

A short story by Nigel Coates

# S e a n S h e e p

Sean lay freshly born on the cold earth on a night with a deathly chill. He looks up to the stars and knows he has to shine as brightly as them if he is to make it through his first night. And that is how he lives each following day.

Sean questions his destiny and dares to dream. He wants to learn of new things and make discoveries in the world and in his mind. But the flock is against him. They are only concerned with *normal*.

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As wild as fire the stallion burned. He reared and bucked and ran the fence line of his paddock. His wide eyes glowed with energy and he stamped his foot repeatedly to let all the animals on the farm know he was the boss.

Having spent a few weeks getting use to his legs Sean ran over to investigate the commotion. While most of the other animals hid in fright when the stallion was in a mood like this, Sean poked his head through the wires to get a closer look.

“It is surely the king of animals!” he exclaimed to himself in awe, as the stallion masterfully balanced on his hind legs and reached for the sky.

He could only ever dream of having such power as he stared with wide eyes of his own. “Sean, come away from there!” his mother requested of him urgently. But Sean did not want to look away. He did not want to miss the majesty. Where was the thrill in going to join the flock?

Sean wanted to continue to bask in the power and glory of the stallion, while he wished secretly for similar power of his own.

After a few minutes the stallion settled - but Sean was still excited. He looked around to see the rest of the flock were at the far end of the paddock and ran to a soft patch of grass out of sight. He too wanted to be great. He could not wipe his smile as he wondered just how great he could be. He wanted others to look at him in awe. He bent his front legs and pushed into the air. For just the shortest time, he was standing on his back legs!

“Wo Wo Wo - What a Rush!”

Sean's eyes grew as wild as the stallion. He again reared to his back legs - this time jumping with such enthusiasm he flipped right over onto his back! He quickly gained composure and sprung to his feet. He reared again, this time balancing a little longer than the first. And again - even longer. He could hardly contain his glee.

After only a short time of practice, Sean could balance on his hind legs with confidence. He looked down the hill and could see all of the sheep slowly eating their way back towards him. He wanted to show them his newfound greatness. He wanted to earn their respect. Sean drew breath - and bleated louder than he ever had before. Every sheep in the flock turned their heads quickly to see.

Sean was rearing towards the sky. They could see his small silhouette delicately balanced on his hind legs, while his front legs thrashed for balance. They all burst into laughter. Having just seen the stallion showing his might and power, they all thought Sean looked ridiculous. Most passed a snide comment to their nearest neighbor before returning to eating the grass with a chuckle.

Sean could not understand. He had just accomplished something that was very difficult to do. Did they think it was easy to rear up in the air? Or did they think he hadn't done a very good job? All he could decide was to continue practicing until he got it just right. Sean's mother walked towards him at great pace.

"Sean! Stop it now," she bleated. "You *must* stop this instance!"

But rearing made Sean feel happy. He continued to smile widely as though worthy of reward. He could not understand his mother's resignation. He could not understand why the flock had laughed. He just wanted to be complimented on his discovery. He wanted his mother to feel proud.

Sean reared into the air and found his balance. Just as he was taking a deep breath to again roar to all of the other animals on the farm, his mother rushed close and pushed him from his feet. Sean flipped and stumbled and rolled on the ground before jumping back to his feet in shock. He could not believe. His mother looked embarrassed. He looked around to see some of the other sheep still laughing at him. They thought he was a fool. They turned their backs in disrespect. They again passed comment on his behavior.

Sean looked to his mother to see that she was very ashamed by his actions. He did not understand why. He hung his head low and felt worthless. He knew he was not as mighty as the stallion - but he was just a lamb after all! And he had only practiced a short time! He could not understand why the flock was laughing at him when he was trying his best. He could not understand why his mother would not give him support. Confusion and doubts filled his mind. Tears filled his eyes.

His mother led him to a quiet corner of the paddock.

"Sean! You have done it again! Why can't you just behave like normal?"

"But Mum, I was just having fun!" Although only weeks old, Sean had already used that reply several times.

"The rest of us are having fun, and do you see us behaving differently?"

Sean looked around at all the other sheep in his flock. Every head was down consciously chewing whatever grass happened to be at their feet. It didn't seem like that much fun to Sean. He could not understand how that was enough to keep them content.



Sean had not meant to cause such a fright. He was only trying to discover something new - and he did! Lambs are quicker off the mark, but piglets are faster over length. The other sheep did not care for his discovery. They cared only for peace and quiet and normal. Again they turned their backs, but this time they did not chuckle. They were starting to think that Sean was a real problem. He filled their thoughts and fuelled their negativity. Instead of trying to understand his perspective, they simply hardened their own. But Sean did not think badly of them. He just wished they could see more than the grass at their front feet.



The rumble of the farmer's motorbike and the sound of barking dogs were always a time of concern for the flock. The farmer opened the gate to the paddock and the dogs ran through. Sean looked to his mother for comfort. He did not know of dogs. She was running towards the safety of the flock. Sean stood still for a moment to consider his options, but the dogs were quickly upon him. They snarled their teeth and their barks chilled him to the bone. He was too scared to move. Snap!

One of the dogs nipped his side. It broke his trance and he ran as fast as he could to his mother's side, for the first time wanting to blend in with the crowd.

They were rounded through the gate and driven towards a big iron shed. Many men were milling around, carefully casting their gaze. Sean felt scared. He liked to know of difference, but he also liked to be in control. But then he noticed the farmer's daughter sitting excitedly on the top railing of the holding pen. She had a kind and somehow familiar smile. Sean ran to the ground beneath her feet and bleated. For a moment they exchanged smiles. But before anything more could happen he was pushed by his flock up the long ramp that disappeared into the shed.

"Shearing!" was the word whispered through the flock.

"Mother? What is shearing?" Sean asked nervously.

"You're too young Sean. It is for those of us with a thick coat." Sean was relieved, but only for a second. He was grabbed by one of the men and thrown into a pen with all of the other lambs. Each was weighed and squeezed and checked from head to toe. One man counted their numbers and wrote notes in his folder. Sean had a bad feeling.

He looked through the railings to see the elders being shorn. It seemed a most unpleasant experience and he did not look forward to the day that he had a thick coat. He hid quietly at the back of the group of lambs.



He walked to the top of the paddock and looked towards the stallion – by far the mightiest of all creatures on the farm. The stallion caught Sean’s eye and whinnied a confident call. He knew the stallion would not fear death, and Sean decided then, that neither would he.

But the more Sean thought of death, the more he thought of life. He wondered what life could offer him. He had only ever known the space of his paddock, the sheep of his flock, and the few other animals he had met through the fence. He wondered what else there could be in the world. What was over the hill in the stallion’s paddock? What was beyond the shed? How many things were there that he could discover? What could he learn?

Sean ran to his mother.

“Mother, I am not afraid to die, I am just not ready. I first want more from my life.”

As his mother looked at her defiant son for the first time a glint of admiration glazed her eye. Only in her wildest dreams could she wish for the strength to govern her own fate. But even after her continual requests to behave and having felt the scold of the flock, Sean continued to live each breath in wonder. Her heart tingled. She was at first unsure of the feeling. Then she came to realize she was proud – but she did not tell Sean. She believed his radical behavior and free thought should not be encouraged. She wanted him to follow the right ways of the world.

“We are only sheep Sean. It is not for us to decide. We must behave as sheep - that is our place.”

Sean found a quiet spot at the top of the paddock to think on her words. His mother was asking him to accept death, with the only reason being, ‘that is the way’, but it was in Sean’s nature to question *the way!*

Sean was not yet prepared to die. He would not accept his fate. He did not want the next sound of the motorbike and barking dogs to signal his end. Before he died, he wanted to know more of life. He was sure.

As the flock stood in a group, Sean shared his thoughts.

“I am not yet ready to die. I will not let it happen.”

His mother begged and pleaded for him to behave. She could not understand his rebellious and defiant nature, just as he couldn’t understand her reservations. The flock laughed at his words and wishes. They had always thought Sean was foolish, but to have the hide to question his own destiny they could not believe! They said he was not worthy to be called a sheep - and that is what hurt.

Sean was trying to open their minds, to better their lives, to allow them to see... but, he was now an outcast. Although he would walk around the same paddock, it would not be as part of the flock. He had been ignored before, but this time was different. This time they would never show forgiveness. He immediately felt sad – but then came to realize they had just given him permission not to behave in their way. He no longer had to concern himself with the expectations of the flock. There was nothing more they could do to him. The limitations they had always placed on him were no longer of concern. Sean was free to be himself.

Sean was free to do whatever he wanted, and become whoever he wished. He knew there would be a day when he showed the world who he was, and he knew he would feel proud.



For several days Sean thought on the developments. Now that his options were without limit, he did not know where to begin. Changing his fate seemed like a good idea, but that decision only had influence in his mind. He knew he had to put his thoughts into practice, for the real world to notice he wanted a new destiny. But taking action wasn't as easy to do as say.

He wandered around his paddock waiting for inspiration. As the days had passed - life had stayed the same. The other sheep were now practiced at ignoring him. They happily ate the grass by their feet and shared their repeated conversations. Sean wandered to every part of the paddock, and always ended up standing alone in the top corner.

Sean began to panic that he would not be able to change his destiny. He was just a lamb after all. Sheep have a certain path to follow – it is well worn for all to see. It was his duty to be eaten. It was why he was born. But, he was different than the other sheep. He was not normal. He could choose his own path. And like a pendulum, his thoughts bounced between the acceptance and defiance of death.



Sean looked over to the hill across the next paddock, and that was it. That was his motivation – so simple. The hill climbed steadily upwards, and then... nothing. What was on the other side of that hill? Answering that question was all Sean needed to confirm he was different. He wanted to see with his own eyes what no other sheep had. Sean was filled with determination. Even if he was soon to face death, it would only be after catching a glimpse of what was over the hill. He was sure.

The stallion was resting easily by some trees as Sean started his mission.

He walked up and down the fence looking for a way through. Several ties of wire were loose near the top post. He had never noticed before – but, he had never had reason to look before. It was a tight squeeze, but soon he was through. He looked over his shoulder to see that the flock all had their heads down. They had grown tired of glancing in his direction. 'What did they care?' As he ran across the vacant paddock he felt his troubles trail behind him. They were of no concern. As he ran towards the unknown he was fuelled by desire. He longed for the rush of making a new discovery. Life, death, his mother and the flock, all blended into one, and disappeared. He thought only of the moment.

Sean reached the next fence that kept the stallion. He was closer to the summit, but could still see no more than before. He had to go further. He paced the fence looking for a way through, thinking only of the new lands he would see and the new things he would discover. If he could get past this next hurdle, he would prove to himself and the world that *normal* was not the only way.

In an almighty roar the stallion was upon him. Sean looked up to see him rearing overhead. He landed and stamped his hoof loudly a half step from Sean on the other side of the fence. Sean had not seen the stallion move from the trees – but he had been watching quietly all along. His wild whinny crossed the farm. Sean continued to look up in amazement. The stallion was even more powerful than he thought! But Sean did not feel scared. The stallion was also more beautiful than he thought, and that is what he focused on.

The wild eyes of the stallion were no deterrent. Neither was his overwhelming size and fearsome roar. Even if harm was to befall Sean it did not matter. He was striving for his dreams. He had faith in his belief and did not fear death.

Sean's only concern was to see over the hill - and focusing on the goal, the obstacles did not seem so big. Without further thought Sean launched himself into the air and landed masterfully on his hind legs. He reared with pride and grandeur. He thrashed his forward legs wildly in front. He tried to climb so high he bounced on his spot. He bleated with all the strength he could muster. He felt as powerful as the stallion, and his determined voice was heard by all on the farm.

The stallion could not believe. In shock, he again reared up and roared. Not that Sean had noticed, but every animal on the farm was leaning against the fence to see. They looked on to see a stallion and lamb rearing toe to toe. They could not believe their eyes. Who did this lamb dare to be?

The stallion was first to settle. Sean also came to rest, though his heart felt like it was going to pound right out of his chest. The stallion lowered his head to look in Sean's eyes. They met at the fence and touched noses.

"What could possess a sheep to act in such a way?" asked the stallion in disbelief. "Why do you not fear me?"

"Oh you did give me a fright!" replied Sean with a smile, "but I must see what is over the hill, beyond your paddock. You see, I am soon to face death, and I cannot do so willingly until I know more."

The stallion was still amazed by the lamb - One so little with a heart so big - One from the flock who dared to stand alone.

"Know more of what?" he asked as he looked over his shoulder to what he had always thought was just another mundane hill.

"Know more of life," replied Sean.

"And what you seek is over this hill?"

"Well, what I seek is beyond *my* paddock," justified Sean. "I must learn of the unknown."

The stallion thought on his words, as Sean resumed looking for a way through the fence. The stallion looked across the paddock from where the sheep had come from. The entire flock was standing along the fence-line with their heads poking through the holes. Their jaws all hung low. The stallion realized what a great effort the lamb had already made to come this far. And who was he to stand in the way of such a strong desire? He reached over the fence and grabbed the lamb by the scruff of his neck. And just like that - Sean was over, and standing at the base of his greatest ever ambition.

And with nothing more in his way, Sean smiled at the clear path before him. He quickly thanked the stallion and started his sprint towards the top of the hill. He ran without burden. He ran without fear. He bounced across the ground with the greatest of ease.

In no time at all Sean reached the summit. He stopped to draw breath and to realize the thoughts in his mind. The lands stretched as far as he could see. He had never imagined the world to be so big! He could see a million trees, hundreds of paddocks, and animals of all sorts confined in their own worlds. He wondered if those animals had thought of the unknown. He wondered if they too had dared to dream, and wonder of all they could be.

The stallion appeared at his side.

"So are you now content to die? Having seen over this hill?"

Sean looked at the view before him and thought. Then he looked over his shoulder back to his paddock. He saw all of the eager onlookers and was shocked. He had never stood so far from his flock and felt a fright when he could not pick which one was his mother. But then, they were just sheep – normal sheep. He guessed they would be mocking him and he was glad he could not hear the laughs. He looked back to the horizon for several moments to think of life and death.

"No I'm not."

"You are obviously not a normal sheep, so it's fair to say you do not need to behave as normal," stated the stallion as he nodded his head. Sean like the encouragement and smiled as he thought of his life till now. His life was what he had made it - and he vowed to continue.

The stallion helped him back over the fence and Sean ran to the post he had squeezed passed. The other sheep surrounded him as he emerged. Sean was preparing for another lecture from his mother and to feel the wrath of the flock, but, all of the sheep were excited!

"What is over the hill?"

"What did you see?"

"What did you say to the stallion?"

Now it was Sean whose jaw hung in shock. They were genuinely curious about the unknown. They wanted to know what he had discovered. They were not mocking his ways. Sean realized that deep down, they too wanted to know more of life and death and the ways of the world - but they had been too afraid to question it.

Sean was filled with the understanding of a universal truth. At one time long ago, sheep did think deeply about all matters. But farmer's locked them in paddocks and placed expectations on them. It was no longer acceptable for a sheep to act freely. They lived with control. And with time, no matter the grandeur of an idea, they did not have the courage or ability to take action in the real world. They succumbed to expectation - and as the generations passed and life settled to a simple routine, it is what the elders taught the lambs. They taught them only of normal.

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But the sound of the motorbike returning made Sean jump in panic. The girl held him tightly and tried to keep him calm. Her father rode close, as the rest of the flock ran desperately back into their paddock – relieved to again return to their home, and all that they knew to be true.

The mothers of the lambs left behind bleated tears of pain. All years previous they felt only mild sorrow, believing in *normal*, and *the way of the world* for sheep. Sean’s recent actions now made them question their beliefs.

“What’s that one you got there girl?” asked the farmer. “Is it sick or injured?”

“No father, this lamb is special.” The farmer approached to look closer.

“He looks normal enough to me!”

Sean feared for his life and kicked free of the girl’s grasp. He bound towards the farmer and reared high into the air. He thrashed his legs and bleated like the mighty stallion. The farmer jumped back in shock!

“Well I’ll be!” he gasped as he re-positioned his hat and shook his head. He looked around to see if anybody else had seen. He thought on it only a second.

“But he’s a male lamb honey, his time had come.” The farmer lunged at Sean.

The girl cried out in tears as Sean ran for his life, narrowly missing the farmer’s grasp. He bolted towards the top of the paddock to the hole in the fence. He dared not look back for he could hear the dogs, the farmer starting his bike, and the girl pleading helplessly. He could also hear the panicked calls from those in his flock, but there was nothing they could do to save him. Sean slipped through the hole and raced across the next paddock towards the stallion. Sean’s fate was in his control.

The farmer stopped at the first fence to open the gate. The dogs circled by his feet in panic as this lamb was not behaving as normal, and the farmer was yet to give them any clear directions. The farmer looked up just in time to see his stallion lift the sheep over the fence by the scruff of the neck. He rubbed his eyes to be sure. The girl caught up to him as he stared at the lamb without word. Her pleas broke his daze and he rode at great speed to the stallion’s fence and climbed over. The dogs quickly followed. Sean was hiding behind the stallion.

“C’mon dogs, Around,” he called anxiously. The dogs nervously set to motion. At once both the stallion and Sean reared and roared. The dogs feared being clipped or squashed by a thrashing leg and kept their distance. The farmer was flabbergasted.

“See father,” cried the girl as she drew near, “He is special!” And the farmer could not deny.

“Dogs, Heal!” he commanded. “Ok, Ok darling, this one can live...” He was still shaking his head.

As the dogs ran from confrontation both the stallion and lamb quickly settled. The girl ran over and picked Sean from the ground. They climbed through the fence and she carried him back towards the house. He expressed his gratitude to the stallion.

As Sean was carried through his paddock the other sheep came near. Most were speechless, but he could hear a few whispers.

"A lamb that has controlled his fate! I never..."

"Did you see him roar? How mighty!"

But his mother's call was his only concern.

"Live well Sean, Be All That You Dream!"

"Good-Bye," he called back to his mother and the flock, before being carried up the path towards the farmer's house.

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Sean was given the grand privilege of living in the house paddock. It was reserved for those who knew how to look after themselves and their surrounds. Geese, Ducks, Chickens, several small dogs, several cats, an old goat called nanny, and a kookaburra that was free to leave – but always hung around.

The farmer lived with his wife and daughter. It was a beautiful wooden farmhouse, with a nice big barn to one side. And that was Sean's new home. And there were so many new people to meet!

In no time at all Sean had many new friends. He gave them all a good laugh on his first night when every animal of the barn gathered around to learn more about the new-comer. He told them his story, and even acted out the part where he and the stallion reared up to fend off the dogs. Most were amazed by his talent, but thought his story was just that – a funny story. Regardless, he was welcomed with open arms.

Sean learned the farmer's daughter was called Bethany. She was always very nice to Sean. She spent hours patting him, talking to him, and playing games. In one game, one of the puppies who was yet to walk surely on his feet kept rolling from side to side on his back. Bethany rolled on the grass to copy him. Sean rolled on the grass to copy Bethany. The farmer walked onto the veranda to see the three of them rolling from side to side. 'The puppy, sure. Bethany, well... maybe. But a sheep!?'

Sean quickly became comfortable in his new surrounds. His new friends were now his family. Each had a unique personality, and none were concerned with normal. His knowledge of the world was expanding greatly, for he now had many people he could talk to about his ideas – knowing that none of them would laugh at him for questioning *the way*.



Sean also studied the workings of the farm. He wanted to see how everybody fit into the bigger picture. He knew the ducks and chickens were for eggs. The cats kept away the mice and rats. The dogs were pets who were trained for work. The nanny goat had been on the farm for 20 years and was granted honorary membership. And the kookaburra – well he'd lost the confidence to fly in the open sky.

Sean was told that no sheep had ever stepped foot in the house paddock before and he felt like an explorer – an explorer of new lands and new ideas.

Whenever Bethany was in sight, Sean was by her side. He followed her everywhere. If she would sit to read a book, he would lay by her feet. If she walked to the orchard to pick an apple he would circle beneath the tree. But when she went to the river, Sean was no idol spectator. Bethany would swing on a rope into the middle of the river and Sean would dive from the bank and swim towards her. He loved to swim! Not so much when his ears went under - but when he kicked his legs to swim forward, he felt like he was flying. The farmer looked up from fixing the irrigation pump. Sean's little head bobbed above the water and it looked like he was smiling. As Sean called to Bethany, it sounded like he was laughing.



With the passing of several weeks, Sean realized how far he had come. When he slept back in his paddock, his wildest dreams didn't even come close to his new life at the farmhouse, so he assumed that his current dreams could also be far succeeded. Sean still had an appetite to learn more.

He tried to imagine a world that was even bigger than the farm. The family of humans would often go down the long dirt road away from the farmhouse, and Bethany would be gone for most of every day. Sean knew there was still so much to learn.

Sean started walking Bethany to the end of the dirt road in the mornings. She would get on a big bus a leave for the day. But this day, Sean didn't want to say goodbye. He wanted to go on the bus. He pushed through the gate and ran towards the open bus door. Bethany ran after him but could not keep up. Sean jumped onto the first step of the bus. All of the children screamed! The bus driver threw his hands in the air in fright! "He's OK, He's OK" called Bethany over the commotion. Sean walked calmly up the second and third steps and turned to lie in the aisle.

"Sean! Come out! Get off the Bus!" pleaded Bethany. But Sean did not move.

The other children all cheered, wanting him to stay.

"Will he just sit there?" asked the bus driver of Bethany.

"Yes," bleated Sean.

When the bus doors opened at school Sean created quite a commotion. All of the children wanted to pat the friendly lamb, and the only way the teachers could get the children into class was to have Sean as the first show and tell. When Bethany asked him to, he rolled over like the day they played with the puppy. He even showed the children how he could rear on his back legs and roar! Sean was a hit.

After the presentation he ran to the corner of the room and sat on a mat. The teacher urged him to spend the day eating grass on the school oval, but Sean would not move. It was easiest to let him stay for the class. And what things he learnt! The teacher stood at the front of the class to explain the Earth. He saw that the world was round! It spun on its axis to give night and day. It circled the sun to give the seasons. He saw everything was in balance, and was told how easily it could fall into chaos.

Sean realized his paddock, his farm, and even the school, were all just a tiny little dot on the surface of the globe. He could not believe the lands could stretch so far. He wanted to see more. He wanted to learn more.

Sean decided to go to school every day. As long as he didn't make a mess, the bus driver was fine. Her father would wave them good-bye in the morning, and then scratch his head. He would be scratching his head when they arrived home again and Sean wondered if he had done so all day. The teachers were fond of Sean and the children loved him!

Sean sat attentively on his mat each day to learn more things about the world. He could never have dreamed there were so many things that were possible. He was amazed by the way it all worked, and by all of the things that you could be. The other animals in the barn would gather around eagerly every night to hear new stories. And Sean loved to explain. He liked to share his discoveries.





He climbed up onto the front section of the trailer and jumped onto the back of the lorry. He nestled down between the other luggage. He wriggled around and soon became quite comfortable. The family came out of the house, jumped into the car, and drove down the driveway. All of the animals who had been spying from the barn could not help but smile at Sean's mischief.



They arrived at the same time as hundreds of other people. Sean looked around to see a nearly full car park, but his heart skipped a beat when he noticed all of the dogs. Some were being walked, others were barking from inside their trailers. Several more were riding in the back of utes. Sean felt sick inside. So many dogs! What had he done?

"Sean!" cried Bethany as her dad rushed to see. He nearly fell backward off his feet when he looked up to see Sean had hitch-hiked a ride. Sean smiled at Bethany and felt on top of the world - until he looked at his view and remembered all of the dogs. He jumped from the back and ran to her feet. She could not take a step without Sean pressing against her leg. The farmer put his dogs on leads and walked towards the entrance of the showground. Bethany skipped with the excitement of having Sean there and he tiptoed nervously by her side.

Without even trying to, Bethany and Sean drew a lot of attention to themselves. They would approach dogs who were ferociously snarling and growling at each other as though they wanted to fight - and then everything would fall quiet in an instant when they caught sight of Sean. A sheep - running free - at the dog trials! The odd silence followed them as they walked across the car park. Heads turned towards them from every direction.

Word spread quickly throughout the ranks of dogs. There had been whispers of a sheep who had not been behaving as it should, and this was one thing dogs took very seriously. If sheep were not afraid of them, the farmer would not need them. But the fact the rumors were true hit them with such shock, they could do nothing but stare. The rumors were fact! And the courage of a lamb that would face them all at once puzzled their minds. Who did this lamb dare to be?

As they walked through the gates the dogs were taken one way and the people directed the other. Sean followed Bethany and was relieved to be able to relax a little. It didn't take long until a circle of children were tickling him all over.

Sean and Bethany made their way to the grandstand. From there Sean got a good look at what was happening. Sheep were in stalls, and dogs were ready. A farmer would release the sheep and get his dogs to run them through obstacles. Sean realized why the farmer had made his flock run all over.

Sean's first concern was subdued. The humans were using several different groups of sheep for the trials, and they were getting a good rest between events. They didn't sound very happy, but at least they were safe.

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The day proved to be very exciting. The crowd cheered loudly and everyone was smiling. Bethany was especially happy as her father had made it to the final four contestants.

Sean ran to the top step of the grandstand as he was having difficulty seeing through the growing crowd. With this greater perspective on the world, he took a moment to think of how far he had come. He thought back to his earliest days. He was so determined to explore the world to find new discoveries. Now, he realized his search of the unknown could be as much within, as it was without. Making new discoveries in the world was great, but of greater satisfaction to Sean were the realizations in his mind - Discoveries of thought. He smiled at his own continued amazement of life.

The announcer stood in the centre of the ring. He waved to the grandstand requesting silence as he was ready to announce the winner. The final four farmers and their dogs stood behind him. Bethany stood in the centre with her father.

"I am proud to announce the winner of this years' muster. Congratulations David Doyle!"

Everyone in the grandstand jumped into the air. They screamed and clapped and cheered. Sean could not see a thing. He was nearly trodden on from every direction. He ran down to the fence for safety and to see what was going on. Bethany and her father were celebrating. Her mother ran to them and the three of them held tight in an embrace. Sean was missing out! He ran along the fence to the gate. Several people pointed and laughed at the lamb running through the crowd at such speed. Sean ran around the gate post onto the competition ring. A wild whistle from one of the judges drew the attention of everyone who wasn't already looking. A lamb running free!

The laughter of the crowd broke the family's hug. They turned to see Sean running towards them. Bethany bent down to welcome Sean with open arms, but one of the dogs belonging to another farmer was not so happy. He hated that a sheep was running free. Sheep belonged in pens, and it was a dogs' duty to keep them there. With a lightning start, the leash pulled from his owners hand before he knew what was going on. The dog pinned his ears and ran towards Sean. His teeth were clenched with determination. Everything that happened next happened so fast.

Bethany reached out to grab Sean, Sean jumped for her arms, and the dog raced between them with his teeth flashing white. Sean was bowled to the ground and Bethany screamed in fright. The dog ran a wide circle back to his master. Sean jumped to his feet and looked towards Bethany. She held one hand in the other and blood was dripping from her clasp. Tears of fear and shock filled her eyes. Her parents wrapped her in an embrace. The crowd all gasped as one. Such a light hearted moment had turned so bad.

Sean had to act. He couldn't just do nothing. He recalled his fright when he was bitten. His insides churned and fuelled the desire. Those dogs had to learn. He had to teach them. Sean walked calmly to where the announcer had stood. He had run over to Bethany. Sean was standing alone, between the farmer and their dogs, and all of the people in the grandstand. And for a while he just stood there.

The dogs knew they were in trouble. A dog could be shot for biting a human! They nervously exchanged glances and waited fearfully for the lamb to do something. The crowd all stared as one. There was not a noise to be heard.

Sean did not really have a plan. He was acting purely from instinct. He thought he would show them his first trick. He lay down, rolled over on his back to his other side, and gracefully stood back up. But still no one said a word. Sean did not understand. Every other time he had done that trick, everyone had laughed and cheered. Maybe they didn't see? At twice the speed he rolled back the other way. He sprung to his feet and smiled with wide eyes at every face in the grandstand. But even the crickets had stopped chirping. For just a moment time seemed to stand still. There was nothing.

Sean could not believe. Why would the human's not support him? He felt frustrated. He hammered his hoof on the earth like an angry stallion. Thwack, thwack, thwack! The synchronized jumps of shock from those in the grandstand nearly bounced it to the ground. What was this lamb doing?

To break the awkward silence was a solitary laugh. The greatest laugh of all. The laugh of the kookaburra. From the wrought iron cornice on the front of the grandstand the kookaburra looked down and laughed. It was infectious. Soon, the crowd also roared with laughter at the lamb's antics. Sean was thankful his friend had found the courage to fly. The kookaburra was thankful to Sean for the inspiration.

Now Sean had them on side, he could put on a show. He ran in a circle and bucked like the stallion would do. He bound high into the air, contorted his body, and landed gracefully each time before launching again. He was wild! He reared in front of the crowd and thrashed his feet in the air. He jumped like a pogo stick trying to climb higher. He bleated what was on his mind.

"I, Sean sheep, Really Don't Like Dogs!"

They had no idea what he said, but they continued to laugh and cheer all the same. They had been held speechless for so long, when they realized the absurdity of a lamb bucking like a bronco, their laughter was continuous. They laughed when their breaths went both in and out. Sean continued to rear and buck wildly.

He felt connected to the energy from those in the grandstand who were wishing him well. He felt invincible. He felt like he was the mightiest animal of them all.

He turned to look at the dogs. They were all cowering behind their masters. Sean ran to the dogs on the very left. He reared and bleated. Those dogs looked to the rest – wondering what to do. They sulked over to the next group. Sean ran all the way to the right. Again he reared and drove those dogs closer to the middle. The dogs whimpered in one big group. The farmers stepped to one side. They had never seen such behavior; Neither had the crowd.

The sound of the applause and laughter was deafening. Some of the crowd were doubled in laughter while others wiped tears from their eyes. Sean ran circles around the pack while bleating wickedly. He stopped at the front and reared. He hopped towards the closest dog, thrashing his front legs at him. That dog cowered back. Sean looked to either side and those two dogs shuffled back in retreat. The dogs had never felt a greater fear. The lamb controlled the crowd as though he could wield thunder. They shuffled back as a pack. Slowly, slowly, Sean guided them backwards. They didn't even realize they had walked right into a holding pen. Sean ran to one side and nudged the gate with his nose. It was loose. He pushed it with his chest and the gate swung shut. The clicking of the latch ended his performance. The dogs were locked away.

Sean ran towards Bethany and bleated along with the applause and continued cheers from the crowd. The family hugged him, and he hugged his family.



That was a special day. The photographers who'd been ready to snap the winner of the dog trials had all taken photos of Sean instead. He made the front page of newspapers all across the land. He was the excited talk of pubs, and radio stations, and dinner tables, and schools. Everyone wanted to know more about him. They wanted to know the story of how a sheep was able to govern his own fate. Everyone wanted to share in his discoveries. They wanted to know his mind.

If he could achieve so much as a lamb, fuelled only by his own belief, what would they be able to achieve in their lives?

And that's what Sean became; A symbol of belief; A symbol of faith. He taught the world that nothing was impossible.



Many people came to the farm. It started with television crews, radio presenters, and writers for magazines and newspapers. They wanted to know Sean's secret - and Sean was happy to show them. He rolled, and bucked, and reared like a stallion. And he told them to follow their heart and believe in their dreams. And then he would just smile.

All of the local children begged their parents to visit Sean on his farm. Most parents were also intrigued and excited to see. And then people came from towns far away - All sorts of people from all sorts of places.

Sean was so excited by it all. He loved when people came to visit - for it was just another opportunity for him to learn more, and to teach.



"We have been here a long time my old friend," said Sean.

"And seen many changes," replied the stallion.

They looked down over the paddock. And how the flock had grown! Young lambs scurried this way and that as their mothers all yelled encouraging words. Some worked for speed, some for agility, while others measured how far they could leap in a single bound. Sean smiled at his life and then to the heavens. Grey clouds were gathering at the horizon and he knew it would be a cold night for autumn.

Sean walked proudly through his flock. He recalled a feeling from a time long before; The hollowness of seeking encouragement and receiving none - The wavering belief in one's own heart. His did not wish that for any lamb. All of the lambs in Sean's flock were encouraged to try new things and to think of new ways. They were taught to place no limits on what they could achieve. They were encouraged to dream wildly, and then follow their dreams with action.

The young male lambs of today were horrified of the stories they were told. They could hardly believe there was a time when they were eaten! Now, the males of Sean's flock were prized for their admirable qualities and sold to stud as young rams – a far better result for them indeed. The flock had been living well from the day Sean returned from the dog trials.



Sean had passed on all that he had learned during his long and amazing life. Those students had become teachers themselves. They taught their young, who had also grown to teach. Sean had stepped back, pleased his discoveries would live forever, and be bettered by those who followed.

Those sheep sold by the farmer took their knowledge with them. Sean's ways of thinking were spreading throughout the sheep of the world. His ideas and discoveries were keenly appreciated. All those to leave the farm wore their association proudly.

Sean had achieved more than he ever dreamed possible. He thought of his life and smiled. He thought of his death. He walked to a quiet spot at the top of the paddock. He crouched down and rolled onto his back to look at the stars above. They were so bright he wanted to reach out to them. The clouds gathered overhead and he thought that he was finally ready to learn more of death. Sean smiled, and let out his last breath.

When he jumped to his feet he was full of the sprightly energy he felt as a lamb. He ran as fast as he could. He burst through the dark clouds and flew effortlessly towards the stars.

He was ready for his next adventure. He knew there was much to learn.

*The End*

