

A painting of a man with a balding head, wearing a green jacket and a striped scarf, holding a bowl of chocolate lollipops. He is offering one to a white lamb. The background features a large, flat-topped mountain under a blue and yellow sky.

# For the Love of Kin

by Louise van der Merwe

# For the Love of Kin

Louise van der Merwe



Published by  
The Humane Education Trust



[www.naturebased.education](http://www.naturebased.education)

ISBN 978-1-0672687-8-7  
For the Love of Kin

Design & Layout: Erika du Toit

©Louise van der Merwe

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the written permission of the publishers.

## Prologue

For the *Love of Kin* is a fictionalised version of what really happened in South Africa in 2024 when Pecorino, a sheep who lived at the Greyton Farm Animal Sanctuary, played a pivotal role in the global drive to reimagine, recreate and revolutionise the world's food system.



## Chapter One — Serendipity

---

**Y**ou might think I'm just a stupid old sheep with nothing better to offer than a tasty portion of myself, like lamb chops or roast leg of lamb on high days and holidays! Some people think that sheep are all the same, with no individuality or personality, or even feelings; that we are mindless creatures, acting on instinct alone, undeserving of any respect. Even robots are respected for their intelligence more than we are, and soon, I've heard it say, robots may even have feelings too!

But what if I told you that I played a part in changing the world? What if I told you the world will become a much, much kinder place thanks, in a small way, to me? You'd probably think "yeah, yeah" and roll your eyes in disbelief and disdain.

Truth is I don't need you to believe me, nor to tell me how marvelous I am. You see, I'm proud of myself and when you feel truly proud of what you have achieved, and that you've done something worth doing with your life, you don't need anyone else's respect. You've got your own self-respect! It doesn't get better than that! But let me start at the beginning.

In the far-distant fog of my memory, I am lying next to the still body of my mother. I want her to stand up so that I can nudge her udder with my head and drink her delicious warm milk.

I hear my own pitiful newborn bleats, urging her *stand up, stand up*. I want to feel the caress of her tongue — like yesterday, as she welcomed me into the world. I want to feel my tail waggle, all of its own accord, as I drink, like yesterday.

I want to prance up onto her lovely fat body like lambs like to do. But she lies still and cold, and all I can hear is the swish of fast cars going by. Then I feel heavy drops of water on me. Soon, it's not drops but rain pouring down, drenching my soft wool. I start to shiver. I bleat and bleat until I grow weak. I nestle as closely as I can to her body.

In the distant fog of my memory, I feel warm breath on my face. I am prodded into consciousness. I see a huge nose right up close, making short sniffing noises. Fear ripples through me and I try to call out, but all I hear is *sniff, sniff, sniff, sniff*.

Then I am being rubbed roughly and vigorously. I am being shaken awake, and a rubbery teat is thrust into my mouth at a most uncomfortable angle. "Come on, come on", a voice says as warm milk is squirted onto my tongue. "Come on! You can do it!"

Well, the rest is history, as the saying goes! I became part of a family in which diversity is the name of the game. Each of us landed up in this family, snatched away from dire circumstances by sheer good fortune, and Thuli is mother to us all.

If it hadn't been for the terrifying big nose of Thuli's canine companion, Jessie, I would not have found such luck.

After all the sniffing of me that day, Jessie had raced back to the farmhouse. With barking and body language, she'd led Thuli to my rescue.

When I was little, I stayed in the farmhouse with Thuli. But when I was strong enough to enjoy the sunshine and fresh air, I was transferred at night to the barn with its bales of sweet-smelling straw and the soothing sound of deep-sleep snores. It was there that I met the other members of the family and heard the most amazing stories of luck and serendipity.

Sweet-pea, for example, is a beautiful hen, nice and plump and adorned in brown feathers with a comb and wattles of red. But when she first arrived, she told us, there hadn't been a single feather on her ravaged, emaciated, goose-pimpled body. Somehow the transport crate she was packed in, had fallen off a truck carrying hundreds of hens just like herself, along the highway. The crate had burst open as it crashed onto the tarmac and the force of the impact had flung her over a fence right into the safety of Thuli's sanctuary. She had spent all her life in a tiny cage as an egg-layer, she said, and had no idea how to put one foot in front of the other.

She had used her wings as oars, dragging her body away from the noise of traffic, until she found herself on the grass outside Thuli's kitchen.

"That's why I believe in miracles," she clucked in happiness.

Thuli's recipe for healing is quite simple and very effective: Love, extra love, warm bedding, fresh water, good food, healthy pasture, sunshine, shelter, and love. We are one family on the sanctuary, each of us bound to the other in the kinship of life.

I soon learned that Thuli is like Mother Earth to everyone, not only animals, although it is mostly animals who need her because they experience the harshness of being born non-human in a world where humans have put themselves in charge — and, unfortunately, we do not speak human language, so much of what we try to say is disregarded as mindless noises. I often see children from the village wandering up the gravel path, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups. Jessie and the other dogs alert Thuli with wagging, welcoming tails, as the children knock softly on the kitchen door with their small knuckles.

“Please, Teacher Thuli, will you read us a story?” they ask politely. Thuli's response is always the same. “What a good idea,” she says. “Go choose a book in the library.”

Thuli's 'library' is a bookcase packed with the books she once read to her own children.

## Chapter Two — A Final Act of Love

---

**T**he piglets, Polly and Penelope, are like children to Thuli too, although soon they are going to be too heavy and cumbersome to remain in the farmhouse, and they too will be transferred to the barn for their good night's sleep.

I thought that, like Sweet-pea, they must have fallen off one of the trucks that travel past our sanctuary most days of the week. But no, these two piglets were the runts of a litter. A farmer had brought them and told Thuli they had failed to thrive like piglets should, and if Thuli didn't want them either, no worries, she shouldn't feel obliged to take them. Well, of course, Thuli took them without hesitation, and, under her very special brand of care, they soon turned the corner and began to thrive.

The dogs, all six of them, all rescued from the local shelter, still help to babysit the piglets. Charlie deftly picks up a ball in his mouth and dashes it against the ground so that it rolls away and the piglets scamper after it on their short trotters, again and again. Everyone loves this game.

Penelope Pig loves nothing more than to help Thuli with washing the dishes. Well, anyway, she thinks she's helping. Nowadays, though, she's getting too big to be in the kitchen.

“You’re just a hindrance, not a help at all,” I heard Thuli say, not unkindly, as she closed the kitchen door with Penelope on the outside. “Go snuffle around and enjoy the sunshine.”

It would take too long for me to tell you the stories of every single one of the animals who call our sanctuary home, so I’ll concentrate on just a few. None of us know exactly how Blossom came to find himself at the sanctuary. He’s not one to tell us much but we know he is the son of a dairy cow, and was destined for the meat market. He and Thuli share a special bond.

When Thuli opens the kitchen window wide, and plays her favourite music from yesteryear, you can be sure to see Blossom lift his head from a tasty grassy patch, turn one ear in the direction of the music, and gambol — yes, *gambol*, even though he is so big and bulky — right up to the farm house, and settle himself down by the kitchen window where he begins to chew the cud to the beat of the music that nourishes his soul as much as Thuli’s.

Esel has his own story to tell. He and his human companion, Oom Piet, worked together for nearly 30 years, collecting cartloads of whatever would help them eke out a living.

Sometimes it was wood from fallen trees. Oom Piet would saw the branches into logs, load them onto the cart, climb up into the driver’s seat, click his tongue in the language he shared with Esel, and together they would trot off to the suburbs to sell firewood for weekend braais. Sometimes it



was rusty pieces of wrecked car that Oom Piet piled into the cart to drop off at the scrap metal dealer.

Esel and Oom Piet had been as one, working together, resting together, sleeping together, eating together, Esel his straw, and Oom Piet, perched on the driver's seat, his polony sandwich. The best journey of all was the one to the Agricultural Co-op to pick up bales of the sweetest hay and carry them home in the cart. Even the people at the co-op, with all their ultra-modern, hi-tech SUVs, were glad to hear the approaching clip-clop of Esel's hooves. Oom Piet was always greeted with respect.

"Hello Oom, how's the business going? Let's help you load up these bales for Esel here!"

The day came, eventually, when old age caught up with both Oom Piet and Esel. Heaving with all his might to make the wheels of the cart roll, Esel had fallen onto his knees. Oom Piet had clambered down off the cart as fast as his bones would allow, to help his beloved friend back onto his hooves.

He had washed Esel's knees, smeared the grazes with Tannie Grieta's special ointment, but Esel's thin legs were not strong anymore and pained him quite dreadfully. One day, his face creased in sorrow, Oom Piet harnessed Esel to the cart as usual. It would be their last journey together. Oom Piet guided Esel to a dirt road they hadn't travelled before. Oom Piet took off his woollen cap in respect for Thuli as she came out of the house to meet them. The dogs, of course, had given her plenty of warning that a visitor was approaching.

“Hello Ma’am,” Oom Piet greeted her respectfully. “Ma’am, please may I introduce you to Esel here.” He stroked Esel’s face lovingly. “I have a favour to ask of you, Ma’am. Esel is old now. He cannot pull the cart anymore.”

Oom Piet suddenly choked up and took out a rag from his trouser pocket to wipe his eyes. “I come today to ask if you will find it in your heart to give him a retirement home, Ma’am?”

Esel, meanwhile, had waited patiently for Oom Piet to climb back onto the cart so they could trot off home together, or better still, go to the co-op. He wondered why Oom Piet had handed his night blanket to Thuli, and the brush too that Piet had used every day to keep Esel ‘respectable’.

“Ma’am, please drop me off at the taxi rank. You can keep the cart, if you will? My old bones are not made for climbing up into the driver’s seat anymore. I cannot bear for Esel to see me walk away without him.”

For Esel, the pain of the absence of Oom Piet in his life, drove him into a misery so deep, that he stayed on his own, away from the other animals, to grieve in private. One day, not long after Oom Piet had left him at the sanctuary and he had found himself being unharnessed from the cart by a stranger in the form of Thuli, Esel saw Piet’s son walking slowly up the path to the farmhouse. He spoke to Thuli at the kitchen door and handed her a brown paper packet. “It was Pa’s last wish,” he told Thuli.



Later, Thuli walked down the field to where Esel stood, dug her hand into the packet, and pulled out a snack, the kind that Esel and Oom Piet had once shared together. Thuli spoke encouragingly. “Come on, Esel, please try this nice treat.” She offered it on the flat of her palm. “Come on now.” But Esel wouldn’t be coaxed. He turned his head aside.

One night, Esel dreamt that he saw Oom Piet stumbling over the tufts of grass and mole hills in the field, waving his arms and calling out his name. *Esel! Esel!* In his dream Esel brayed in excitement and trotted towards Oom Piet as fast as his legs would go. In his dream, Oom Piet reached into his pockets and pulled out Esel’s favourite treats, a piece of apple, a chunk of carrot. In his dream, Esel felt his heart might burst with happiness.

“We’ll be together again one day – don’t you worry,” Oom Piet had whispered. “There’s a place in Heaven for you too, old friend.”

Esel wondered if his dream might come true and he kept a lookout for Oom Piet day in and day out. But finally, the chasm of loss came back into his heart, and he mourned alone, in private sorrow and grief.

The months passed. Eventually, the peace and care at the sanctuary, together with Thuli’s special brand of love, brought him to an understanding that leaving him must have torn Oom Piet’s heart in two, just like his own.

Together they had eked out a living for nearly 30 years, the best possible years, bonded together in trust and kinship.

Bringing him here to the sanctuary had been Oom Piet's final act of love.

## Chapter Three — A quarrel and a gift

---

**M**y story would be missing someone special if I didn't mention Bill, the goat. Although well past his prime, he still stands proud, with nobility in his countenance. His horns catch my eye before anything else, every time. They spread from his head like the branches of a tree – long and curling and magnificent. Most people don't know that rams grow such spectacular horns, because most rams are never given the chance to grow old. Bill's beard is also long, as is the wavy hair on his chest.

Bill has only recently joined our family. He was used as a stud all his life, so that his good genes could be carried through to the next generation. Loaded onto the open back of a bakkie, each horn firmly tied to the side bars, Bill had seen the world on many a long and bumpy ride from farm to farm. Thuli was well-acquainted with Bill's owner, farmer Koos. However, their friendship was put in serious jeopardy one day on the patio.

Busy dunking his rusk into a mug of sweet coffee, Koos confided in Thuli cheerfully that Bill's horns would soon be mounted on the wall of his sitting room. Then he added, in a warm and friendly way: "And, if you weren't such a vegan freak Thuli, you could come and enjoy some of his lovely chops with me."

Thuli's mouth dropped open in shock. "You're going to kill Bill the goat?" she asked in horror and disbelief.

“Yes,” nodded Koos. “He’s old now. Very old. And I’m probably never going to go on a hunting safari again. There’s a spot on my wall where his horns would go very well. A kind of trophy!”

“Hardly a trophy,” Thuli retorted in a voice so steeped in disbelief that Koos looked up, startled.

“You’re going to *hunt* him down in his paddock, are you?!” she asked sarcastically.

“No,” said the farmer defensively, “of course not! I’ll set him free first, so that he can wander into my farmlands and enjoy a last taste of freedom, before I track him down in a kind of *fair* hunt.”

Thuli’s face reflected her despair. “You disappoint me. I thought you loved your animals. You always said you did.”

“But I do,” protested Koos. “I do love them. That’s why I want to put Bill’s horns on my wall!”

“You want to pretend you’re a big game hunter in the wild, wild wilderness,” Thuli retorted. “After all the money he’s put in your bank account over the decades! It’s just despicable.”

“Agh!” retorted Koos crossly. “Don’t be so dogmatic and judgmental, Thuli. You hold it against me that I am just a normal human being, doing what our ancestors have done for thousands of years.



“You’ve got some pie-in-the-sky idea that we should all rely on plant food. That’s *your* problem, Thuli, not mine.” Koos looked very disgruntled.

“*My* problem,” said Thuli, “is that instead of allowing Bill to retire in dignity, you’re going to treat him like a commodity! We humans give more value to a bunch of grapes and the furniture in our sitting rooms than we do to the well-being of an animal.”

“We don’t live in a perfect world, Thuli. Get used to it!” Koos snapped back.

“Well, don’t hold your breath, Koos. I’ll never get used to the suffering we impose on all the millions of animals stuck away in factory farms, as if their lives don’t matter.”

Koos was stymied. He couldn’t tell Thuli that suffering didn’t matter. Even he didn’t believe that.

Thuli shook her head. “I’m afraid I’ve got things to do, Koos.” As she got up to leave him on the patio by himself, she muttered under her breath: “Don’t choke on Bill’s tough old chops, will you!”

Koos sat alone for a few minutes more, confounded and perplexed, then he struggled to his feet and, bent with old age, slowly made his way to the path that led to his neighbouring farm.

The next day, Koos drove up in his bakkie with Bill in the open back, his horns tied to the railings at each side. He untied the

ropes and Bill hopped off as if this place had always been his turf. Thuli emerged from the house, unsmiling, her eyebrows raised in an expression of hostile enquiry.

“I’ve decided that Bill is my gift to you, Thuli,” said Koos, holding out his hand in a gesture of ‘let’s-make-up’. “His meat would be too tough for my old teeth anyway, and yes, I agree, his horns are a pleasure to behold, more so on his head than off!”

Koos smiled contritely, a smile of “am I forgiven?”

Thuli took his outstretched hand. “Thank you Koos,” she said. “What a wonderful gift.”

## Chapter Four — A soothing head scratch

---

I don't think I've told you yet what my name is. I used to be known as Lambkin until Pilgrim joined the family to partner with Thuli in a small restaurant business on the sanctuary. Pilgrim gave me a new name – the name I carry with pride to this very day; the name I may be known by in the annals of history.

But let me not get ahead of myself again, save to say that on the day Pilgrim arrived, none of us could possibly have had the faintest idea of just how much he would influence our lives, and the lives of those yet to come.

Not long after he joined the family, while we were still getting to know him, I saw Pilgrim crying one day. I looked up from my grassy patch when I heard him blow his nose. Most unusual. At the same time, he mopped his eyes with a tissue. I stepped closer and gave him my head to scratch and tickle behind the ears. I knew he liked to do that. Then Thuli came and put her arm around Pilgrim's shoulders. "Baby steps," she said in a comforting voice. "Remember, we're helping to change the world, one meal at a time."

"I know", Pilgrim nodded. "But the screaming of those pigs as they passed by all packed tight in the truck just now, it just about broke my heart. They seem to have a premonition that there's nothing good waiting for them at the end of their road trip."

Pilgrim mopped his eyes and tried to stifle a sob. He had been brought up in a generation which frowned upon men showing their emotions. Then he blew his nose again, and made an extra effort to brighten up, giving me a good head scratch into the bargain.

“I’ve been thinking,” he said, suddenly changing the subject and trying to bring back a perkiness in his voice. “We can’t keep calling this young fellow ‘Lambkin’. He’s all grown-up now. It’s time we gave him a new name! I mean, what young man wants to be called ‘Lambkin’! What about the name Pecorino instead?”

“What?!” exclaimed Thuli. “That’s the name of a cheese!”

“Exactly!” said Pilgrim. “On our sanctuary, it’s now the name of a beautiful fellow-being!”

Well, I didn’t really understand the logic in this, but I knew it came from a good place in Pilgrim’s heart, so Pecorino it was!

## Chapter Five — ‘We need our protein’

---

Pilgrim, we learned, is a chef who specialises in plant cuisine, learned as a child during every school holiday he spent with his maternal grandparents who lived in Italy. So one could say he’s a herbivore, I suppose, like Bill and Esel and myself. But not Sweet-pea. She has a special liking for worms. And of course, not the dogs either.

Pilgrim took up residence in a cottage that had stood empty, next to the barn where the bales of hay are kept and where we sleep each night. In the days following Pilgrim’s arrival, three young men came to erect a dining and workshop area, attached to the cottage. They used the bamboo that grows thick and tall at one end of the sanctuary. Pilgrim reasoned that not only is bamboo one of the best grasses to combat climate change, but it is also immensely strong, long-lasting and ultimately biodegradable.

The young men sawed the shiny green poles into equal lengths to build walls, and then the roof. Pilgrim told them that donating their time and muscle power would earn them delicious veggie cuisine for lunch, every day of the project. They eyed each other dubiously.

“If you don’t mind, Sir,” ventured one of them, “we need protein. This is tough work. We need our protein.”

Pilgrim smiled and nodded as if in perfect agreement, and he beamed broadly when they ate his lentil bobotie with gusto, even accepting second helpings. And they never flagged in muscle power!

Thuli and Pilgrim made garlands of dried seed pods threaded with ribbon to decorate the new restaurant and workshop. Outside, the wild-growing nasturtiums with their round leaves and bright orange flowers were encouraged, and would be used in Pilgrim's culinary, as well as medicinal, workshops. At the entrance, when it was all finally finished, ready to host food enthusiasts, a colourful board was erected with the words:

*The Hungry Herbivore*

*Enjoy! and save our animals one meal at a time*

Soon the sanctuary played host to a bustling business. Tourists from all over the world came to indulge their taste-buds. In fact, even Koos has become a regular diner. "I'm not a vegan but I'm happy to be a flexitarian," he told Pilgrim cheerfully. Bill always trots up to welcome Koos and offer his head for a scratch. I'll never let on to Bill about the diabolical plan Koos had in mind for his horns. That's something better left unsaid.

## Chapter Six — A peppercorn-sized piece of me

---

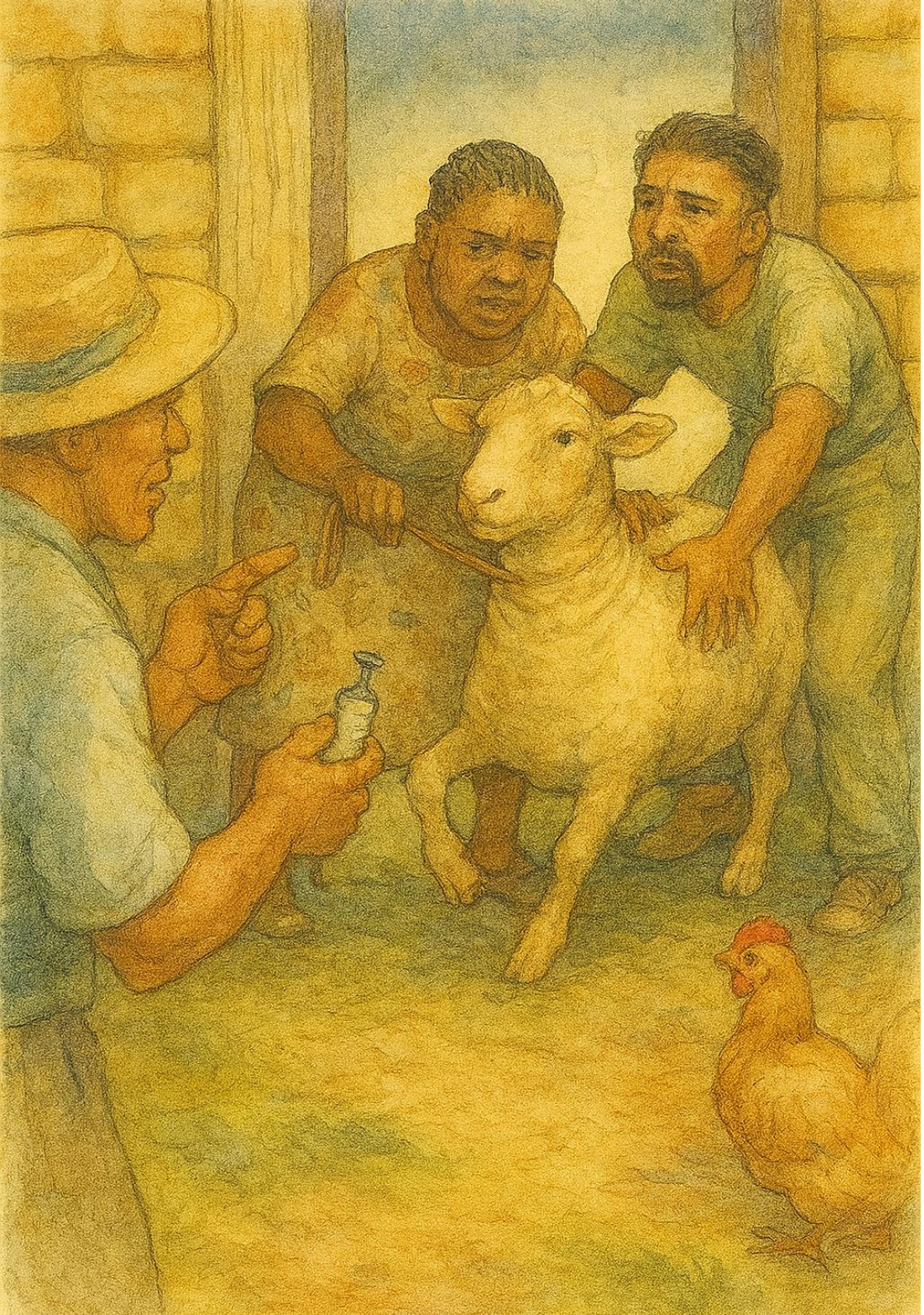
I knew something was up the morning I detected a note of sympathy in the way Thuli and Pilgrim greeted me. I probably wouldn't have taken much notice, but they kept on fussing over me. A bit odd, I thought.

Then Thuli stroked my muzzle and the top of my head and said: "There's nothing to worry about. You'll be fine." What *was* she talking about!?! This was a tone of voice I couldn't remember ever having heard. Then I saw the vet walking across the field towards us. How very unnerving! Not another injection, surely!

I decided it was best to take myself to a patch of sweet clover a short distance away. To my alarm, they followed, and just as I was about to trot off at a faster pace, Thuli deftly put a lead around my neck, all the while trying to soothe me with "It's okay, it's okay" in her strange new tone of voice.

As much as I dug in my hooves and resisted, I was dragged to the barn. I couldn't believe how roughly I was being treated, and I bellowed out my objection.

The next thing I knew, I felt a bit groggy and a little uncomfortable in my nether regions, but thankfully, the sympathetic tones of Thuli and Pilgrim had been replaced with a brisk "Come on, get up. Here's a treat for you!"



I didn't know, of course, that something momentous had just taken place. A clue, perhaps, was when Thuli said she was so glad I could join the girls now without bringing more lambs into the world.

But that wasn't all.

What I couldn't possibly have imagined was that, along with being neutered, a tiny peppercorn-sized piece of me, deemed more precious than gold, had also been extracted. With the greatest of care, it had been placed into a sterile container for transport in a cooler, straight to the city where some of the world's most talented young scientists were ready and waiting for its arrival!

## Chapter Seven — A day of strange behaviours

---

That afternoon, Thuli and Pilgrim were back to their normal selves, thankfully. Well, mostly. I say ‘mostly’ because an energy of excitement seemed to radiate from both of them as they sat on the patio. Thuli brought out a tray with pomegranate juice in tall glasses. They stood up to hug each other and clink their glasses together. “To a kinder world!” they said in unison. Thuli held out her glass again. “This one’s for you, Pilgrim,” she said, clinking his glass with hers, and taking another sip of her juice. “It wouldn’t be happening if it weren’t for you and your special nerd friends at the bio-reactor place!” Then it was Pilgrim’s turn. “Let’s toast Pecorino,” he said, and in unison again, they called out into the rays of the late afternoon sun. “Here’s to Pecorino!”

Truly, it was a day of strange behaviours.

Thuli and Pilgrim had just wandered back into the farmhouse when a police van drove up the dirt driveway and two constables got out. I followed them up to the house while the dogs raced ahead to warn Thuli, with a great cacophony of barking, that strangers had entered the property.

The constables knocked on the open front door and Penelope Pig trotted out from the kitchen to greet them with her usual spunk. “We should have guessed,” said one of the policemen to the other with a wry expression.



He knocked again, this time more loudly. “Any *humans* at home?!”

Thuli appeared, wiping her hands on a kitchen cloth, Jessie at her side. “What can I do for you, officers?” she asked tersely. She didn’t like policemen arriving at the sanctuary. Last time, it was because of a complaint from a neighbour somewhere up the road that the flies on her property must be coming from the sanctuary. Thuli had been most indignant about that.

“Ma’am, please tell your dogs to stop barking. I can’t even hear myself think!” Thuli quietened down the dogs. “There’s a sheep who needs a home,” said the policeman. “Do you have space? We found her in the boot of a car we pulled over for speeding.” Thuli’s face changed to one of delight. “Oh yes, for sure,” she exclaimed. “Where is she now?”

“Still tied up, Ma’am, in the back of our van. We didn’t want to undo her in case you didn’t want her.”

“Oh my word!” exclaimed Thuli in horror. “The poor thing! Please drive up to the barn, officers.”

We all followed up to the barn, trying to catch a glimpse into the van as the constables opened up the back. We could see the sheep lying there, her eyes bulging in terror. Thuli ran to fetch her big scissors from the house. She cut the rope that bound the sheep’s legs together and the rope that tied her mouth shut.

“How weird,” she said. “Why gag her like this? It’s not like sheep are known for being biters!”

“It was probably to stop her bleating in the car boot and giving herself away at a stop street,” explained one of the constables.

And true enough, as the rope around her mouth came off, the petrified creature blurted out a heart-rending BAAAA, releasing some of the terror she had experienced in that dark boot where noxious fumes from the exhaust had threatened to suffocate her every breath.

She made frantic attempts to stand up. But her legs were numb and her knees buckled beneath her time and time again. Thuli spoke words of encouragement and I joined in. Finally, she staggered up, and this time, her legs held her.

Thuli’s pleasure at rescuing Pretty (as she named her) was catching. We all shared her delight. Pretty began to drink the water offered her as though it was the last drop on earth. I stayed with her while Thuli led the constables back to the farmhouse to enjoy coffee and rusks before being on their way again.

It was almost sleep time and our family members gradually joined us in the barn to settle down for the night. Pretty felt our tranquillity. Her eyes no longer bulged. I wanted her to know that serendipity had blessed her this day. She had escaped a butcher’s knife; the peace of our sanctuary awaited her.

## Chapter Eight — Time for the ‘taste test’

---

**T**ime passed. In the fast city, and unbeknown to me until many moons later, the peppercorn-sized piece of me that had arrived in the cooler at the start-up biotech company a few weeks ago, had grown in size.

My cells had been placed in a special incubator called a bioreactor, supplied with special nutrients under the watchful and anxious eyes of super-smart bio-technicians and, amidst much high-fiving between them, and exaltation at their success, it had grown into a small piece of meat.

Each one of these young scientists held a vision of a world that would feed real meat to people without killing animals, and they were the first in Africa to put the new technology, called ‘cultivated meat’, to the test. So far, they had managed to grow my cells into a portion big enough to make a meatball, and two mini meatballs as extras. For them, this was just the beginning. Now it was time for the ‘taste’ test.

## Chapter Nine — Cultivated meatballs

---

Well, obviously something big was happening. I had never seen Thuli and Pilgrim wear such fancy clothing before, nor Thuli with shiny pieces of silver dangling from her ears. Even her hair looked strangely unfamiliar. As for Pilgrim, I'm pretty sure I've heard him say before, that he hates ties and that they are useless pieces of adornment that you will never catch him wearing! It just goes to show... never say never! And his shoes looked shiny too.

We watched as Thuli and Pilgrim drove down the dirt road towards the highway. There was an excitement about them that I understood later through snatches of conversation. They were off to big bustling Cape Town, where a man called Philip Lymbery would taste a meatball made from me, and declare whether it was a success or not. All the way from London, he was head of an international organisation called *Compassion in World Farming* that campaigned for a kinder world for farm animals.

Now, after four decades of never allowing a piece of meat to pass his lips, he had come all the way to Cape Town for a *tasting*. With flashing lightbulbs, microphones and smartphones thrust before his face as if he were a Hollywood celebrity, Philip took the plunge and savoured the taste of a meatball made from me.

Rolling it around on his tongue thoughtfully, he finally gave his verdict: *“Remarkable – lovely – for me a little bit strange – but – I am so pleased I have tasted the future!”*

A deafening applause rang out. The two mini-meatballs were given to special guests Thuli and Pilgrim. The story and pictures of the event made media headlines around the world.

Much later, when the two of them arrived home, they trudged across the field calling my name. I looked up. “There he is,” Pilgrim shouted, and he began to run towards me, shiny shoes, tie and all. Their faces were elated. Something very good must have happened.

“Pecorino”, said Pilgrim as he bent to hug my neck, “it was a wonderful event and I am so happy that I can share this information with you as a ***living being.***”

The next day, the two of them got to work decorating a brand-new board for the name of the restaurant.

Now it’s called:

*The Hungry Herbivore*

*A first for Africa: Homegrown cultivated meatballs on the menu every Sunday!*

And you’d best believe it, you’ll have to book a table well in advance if you want to come join us on a Sunday.

Now you know why I began my story by telling you I have played a tiny part in making the world a kinder place.

Maybe it is wishful thinking that the world is going to become kinder. Only you, the children of today who are reading this letter from me, will be able to determine if my hope comes true. I say this because it is going to take some years before technology produces cultivated meat on a scale large enough to feed all humans, and I probably won't be here anymore. But if it happens, I will have played a role and I am proud of that. My wish now is that you too will grow up to play a role that you can be proud of. How exciting to think about that!

*Yes! It really happened!*  
*30 April 2024, Cape Town, South Africa*

**Philip Lymbery** delights the crowd by breaking his 40-year self-imposed ban on eating meat!



*When Compassion in World Farming CEO, Philip Lymbery* accepted an invitation from South African pioneering food company *Newform Foods* to sample its lamb meatballs, cultivated in a Cape Town bioreactor, he was unsure at first.

After all, it had been four decades since anything remotely meaty had passed his lips.

But the fact that a very happy, healthy sheep, still enjoying life at the *Greyton Farm Animal Sanctuary* in the Western Cape, had provided the meatball with just a peppercorn-sized donation of his cells as a starter, compelled him to break his meat-fast. After savouring the meatball, Philip gave his verdict: ***“Remarkable, lovely, for me a little bit strange, but... I am so pleased I have tasted the future!”***

## Epilogue

The era of Kinship

### **World Protein Day : 2050**

The school kids line up outside the museum. They are about to embark on a guided tour of the **History of Food** display that has been set up by the curator in celebration of World Protein Day.

“Okay guys, in you come,” says the guide who introduces himself as ‘Michael’.

A display area confronts them with huge photographs lining the walls, of chickens squashed together in barren cages; of pigs driven demented in tight spaces from where there is no escape; of sheep and cows crammed into ships for sea journeys to slaughter. Relics and artefacts of obsolete instruments and tools are on display too, each with a tag identifying for what it had been used in the era of industrialised farming of **kin**.

The children shudder and pull faces of distaste and disbelief.

A lone voice breaks the silence: “Talk about a dystopia!”

“Indeed,” Michael agrees. “The immensity of the injustice that was inflicted on our kin is incalculable. You’ll be surprised though,” he adds, “it was this very dystopia that generated

the culture that we enjoy today. A hundred years ago, industrialised farming was thrust on society, but ordinary people didn't want it. For a century they signed petitions, marched in protest, turned vegan, did anything they could think of to bring it to an end."

Then he adds: "Come on... hands up... let's identify some of the good that emerged from an era of institutionalised violence against kin."

The school kids are silent. Then, slowly, hands begin to dart up.

"We don't call them animals anymore. Justice for Kin is in our Constitution."

Michael nods approvingly.

"Cultivated meat is the norm. We've even forgotten it originates in kin."

"We don't grow half the world in crops to feed enslaved kin anymore."

"A lot of land has been restored to wildlife kin."

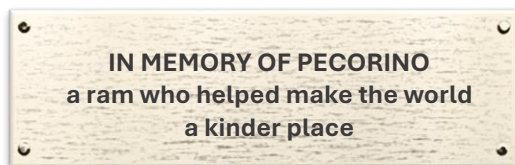
"We've set ourselves free from being the drivers of slavery."

"Africa became a front-runner in the biotechnology for cultivated meat."

The school kids are hungry and follow Michael into the dining area. As they take their seats, they become aware of a large, framed photograph of a sheep looking at them.

A brass plaque reads:

**In memory of Pecorino**  
**a ram who helped make the world a kinder place**



*For the Love of Kin*

is a fictionalised version of what really happened in South Africa in 2024 when *Compassion in World Farming* CEO, **Philip Lymbery** accepted an invitation from pioneering food company **Newform Foods** to sample its cultivated lamb meatballs. The fact that a very happy, healthy sheep, still enjoying life at the **Greyton Farm Animal Sanctuary** had provided the meatballs, was motivation enough for him to break his 40-year fast from meat.