

'Ah!' they all said softly. 'A-a-a-a-a-ah!' and then with one voice they began to intone:

*I may be ewe, I may be ram,
I may be mutton, may be lamb,
But on the hoof or on the hook,
I bain't so stupid as I look.'*



Then by general consent they began to move away, grazing as they went.

'Is that it?' called Fly after them. 'Is that the password?' and the murmur came back 'A-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ar!'

'But what does it all mean, Mum?' said Babe that night when she told him. 'All that stuff about "I may be you" and other words I don't understand. It doesn't make sense to me.'

'That doesn't matter, dear,' said Fly. 'You just get it off by heart. It may make all the difference on the day.'



Eleven
'Today Is the Day'



The day, when it dawned, was just that little bit too bright.

On the opposite side of the valley the trees and houses and haystacks stood out clearly against the background in that three-dimensional way that means rain later.

Farmer Hogget came out and sniffed the air and looked around. Then he went inside again to fetch waterproof clothing.

Fly knew, the moment that she set eyes on the

know, that this was the day. Dogs have lived so long with humans that they know what's going to happen, sometimes even before their owners do, she woke Babe.

'Today,' she said.

'Today what, Mum?' said Babe sleepily.

'Today is the day of the Grand Challenge Sheep Dog Trials,' said Fly proudly. 'Which you, dear,' she added in a confident voice, 'are going to win!' With a bit of luck, she thought, and tenderly she licked the end of his snout.

She looked critically at the rest of him, anxious as any mum that her child should be well turned out if it is to appear in public.

'Oh Babe!' she said. 'Your coat's in an awful mess. What have you been doing with yourself? You look just as though you've been wallowing in the duck-pond.'

'Yes.'

'You mean you have?'

'Yes, Mum.'

Fly was on the point of saying that puppies

don't do such things, when she remembered that he was, after all, a pig.

'Well, I don't know about Large White,' she said. 'You've certainly grown enormous but it's anyone's guess what colour you are under all that muck. Whatever's to be done?'

Immediately her question was answered.

'Come, Pig,' said Hogget's voice from the yard, and when they came out of the stables, there stood the farmer with hosepipe and scrubbing brush and pails of soapy water.

Half an hour later, when a beautifully clean shining Babe stood happily dripping while Hogget brushed out the tassel of his tight-curved tail till it looked like candy-floss, Mrs Hogget stuck her head out of the kitchen window.



'Breakfast's ready,' she called, 'but what in the world bist doing with thik pig, taking him to a pig show or summat, I thought you was going to drive up and watch the Trials today, anybody'd think you was going to enter 'e in them the way you've got un done up, only he wouldn't be a sheep-dog, he'd be a sheep-pig wouldn't 'e, tee hee, whoever heard of such a thing, I must be daft though it's you that's daft really, carrying him about in the poor old Land Rover the size he is now, the bottom'll fall out, I shouldn't wonder, you ain't surely going to drive all that way with him in the back just so's he can watch?'

'No,' said Farmer Hogget.

Mrs Hogget considered this answer for a moment with her mouth open, while raising and lowering her eyebrows, shaking her head, and drumming on the window-sill with her fingertips. Then she closed her mouth and the window.

After breakfast she came out to see them off. Fly was sitting in the passenger seat, Babe was