

Dora's Story



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Acknowledgements

Writers are supposed to be these solitary people pouring out words from their own minds onto paper. This is a myth. No writer can create a novel without help.

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I love my Nubian dairy goats but they are not show goats. Although Dora is based on my own Alpine Nubian cross High Reaches Buket's Joy, the magnificent show poses consulted belonged to Grand Champions at the 2014 ADGA National Show. These were: Alpine Champion CH Iron-Rod STB Shelby owned by Iron-Rod, bred by Leslie Sidwell; Nubian Champion Iron-Owl PFY Pika owned by Woest-Hoeve, bred by Iron-Owl Nubians; and Recorded Grade Champion GCH Cherry Glen Gentry Bridget owned by Diane Kirsch and Wayne Cullen who were the breeders of this magnificent doe.

Many other people have helped with both moral support and reading my drafts. Thanks to Sharon Smith, my editor, who found many minor things but a couple of major gaffes I hope are now corrected.

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Table of Contents

Part 1	A Kid Is Born	7
Part 2	Emily	31
Part 3	Simon Snyder	175
Part 4	Leonard and Marie Weldon	189
Part 5	Miranda and Susanna	247
Part 6	Shawn	331
Author's Notes		408

Part 1



A Kid Is Born

Chapter 1 Just a Grade

“A grade kid,” sighed Adriana Collier looking into the kidding pen, a temporary affair of four wooden slat panels fastened together, “and out of my best Alpine doe. You just had to go visit the Nubian buck, didn’t you Wilhelmina?”

Wilhelmina looked up a moment then went back to the serious business of cleaning up her new little girl. “You’re mine,” she bleated to the kid. “Get up.” After this she began to toss straw bedding aside with her front foot and pawing at her new kid.

“Ma! Stop!” cried her kid struggling to stand up. Legs seemed everywhere. She placed one front leg, then another. One back leg was crossed over the other. She tugged and tugged but couldn’t pull it loose. Suddenly she flew onto the pile of bedding.

Now the kid’s legs were untangled. Bedding flew on top of her. “Ma! Ma! Help!”

More bedding flew hitting the kid in the face. “Maa!” Her answer was more bedding.

“Wilhelmina! Stop that!” Adriana unfastened a panel and went in the kidding pen. She stooped down, reached over and picked the kid up brushing bedding off of her.

The doe stopped digging. “My kid! Mine,” she bleated, stuck her nose over and started licking her kid again. Adriana set the kid down standing shakily on her four legs each stretched out to the far corners of a rectangle.

Under the onslaught of her mother’s tongue the legs collapsed dropping the kid onto the floor. Stubbornly the kid struggled to move each leg back into place and pushed herself back up. She wavered then tried to move one leg. Down she went again.

Fifteen minutes later the little kid was standing and moving toward her mother. She butted impatiently searching for something. She didn’t know what she was searching for but would know when she found it.

Wilhelmina suddenly started throwing bedding aside again. The kid went flying again.

Adriana shoved Wilhelmina against a panel, reached under her and squeezed a teat. The essential first yellow milk called colostrum squirted out.

Adriana picked up the kid holding Wilhelmina against the panel with a shoulder and placing her kid underneath her supporting the kid with a hand. The kid nosed around searching. Wilhelmina reached around and pulled Adriana’s hair.

“Ow! Stop that!”

The kid found her mother’s udder and teat. This was what she was searching for! She mouthed her way up and down the teat but finally found the end. Warm colostrum ran down her throat as she gulped wagging her tail in joy.

Wilhelmina tried to get her head past Adriana to lick her kid. She shifted. The kid lost her grip on the teat. Adriana shifted into a new position, shoved the doe back against the panel. The kid finally latched onto the teat again.

When the kid’s belly was round and plump with colostrum rich with antibodies, she started just nosing around. Adriana stood up stretching her cramped back. Wilhelmina quickly scooted around to start licking her kid. The kid closed her eyes, wavering but unable to lie down to sleep. Those legs were too hard to maneuver. Then her mother’s tongue lifted her back end up off the floor. The kid collapsed immediately curling up asleep.

For the next two days the doeling mostly slept and ate. Her legs started obeying her. She walked carefully around the pen.

Wilhelmina doted on her little doeling unless she was eating. The little doeling slept under the hay rack.

“Maa! My leg! Get off! Help! Help!” Frantically the little doe tugged and thrashed and screamed.

Wilhelmina calmly continued eating.

“Maa!” screamed the struggling little doe. “Help! My leg! Ow!”

Wilhelmina continued eating.

Adriana came running. “Move over, Wilhelmina! Get off of her!” Wilhelmina looked at Adriana blankly chewing on a mouthful of hay. Adriana reached over hooking a hand over the doe’s neck behind her ears and tugged. Wilhelmina moved over. The little doe got shakily to her feet. Her leg hurt but she was fine. Wilhelmina looked down then started licking her.

Walter Collier walked over then. “Those does just don’t seem to know where they put their feet. Pretty little thing. Ears are a little long for an Alpine.”

Adriana glared at her husband. “That’s because she’s half Nubian.”

“A crossbreed,” said Walter keeping his tanned wrinkled face expressionless but his blue eyes twinkled. “That explains all the color. Not that her mother isn’t pretty with golden brown in front and black on the back.”

Adriana continued to glare at him. “Yes, she’s a crossbreed out of my best Alpine doe. And she’s a late March kid, a month behind the last ones.”

“She’s still pretty. Someone will want her.”

Adriana shrugged. “Maybe. I better get back to cleaning the milk room.”

“When you’re done maybe you can help me in the greenhouse. I’m repotting those tree seedlings and starting to train those others for bonsai.”

“It shouldn’t take long to finish.”

By the next day the little doe was walking well. For some reason her ears itched. She tried to scratch with a hind foot but scratched only open air then fell over. After many tries, she finally scratched her ear and fell over.

The pen seemed so small to her now. She tried to jump but her front feet just wouldn’t both leave the ground at the same time.

By that evening the kid could scratch her ears and stay on her feet. She could make little hops. Wilhelmina spent much of her time hanging her head over the panels looking for the other goats.

The next morning Adriana opened the panels. Wilhelmina ran out looking for the other goats. Adriana picked up the kid and walked to the door where Wilhelmina waited.

Adriana opened the door but Wilhelmina suddenly remembered her kid and ran back to the pen. “My kid! My kid! Where are you?”

“Maa! Where are you?” the little kid cried.

“Wilhelmina, she’s over here,” called Adriana holding the doeling out for the doe to see. Wilhelmina ran back to the door and out. “Hurry up! Let’s go out!”

“Out? Maa!”

Adriana walked out into the empty main barn and set the doeling down. Wilhelmina ran over to sniff and lick her. Then it was time to eat hay so the doe walked over to the hay trough and began eating.

The kid went exploring, sniffing everything. This was a big place. She found a nice sunny corner, curled up and went to sleep.

“My kid! My kid! Where are you?” called Wilhelmina over and over. She tried to get back into the other room but the door was closed. She looked around in the barn. Finally she found her kid asleep in the corner.

Licking and pawing woke the kid up. After a quick snack, the kid was ready for fun. She tried to hop across the barn. She tried to buck. Wilhelmina yawned and lay down.

A mountain! A challenge! The kid hopped around her mother. Carefully she stepped onto her mother’s side. It was soft and she backed up.

“I want on top!” The kid stepped back onto her mother and tried to get all four feet up. She fell off. She got up and tried again. This time she got all four feet up on her mother’s back leg before falling off.

The kid was tired. She lay down with her front feet up on her mother’s side and went to sleep.

Wilhelmina stood up. The kid rolled over and onto the floor. It must be time to eat so the kid grabbed a teat. Her mother stood still for a few minutes then walked back to the hay. The kid jumped around and finally went back to the corner to sleep.

A rush of feet woke the kid later. Goats were everywhere! All of them wanted to sniff her.

“Maa!” The kid ran from goat to goat looking for her mother. Wilhelmina was outside butting heads with another doe.

“Maa!” The kid ran over to a doe and tried to grab a teat. This doe whirled around and shoved her away.

Smaller goats came over. One tried to butt heads with the kid. She ran away. “Ma, where are you?”

Adriana came up from the gate and picked the kid up. “Maa!” She was carried off and put in the pen.

Blowing and huffing Wilhelmina came back to the pen because Adriana pulled her on a lead rope. Her fur stood on end across the tops of her shoulders and down her backbone.

“Maa!”

Wilhelmina snorted.

“Maa!”

“My kid!” Wilhelmina surged into the pen. “My kid. my kid,” she crooned.

By the time the doeling was a week old, she and her mother stayed out in the barn. Other kids crowded into her favorite corner at night sleeping in a heap.

Each day was much the same for the next week. In the morning Adriana guarded the gate so Wilhelmina couldn’t go out in the big pasture. The doe stood at the gate cring until Adriana called her up for a dish of grain.

Wilhelmina then ate hay. The kid hopped across the barn. When her mother lay down for a nap in the sun, the kid jumped up on top of her mother’s back. When the kid was tired, she lay down on top of her mother and slept until her mother stood up dumping her on the ground. The kid went back to sleep while Wilhelmina went out into the barn lot pasture to graze until the other goats came back as the sun set.

One day was different. Adriana came out and picked the doeling up. Wilhelmina called as the doeling disappeared into the other room. The doeling was used to being carried but not being stood in a box with a lid. Only her head was out.

Cold metal touched the kid’s head. There were funny noises. Hair fell down and tickled her nose. She sneezed and tried to get out. More hair fell down. “Have to clip

your hair up here,” said Adriana zipping hair clippers around on the doeling’s head. “I need to see those horn buds. We need to get rid of those horns.”

Scorching hot metal pressed against the top of her head. “Maa! Maa! This hurts! Maa!”

Then the hot metal pressed against the other side of the top of her head. “Maa! Maa! This hurts! Maa!”

The hot metal was gone. The doeling’s head hurt. “No horns on you,” said Adriana.

Next Adriana held onto one ear and rubbed something on it. The doeling’s ear felt really cold. “This alcohol will clean your ears,” said Adriana. The other ear now got rubbed and felt really cold. The first ear was dry and warm again.

Adriana pulled the doeling’s ear up and pressed a cold metal bar against it. Needles stabbed the ear.

“Maa! Maa! This hurts! Maa!”

Something else rubbed the doeling’s ear. “Maybe Walter’s right. Maybe someone will want you. You need these tattoos.”

Adriana pulled the other ear up and pressed the cold metal bar against it. The doeling struggled but couldn’t get out of the box. The sharp needles stabbed her ear.

“Maa! Maa! This hurts! Maa!”

“That’s both horns and both tattoos. I know it hurts. It’s all over now.” Adriana opened the box and lifted the doeling out. “Let’s go find your mother.”

As soon as Adriana set the doeling down in the barn Wilhelmina rushed over. The kid ran under her to grab a teat. She wasn’t hungry but it made her feel safe.

Within an hour Wilhelmina and her kid were back to the old routine.

Chapter 2 Left Behind

The kid knew her mother disappeared into the other room in the barn every morning and every night for a little while. The other adult goats did the same. It was a good time to get a milk meal when her mother came out.

Every morning Wilhelmina followed the herd to the pasture gate. Sometimes the kid went too. Sometimes the kid stayed in the barn to sleep for a little while. When she woke up, her mother would be eating hay.

But this morning the kid's mother wasn't there. The kid looked all over the barn. Her mother wasn't there. The kid looked outside the barn. Her mother wasn't there. She was hungry but not really hungry. She went back to her corner and lay down again.

That afternoon the kid was really hungry. She chewed on everything in the barn. She looked all over for her mother.

"Ma! Ma! Where are you?"

"Hello, little goat," said Adriana opening the door and walking into the barn. "Are you hungry? Let's go out and find your mother."

Adriana picked the doeling up. They went out the pasture gate. "You're getting big. I won't be able to do this very long. There's your mother over there."

Adriana walked toward the herd of goats. "Wilhelmina!" she called when half way there.

"My kid! Where's my kid?" answered Wilhelmina.

"I have your kid, Wilhelmina. Come and get her." Adriana set the doeling down.

Wilhelmina rushed over. "My kid! My kid!"

"Ma! Ma!"

Adriana turned and walked back toward the barn.

Wilhelmina stood for her kid to eat then turned to go back with the herd. The kid stood there watching. Where was her mother going?

"Ma! Ma?"

Wilhelmina ran back. "My kid. My kid. Let's go." She started off again this time calling, "Keep up. Stay with me. Hurry up. Kid, my kid, let's go."

The kid followed.

Back with the herd everyone was busy eating. The kid chewed on some bits of grass but wasn't impressed. Then again, grass wasn't so bad. The kid ate some.

Two groups of kids were mixed in with the adult does. One was older and bigger. Every so often this group raced off leaping onto two big boulders in the middle of the field. They raced up and across the boulders and back to the herd.

The other group wasn't much older than the new kid. They made it clear she wasn't one of them as they raced around the herd. She couldn't keep up. They raced around the boulders and over a couple of large rocks near them. The kid stayed with her mother.

As the sun edged toward the horizon the herd moved closer to the pasture gate. Adriana met them at the gate. Everyone went through the pasture gate and into the barn lot. The kids ran over and jumped onto some large wooden boxes.

Wilhelmina's kid followed but the boxes were too high. A kid on the lowest box butted her head. She ran back to her mother to nurse.

This day set the pattern for that week. Each morning Wilhelmina went out alone. Each afternoon Adriana took the kid out and left her with her mother. The kid came in with her mother.

Wilhelmina's kid was now a month old. She was growing fast especially since she was an only kid. Wilhelmina gave lots of milk so the kid was always fat.

Wilhelmina was at the gate with the herd. This morning the kid was with her. Adriana grabbed the kid as she tried to follow her mother out the gate. "You're too little. I'll take you out later," Adriana told the doeling as she carried the kid back to the barn.

Again the next morning the kid tried to follow her mother out the pasture gate. Again Adriana caught her and carried her back to the barn.

"You are persistent," Adriana told her the next morning on the way back to the barn.

Adriana was away for the day so Walter let the goats out the next morning. The kid ran out with Wilhelmina.

The herd ran out to their favorite eating place in a ravine between two hills. After gobbling up greens for an hour, the herd lay down to rest and chew their cuds. The kids weren't tired racing around the herd, jumping on rocks near the side of the ravine and chasing each other. Wilhelmina's kid followed them trying to keep up.

At last the kids lay down by their mothers. Wilhelmina's kid was very tired. She curled up and went to sleep.

The sun was low in the sky when the kid woke up. No one was there. The herd was gone. Her mother was gone. She heard birds and insects but no goats. She curled up and lay still waiting for her mother to come back and get her. No one came.

Adriana let the herd in the pasture gate. She was tired after a long day in the big city.

"My kid. My kid. Where is my kid?" called Wilhelmina. She searched the barn calling. No kid answered her. Adriana helped her look uneasiness curling around inside. No kid lay in the barn. No kid was playing. No kid answered Wilhelmina's calls.

Adriana went to ask Walter about the kid.

"I guess she went out with the rest."

"She didn't come in. I'll have to go look for her."

"I'll help."

Grabbing their flashlights the two went back to the barn. Wilhelmina still called forlornly searching and checking every kid looking for her own.

"Why don't you start from the north end?" said Adriana. "I'll start at the south end and we'll meet in the ravine."

"She's probably in the ravine," answered Walter. "The herd spends a lot of time in there. Why don't we start there, then split up?"

The two started out across the darkening pasture. Frogs were calling by the pond. A chill crept up in the air.

Dark shadows stretched across the ravine. Just enough light was left to see. Color was starting to fade into grays.

"Kid. Kid. Where are you, kid?" called Adriana from the ravine entrance.

No answer.

Walter and Adriana looked around every tree, rock and clump of grass. They started into the ravine searching, hoping to see the kid curled up in the grass.

"Kid. Kid. Where are you, kid?" called Adriana every minute or two as they went deeper into the ravine.

Each time Adriana called she felt more hopeless but not willing to give up. Coyotes came through the ravine at night. A kid alone was just a snack. All she could see was what the flashlight lit up.

Curled up in a clump of violets the kid thought she heard someone calling. Was her mother coming? It was getting dark and she was hungry. She heard the call again.

“Ma? I’m over here, Maa!” called the kid scrambling to her feet.

“Kid? Is that you, kid?”

“I’m here! I’m here!”

Light flooded the kid’s eyes. Hands picked her up. “Walter, I have her!” Relief flooded through Adriana.

“That was lucky. It’s a good thing she answered you.”

“I do hate to lose a kid,” answered Adriana. “Even a crossbreed like this one is hard to lose.”

As the two approached the barn lot, Wilhelmina’s calls were easier to hear. The kid started struggling.

“Ma! Ma!” blasted Adriana’s ears.

“She has a Nubian’s voice,” commented Walter.

Adriana laughed as she entered the barn lot and put the kid down. The kid raced in as Wilhelmina ran to meet her. Wilhelmina stood contentedly chewing her cud as her kid nursed.

After that Wilhelmina’s kid went out with the herd. She was careful to sleep on top of her mother so she woke up when the herd did. She could jump up on the smaller rocks, then bigger ones, then the boxes in the barn lot.

But there weren’t as many kids now. Sometimes the herd didn’t go out after milking time. People came to look over the goats. Some of the older kids left with the people. A group of kids were kept in one day. In the evening the kids were gone and never came back. More kids left until only three were left.

July days were hot and dry. The greens in the ravine started to wilt. Grass in the pasture was dry and crunchy. The pond was surrounded by a ring of mud that slowly dried replaced by another ring as the pond got still smaller.

One day strange noises came from the sky. The sky turned dark. The herd got up from their spot in the ravine trotting toward the pasture gate. The world was as dark as though the sun had set. Brilliant light lit up the pasture. Sound burst out as the light faded and pounded the kid’s ears.

Huge raindrops pelted the goats as they fled toward the gate. Adriana was standing at the open gate with something over her head that flapped and shivered in the wind. Not a single goat hesitated running by this strange thing as they fled from the rain and noise. Now rocks were pounding them as well, rocks falling from the sky!

The goats crowded into their barn in one big mass. The kids hid in their corner from the bursts of light and pounding noise. Rocks pelted the roof and made Wilhelmina’s kid want to lie down and hide.

Everything in the barn suddenly lit up. Noise erupted as though it would knock the barn down. There was a swishing sound and a crash.

The rocks quit pounding the roof. The brilliant light got dimmer. The noise seemed farther away. Rain pounded the roof, roared off the eaves, over the water gutter and formed a waterfall to the ground across the doorway. The day got brighter as though the sun were rising in the west. Rain turned to showers, then mist, then was gone.

Adriana came back into the barn from the milk room where she had stayed as the storm passed. Goats pressed around her as she looked out the barn door.

Mud was everywhere. Some of it was washing away in the water still racing across the barn lot. One of the big oak trees in the barn lot was down with its top crushing the fence.

The herd stood in the barn door looking at the downed tree. Cautiously the lead goat, an older black and white Alpine stepped outside. The rain had stopped. The sun was shining again. The herd followed then overtook their lead goat in a stampede to be first for this leafy feast.

Walter came around the side of the barn looking for Adriana. She joined him as they too went down to the fallen giant.

“It’s a shame to lose that tree,” said Adriana. “I wonder how big it was.”

“Cleaning it up will take time. I guess I’ll wait until the goats are done.”

The two laughed. Goats were standing up on the branches. Goats were standing on the trunk. The sounds of chewing and crunching came from all the goats.

“I’ll go check the rest of the fences,” said Walter.

A week later the leaves were gone from the fallen tree. Now sounds from Walter’s chainsaw occupied part of every day. Then the tractor chugged into the barn lot and out again with loads of firewood. Soon only the massive trunk was left cut off so the fence was again up.

Chapter 3 A New Home

One early August morning Adriana kept the herd in. A truck pulled up. A family got out and started toward the barn. Their dog leaped out the window and raced after them barking wildly.

Goats froze. Ears went up. Tails went up. The herd bolted.

“Run! Danger! Run!” Wilhelmina screamed to her kid. “To the tree!”

“I can’t get on the tree!”

“You can! Run! You must! Run!”

“I can’t!”

“You can! You can! You must! Run!”

Wilhelmina leaped onto the tree trunk. The kid leaped wildly after her and scrambled onto the trunk behind her mother. Behind them and in front of them other goats were leaping onto and racing up the trunk to leap down on the other side of the fence. Other goats were milling around against the trunk crying. Behind them the dog continued to bark. Adriana was screaming something but the kid continued running as most of the herd fled to the safety of the pastures and hills.

Later the rest of the herd came out to find their herd mates in the ravine. All was quiet that evening but the herd stayed in the pasture. They looked at the gate until Adriana came out to lead them in. The dog, the people and the truck were gone.

“I may have to take these last three to the sale next month,” Adriana told Walter the next morning. They were watching the goats milling around waiting to go out to pasture.

“That would be a shame. That little crossbreed is sure a pretty thing now. Not that the others aren’t.”

Adriana laughed. “She does have the colors, doesn’t she? That white tail tip really does it. She would be a really nice family milk goat for someone.”

“Maybe you should advertise them again.”

“Maybe I should. I would rather not take them to the sale barn.”

A week later a truck pulled up as the herd milled around in the barn lot wondering when Adriana would open the pasture gate. Heads and tails went up as people got out of the truck. This time no dog leaped out. But the herd wasn’t taking any chances. The goats moved down to the far end of the barn lot near the tree trunk.

Adriana walked toward the truck. The woman coming around the truck was tall and thin in clean jeans with sharp creases down the legs and a crisp new blouse. Her soft brown hair was pulled up into a French twist.

A girl dressed much like her mother but with her hair hanging straight down to the middle of her back followed stepping carefully to avoid any mud or other debris on the ground. The younger girl’s jeans had been neat and clean but now had wrinkles and smudged knees. Her curly shoulder length hair was wind blown into wild mounds. She bounced as she walked behind the others looking all around.

“I’m Allison Frazier,” the woman was saying looking at this tall wiry woman with short curly windblown white hair wearing worn jeans and shirt splattered with dirt. “I called you about buying some goats. These are my two daughters Elizabeth and Emily. Please call me Allison.”

“I’m Adriana Collier. The goats are in the barn lot.” She led the way through the gate into the lot.

Allison and Elizabeth stopped just inside the gate turning back. Adriana closed the gate behind them. Emily was walking toward the herd.

“You have a lot of goats,” Allison was saying to Adriana. “How many are there?”

“I have about a dozen Nubians and a dozen Alpines.”

“Which ones are which?”

“The Nubians have the long ears that hang down. The Alpines have ears that stand up. You haven’t had goats before?”

“No, the girls are starting a 4-H goat project.”

“Where will you keep the goats?”

“We bought fifteen acres with a house and barn on it. The barn is for horses but we can use one of the larger stalls for the goats. There are several pastures.”

“What kind of fencing?”

“I don’t know. It’s like that wire there with the up and down wires making rectangles.” The woman pointed carelessly at the barn lot fence. “Why do you ask?”

“Field fence is good goat fencing. The usual barbed wire won’t work for goats. Field fence keeps dogs out of the pastures too. Do you have dogs?”

“The girls asked about getting one but I hate hearing dogs bark. I told them they could get a cat. At least cats catch mice and the barn is full of them.”

“Mother, look at Emily,” said Elizabeth tugging on her mother’s arm.

“Oh, no! Those goats won’t hurt her, will they?”

Emily stood in the midst of the herd. She was only a little taller than the Nubian goats surrounding her and competing for her attention. The Alpines still stood apart near the trunk watching warily. Emily was petting two goats and another was tugging at her blouse while another was trying to shove her way between one of the lucky ones and Emily to take her place. Another grabbed for the dark brown curls and Emily slapped at her with one hand grabbing her curls back with the other.

“No,” said Adriana. “The Nubians are very friendly.”

“They’re so big. You’re sure Emily’s safe?”

“Why don’t we walk down to join her?”

“I don’t know,” Allison said uneasily. “You’re sure they won’t hurt us?”

“Mother, let’s walk down to see the goats.”

The three walked slowly down the barn lot.

Emily was still surrounded and being pushed by the eager Nubians.

“You have to be careful of people you don’t know,” Wilhelmina told her kid. “Stay here with me.”

“Yes, Ma.”

Emily started petting the other two kids. She saw Wilhelmina’s kid.

“Aren’t you pretty? Why don’t you come over?”

Emily moved closer. Wilhelmina moved back along the trunk. Her kid stood still watching.

“Kid!”

The kid looked and saw her mother had moved. “Yes, Ma.” She ran over to her mother.

The Alpines were watching the other people walking toward them. Their tails were up.

“Which goats are for sale?” asked Allison.

“I have three doe kids or doelings left. They are over three months old, old enough to wean or leave their mothers. Two are purebred Nubians. One is black. The other is brown. You can see them over there on the right. Your daughter is petting them. Both have frosted ears and noses. Both are disbudded and tattooed.”

“Frosted ears and noses means they have white ears and noses, right?” Elizabeth asked.

“Yes. And disbudded means the horn buds were burned off and won’t grow. Sometimes they get little scurs, kind of like bits of horn growing. You can ignore those or cut them off. The tattoos are to identify the kids. One ear has a set of letters I use for my farm, Royalty Acres. The other ear has a letter for the year and the number of the kid.”

“They’ll pull your hair,” Emily warned Elizabeth who hastily tucked her soft brown hair into her blouse where it tickled her back as she moved toward where the goats stood.

Emily went on petting the two kids. The big Nubians pushed around her so she was carried around to where the Alpines stood. Hastily they circled around her but Wilhelmina was trapped. Emily moved close enough to pet her kid.

“Ma, I like this person,” the kid said and rubbed into the pets.

“You said you have three for sale? The third is an Alpine?” said Allison.

“No. I’m afraid my best Alpine doe, that one there by the tree, the brown and black one, didn’t breed to my Alpine buck. Instead she got through the fence and in with the Nubian buck. That’s her doeling Emily is petting. It’s a grade Alpine Nubian cross.”

“She has lots of color on her,” said Elizabeth. “She’s brown in front like her mother with black circles on her face and black in the back like her mother. But look at that big white triangle on her side!”

“And the white tail tip,” Adriana added. “She is the prettiest one but still a grade.”

“She can’t be shown?” asked Allison. “The girls will be showing their goats.”

“You can show her in grade classes. She has lovely conformation and would show well. She should milk well. Her mother is a star milker. And that cross is known to produce a lot of milk.”

“So, what’s the difference between a purebred and a grade?”

“A purebred can be registered as a particular breed and her pedigree can be traced back to the original members of that breed imported from Europe. A grade is recorded and has a goat without such a pedigree in the background or, like this one, is a cross between two breeds. Breeding a grade to a registered buck lets you upgrade her offspring. By the fourth generation all the kids can be registered as Americans.”

“I think the girls should have the purebreds. Do you show your goats?”

“When my two boys were home, we showed the goats. Now that only Walter and I are here, I don’t show much. Sometimes I go to the May show so they have enough Alpines to be sanctioned.”

“Sanctioned?”

“The American Dairy Goat Association, ADGA, sanctions shows so goats can earn permanent championships. There have to be at least ten goats of a breed and two exhibitors for a show to be sanctioned for that breed.”

“Showing goats is starting to sound complicated.”

“You said your girls will join Four H. They will help you get started.”

Emily had her arms wrapped around Wilhelmina’s kid.

“Mother, I want this one.”

“That one is just a grade. We’re going to buy the two purebred doelings.”

“Please, Mother.”

“I have just the three doelings left,” said Adriana. “Let’s work something out for the three.”

“We only need two, one for each girl.”

“Please, Mother, please get this one,” begged Emily.

The two women moved off to discuss price. Elizabeth gingerly moved closer to Emily. Nubians surrounded them both. Elizabeth reached carefully over and touched one head.

“It’s silky! I thought it would be different.”

“They’re really friendly. I hope she gets this one. It’s the prettiest one.”

“It’s just a grade. We want those two, the black one and the brown one. I want the black one. You can have the brown one.”

“What will you call yours?” asked Emily.

“I don’t know. You know this place is called Royalty Acres. What are some royal names?”

“Princess? Queen? Is Lady a royal name?”

“Diana. Juliana, I think, from the Netherlands.”

“Sheba,” said Emily.

“I think the black one is so pretty.”

“She isn’t all black.”

“She isn’t?”

“Go look. She has that white spot on her head and white under her head like a necklace.”

Elizabeth worked her way through the crowd to the black doeling. “You’re right. She’s all dressed up. I’ll call her Diana. What will you call yours?”

“I want this one. I’ll call her Dora.”

“Dora? That’s not a royal name. But then she’s not a royal goat, just a grade. And look at those ears. They don’t swoop down like Diana’s. They don’t even stand up like her mother’s. They stick out.”

“They’re like wings. Maybe Dora can fly. We can go exploring places!”

“That’s silly. Anyway, Mother is just getting the two purebreds, not that silly grade. What will you call the brown one? I’d call her Queen.”

Adriana and Allison walked down to the girls and herd. Adriana carried lengths of some kind of string in her hands.

“Your goats should have collars while you take them home. I’ll make some out of this baling twine. Be sure you take it off when you get home.”

“Why?” asked Allison.

“They are going to be unhappy and cry and look for a way to get back to their mothers for a few days. If the twine gets caught on something, they could choke.”

“Did you get this one, Mother?” asked Emily.

“Yes, we will take all three doelings, the black one, the brown one and that one.”

“Thank you, Mother.”

“I’m naming the black one Diana and the brown one Queen,” Elizabeth told them.

“Mine’s Dora.”

“Those are nice names,” said Adriana. “Allison, do you remember where to write those in on the forms I gave you?”

“Yes. And we’ll get the girls listed as junior members of that goat association.”

“The American Dairy Goat Association or ADGA.”

Adriana had the twine tied around the doelings’ necks.

“Why did you make those extra knots?” asked Emily.

“I put a knot in front of and a knot behind where I tied the twine into a loop. That way the knot can’t slip and choke your doeling. Her name is Dora?”

“Yes. I don’t want Dora to choke.”

Adriana and the two girls started leading the doelings away from the herd.

“Put your hand around the twine collar and keep it high, just under the chin,” Adriana told them, helping them get the twine in place.

“Why?” asked Emily.

“It keeps them from pulling away so easily. You do have to be careful not to get your hand caught in the twine if they do run away.”

“Why would they run away?”

“Goats are herd animals. These doelings are used to staying with their mothers. You are strange and taking them away to someplace they don’t know.”

Emily hugged Dora. “I’m sorry you have to leave your mother. You’ll be happy at my house.”

The doelings cried and turned sideways trying to go back to the herd. Their mothers called them. The doelings called back even louder.

Finally the doelings were by the Frazier’s truck. Even in his greenhouse Walter had heard the doelings. He came out to help. Large and muscular he easily lifted them one by one into a large dog kennel and closed the door.

“You have my phone number and my email,” Adriana told Allison. “If you have any questions or problems, please ask me. And that book I told you about will have a lot of information in it. “Your Goat” from Storey Publishing. Do you want any grain or a bale of hay to get them started?”

“We have the pastures,” Allison said. “And we’ll stop at the feed store on the way home to get some feed. That feed you recommended. And you said they might have that book.”

“I mentioned the hay because you might want to keep them in a day or two until they settle down.”

“That might be a good idea. Yes, we would appreciate a bale of hay.”

“I’ll get one,” said Walter.

“How long will Dora cry?” asked Emily.

“Yes, how long do we have to listen to this crying?” asked Allison.

“It should be mostly gone in a day or two. They may get hoarse and sound funny before then. It should be better a little while after they can’t hear their mothers calling them anymore.”

Walter came back with a bale of hay and put it in the truck next to the kennel. “That should last you almost a week. It comes apart in sections called leaves or flakes. They will probably eat one in the morning and another at night.”

“Don’t put it on the ground,” warned Adriana. “They’ll step on it and ruin it and won’t eat it.”

“We better get started and get these three home,” said Allison. “Girls, get into the truck.”

Emily climbed in behind the passenger seat into the extended cab. Elizabeth got into the passenger seat. Both buckled their safety belts. Allison got into the driver's seat.

"If you have any questions or problems, be sure to call."

"We will."

Allison buckled her shoulder belt, started the truck, backed out of the driveway and turned down the road. The doelings still called from the kennel. The sounds of their mothers' voices got fainter and were gone.

Part 2



Emily

Chapter 1 Goats Come Home

Dora let Adriana tie a collar around her neck. Queen and Diana had collars on too. Then she was pulled away from her mother and the herd.

This was not all right. Dora screamed and pulled back. Her mother followed calling her.

Dora, Queen and Diana were pulled into the barn then out another door. The three were held struggling at the end of a big metal thing. Walter came and lifted Queen up. He pushed her into something in the metal thing.

“Maa! Maa!” screamed Dora.

“Kid! My kid!” Wilhelmina answered.

Diana, Queen and their mothers were screaming too.

Walter picked up Diana and shoved her into the place where Queen was.

“Maa! Maa!” screamed Dora.

“Kid! My kid!” Wilhelmina answered.

Now Dora could hear Queen and Diana calling from over her head in this metal thing. Walter lifted her up. She was put down in front of a wire door which opened and she was shoved through it. By the time she squirmed her way around under Diana, the door was closed. A metal fence was past the door.

Dora joined Queen and Diana crowding up to the door calling their mothers. Answers came from beyond the barn. Dora pushed hard but the door would not open.

A loud noise came from in back of the box and the floor vibrated. The cage jerked so Dora wavered on her feet almost falling. Then the cage began to move.

Dora looked out through the wire door. “Maa! Maa!” she called over and over in a chorus with Diana and Queen. The answers from their mothers got fainter and fainter until Dora couldn’t hear her mother anymore.

Everything was strange. A great monster roared by. Another roaring monster came up behind them then sped on around and away.

Dora pushed on the door so she could run back home. It wouldn’t open. At last she lay down next to Queen and Diana. The three shivered with fear.

Emily sat in the back of the king cab pickup watching the doelings through a little window in the kennel.

“Thank you for getting Dora,” Emily said to her mother.

“Emily,” said Mother, “don’t get too attached to that grade. We are going to sell her. I want you girls to have the best and that means purebreds.”

“Please, Mother, I like Dora. I don’t care if she’s a grade. Please let me keep her.”

“A grade is a second rate goat. You and Elizabeth will have the best.”

“I don’t care if Dora’s second rate,” said Emily starting to pout. “I’ll be second rate too, if I can keep her.”

Mother pulled the truck into the feed store parking lot. The doelings got up starting to call again. People stopped and walked around to take a look at them.

“I’m going in to get that feed and look for that book. You girls stay here with the truck.”

“I want to go out and talk to Dora,” said Emily.

“I want to help find that book,” said Elizabeth.

“I don’t want to be here very long. All right, Elizabeth, you can help me get the book. Emily, stay right by the truck.”

“Yes, Mother.”

Mother and Elizabeth went in the feed store. Emily went back and climbed in by the kennel. She could put her fingers in to touch the doelings. They backed up.

“Those are your goats?” someone asked.

“Yes.”

“Just got them?”

“Yes.”

“What’re you going to do with them?”

“They’re a 4-H project.”

“Pretty things.”

“Hey, Mom, I hear goats!” said a boy. “Can I go see them?”

“Yes, you may.”

“Are those your goats?”

“Yes.”

“I have goats, too. I’m Justin. Are you in 4-H? I am.”

“I’m Emily. We just moved here. We’ll join 4-H at the next meeting. What kind of goats do you have?”

“I have Boers.”

“What are those?”

“They’re a red and white meat goat. Those are Nubians, aren’t they?”

“Yes, except for Dora, she’s a grade.”

“Which one’s Dora? That one with the funny ears?”

“They’re not funny. They’re like wings.”

“Are you in the goat project?”

“I guess so. What do you do in the project?”

“We learn how to take care of our goats, trim hooves, feed them, stuff like that. And we learn how to show them. I’m raising a market wether this year.”

“What’s that?”

“A goat sold for meat. It’s auctioned off at the end of the county fair.”

“I don’t want to sell Dora. Elizabeth wants to keep Diana and Queen too. We don’t have to sell them after the fair, do we?”

“Only market animals are sold.”

A man brought out a big paper sack and dropped it on the hay beside the kennel.

“Emily, it’s time to get back in the truck.”

“Yes, Mother. This is Justin. He’s in the 4-H goat project.”

“Hello, Justin,” said Mother looking this boy with the brown crew cut, worn jeans and blue tee up and down. “I’m Emily’s mother, Mrs. Frazier.”

“Hello.”

“Justin! Time to go!”

“See you Emily, my Mom’s calling.”

“Who was that, Emily?” asked Elizabeth.

“That was Justin. He’s in the goat project and raises Boers. He’s raising a market wether.”

“I found that book. Mother got each of us a copy. And we got a water bucket and three feed dishes.”

“I found those,” Emily said as she pushed them out of her way so she could sit down.

The truck backed up and pulled forward out of the parking lot. Dora surged back and forth in the box. She lay down again and closed her eyes. Maybe all of this would be gone when she opened them again.

Dora's eyes opened when the truck stopped moving. She was still in the big box with Diana and Queen. Everything still smelled strange. She couldn't hear her mother. She scrambled up with the others. "Maa! Maa!" the three called. No one answered them.

Mother backed the truck up to the horse barn. The three got out.

"I hope they don't keep this up," grumbled Mother. "That screaming hurts my head."

"Mrs. Collier said they would stop in a day or two," said Elizabeth. "They are loud."

"Where are they going?" asked Emily.

"Let's take a look," answered Mother.

The three went into the barn to look at the different stalls. There were three smaller stalls on the right side of the barn. Across a wide aisle were two large stalls. Spider webs hung from the rafters. Bits of straw were scattered across the floor.

Mother opened the first large stall door. The two girls walked in with her. It was clean. The floor was bare dirt.

"There's a hook," said Elizabeth. "We can hang the water bucket on it."

"Do we get water from the house?" asked Emily.

"If we do, you can carry it," said Elizabeth.

"We'll look for a water faucet later," said Mother. "Let's get those goats out of the truck and into this stall."

"There's someplace to put the hay," said Elizabeth.

"They can't reach up there," said Emily. "Can't we make it lower?"

"Let's get them out of the kennel," said Mother.

Mother opened the tailgate. "You be ready to grab those goats when I open the kennel. Don't let them get away!"

"Can they get out of the barn?" Elizabeth asked.

"We better look for a door at the other end."

There was a door at the other end and it was open. Mother closed it. "Now they can't get out of this end. Thank you for thinking of that, Elizabeth."

The three went back to the truck. The three doelings stood at the kennel door looking out.

"Elizabeth, I'll open the door just a little. You reach in and grab one twine. Then you can get that one out."

Dora, Queen and Diana backed up cramming themselves in the back of the kennel. Elizabeth had to climb part way into the kennel to grab Diana's twine collar.

Elizabeth pulled Diana forward. Diana's legs pushed stiffly out in front of her. She pulled back until she almost lay down. Mother reached in to help pull. The bottom of the kennel was smooth so Diana slid forward until her front hooves braced against the ridge at the door.

With both Elizabeth and Mother pulling Diana's head slowly came forward out of the kennel. Her shoulders emerged. Diana suddenly leaped out flying over their heads. The three fell onto the ground in a heap.

Dora and Queen saw the open door. They bolted out into the barn! They ran to the far end looking for a way out.

Elizabeth and Mother got up. Diana was already up and tugging madly to escape to join the other two doelings. The three went into the barn.

“Close the door, Emily!” yelled Mother.

“How?”

“Pull the big door over! It slides!”

Emily grabbed the door and pulled. It stuck then slid easily across the opening. Now the three doelings and three people were shut in the barn.

It was dark with barely enough light to see. Emily looked for a light switch, found one and turned it on. Light flooded the barn.

Diana had pulled loose and was now back with the other two doelings. They raced back and forth along the back wall.

“They can’t get out,” Mother said. “Let’s try to get them to go to the other end of the barn. Maybe they’ll go into the stall.”

The three edged down one side of the barn toward the doelings. The doelings watched then bolted for the other end of the barn. Dora saw the open stall door and ran in with the others right behind her. Mother ran up to slam the door closed.

“If I’d known how much trouble goats were, you’d not have any!”

“They’re just scared,” said Elizabeth.

“They’re really nice,” added Emily.

Mother tried to put her hair back up into the French twist. “Let’s get the rest of the things out of the truck.”

Emily pushed the door open again. Elizabeth got into the truck bed and rolled the bale of hay out onto the ground.

“Push the kennel out too,” Mother told her.

“Yes, Mother.”

The kennel was light and easy to push out. Mother and Emily carried it into one of the smaller stalls and put it down. Elizabeth had tugged the sack of feed out onto the tailgate.

Elizabeth took the twine around one side and Emily the other to carry the bale of hay into the barn near the goat’s stall. Mother carried the sack of feed in and set it on the floor in front of the hay bale. Elizabeth and Emily had gotten the water bucket and feed pans out of the truck.

“The goats need some water,” Emily said.

“Maybe it would be better to have all of us here while putting it in the stall,” sighed Mother. “There should be a water faucet around here somewhere.”

“What’s that?” asked Elizabeth pointing to a pipe with a handle and spout on it near where the two large stalls met. A cement basin with a drain was under it.

“That must be it. It’s certainly the strangest one I’ve ever seen.”

Emily carried the bucket over and hung it on the spout. Elizabeth pulled the handle up. Water gurgled up the pipe and poured into the bucket. When it was full, Elizabeth shut the faucet off. Emily tried to lift the bucket but it was too heavy. Mother came over and got the bucket. She tipped some of the water out so it wouldn’t slosh out on her jeans.

“I’ll carry the bucket in. Elizabeth, you open the stall door. Emily, you stay behind me then stand in the doorway so they don’t come out.”

“Yes, Mother,” replied the two girls.

The three doelings crowded into the far corner while the water bucket was put in.

“Let’s try putting some hay and grain in since they seem to be staying in.”

Mother didn’t have a knife to cut the twine on the hay bale. Emily ran up to the house to get some scissors. Once the bale was open, it was easy to see the flakes of hay. Elizabeth had put a little grain in each pan. Mother again went into the stall. This time she put the hay in the feed rack and the pans on the floor.

The goats were moved in.

Chapter 2 Goat Fun

“Is Emily up yet?” Mother asked Elizabeth the next morning.

“I guess so. She’s not in her room.”

“She’s late for breakfast.”

Emily didn’t come for breakfast.

“Where is she?” Mother asked.

The house was quiet. Elizabeth looked around but didn’t see her anywhere.

“Do you think she went to the barn, Mother?”

“I’ll go look.”

The two walked down to the barn. The barn was quiet too. Emily didn’t seem to be in the barn. Elizabeth opened the stall door to look at the goats.

“Mother, look in here.”

Emily had her bathrobe on and was lying with her head on Queen. Queen’s head was on Emily’s arm. Dora and Diana were lying beside Emily and had their heads in her lap. All of them were asleep. Dora picked her head up and looked at the people in the doorway then laid it back in Emily’s lap.

“Emily!” said Mother.

The doelings’ heads went up. Emily opened her eyes and yawned.

“Emily! What are you doing in here?”

The doelings fled to the far corner.

“I woke up. I wanted to know if they were all right. I guess I fell asleep.”

“I guess so! Now get up to the house. Get cleaned up and dressed. Your breakfast is still sitting on the counter.”

“Yes, Mother.” Emily walked out of the stall looking down at her feet.

The doelings watched Emily leave. Dora called forlornly. She missed her mother. Queen and Diana were nice but they weren’t her mother. Emily was nice. Maybe, Dora thought, everything would be all right.

“School starts next Wednesday,” began Mother once they were sitting at the counter. The two girls groaned. Mother glared at them. Emily went back to eating her breakfast. Elizabeth wished she had something to do to.

“As I said, school starts next week. Those goats are yours! You are responsible to feed and water them before school. You are responsible to clean up, feed and water them after school. If you can’t or won’t do this, I will sell all of them! Is this understood?”

“Yes, Mother,” said both girls.

“I do not want to find either of you sleeping with the goats again, especially on a school day!”

“Yes, Mother,” said Emily hunching low over her breakfast cereal bowl.

“As soon as you finish eating, Emily, I want both of you to go out and take care of your goats.”

“Yes, Mother.”

The girls spent all day Friday playing with the doelings. Every time the girls left the barn the doelings started calling again. Their voices became hoarse. A low pitched call jumped into soprano and squeaked making the girls laugh.

A car pulled into the driveway that evening.

“Father! Father!” called the girls running over. “Come see our goats!”

Father opened his door and stretched his tall, lean frame as he stood up. "Let me put things in the house and change clothes first," he laughed.

Mother opened the house door.

"Hello, Allison. I hear you bought them their goats for that club." The couple went to their room.

"How was Germany?"

"Cool. Rainy. I got everything finished and set up so I don't need to go back."

"You'll be working in the city?"

"For a couple of weeks. I even get three day weekends this one and next. Then it's off to Mexico City for a week or two. Tell me about these goats."

"I ended up buying three. The woman, a Mrs. Collier, was quite insistent as they were the last three she had for sale."

"The girls seem pleased."

"Two of them are nice, purebred Nubians. The other is some grade."

"You could have insisted on only two."

"Emily is quite taken with the grade. Maybe she'll get over it soon. Then I can sell the thing."

Father sighed. "As long as Emily wants that grade, it stays."

Mother turned silently to put his suits and clothes away. Father shrugged and went out to find his girls and meet their goats.

"This is Diana," said Elizabeth. "And this is Queen."

"This is Dora," Emily told Father. "She's my favorite. Isn't she beautiful?"

"They're all beautiful, I guess. I don't know much about goats."

"Mother bought each of us a book about goats," said Elizabeth.

"And we're joining this goat project that meets once a month. The next meeting is two weeks from now. They'll teach us how to take care of them, feed them and show them."

"We can show our goats next year," said Elizabeth.

"When we stopped at the feed store, a boy named Justin came over. He's in the project. He raises Boers. Those are meat goats."

"Nubians are dairy goats."

"Dairy as in milk?" asked Father. "What are you going to do with this milk?"

"The book says it's good to drink and make things like cheese and yogurt," said Emily.

"Goats only have milk after they have kids. Ours are too little to have kids."

"We have to feed and water them now."

Father helped fill and carry the water bucket. The girls put out hay and grain.

Saturday morning Mother and Father went to the barn with the girls again. The day was sunny and warm.

"Can we let the goats out in the pasture today, Mother?" asked Elizabeth.

"I don't want to chase them around the pasture."

"Chase them?" asked Father.

Mother told Father about bringing the goats home and chasing them around the barn. His face twitched but he didn't laugh.

"They were scared," said Emily. "They aren't so scared now."

"How do they go out to the pasture?" asked Father.

"There's a door in the back of the stall," said Elizabeth.

“I see it. It looks like a double door.”

“What’s a double door?” asked Elizabeth.

“A double door has two parts, a top and a bottom, that can be opened separately.”

“How do you know that’s a double door?”

“Do you see the latches on the top and bottom? One is for the top half. The other is for the bottom half.”

“Can I open it?” asked Emily.

“I think you are able to open the bottom half and, yes, you may open the bottom half.”

Emily groaned but ran to open the stall door. She swung it open. There was a hook on the outside so it would stay open. She hooked it.

“Dora. Come on outside Dora.”

Dora walked over by the open door. Diana and Queen were beside her. Dora stretched her neck out so she could see out the door. Diana and Queen tried to see out too. Someone pushed Dora so she was half way out. She spun around and ran back inside the stall. Diana and Queen followed her.

The three walked back to the open door to look out again. Dora took a step out. “Come on, Dora.” Emily walked out into the pasture. Dora looked.

“Dora, come on out. There’s lots of grass.”

A breeze ruffled Dora’s fur. The grass smelled differently than before but still smelled good. She took another step out. Diana and Queen crowded behind her. Then the three were outside eating grass. It tasted much better than hay. Even better there were weeds in the pasture.

“At Royalty Acres there were big rocks and a fallen tree in the pasture for the goats to play on,” Emily told Father. “We need something for the goats to play on.”

“What does it say in your goat book?”

“I don’t remember.”

“Let’s go look.”

After the girls left for school Monday, Father and Mother got some empty wood cable spools from the local electric company. The company had been putting up some new transmission lines using all the wire from two big spools and three smaller ones. They bought some plywood and boards as well.

Elizabeth had designed a play area. The next Saturday Father looked over her plans with her. First plywood was cut to fit over the tops of all the spools covering all the holes. Then the two big spools were joined with two boards between them. Two of the smaller spools were next to this with a board between them and up to the big spools. The third spool was by itself on the other side.

Father used his new skill saw to cut the plywood pieces. Elizabeth nailed one on a spool while Emily nailed the other one. Father lifted the boards into place. The girls held the boards steady while he nailed them down. The new play area was done.

The three goats looked over this strange thing in their pasture. Dora leaped onto a small spool. It promptly fell over.

Father put boards attaching the top of the small spool to the big spools. Dora leaped up on the small spool again. It stayed put.

Carefully Dora walked up the board to the top of a big spool. She stopped to look out over the pasture. Diana jumped up on the small spool going up behind Dora.

A wild chase began. Dora raced across to the other big spool and down to leap onto the ground. Diana was right behind her. Queen ran over.

Dora led the three doelings on a wild run around the pasture, leapt onto a smaller spool, up the ramp to a big spool, across the boards and down to the boards between the smaller spools and off around the pasture again.

The next time Dora spun around on the big spool to butt heads with Diana. Queen went up on the other big spool and shoved Dora from behind.

Father and the three girls stood by the barn watching the antics. Elizabeth grinned because her design was working even better than she expected. They laughed on the way back to the house to tell Mother about the new goat play yard.

Whenever Emily was home after that, she would come out and sit on the board between the small spools. The doelings raced around her then lay down beside her. Emily started sitting on the board to read or do her homework. Dora would lay down with her head in Emily's lap. Elizabeth would find them there when she came out to help feed the goats and put them in their stall for the night.

One morning the girls found the feed sack torn open. Feed was scattered in the center aisle. The stall door was closed so the goats hadn't done it. They cleaned it up and put the cleanest feed in an old sack. This time they locked it in one of the smaller stalls.

All of the stalls were solid wood part way up with bars the rest of the way to the ceiling. A couple mornings later the feed sack was again torn open with feed scattered.

The project meeting was that afternoon. Emily took Elizabeth over to meet Justin. Justin introduced them to the other project members. There were Kaila, Juliana, Brendan, Mike, Dwayne and Rachael.

Elizabeth and Rachael knew each other from the county fair where Rachael was showing her goats. She gave Elizabeth the idea to get some dairy goats. Now they were in the same classes in school. The two took off together a little ways to talk.

Emily found out only Dwayne and Rachael had dairy goats. The others had Boers or Kikos, two kinds of meat goats. Even Dwayne had a Boer market wether.

"Our sack of feed was torn up this morning," Emily told Justin.

"That sounds like a coon," said Mike pushing a long strand of black hair out of his face. "I have them too. Once they tore up three sacks in one night."

"What's a coon? What do you do?"

"A raccoon. I shoot the coons."

"I can't do that. Raccoons are cute. I don't have a gun."

"The best way is to put your feed in a metal trash can," said Kaila.

"Why metal?" asked Emily.

"Mice can't chew into it. But the lid has to be real tight. I tie mine on with a bungee cord."

"Will a raccoon hurt my goats?" asked Emily.

"I've never had one hurt a goat," said Mike.

"Coyotes can kill a goat," said Brendan. "We have coyotes run across our place almost every night."

"What do you do?" asked Emily.

"We have a guard dog."

"I have a guard donkey," said Juliana. "Some people keep a llama."

"We lock ours up every night," said Emily. "Won't that keep them safe?"

"Probably," said Justin. "Just don't ever forget to lock the door."

The main topic of the meeting was feeding goats over the winter. Everyone agreed goats were really sloppy eating hay.

“My goats stand on top of my round bales,” commented Mike.

“I tried putting a round bale in a round bale feeder,” said Juliana. “First the goats jumped over it and onto the bale. Then the goats just went through the holes.”

“I tried wrapping a cattle panel around a round bale,” said Brendan. “They did jump on top but mostly they ate through the holes.”

“What’s a round bale?” asked Emily

“It’s a four by five bale,” said Mike.

“Oh, Mike, she won’t know what that is either,” said Justin.

“So you explain it.”

“Emily, hay is dried grass. Someone uses a tractor to cut the grass. It’s left to dry for a day or so. Then it’s piled up in long rows. Someone on a tractor pulls a baler over it. For a round bale the grass is rolled into a big round tight roll four feet across and five feet long.”

“I use square bales of alfalfa,” said Rachael. “Those are about a foot and a half square and four feet long with the hay packed into sections or flakes.”

“Mrs. Collier sent one of those home with us.”

“We don’t have any hay,” said Elizabeth. “Where do we get some? What kind of hay should we get?”

“Alfalfa is good for dairy goats,” said Rachael.

“Alfalfa is good hay for all goats but it costs a lot more than grass hay,” said Mike. “I like orchard grass, clover hay.”

“We have three doelings,” said Emily. “Mr. Collier told us to feed one flake in the morning and one at night.”

“You’ll need about thirty bales for the winter,” said Rachael. “They’ll eat more as they get bigger.”

“You better get square bales,” said Dwayne. “Three goats won’t eat a round bale before it molds.”

“You can’t feed moldy hay to goats,” said Kaila. “Some molds can make them really sick.”

On the way home from the meeting Mother stopped and bought a metal trash can and some bungee tie down cords to keep the lid down. Once they got home she called Rachael’s mother to find out where to buy some hay.

“Goats cost a lot to feed,” Mother said to Mrs. Goldman. “I don’t know if I’d have gotten them if I knew before.”

“Rachael really enjoys her goats. Horses cost a lot more to keep and are a lot of work. Cows sell for more but are so big for a girl, especially one Rachael’s age. She’s almost eleven. She can take care of the goats herself, train them, show them, milk them and now we’re learning to make cheese.”

“What breed does Rachael have?”

“She has LaManchas, the ones with short ears. No one else around here has them so we had to buy a buck too. He stinks this time of year.”

“Ours are Nubians. Should we buy a buck?”

“There are several people around here with Nubians. You can get them bred there. It’s a lot cheaper than keeping a buck for three does. In fact, Mr. Kingston who has the alfalfa raises Nubians.”

Chapter 3 Goats Give Milk

The next Saturday the Fraziers got in the truck driving over to meet the Kingstons, their goats and get thirty bales of hay. Dressed in worn overalls hanging loosely over his tall, lean body, Mr. Kingston met the Fraziers as they pulled into the driveway.

Father went with Mr. Kingston to look at his hay. Mother followed them. Elizabeth and Emily went to look over the gate at the goats. Soon Emily was in the goat yard surrounded by Nubians demanding her attention.

“Look at these with spots,” said Emily.

“Maybe you should come out of there.”

“I like being with the goats. I can’t reach them over the gate. Look at this gray one. Mrs. Collier didn’t have gray ones or spotted ones.”

“Those look like someone tried to paint them white but just splashed a few hairs.”

“Look at that one. Is it black with white spots or white with black spots?”

“Hard to tell, but probably black with white spots. Having this many goats must be a lot of work.”

“It would be fun to have some with spots. Dora has patches. They’re whiter and one is a lot bigger than these.”

“I think these are much prettier than Dora. Their ears are nicer.”

“You heard Mrs. Collier. Dora will give a lot more milk than your Nubians.”

“So what. What will you do with it? Drink it? Ich!”

Emily turned away and ignored Elizabeth. She liked these goats. They were friendly. But they weren’t like Dora. They wouldn’t walk with her or sleep with their heads in her lap. Dora was special even if she was a grade!

“Emily!” called Mother. “What are you doing in there? You weren’t told you could go in there! Out! Now!”

“She can stay in,” said Mr. Kingston. “My goats can always use more attention. It’s good for them.”

Mother glared at Emily but stopped calling.

“Mother,” said Elizabeth, “some of these goats have spots.”

“I bought a spotted buck years ago. His daughters and granddaughters have spots.”

“We will want our doelings bred later,” said Mother. “How old do they need to be?”

“I usually wait until mine are a year old but lots of people breed before that. It depends on the doeling. If she’s almost grown and at least seven months, she’s big enough.”

“Dora was born in March. But she’s almost as big as that one, the gray one.”

“That one is still a bit too small so Dora probably is too. She’s too young too.”

“Our books say it takes five months for them to have kids.”

“That’s right. And breeding season goes until February. Nubians seem to breed all year round here but I prefer spring kids.”

“Roy,” said Father, “what do you do with all your milk? You have a lot of goats.”

“I use it to raise bottle calves. Amelia makes some cheese and uses it in the kitchen.”

“You drink it?” asked Elizabeth.

“Sure. Have you tried some?”

“No.” Elizabeth tried not to make a face.

“Can -,” Emily looked at her father who softly cleared his throat, “may we try some milk? Is it hard to raise bottle calves?”

“Calves do real well on their own mothers. They’re real delicate on a bottle. The biggest secret is to get a healthy calf to start with. Then keep everything clean, the bottles, the nipples and the milk. Then I don’t have much trouble. Why don’t we go in and get some milk before we start loading hay?”

Mother glared at Emily. Emily didn’t notice. She was happily walking between Roy and Father asking questions about goats and calves.

“This is my wife Amelia,” said Roy. “This little girl wanted to try some goat milk. They just bought themselves some doelings.”

“I’m Emily,” said Emily smiling at the short well padded woman with waist length straight brown hair hanging in a single braid down her back who was shredding lettuce into a bowl. “You have pretty goats.”

Mrs. Kingston busied herself getting out glasses and milk. “Do you like goats, Emily?”

“Yes. This is my sister Elizabeth and my parents.”

“Hello, I’m Allison. My husband is Edward. We came to buy some hay. Mrs. Goldman gave me your names.”

“Yes, we know Sarah. Her daughter Rachael has those goats with no ears. They’re really nice but I just can’t get used to those tiny ears. Roy says you have goats.”

“I bought the girls two Nubian doelings.”

“Don’t forget Dora,” said Emily. “Dora’s an Alpine Nubian cross.”

“That’s a great cross for milk. Here’s some milk for you, Emily.”

Mrs. Kingston handed out samples of milk to all of the Fraziers and a full glass to her husband. Mother and Elizabeth eyed theirs warily.

“It looks just like the milk from the store,” said Emily. “It doesn’t taste like it. It tastes better.”

Elizabeth took a cautious sip. “You’re right, Emily. It tastes okay.”

Father laughed and tried his. “Not bad. I could get used to this.”

Mother still looked at hers. She sighed and tried a sip and gagged. “I just can’t drink this. I’m not a big milk drinker anyway.”

“May I have yours, Mother?” asked Emily. She drank that milk too.

“Let’s get your hay loaded, Edward. This is your first time loading hay?”

“Afraid so.”

“It’s not hard.”

The two men went out.

“How long have you and Roy had goats?” asked Mother.

“Fifteen years or more. We like the goats, but there’s not much money in them unless you show. There’s more money in the cattle so we started raising bottle calves. Sometimes we raise a few pigs. The best part is having milk to use and the cheese. Would you like to try some cheese?”

“No, not today.”

“May we go out and see the goats again?” asked Emily.

“It’s about time to milk. Would you like to help?”

“Yes! We can, can’t we, Mother?”

“Until the truck is loaded and we’re ready to go.”

“Emily, will you carry these two bottles? Elizabeth, did you want to help too?”

“Yes.”

“Please carry this pail. Let’s go.”

Mrs. Kingston led the two girls out to a room attached to the barn. Inside was a table, two metal trash cans with lids and two benches with tall boards sticking up at one end.

“We just got a trash can to keep our feed in. Something was tearing up our feed sacks. Mike thought it was a coon.”

“Mike’s probably right, Emily. You can set those things on the table.”

“What are these?” asked Elizabeth.

“Those are milk stands. It’s easier to show you how they work when the goats come in.”

Mrs. Kingston checked the stands and put feed in the dishes in front of the tall boards. Then she opened a door to the barn and let two goats come in. The goats stopped to look at the girls then each went to a stand and jumped up. They put their heads between the tall boards and started eating. Amelia pushed one board over locking it into place around one goat’s neck then did the same for the other one.

“Goats are too small to milk on the ground. The stands get them off the ground. There’s a step at the end but most of the goats jump up. Mine are tall enough for me to sit down with my knees under the stand. The stanchion keeps the goat from backing out until I’m done.”

Mrs. Kingston brushed the goats’ udders and stomachs off. She washed a little dirt off one udder and dried it using paper towels. She squirted a little milk into a cup with a strainer on top. Putting a bucket under the goat, she grabbed the teats and squirted milk into the bucket. When she was done, she poured the milk into the big pail and put the lid back on. Then she sprayed the doe’s teats with something in a spray can.

“Emily, would you like to try milking this other doe?”

“I suppose so. How?”

“I’ve already brushed her off. That way I don’t get straw, hair or mud in the milk. Get the bucket and sit down.”

“I have the bucket. How do I get the milk out?” Emily was squeezing one teat but no milk came out.

“The udder is full of milk. The teats are how the milk gets out. Pinch off the top of the teat to trap the milk then squeeze to push it into the bucket.”

Emily tried again. A few drops came out.

“Use your thumb and first finger up here at the top. That’s good. Now close the rest of your hand.”

Milk squirted out sideways and hit Mrs. Kingston. She laughed. “Now you can get the milk out. Next time aim for the bucket.”

The next time Emily hit the bucket with most of the milk. She tried a few more times and got milk in the bucket each time.

“You’re getting good. I better finish before I have to give the doe very much more feed. I don’t want her to get fat.”

Mrs. Kingston finished. Emily sprayed the teats. “What’s this?”

“It kills any bacteria so none get into the udder to infect it.”

Mrs. Kingston let the two does out and one in. “Your turn, Elizabeth.”

Elizabeth brushed off the doe's udder and stomach. She got the bucket and sat down. "She won't kick me, will she?" Elizabeth slowly reached for a teat and ran her fingers over it. The doe kicked at her hand. Elizabeth jerked her hand back.

"Don't tickle her. Just reach in and grab hold."

Elizabeth finally managed to get a few drops of milk out. She shot a thin stream over and into the bucket. "This is hard."

"It does take practice. Have you girls joined ADGA, the Goat Association yet?"

"We just got our junior membership stuff back," said Emily. "Now we can register our goats."

"You can't register Dora," said Elizabeth.

"I can record her."

Mrs. Kingston had taken Elizabeth's place and finished milking the doe. The doe went out and two more came in. Emily helped brush off the udders. Mrs. Kingston milked the first doe. Elizabeth did the teat spray.

"We must have missed you the last time," Mrs. Kingston said to the other doe. "Your feet look terrible."

"What's wrong with them?" asked Elizabeth.

"Look at that doe's feet and then at this one. Do you see how long her toes are?"

"That one is bent over a little."

"They need trimming."

"Our goat books tell us to trim our goats' feet but we don't know how," said Emily.

"Usually Roy trims the feet but I'll do this one after we milk her."

Mrs. Kingston finished milking the doe. She got out a pair of what looked like pruners out of a cupboard in a corner. "These are hoof trimmers."

After putting the other doe out and more food in the doe's bowl, Mrs. Kingston picked up a front hoof. "First push any dirt out. Do you see how the hoof is folded over? You cut that part off."

"Don't hooves wear off when the goats walk around?" asked Elizabeth.

"If they are on lots of rocks, the hooves wear down. Ours spend too much time on pasture and soft ground. Do you see how I flattened the hoof down level with the foot? The back one is a bit harder because goats don't like you to pick them up."

Mrs. Kingston quickly had the hooves trimmed and let the doe out. Two more came in.

Mother opened the door. "Girls, it's time to leave. Thank you for everything, Amelia."

"Come back or call if you have any questions or problems. Ask Roy to give you a catalog so you can order some hoof trimmers. Good bye, girls."

"These goats are expensive," Mother complained on the way home.

"Roy was telling me the purchase price is always the cheapest thing about livestock," said Father. "He has some really nice bucks."

"They seem to be a lot of work, too."

"Aren't the girls doing most of it?"

"We feed, water and clean up after the goats every day, Father," said Emily.

"Mrs. Kingston showed us how to milk and trim hooves," said Elizabeth.

"I like the goats," said Emily. "Dora is lots of fun. We play. She keeps me company when I do homework."

"She doesn't eat it?" teased Father.

“She did eat one page or tore it. I’m careful now.”

Mother sent off the applications for papers that week. She ordered hoof trimmers. Both arrived the following Thursday.

“We’ll ask Father to help trim hooves this Saturday,” said Emily.

“Maybe Rachael can come over and show us how. Mother, may I invite her?”

“Yes, ask her to come for lunch on Saturday.”

“Where are Dora’s papers?” asked Emily looking through the papers in the ADGA envelope.

“I didn’t get them. I don’t want to waste money on that grade. We’ll only show the other two.”

“I want to show Dora in Showmanship. And Mrs. Collier said there are grade classes.”

“You have those two nice Nubian doelings. You can show them.”

Emily ran to her room. When she came out, she handed money to her mother. I’ll pay for Dora’s papers out of my allowance. Please send for Dora’s papers.”

“No, I won’t. She’s nothing but a grade. We need to sell her and work with the purebreds.”

“Please, Mother.”

“No, and quit whining.”

Emily ran back to her room then out to the barn.

Rachael came to visit on Saturday. She showed the girls how to trim hooves on Queen. Elizabeth trimmed Diana’s hooves. Emily trimmed Dora’s.

“I don’t know why you bother doing this grade goat,” said Elizabeth.

“She’s a nice looking goat,” said Rachael. “My first goat was a grade. She had these funny broken ears that stood up and bent over in the middle. The ends would flap when she ran.”

“Do you still have her?” asked Emily.

“No, she was an old goat and died four years later. I still miss her. We used to have a good time in showmanship and at the county fair.”

“Purebreds are better,” said Elizabeth.

“They cost more and maybe you can sell the kids for more. Grades can be good goats too.”

Emily watched Rachael and Elizabeth looking like opposite twins walk up to the house as soon as the hooves were done. Rachael’s blond hair spread across the top of her back. Elizabeth’s brown hair did the same. Both tall and thin. Emily turned to Dora. “I don’t care what they say, Dora. You are my best goat.”

Dora stood happily letting Emily hug and pet her. Diana and Queen stood close by nudging Emily for their share. Emily led them outside to play on the spools then sat quietly while Dora slept with her head on Emily’s lap.

Father found Emily with the goats. “It’s time for lunch. What’s wrong, Emily?”

Emily’s face was wet with tears. “Mother wants to sell Dora. She won’t get her papers. I said I’d pay for the papers but she still won’t get them. Dora’s my goat. Please ask Mother to let me keep her.”

“I’ll talk to her.”

Rachael and Elizabeth had lots to do after lunch.

Emily went back out and took the goats for a walk behind the pasture in a patch of woods. The goats ate fallen leaves and shuffled others aside to find acorns to eat. A squirrel crashed through the leaves, ran up a tree and sat there scolding the group.

Rachael went home in the mid afternoon. Emily put the goats back in their pasture and went in.

Late that evening the girls went to their rooms. Emily could hear her father talking.

“Emily tells me you won’t get the papers on Dora.”

“That goat is just a grade. I’ve been talking to some of the other mothers from the project. Purebreds are the best investment.”

“The goats aren’t an investment. They are a 4-H project. If Emily wants to use Dora for her project, she can use Dora.”

“She can use one of the other two just as well. They’re purebreds.”

“I usually don’t interfere. You always want the best of everything. That’s fine. But this is different. As long as Emily wants to have Dora, the goat stays. You will get her papers. You will not sell her unless Emily agrees. I do not want to find Emily in tears again because she’s afraid of losing her favorite pet.”

A drawer slammed. Dora’s papers came the next week.

Elizabeth and Emily learned more about taking care of their goats at the next project meeting. They also found out about wearing coveralls to do chores so they didn’t have to change clothes before catching the school bus. Everyone was talking about breeding their does. Most were already bred so they had their kids early in the year, at least two months before the first show in May. The project program was on basic showing.

Emily studied the parts of a goat in her goat book. Sometimes Elizabeth helped quiz her but had to keep looking at the diagram. Emily spent afternoons teaching all the doelings to lead and stand. Elizabeth came out when the weather was warmer to help.