

A Haircut for Britches



Britches and the other young sheep stared at Duncan, their eyes wide open. The old sheep spoke in a loud whisper. “Have you ever seen a farmer’s wool hat? That’s what will happen to you. Your wool will be turned into a hat!”

Duncan spoke louder. “Or even worse, the farmer could turn your wool into a rug and people will walk on it!”

The young sheep shook with fear. They couldn’t take their eyes off Duncan.

“The farmer is a crook. He’ll take all your wool and you’ll *freeze!*” Duncan shouted. He shivered to show how cold they would be. “Yes, that’s what happens when your wool gets sheared.”



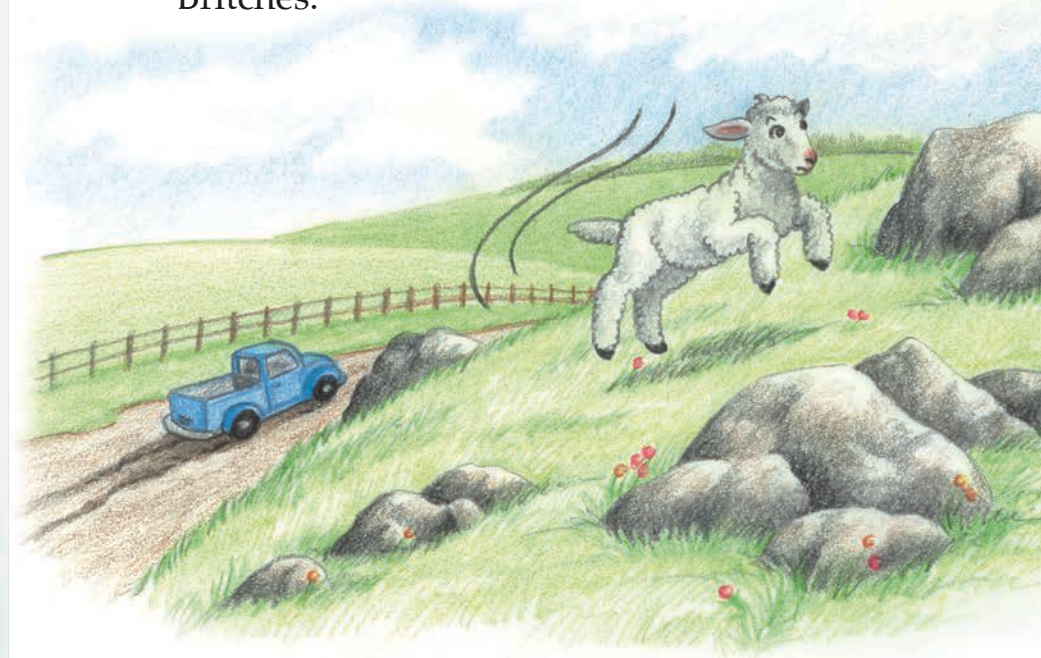
Britches stamped his hoof. “I don’t think that’s true, Duncan!” But deep down, Britches was scared.

“It’s all true,” Duncan told the young sheep as he walked off. Then he paused and added, “And just wait until you see the huge teeth on the farmer’s dog.”

A dog! In their panic, the young flock pushed closer together. Britches tried to be brave and soothe them. “Don’t listen to that old sheep. We’ll be fine. We’re not scared of a little haircut!” But the sheep were so worried by Duncan’s stories that they didn’t even hear Britches.

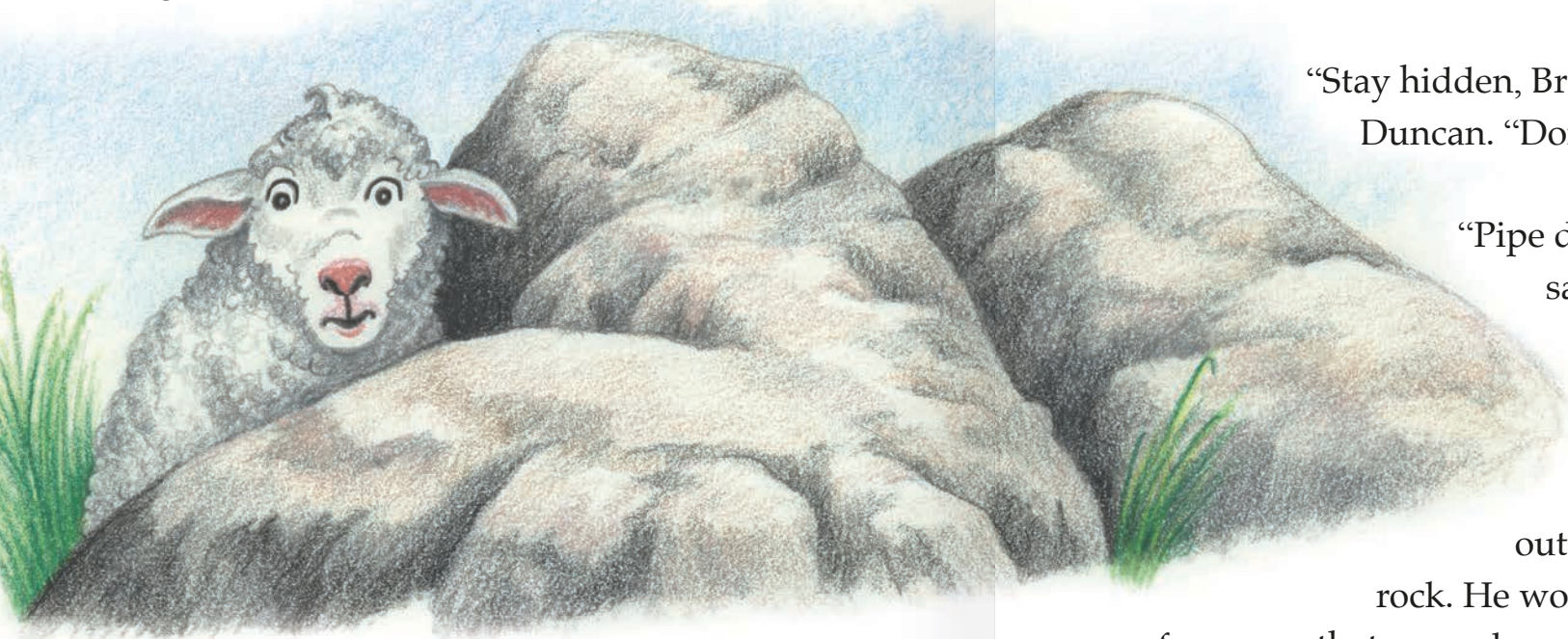


The flock huddled close as the farmer’s truck rumbled up the winding road. All the young sheep were too scared to move—except for Britches.



Britches didn’t want to find out if Duncan’s stories were true. He made a dash for the hills and hid behind a large rock. He didn’t want to be a hat or a rug, and he didn’t want to freeze or get eaten by a dog. No, sirree. He would keep all his wool and stay safe and warm.

Britches peeked out from behind the rock. He saw the farmer and the dog herding his friends into a small pen. Britches kept thinking of the dog's teeth.



One at a time, the sheep came out from the pen looking skinny. Britches stared in shock. He couldn't take his eyes off the growing pile of wool in the back of the farmer's truck. Would his friends' wool ever grow back? Did it hurt to have a haircut? The sheep didn't *seem* to be hurt, but Britches didn't want to take any chances.

The other sheep called out to him. "Baa! Britches! Where are you? It's not so bad! We all stood like good little sheep. You can do it, too!"

"Stay hidden, Britches!" yelled Duncan. "Don't become a hat!"

"Pipe down, Duncan!" said all the other sheep.

But Britches didn't come out from behind his rock. He wouldn't go near the farmer or that scary dog—*ever*.

At long last, the farmer finished his shearing. Britches watched as the farmer counted the sheep. He seemed puzzled and began looking all over the pen, behind his truck, and behind the bushes. Then he gave a command to the dog, who looked in every nook and cranny—everywhere except behind the rock where Britches hid.

The farmer shrugged, packed up his shears, and drove the old truck down the winding road. Britches felt very lucky. He had escaped being sheared!

When night came, Britches sneaked back to the sleeping flock.



In the morning, the other sheep were happy to see that Britches had returned. “Britches! We looked all over for you! Where have you been?” they asked.

Britches looked at his friends and felt sorry for them. They looked skinny and cold without their long wool coats. “Oh, I camped out in the woods,” he said. “And I was nice and *warm*.”

“You should have gotten a haircut like us. It feels great!” said his friends. Britches wasn’t so sure.

As the summer days began to grow warmer, his wool coat got thicker. Britches felt itchier and itchier. He tried everything to reach his itches. He shifted from one foot to the other. He rubbed his sides on the fence posts. He used his hoof to scratch behind his head. He was itchy, but he felt lucky to still have his wool!



Summer dragged on. The other sheep weren't bothered by the heat, but Britches felt like he might bake in the sun. While the other young sheep played, Britches stood in the shade of the woods. While the rest of the flock munched on fresh green grass, Britches waded in the brook to cool off.



He slept behind bushes and rolled in the dirt. Soon his white coat was clumped with burrs. His dusty wool made him sneeze, and his friends felt sorry for him.

One hot day, the farmer's truck rumbled back up the winding road. Before Britches could run for the hills, the dog jumped from the truck and herded him into the pen. Britches noticed that the dog's teeth weren't really as big as Duncan had said.

The farmer spoke kindly to Britches as he got out his shears. Britches had nowhere to go. He closed his eyes tight as the farmer flipped him over. Britches waited for the first clip.



And then—nothing! Britches slowly opened one eye, then the other.



He could see the farmer snipping at his coat, and he could hear the sound of the shears, but it didn't hurt. As the matted wool fell from his body, Britches felt a lovely breeze.

A minute or two later, the farmer was done. Britches jumped to his feet and shook his whole body. The gentle old farmer laughed at the silly young sheep.



“Baa!” Britches bleated happily. He felt light and free. He trotted to the top of the hill and back to his flock. The farmer wasn't so scary after all ... and the dog was even kind of nice.

And the haircut didn't hurt one little bit! It felt good to be rid of that thick, itchy coat!

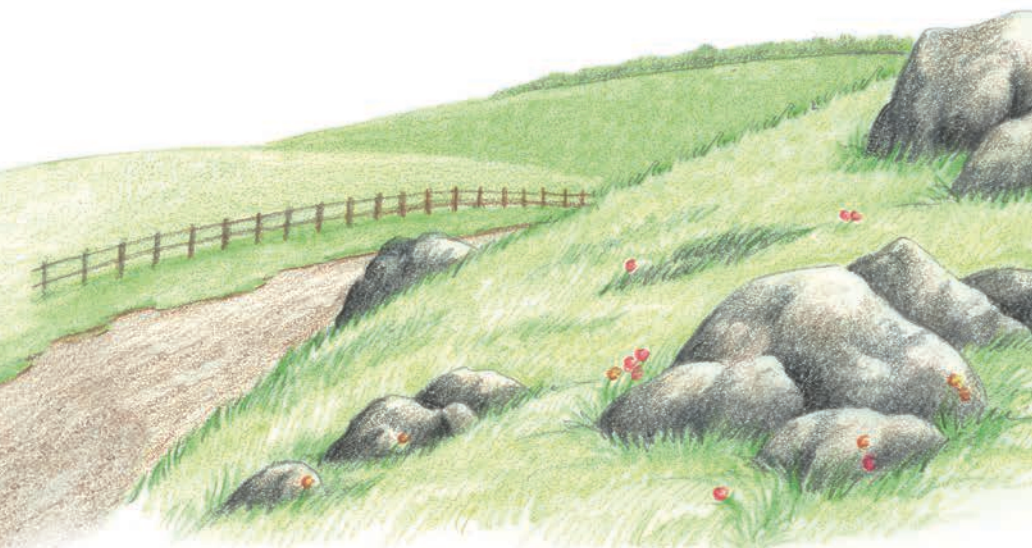
Duncan nodded at Britches. "I see you gave in," he teased. "I hope you enjoy being a hat!"

"Oh, Duncan, don't be silly," said Britches. "Now I understand that we have to get a haircut in the spring so we don't get too hot in the summer. Better to be a hat than to be cooked by the sun!"

Then Britches rolled and jumped and kicked with joy.



The End





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