

written by **BOB HARTMAN**

Goat Boy



Chronicles

THE BIG PIG STAMPEDE

and a bunch more amazing miracles





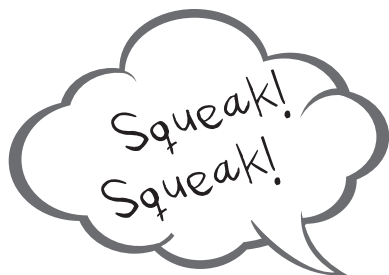
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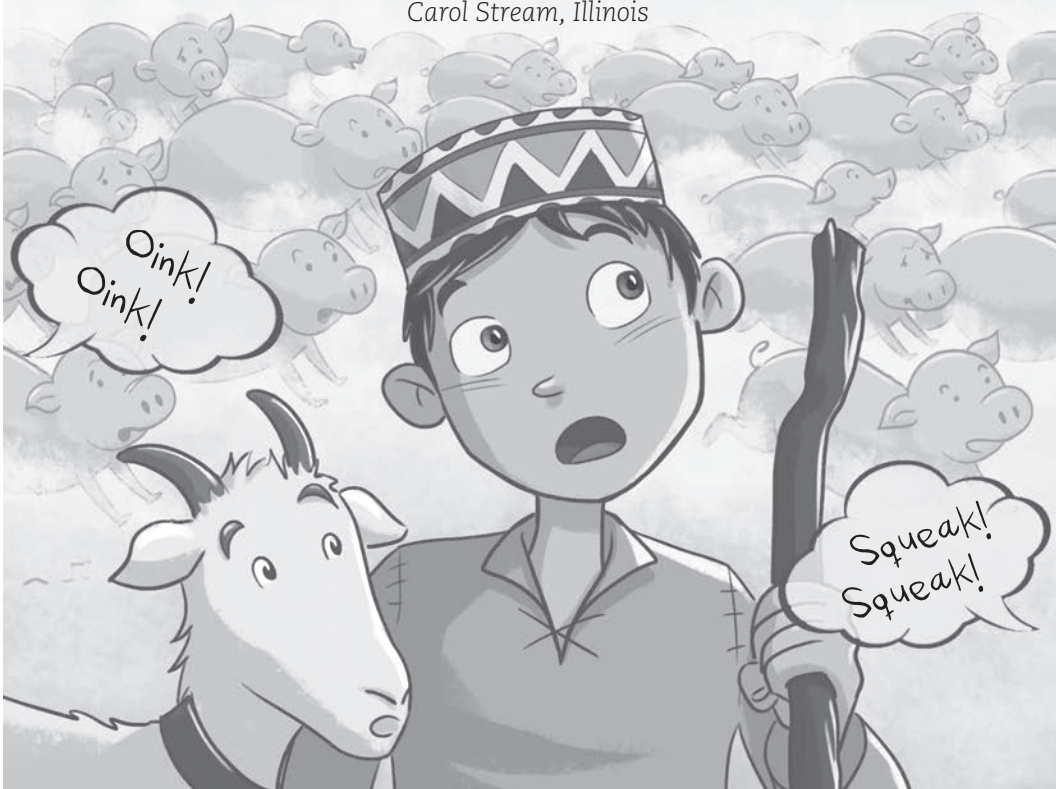
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illustrated by Amerigo Pinelli

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The Big Pig Stampede

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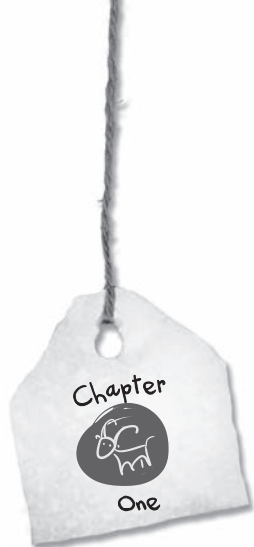
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WHERE ME AND BUG MAKE A DEAL. SORT OF.

My brother was the first one to call me Goat Boy.

I'm eleven. He's thirteen. He thinks he knows everything. And he's sort of a bit of a jerk.

No. That's not exactly true. There's no "sort of" or "bit of" about it. He's a jerk.



All right, I did have a goat I took care of. I mean, I still do. That's one of my jobs. So what?

"Everybody has to pitch in." That's what my dad always says. So he runs the market stall. And my brother helps him buy the stuff we sell. And I take care of whatever animals we pick up along the way.

I like animals. I'm good at taking care of them. What's the big deal?

It's not like I call *him* names.

"Hello, Cheap Trinket Boy!"

"Yo, Mr. Busted Pottery!"

Okay, he'd probably punch me if I did. (And he punches really hard.) But I don't do it. That's the point.

Anyway, Goat Boy stuck. Mostly because he just kept saying it and wouldn't shut up about it.

And that's why my friend Bug shouted, "Hey, Goat Boy!" when he ran up to the stall tonight, and not "Hey, Gideon!" which is my real name, which he knows.

To be fair, I do call him Bug. But I don't actually know his real name, because he likes Bug and refuses to go by anything else. Or tell anybody else what his real name actually is. So I'm sort of stuck.

And yeah, he's called Bug partly because he's small. But also because he can be kind of annoying. Oh, and because one time he ate a melon that had bugs all over it. Which he went ahead and ate too.

Honest, I nearly vomit every time I think about it. But it didn't bother Bug at all.

So Bug shouted, "Hey, Goat Boy!" and I shouted back, "Hey, Bug!" and that's when he asked me, "Has your dad got any wine for sale?"

"Yeah," I said. "He's got some wine. How much do you need?"

"As much as you have. There's this big wedding on the other side of town, and they ran out.

So the word on the street is they'll buy whatever anyone's got."

Bug's dad runs a stall like ours. We all sort of travel around together, from town to town. My dad says Bug's dad is the best market trader he ever met. And that's saying something, because lots of people say that about my dad. So if there was a deal going, and Bug's dad was part of it, I knew my dad would want to get in on it as well.

Bug and I ran to the stall to tell him, but the only person there was my big brother.

"Sam!" I shouted. (Short for Samson. Known for punching people. Of course.) "Where's Dad?"

He looked down at me. He always looks down at me. "Who wants to know?"

"I want to know! Who do you think?" I shouted.

"He's off somewhere, doing a deal," Sam said. "You'll just have to wait."

"There isn't time to wait," Bug whispered in his insisting, bugging sort of way. "They need the wine *now!*"

I figured that. But I also figured if I told my brother, he'd sell the wine and take all the credit for it, and I'd still just be Goat Boy. This was my

chance to prove that I could be a brilliant market trader too.

So I grabbed two skins full of wine, chucked another at Bug, and said, “Run!”



“What do you two think you’re doing?” my brother shouted as we disappeared down an alley. I knew he wouldn’t come after us. He needed to stay and watch the stall. And I knew



my dad wouldn't mind, either. Not if I came back with a pile of coins.

Bug led the way, through a
maze of back streets.
and felt heavier
skins were full
the farther
we ran.
we went as quickly as
we could, but the wine

Finally we arrived at a big house, with torches blazing and people dancing and servants buzzing in and out. Bug grabbed a boy about our age and we put our wineskins on a table to show him. The boy's name was Shem. He was tall and

scrawny and had a front tooth missing. He was one of the servants, and also Bug's contact.

"Where do you want us to put the wine?" Bug asked. "And where do we get paid?" Bug's dad had taught him well. *Paid* is always the most important word.

Shem looked kind of embarrassed.

"Umm . . . well . . . we don't really need the wine anymore," he muttered.

"What do you mean?" Bug bugged. "You ran out. You've got a huge crowd here. There's no way you already found enough wine for everybody in this place."

Shem shrugged. "That's what we thought. But then this woman came up to us." He pointed. "She's standing right over there."

"Doesn't look much like a wine merchant to me," Bug grumbled.

"No . . . no, she isn't," Shem said. "But she has this son—the guy standing next to her—who is a rabbi or something. She heard about the wine running out, so she said that we had to do whatever her son told us to do."

"Weird," I replied. "So what did he say?"

"Well, we have these six big stone jars,"

Shem explained. "They hold, I dunno, twenty or thirty gallons each. The rabbi guy told us to fill them up with water."

"What? All of them?" Bug said.

Shem nodded. "Yeah. All of them. It took a little while, but we did it. And then he told us to scoop some out and serve it to the man in charge of the wedding."

"What? A cup of

water?" I laughed. "I bet he was impressed."

"He was," Shem replied.

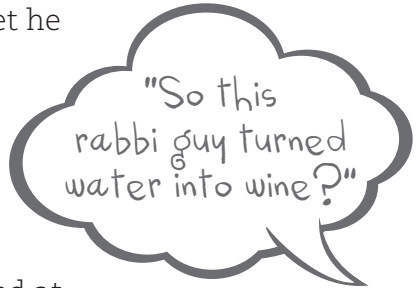
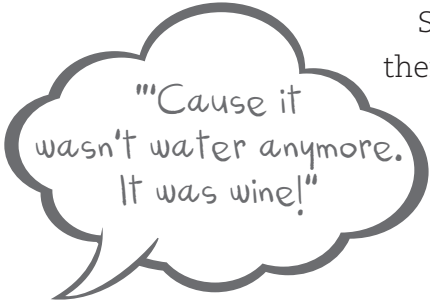
And he looked dead serious.

"Cause it wasn't water anymore. It was wine!"

I looked at Bug. Bug looked at me. And we both laughed.

"So this rabbi guy turned water into wine?" Bug said. "What'd he do next? Pull a turnip out of your ear?"

"It happened. Honest! Just like I told you," Shem insisted. "I don't know how he did it. But



everybody here says it's maybe the best wine they ever tasted."

"So you don't need our wine, then," I sighed. "That's the point. You didn't have to make up some crazy story as an excuse."

"I didn't make it up!" Shem said. "Ask any of the other servants. It was like a . . . a . . . miracle. That's what they're all saying."

"Well," Bug grumbled, "it will be a real miracle if we don't get in trouble for losing this sale. And all thanks to your wine-making rabbi guy."

Then he picked up one of the wineskins and stamped off. And I stamped after him.

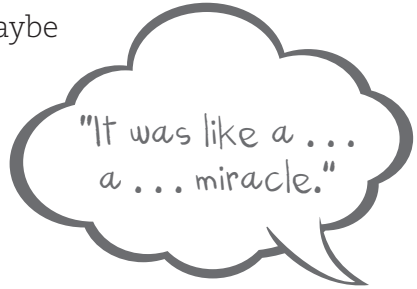
"It's Jesus," Shem shouted after us as we stamped away. "I think the rabbi guy's name is Jesus."

"Do you really think we'll get in trouble for this?" I asked on the way back to the market.

"Nah." Bug grinned. "I just wanted to make him feel bad."

"To bug him?" I said.

"Exactly!"



But Bug was wrong.

When we arrived, my dad was waiting for us. His arms were crossed. He was tapping one foot. And my brother had this really annoying smirky look on his face.

“So where have you boys been?” my dad asked. And not in a friendly “How’s your day gone?” kind of way.

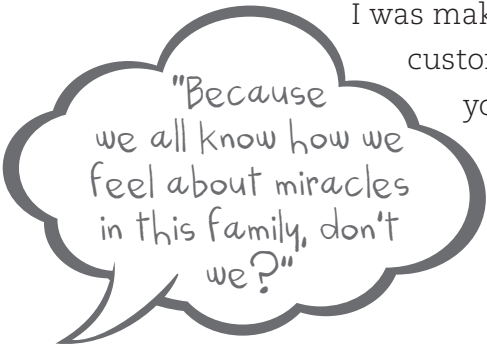
I looked at Bug. Bug looked at me.

And then, for some strange reason, Bug decided that retelling the story Shem had told us would somehow help.

Again he was wrong.

At the point where Bug reached full miracle mode, my dad put up his hand and shouted, “That’s it! It’s bad enough you took the wine without asking. Even worse, at that very moment,

I was making a deal with a customer to sell him the wine you had taken. A deal that I have now lost. But the worst thing of all is to expect me to believe



“Because we all know how we feel about miracles in this family, don’t we?”

some ridiculous story about rabbis and jars and miracles.”

Then he stared at me. Hard. “Because we all know how we feel about miracles in this family, don’t we?”

I hung my head.

My mom got sick. My dad prayed. She died.
So much for miracles.

“Good night, Bug,” Dad said at last. And Bug didn’t need telling twice. He slipped away with a wave and a sheepish glance.

“As for you, Gideon,” Dad said, “there are animals that need seeing to.”

So I put the wineskins back where I’d found them. And as my brother snickered and adjusted them just so, I went to the place where we kept the cages. And I fed the chickens. And the doves. And the goat.

Because that’s all I am, I guess.

Goat Boy.