



A SHEEPS TAIL

by Deborah Price

Synopsis
Of
A Sheep's Tail

Save our Valleys is a part fictional tale about the animals that live in the green Valleys of Wales, including Baarbaara the oldest sheep in the Valleys, an old Pit-pony called Mr. Coal and a squirrel called Dylan, who join up with all the other animals, to help the humans without them knowing. They are planning to protest against a Mega-Company, from another Country building an Incinerator in their beautiful Valleys.

The story follows the animals on their quest to stop the Monster Incinerator being built, which could destroy their homes and pollute their environment if it went ahead.

Mr Coal and Baarbaara both remember when the Valleys were black with soot from the coal mining industry, and now that the trees and grass and wildlife have returned they want to ruin it all again. Why?

A SHEEPS TAIL

Mr Coal a retired pit-pony was grazing happily at the top of the Cairn Bugail, next to the Rohi stone, it was a favourite place of his, with the best view for miles around.

Gone were the old black scars across the Valley where the mines he used to work in once stood, now replaced by luscious green grass, trees and healthy air. Fresh clean water tinkled in the rivers instead of the sooty black water that had run through them before, killing all the fish and polluting all the wildlife.

The only things he didn't like were the huge metal dinosaurs that stood still on the horizon that supplied the towns with electricity, 'Still, can't really moan', he thought, 'It's so beautiful here now, with fresh air and plenty to eat and drink'.

As he looked up from grazing he could see Baarbaara the oldest sheep in the Valleys, plodding up the mountain towards him, she was a funny old girl, she loved a good gossip, she would tell stories and elaborated tales to anyone who would listen, not that all of them were true of course.

She had many, many, children, grandchildren and great, great, great grandchildren too, so many in fact she had lost count a long time ago, how old she really was nobody knew, but at least a hundred years old all the sheep said.

"Baa, Mr Coal, how are you today, butt?" she greeted him,

“Just wonderful” he replied “Enjoying the clean fresh air and luscious surroundings as usual Baabaara, you alright?”

“Tickety Boo” she replied.

Just then a piece of paper fluttered across the mountain towards the two friends, “Bleedin’ Litterbugs” said Baarbaara, and walked over to eat the litter, just as she was about to munch it Mr Coal saw a big black picture and a “NO” printed on it, he said “Wait a sec Baarbaara, let me read it before you eat it, it looks important. Baarbaara brought the paper to him and Mr Coal started reading aloud the heavy black print, “No Monster Incinerator in the Valleys, What the heck?” he exclaimed, “What is it Mr Coal?” Baarbaara asked.

“Oh my, oh my, some evil American Company wants to put a Monster Incinerator up here on our mountain, and the residents are protesting against it,”

“Baa Oh No, it’ll ruin the Valleys like the coal mines did” she replied, “Why can’t they put it in their own Country?” she asked Mr Coal.

“I don’t know Baarbaara, but the people are protesting here and we’d better get all the animals to help them too, this IS NOT going to happen!” he said angrily.

“Baarbaara, you know enough animals to get us a protest group going, so I’m relying on you to pass the word around, spread it as far as possible alright.”

“On the case Butty” replies Baarbaara, marching off down the mountain in a real rage, mumbling under her breath as she went ‘They won’t get away with this, how

dare they try and take our lush valleys away again, they've got a fight on their hands now, no doubt about it!"

"Baarbaara, what's the matter?" a little voice piped up from the tree above her, it was Dylan the grey squirrel.

"Oh Dylan, I'm sorry I was in such a rush, I didn't notice you Butt" she said.

Dylan chattered "You shouldn't be rushing about at your age Baarb, you should be taking it easy like"

"Baa, I know, but let me tell you what Mr Coal and I just found out, and to think I almost munched that leaflet up,"

"Tell me, tell me" Dylan shouted excitedly, he knew Baarbaara always told good tales, she told him of the leaflet and it's contents, and he looked at her aghast, "No, No!" he said "We can't let this happen, it'll ruin the Valleys all over again."

"Exactly" said Baarbaara, "Now you know why I was in such a rush, we have to do something, go quickly and tell as many of your friends and family and other animals as you can especially the birds because they can travel far and wide."

"Ok, I'm off" said Dylan, "Tara Baarbs see you later," and off he scampered through the trees on a huge mission to pass on this important information.

Baarbaara carried on down the mountain, back to her flock. A few of her friends saw her rushing down and knew instantly that there was something afoot,

“Baa, Baa, Baa” they called loudly to round everyone up to see what was the matter with Baarbaara. By the time Baarbaara reached them, there were hundreds of sheep gathered to hear her news.

“What’s the matter, what’s the matter Grandmother Baarb?” the little ones bleated out loudly.

Out of puff Baarbaara sat down on the ground, beads of sweat gathering on her woolly brow, she had to get her breath back before relating the horrible story she had to tell them all.

Her little heart was beating so fast she needed to calm down a "bit before she could speak, “Baa, baa” she said softly, “Terrible news everyone, listen closely now.”

All the sheep, young and old, came in as close as they could, surrounding her on all sides, so they could all hear the Great, Great Grandmother sheep tell her tale.

She told them about the leaflet she’d almost eaten and about Mr Coal reading it to her and how she’d told Dylan the squirrel to go and tell all his kind and as many of the birds and other wildlife he could find and to spread this awful news far and wide, and how the people were going to protest about the foreign company who wanted to spoil their beautiful home here again.

They were all obviously horrified and vowed to help Baarbaara and Mr Coal put a stop to it. “Go to the farms and tell all your brethren, and the cattle, and chickens and pigs and the dogs and cats too, go now, baa” she said.

The sheep, lambs and ewes dispersed quickly, each one on a mission to save their beautiful home in the Welsh Valleys.

The word spread quickly throughout the area, by foot, by wing, by tree, by water, all the animals and all the insects including foxes and badgers, frogs and newts, mice and rats, lapwings, crows, ravens, and magpies, even the hawks and buzzards who hadn't long returned to the area joined them, so concerned were they all about what this Monster Incinerator would mean to their lives, and their health, and to the humans who fed them and their children too and of course the countryside itself. They united as one and agreed to join the protest which the local people had set up.

Over the next few weeks between Mr Coal, Baarbaara and Dylan every animal, bird, insect and fish knew and joined with them. There were posters in all the people's windows, and shop windows, and petitions were signed, and meetings set up for their huge campaign against the proposed Monster Incinerator. Everything was in place to put a stop to them building this extremely dangerous monstrosity, and once again turning the Valleys to darkness.

The meeting was set up, there would be reporters and T.V. coverage and postings on the internet, and thousands of people protesting and they knew nothing of the animal protestors yet. It was a warm sunny morning in August, the schoolchildren were on holidays and would be joining the protest. “The more the merrier”, thought Mr Coal ironically, as it wasn’t a very merry occasion was it?

At 10am the people started arriving at the proposed Covanta Monster Incinerator site in their thousands. On foot, on bikes, on motorbikes, in cars, mini-buses, and even coaches, they came from all over the Valleys, united in their pledge to stop Covanta building here.

Baarbaara, Mr Coal and Dylan were watching up on the mountain above and all you could see if you glanced up was a sheep and a pony, Dylan was too small to be noticed from down there, but behind them the mountain was covered, as far as the eye could see, with every local animal, bird and insect you could ever imagine, it was incredible, of course there were no fish, but they still supported the cause, they just couldn’t be there. Like a scene from a long ago battle it was.

Proudly Baarbaara gave the signal “Baa, Baa, Baa, Baa, everyone ready” she shouted, and slowly and uniformly they headed down the mountain to join the people and finally put a stop to this horrendous project.

Just as they set off, Baarbaara shook her head, she looked around, ‘Oh my, baa, baa, baa, what’s happened?’ she thought.

She gazed around in a daze, complete panic overcoming her, plumes of black smoke filled the air making it hard for her to see clearly, shocked to the core at the sight that greeted her old eyes, she blinked trying to make it go away. “Oh, No!” she exclaimed aloud, looking at the dusty barren ground, ‘Where was the lush green grass she chewed every day? Where were her family? Where were the birds that usually sang all day long? Oh Baa, Baa, Baa’ she cried, tears rolling down her dusty old face, as she realised, this was the result of the Incinerator.

All their protesting had been ignored and slowly over the last ten years she’d watched her friends and family die horrible deaths, and the landscape turn grey and barren like the surface of mars.

A day she had once enjoyed sprang into her mind:-

‘Today I saw a lizard run into the crack of a dry-stone wall at the bottom of the Tre-Twpa, when walking atop the hill amongst the standing stones and burial chambers, a rabbit dancing in the sunlight knocked a stone and sent it rolling down the mountains grassy slope. Mr Coal and the ponies, healthy looking for pit-ponies stood grazing behind the wall, with a foal no more than six weeks old, suckling on its mother’s milk. More sheep, in the farm, across the road, heavily pregnant, very well cared for, with white, white fleece. Walking home the frogs were coming down the Cairn Bugail, jumping across the road, trying to avoid the cars, to make it to the pond below for the night. Later on I dreamt of a fox running through the long lost corridors of a school

with vines and trees growing inside, then I heard the story of a virgin birth, eighteen years after the last child had died, surely this one will live?’

‘How awful’, she thought, seems like my dream came true, does that mean it’ll take another eight years for a child to be born again? She wondered. Very few people were left already, and children were being born deformed, and everyone was ill and sickly looking, thanks to the cancerous, poisonous substances being carried through the air in the fumes and gases from the Incinerator, much further afield than anyone had anticipated, all the way to England. It really was a Monster, there were no more farms, all derelict now, the water was poisonous and everything seemed geared to kill off the youngest first, then another casualty, she herself had discovered Mr Coal’s dying corpse, his legs covered in huge ulcers and his tongue swollen in his mouth, as he whispered “Goodbye dear friend, I’m off to a better place in the green fields of heaven, I’ll see you later” and breathed his last breath, as his soul departed his gnarled and sore body, now an empty shell.

Baarbaara realised how much horror had come to pass because of the Incinerator, and could take no more, this was genocide, pure and simple, it had devastated all she had once loved, she no longer cared for this world and made her way to the tumble-down farm that was once her home, she laid her head close to the place where she had been born and closed her eyes to this carnage for the

last time, ‘Goodbye cruel world, baa, baa’ she thought as she drifted off to another world to join her family and friends.

“Grandmother, Maaa, Baarbaara” she heard voices calling her and smiled for the first time in ages, thinking she was being greeted by her family at the gates of heaven. She opened her eyes, surrounding her were all her family and friends, birds were singing and flying above her, all the animals were healthy and happy and most of all blue sky everywhere, green, green grass, and beautiful trees swaying in the breeze. Shocked by what she saw she started crying, Mr Coal trotted up to her and said “Baarbaara, what’s the matter old sheep?”

She looked up at Coal and said “You’re alive?”

“Of course I’m alive, you old fool, it’s you we’ve been worried about, you’ve been poorly since all the excitement of our big protest, we’ve all been waiting for you to wake up to tell you the good news”

“Baa, Baa, I dreamed that they’d built the Monster Incinerator and everything was ruined and you were all dead and all the people got really sick” she cried.

“Oh, poor little love” he said with a grin, “It’s ok, we’ve put a stop to it, it was all over the T.V. and the papers and the Internet, and the people took Covanta to court and presented their case against them and they were refused permission to ever build another Incinerator anywhere.

“Baa, Baa, Baa” all the sheep joined in, “We Won, We Won” “cackle,cackle” went the ravens, “neigh, neigh” went the horses, “moo, moo” said the cows, “cluck, cluck”, “chatter, chatter”, “cockadoodledoo”, “miaow, miaow”, “woof, woof”, “tweet, tweet”, “squeak, squeak” and the sound of all the happy animals and insects echoed right around the Welsh Valleys

letting everyone know how happy they all were, and that by standing as a united front, they had beaten the huge American company Covanta and saved their beautiful home.

Baarbaara smiled as she took in all the wonderful news and knew now she could that she could live out her days in peace and without fear, as could all her family and friends and the people of Wales.

“Today is a good day” she said to everyone, and bent her head to chomp on the luscious green grass.