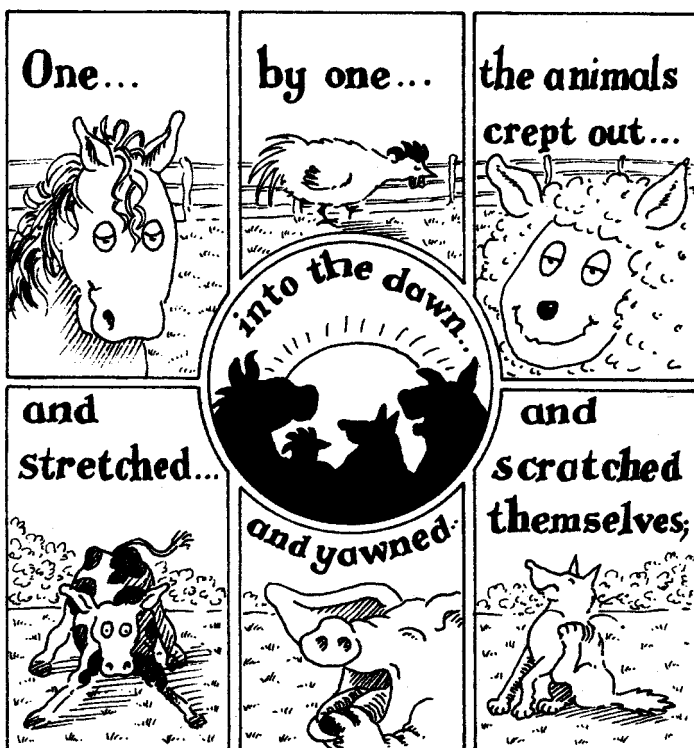
At first light every morning Frederick, the flame-feathered cockerel, lifted his eyes to the sun and crowed and crowed, until the light came on at old Farmer Rafferty's bedroom window.

WAKEY!

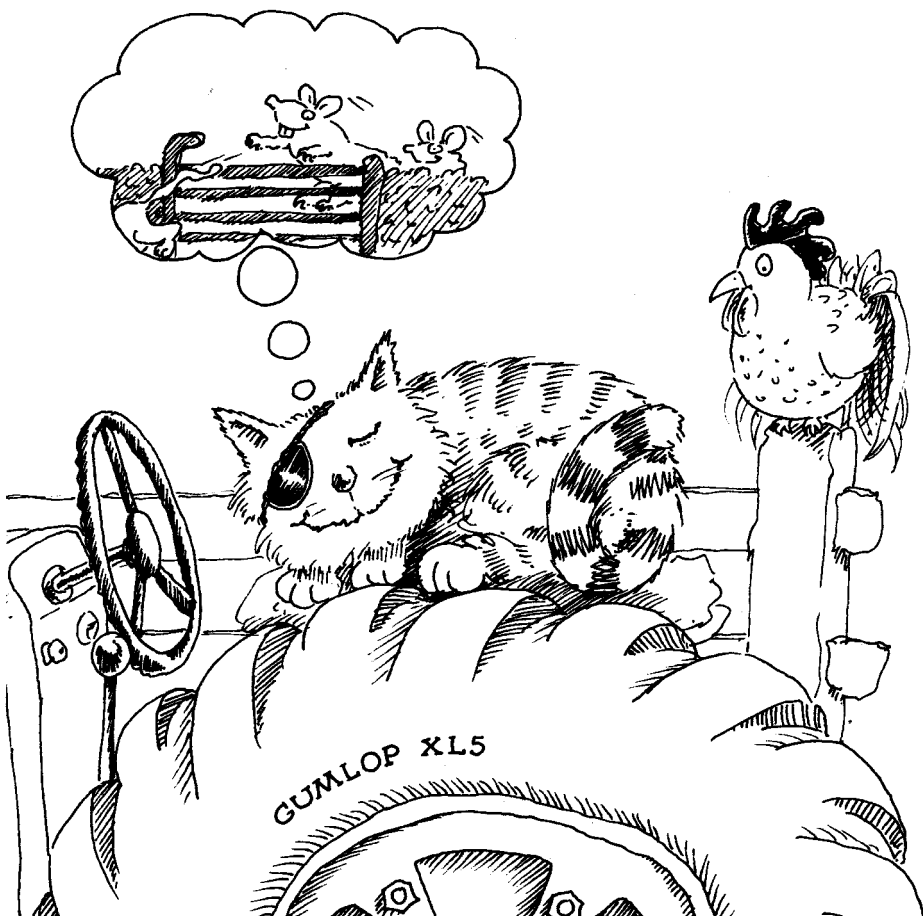
WAKEY!

WAKEY!





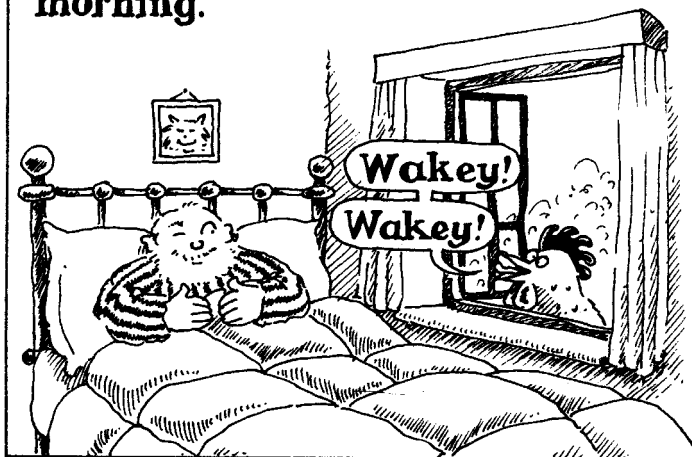
Mossop was a tired old farm cat who spent most of his day curled up asleep on the seat of Farmer Rafferty's tractor. Mossop paid no attention to Frederick – he got up when he pleased.



Farmer Rafferty was usually a kind man with smiling eyes, but like Mossop he was old and tired, and he ached in his bones in the wet weather. His animals were his only friends and his only family.



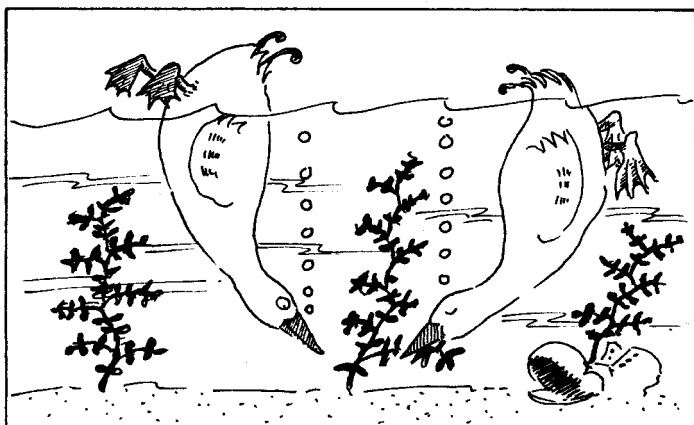
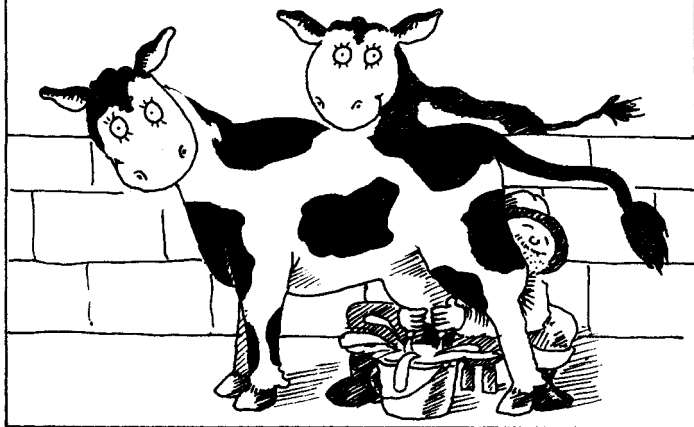
So, Frederick woke him up every morning.



Penelope and her speckled friends laid their eggs for him.

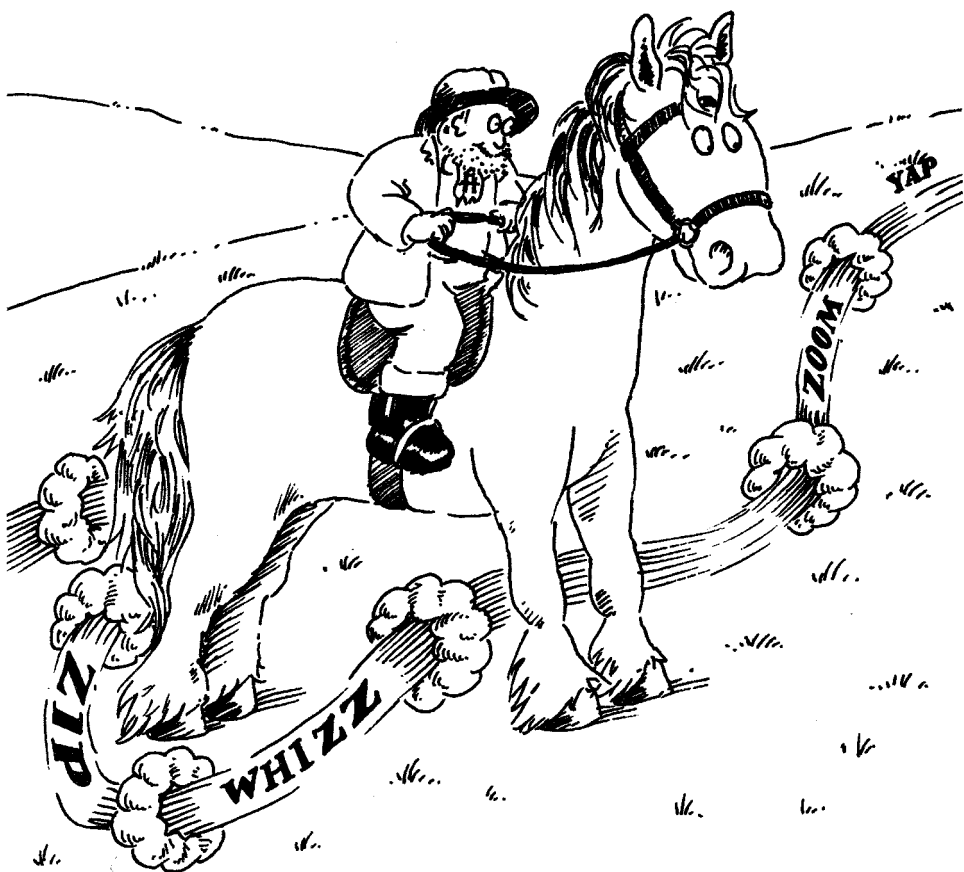


**Auntie Grace and Primrose let
down their milk for him.**

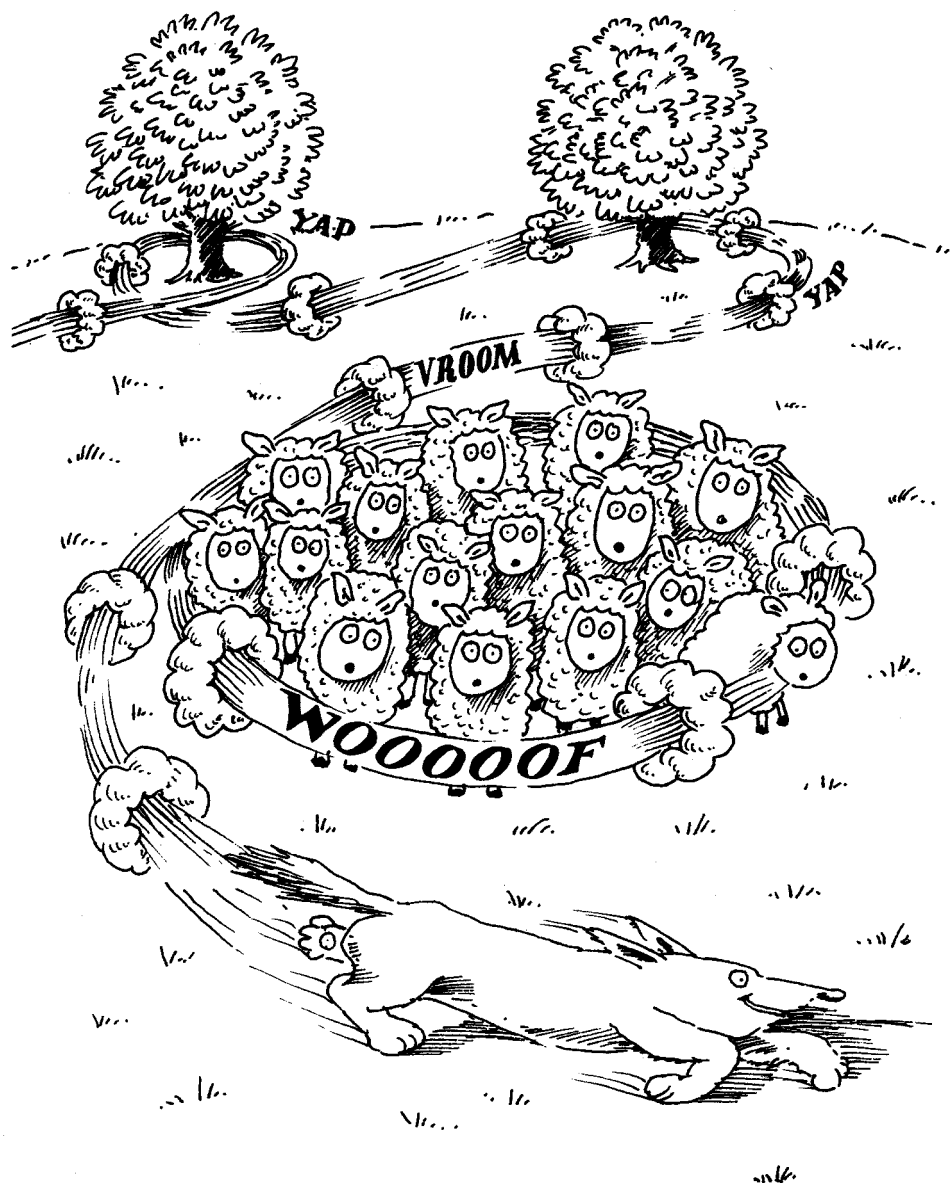


**Upside and Down kept the pond
clear of weeds.**

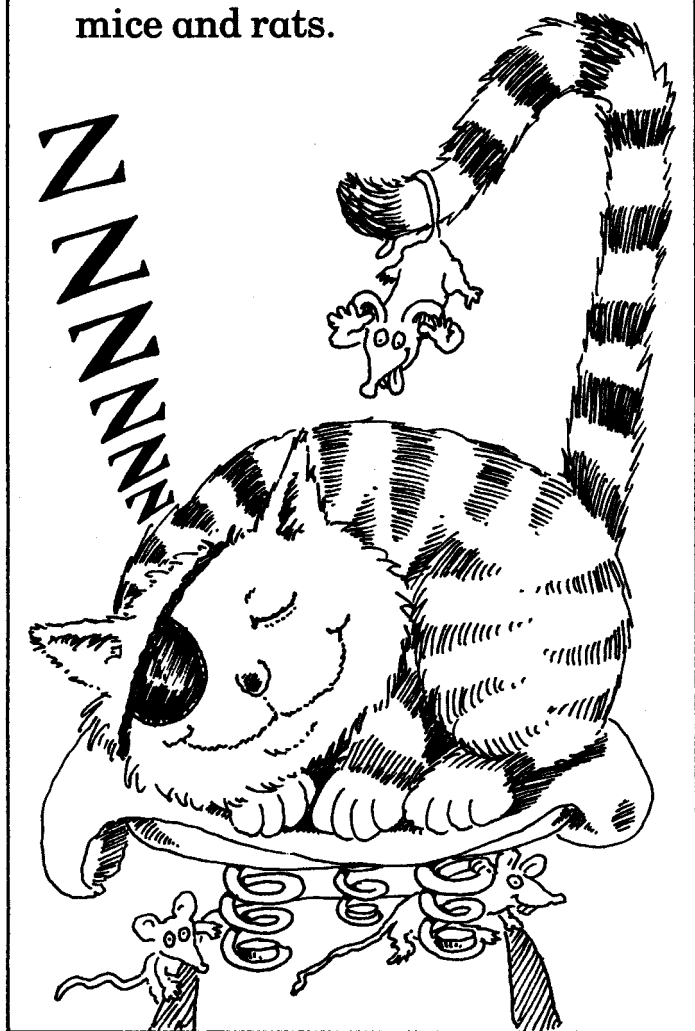
Captain carried him all around the farm to check the sheep.



Jigger, the almost-always-sensible
sheepdog, rounded up the sheep.



And Mossop was
supposed to catch
mice and rats.



Chapter Two

Farmer Rafferty always liked to sing as he worked. He sang in a crusty, croaky kind of voice.

idley-pom-pom (whistle v.v.)
yum-pom-pom
la-la-di-di-doo-ho-ho-hum-
yum-pom-pom
idley-pom-pom (whistle v.v.)



Hmmm! It's
Beethoven's
Violin Concerto
today.

He's in a
good
mood
today.

I like to
hear him
sing.

Now that's
what I call
music!

Dummy!



la-la-tiddley-um-pom pom-tiddley-um-pom-pom-with a hey a ho a ho and a tiddle-iddle-o and-a-bing-bang-

That morning though, as old
Farmer Rafferty went into the
tumble-down barn to fetch corn
from the corn bin, he suddenly
stopped singing.

Oh!



The animals crowded into the barn to find out what was the matter. They found Farmer Rafferty standing by the corn bin holding a mouse up by its tail.

This is a mouse, and there are three more in there, Mossop.

Mossop!

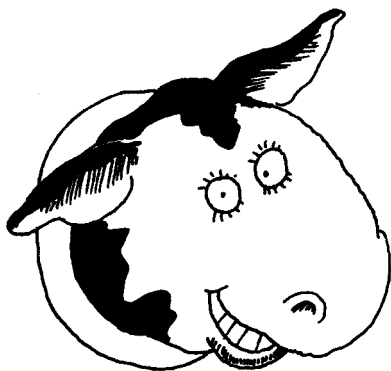
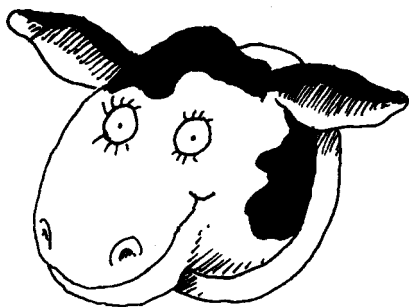
Where is that Mossop?



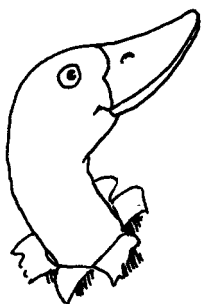


Have we or have we not
got a cat on this farm?'
said Farmer Rafferty
in the nasty,
raspy voice
he kept for
special occasions.

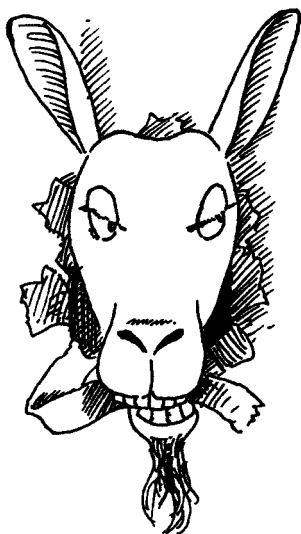
'We have,' said
Auntie Grace, the
dreamy-eyed
brown cow.



'She's right,' said
her friend Primrose,
who always agreed
with her.
'We have, and
he's asleep on
the tractor seat.'



'Having a catnap,'
sniggered Upside
or Down – no one
could ever tell
which was which.

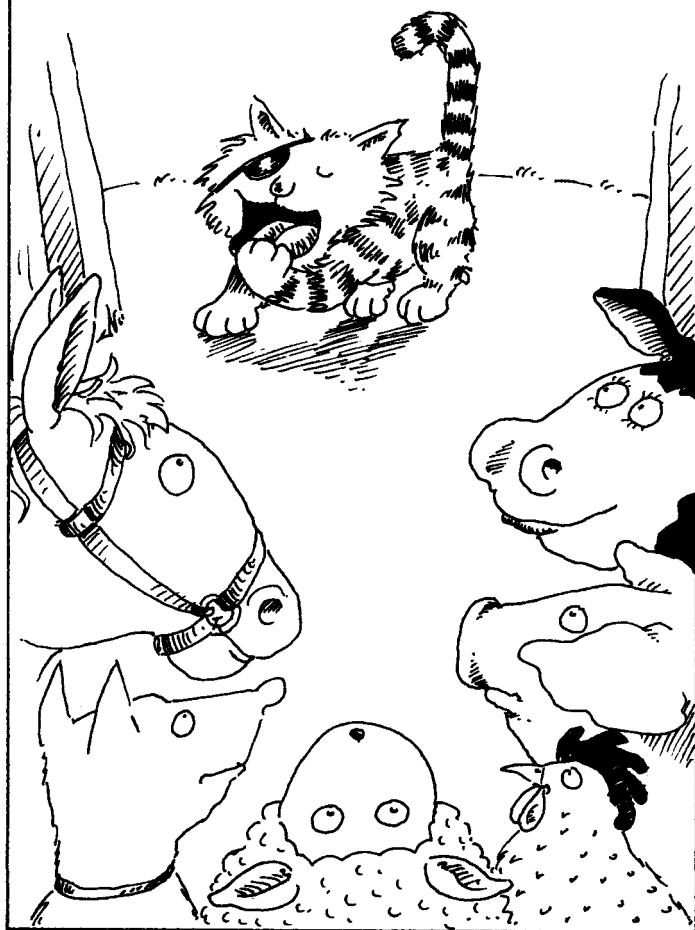


'Having his beauty sleep,'
mumbled Egbert,
the greedy, grumbly
goat who ate anything
and everything.
'Not that it'll help
him much.'

'Fetch him,' ordered old
Farmer Rafferty.
'Fetch that Mossop
here. I have a thing
or two to say to him.'



But at that very same moment
Mossop wandered into the barn,
yawning hugely.



MOSSOP!

Everywhere I go these days there's mice or there's rats. There's mice in my barley sacks, there's rats in my roof and now there's mice in my corn bin. I've warned you before and this time I have had enough. If you aren't up to the job, you will have to go. That's all there is to it.

Gulp!



Oh please, Mr Rafferty,
Mossop does his best.
He's just old
that's all.



All right Captain, I'll give him one
last chance to prove he's still cat
enough to stay on this farm. Mossop,
by tomorrow I want twenty-six mice
dropped outside my backdoor,
d'you hear me? Twenty-six mice or
you're on your way.

