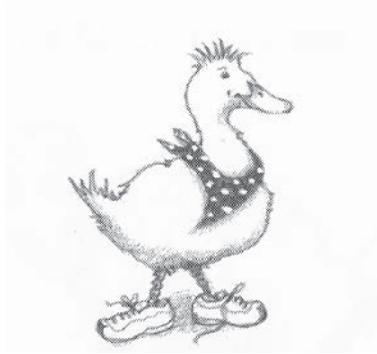


Chapter 1

Goodbye and Hello



‘Welcome, Duck. I’m Caitlin, but everyone calls me Cate. I’m the Farm Caretaker.’

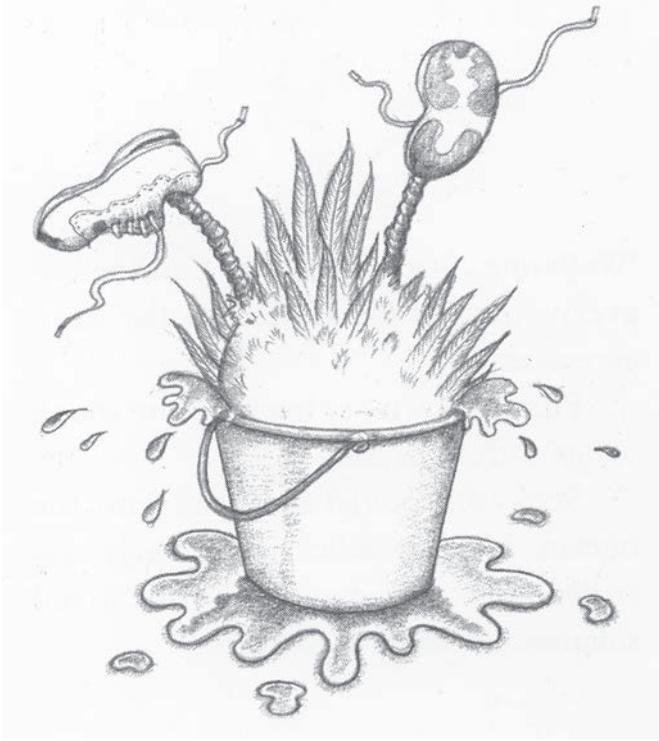
Putting down her bucket, Cate shook wings with Duck.

Duck poked his head into the bucket.

It smelt delicious. Bready and fruity with sultanas. He loved sultanas. He leant in further.

His tail went up and he fell headfirst into the warm, fruity porridge.

‘Help!’



Cate pulled him out. Duck was covered in porridge and sultanas.

Even his voice was porridgy.

'Qu...eee....cc...kkk...k.'

Cate washed him under the yard tap. 'Can't waste sultanas. The farm needs money to fix things up, the Health and Safety Inspector said so. Otherwise we'll be closed down in a month.'

'What sort of things?' wondered Duck.

Cate pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. It read:

Safety Report

Fix these or the farm will close.

Smelly toilets.

Pond needs fence.

Duckboards over mud.

Signed

Mr Safe T. Rex

‘We need duckboards over the mud so kids don’t slip in wet weather.’

Duck liked the idea of duckboards.

‘Wheelchair access. New toilets – our old ones stink! It all costs heaps.’

Cate checked the bucket. ‘Oh good, there’s still enough there.’

‘What for?’

‘Pig likes his porridge on time.’

‘Does Pig eat porridge for dinner?’ asked Duck.

‘Pig eats sultana porridge ANY time. It’s his favourite treat.’

Duck followed Cate’s boots to the pigpen. Pig’s big snout poked through the wooden fence.

Cate poured porridge into his dish. Pig gobbled, without even a thank you. No manners, thought Duck.



Pig coughed. Out popped a large, yellow feather.

Duck and Cate looked at each other.

'What is a yellow feather doing in my porridge?' grunted Pig.

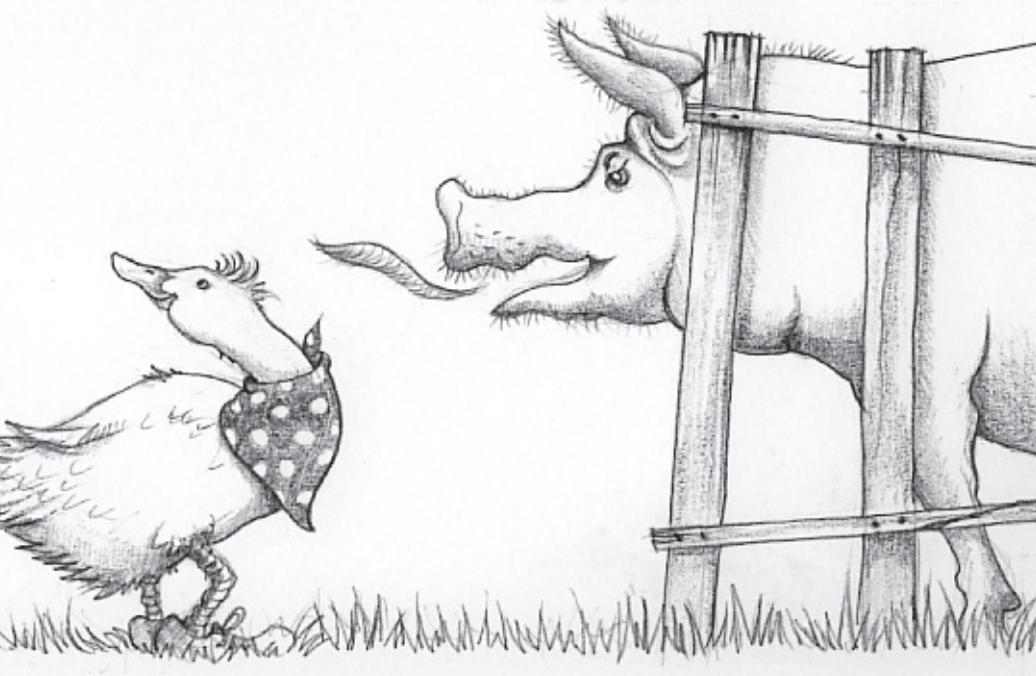
'It's mine.'

'What's your duck feather doing in my porridge?'

'I fell into it,' said Duck.

'Do you always let other animals bath in my dinner?' asked Pig.

'It was an accident.' Cate wiped the feather on her rainbow overalls and stuck it in her hair.



‘Listen, Duck. Stay away from my dinner,’ warned Pig.

‘Will you be my friend?’ begged Duck.

‘Maybe.’ Pig gobbled. ‘Hey, there’s only six sultanas in this porridge, Cate.’

‘We’re cutting back on luxuries.’

‘Six sultanas are a luxury?’ Pig couldn’t believe his ears.

‘Come along, Duck, let’s collect the eggs.’

‘Pig didn’t make me feel very welcome,’ said Duck.

‘It takes time to get to know Pig,’ said Cate.

Cate picked up a sack and a bucket of cabbage leaves and carefully opened the hen house door.

Rich smells hit Duck's nose. Hay. Wholemeal bread. Eggs. Inside were brown, black and white squawking chickens.

Cate threw leaves onto the ground, poured grain and filled bowls with fresh water.

Two brown eggs nestled in a hollow of the straw. Cate put the eggs into her bucket. After feeding the hens, Cate and Duck entered the largest barn. It smelt of woodsmoke and wool.

'My favourite spot is beside the fireplace. Would you like to sleep here?' Cate pointed to the wooden rocking chair with a saggy, purple cushion. Duck noticed the coffee stains. Cate laughed. 'Yes, I am a bit messy. Daytime, it's mine. You can have the night shift.'

