

Bonnie

(The Story of a wandering sheep on Whalsay)

My name is Bonnie. As in The Bonnie Isle of Whalsay. My owner Arthur chose this title for me when I was just a tiny caddy, little over a year ago. I live in a field close to the Symbister harbour with my flock of around 10 other sheep. Although we are supposed to live in the field, I always manage to escape, much to the dismay of Arthur and the many cars rushing to board the ferry — the cars that I hold up by ambling back and forth across the road.

Today is a particularly warm summer's day, unusually warm for Shetland. I get up and stretch my legs, baaing to my fellow sheep as I make my way to the fence. I noticed a new fence gap last night when I was looking for new escape routes after Arthur sealed up yet another one. I squeeze myself through the fence, catching my wool on one of the sharp bits on the wire. Then I jump over a small ditch, onto the road. I teeter over the road towards the pier where all the big pelagic fishing boats are, causing cars to beep as I hold up the traffic waiting to board the ferry. I wander along to the end of this pier and climb onto the wall to get a good look at my favourite sight.

The sun is beginning to rise; a beautiful sky of golden reds and yellows. The sea reflects and glitters in the sunlight as if every wave and ripple is diamond encrusted. A horn toots a friendly goodbye behind me; it is the Linga making its first journey this morning to Laxo. It chugs along peacefully on the calm water as it leaves the harbour, cutting the sea with the bow as it goes.

I jump from the wall deftly, because I practice every day, and notice some of the pelagic fishermen near their boat. They are getting ready to go off. 'Look there's Arthur's rogue caddy!' one of the men says to the other. I quickly scurry away, knowing they'll tell Arthur about seeing me when he's next in the boating club.

About midmorning Arthur decides to go out on his wee boat, and I decide its time for another excursion. I slip through the fence, catching my wool again, cursing as the jaggy bit grazes my skin. Then I follow Arthur towards his boat. I look down into the boat where Arthur is sorting out fishing rods and nets, and when his back is turned, I jump into the boat and scramble into the small wheelhouse. Arthur turns round suspiciously, his face confused about the noise of hoofs on his deck. Luckily he turns back around, happy that no one is on this boat.

He starts up the engine and we're heading out of the harbour. I look out the wheelhouse window, watching as the sea passes me by, the sun having now illuminated the sea properly so it looks like molten gold.

I figure it is time to make my presence known when Arthur starts fishing. I climb out of the wheelhouse and onto the deck.

‘Bonnie, how did doo git here?’ he says, rubbing his grey beard in bewilderment, ‘weel I suppose if doos here doo may as well make desel useful. Here haad this.’ He puts a fishing rod in my mouth.

We fish for three hours in total, me catching three small fish Arthur catching two bigger ones. After fishing Arthur takes me around the small isle next to Whalsay called Linga, where we watch the sunset. It is like a cover being pulled over the sky, because when we went to get back to Whalsay, everything is black. Luckily, Arthur has a light at the front of the boar, a little firefly to help us see where we were going.

We depart the boat and Arthur said to me:

‘Bonnie, I tyeen doo doesnoo understand whit I’m saying, but I think I’m gonna move dee to Linga since doo liks to walk around so much. Would doo like that?’

I think of all the sunrises and sunsets, the sparkling water and the chance to see all the boats out on the sea. I baa in happy agreement before setting off to my field, and jumping all the way *over* the fence happily.