

*For
Love
Of
Goats*

Karen GoatKeeper

*This book is dedicated to goats
and those who love them*

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Author's Notes

Destiny Is Named Jennifer



I was stranded twelve and a half miles from anywhere under doctor's orders to do nothing while broken bones healed. I'd lost my first attempt to live on my own in a late night car accident. Now I was living with my parents in their new place in the country: a one big room building with no running water.

After a month of boredom, I was ready to try something, anything. My father's goats obliged when Sandy, a mixed breed doe with sundgau Alpine markings, had a single, half Nubian black doe kid. Goat kids are cute, playful, demanding, interesting and I was hooked on Jennifer. She was hooked on me, loudly demanding my presence whenever she got bored.

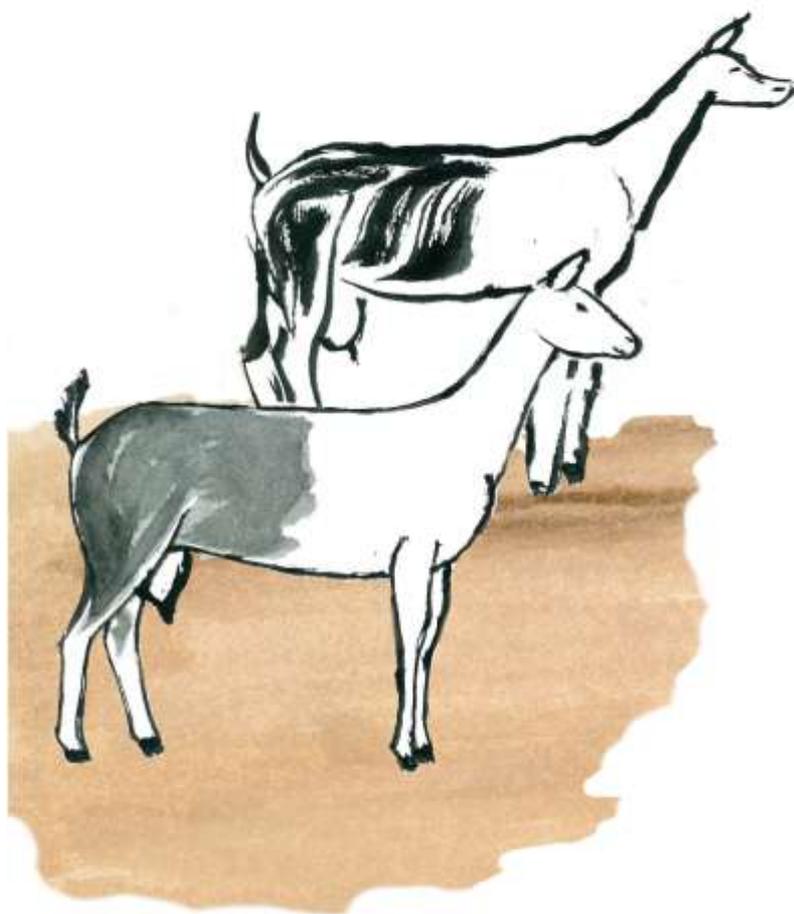
I bought some books on goats. I learned how to milk. I found goat milk suited me. Jennifer would do anything for me and nothing for my father. "You spoiled her. You take her," he told me. So I did.

Jennifer and I moved several times. She was queen of my little herd until the day she died many years later. Some of her relations are still in my herd over forty years later.

Jennifer turned me from being a city girl to being a country girl. She gave my life meaning and roots. Not all the times with goats are good ones, but they are interesting. Some are comic at the time. Some gain humor in hindsight. Some always remain in the "You must be kidding." category.

One thing is certain: goats are never boring.

A is for *Alpine*



Alarmed Alpines align alertly.

“Are aliens arriving?”

“Ask Alice.”

“Are abominable animals attacking?”

“Ask Alice.”

“Any amusing arboreal antics?”

“Ask Alice.”

“Alice?”

“Just a gust of angry air,” answers Alice ambling away.



B is for Boer



“I’m bored!” bellows Bruce Boer.

“You are a bore,” bellows back Betty Boer.

“A boar is a pig,” pronounces Bruce Boer. “I most certainly am not a pig.”

“Bore not boar,” banTERS Betty. “But, now that you mention it, boar might apply.”



“I am not a pig.” Bruce barges his beefy, brawny body broadside to the fence.

Betty Boer blinks. Bruce’s bearing belies his bulk. “You are a handsome beau,” says she.

Bruce begs, “Beautiful Betty, beyond the fence, be mine.”

One Problem with Bucks



Goat hooves, like fingernails and toenails, grow constantly. Dairy goat hooves must be trimmed about every six weeks according to my new goat books. My father didn't know this so his few goats needed their hooves trimmed.

I had worked at a horse rental stable and seen horse hooves trimmed. I had a hoof knife and hoof pick. I had lead ropes. One weekend I decided to tackle the goats.

The does were easy to catch and cross tie. Trimming hooves was another proposition as far as they were concerned. I managed the first two without too much arguing. The third laid down.

It is possible although difficult to trim front hooves on a goat with the goat lying down. The back feet are impossible. This doe refused to stand up. Since she weighed more than I did, this was an impasse. I sat down and waited. And waited.

Finally the lure of a feed pan with a bit of grain got the doe back on her feet. I sidled her to the fence tying a rope under her belly to over her back and did the hooves on that side. Reversing her wasn't too hard. Her hooves were done.

The one goat remaining was the buck. All two hundred pounds and three foot horn spread of him. At least he was friendly.

The buck thought I was weird, but gave no trouble. His hooves were soon trimmed. I had learned how to trim hooves.

Packing up I went back to my apartment in town. I had studying to do for college classes the next day. My favorite spot was propped lengthwise on the couch. I settled in.

My nose began to itch and run. My eyes began to water. I sneezed and investigated.

My blouse stunk. No, it reeked. I could almost see the clouds of musk rising from it.

My goat book later informed me bucks produce musk in the fall for breeding season. I don't have a good sense of smell and hadn't noticed my blouse getting liberally smeared.

I changed blouses and returned to my studying. The smell never came out of the blouse.

J Is For Journey



Jaunty Jasper jogs jingle jangle jump on a journey.

Jealous Jasmine jiggles, jerks, jostles her gate.

Jaunty Jasper, joyful Jasmine jog jingle jangle jump on their journey.

Jump on a jumble of rocks.

Jiggle through a jungle of junipers.

Jasper and Jasmine jog jingle jangle on a jolly journey.



The Little Goat



I must admit I was getting a bit cramped for space. Still, the push, squeeze and squeeze some more then plop was a bit much. Where am I anyway? Who are you?

Ma. You are Ma. Your tongue is pushing me around. Let me see where I am. Quit shoving.

I'm hungry. Where's the food? Wait. I know where the food is. Ma has it. All I have to do is get over to Ma. Maybe I can get her to come over here. Hey, Ma!

No, no more licking. I'm fine. I'm hungry. The food's up there. How do I get up there?

Legs. I have these long legs. Let's see. I'll put one there. That one there. Push. My back end is up.

Now the front one goes there. And the other one goes...Oops.

Now my legs are crossed. They won't move off each other. Help, Ma!

Ma, you can stop pawing me now. You finally got me cleaned up and now you're burying me in all this whatever it is. My legs are untangled now. You can stop any time.

Back to the legs. My back end is up. I can do this. One front leg there. The other one there. Push. Push!

I'm up! No, Ma, no! No licking. Oops.

I'm hungry. Back end up. I'm getting good at that part. Front end up. Front end up!

Where's Ma? Over there. Move a leg. Move another leg. Why am I not getting closer? The back legs. I must remember to move the back legs too.

Oh, no. Don't, Ma. No licking. Hey! I didn't fall down. Good. Now move the front leg. Move the other front leg. Move the back leg. Move the other back leg. Repeat.

At last I'm up to Ma. Where's the food? It's up there somewhere. I know it's there somewhere. Keep looking.

This feels like what I'm looking for. How do I know? Who cares. I found it.

Milk. Lots of delicious milk. I'll wag my tail to celebrate.

O Is For Oberhasli



“Oodles of onions,” opined Olivia.

“Oodles of onions?” asked Oona.

“Yes, oodles of onions smell so good,”

“You’re dreaming.”

“No, I smell oodles of onions.”

Oona breathed deeply. “Oodles of onions. Are they for us?”

“I want oodles of onions to eat.”

After milking, Olivia and Oona went out. Oodles of onions were in their hay trough.

“Oodles of onions,” groaned Olivia.

“I ate oodles of onions,” moaned Oona.

“I’d do it again,” said Olivia. “I love oodles of onions.”

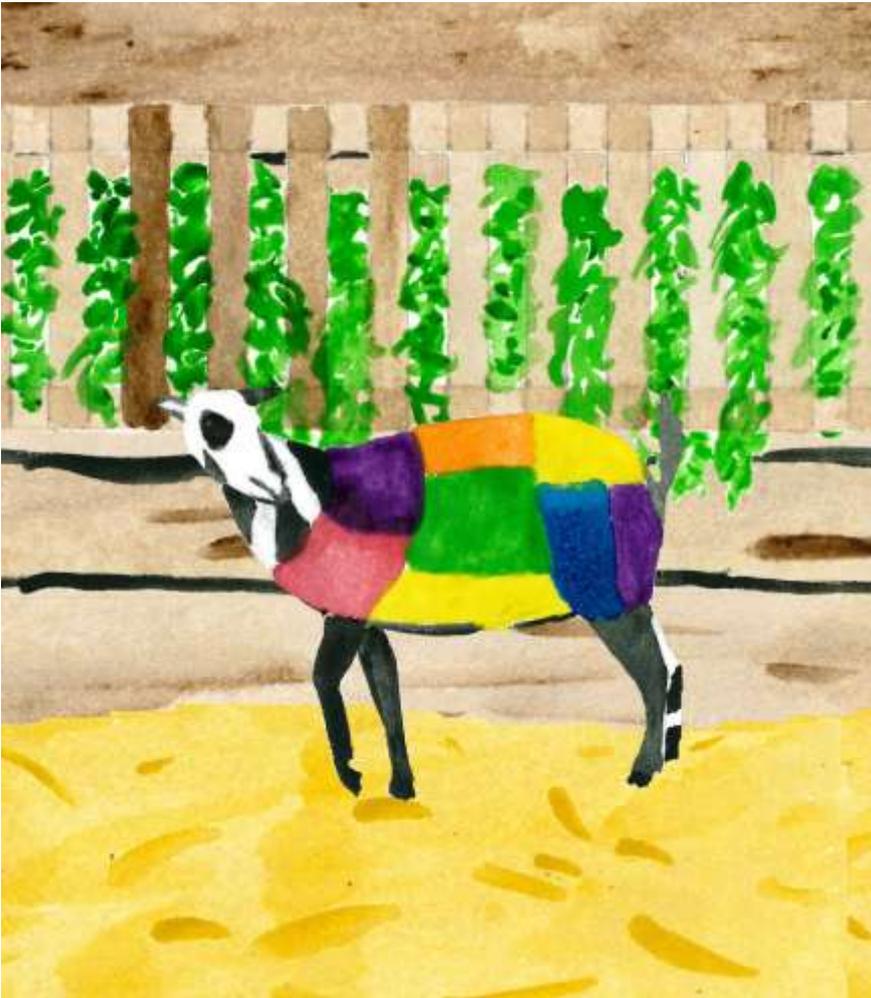
“So do I,” sighed Oona.



P is for Parade

Pretty, petite, prissy Priscilla prances proudly in her patchwork pad. "Look at me! And I'm warm."

"I want that patchwork pad," declares Patty walking over. Priscilla pushes Patty away parading off.



“I’ll get one,” vows Patty.

One by one shivering goats go into the milk room. A parade of patchwork apparel on pampered goats appears replacing cold with warm goats.

“Mine is prettier than Priscilla’s,” gloats Patty.



Moving With Goats



Moving a regular household is a major task. Moving a homesteading household and its livestock is a monumental task. We were moving from the Michigan Upper Peninsula to the Missouri Ozarks.

Two rental trucks went south filled with belongings including the Ford 8N tractor, two wood heating stoves, wood cookstove and a portable sawmill. The boxes of belongings were piled into an old hog shed as there was no house. A narrow pathway a foot wide was left between the stacks.

One last trip down would take the last of our belongings and the animals. We had no stock trailer. We rented a truck.

The truck floor was lined with a plastic tarp topped with an ash layer and bedding hay. Four fifty-five gallon barrels were hung from the side rails inside the truck, two on each side. The chickens were put in the barrels with wire secured over the open end. The goats were put into the truck.

The pickup was loaded until the springs underneath were flat. Inside the truck cab the passenger seat was piled with four cat carriers, two cats to each carrier. A trailer pulled behind the rented truck was piled high.

We planned to leave at dusk to keep the truck cool for the animals. We finally left about eleven. On the way we picked up a bottle baby, a red and white, registered polled Nubian buck named Uponahill Jumping Jack Flash. We drove all night stopping just before the Wisconsin Illinois line to grab some sleep and care for the animals.

In the morning we started off again. Everything was on schedule. The pickup overheated. We pulled over to check it out.

The water pump had failed.

This was Sunday morning. No mechanic was open. There were animals to consider. We filled the radiator with water and drove on.

Every fifty miles I pulled over to fill the radiator. Each time was fifty miles closer to our new home. Time rolled by. Drive. Stop and fill. Drive. Stop and fill. Every fourth stop and fill was time to exercise the goats, serve water and feed a bottle. Keep the fingers crossed the truck makes it through the interchanges at St. Louis.

Dusk fell. Only a hundred miles to go, but the truck overheated sooner. Drive. Stop and fill. Drive. Stop and fill. We pulled down the gravel road and turned onto the property twenty-four hours after leaving Michigan.

W is for *W*ether



Loyal stands in the doorway looking out.

"Hey! Loyal! What are you looking at?" calls Dandy.

"I'm looking out at the weather to decide whether I want to go out or not, Dandy Wether," answers Loyal.

"Well, I know I'm not going out," declares Dandy. "It's raining and no wether I know would think twice about whether or not to go out in weather like this."

"Wouldn't you like to go eat some more of that willow?" she asks.

"Of course, willow is nice," answers Dandy. "Today I'll eat hay. When the weather is better this wether will eat more willow."

"Perhaps you are right," Loyal sighs. "Thinking whether to go out in this weather just to eat willow is wasting my time. I will not go out to eat willow in rainy weather either, Dandy Wether."