Black Sheep

Mary Schmidt*

*Iowa State College

Copyright ©1942 by the authors. Sketch is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).
http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch
SNOOKIE opened one sleepy eye and surveyed the new morning. The sun was shining on the green meadow, and the budding trees were whispering in the light spring breeze. Exultantly he opened the other eye, and blinked twice.

"What a lovely day to frolic and gambol with the other lambs," he thought, leaping just a little unsteadily to his baby feet. He sniffed and snuffled at his mother, Mrs. Boobytail, who was still asleep.

"Mother," he baa-ed in a low voice, "may I go out and play?"

"Yes, Snookie, but be careful not to get near the barbed wire," she cautioned him.

He frisked gaily out through the door, and gave two great bounds in the sunshine for sheer joy. Several other lambs were playing in a group down on the south side of the pasture. He quickly joined them, and greeted them with a squeaky "Baa-aa" in his excitement. His special friend, Snowdrop, was catching her breath a little apart from the others.

"Hello, Snowdrop," said Snookie. "What's new today?"

"Two new lambs have come to play with us, Snookie," she said. And sure enough, Snookie could pick out two unfamiliar faces in the noisy little group, a black one and a white one. Snookie hopped toward the white one, but she just gave him a frightened look and ran to Snowdrop. So he turned his attention to the little black lamb.

"Hello," he said. "I'm Snookie. What's your name?"

"Licowith Dwop," lisped the little fellow. He was very young. He still talked baby talk.

"How'd you get so dirty?" asked Snookie, looking him over curiously. "My mama scolds me when I get dirty!"

"I'm not dirty! I came thith way," exclaimed Licorice Drop.
“Can you run? I'll race you to the apple tree!” cried Snookie, and was off, his dark companion stumbling close behind. They dropped panting in the waving grass, and laughed and wiggled because they were having so much fun. They played together almost all morning, until Snookie heard Mrs. Boobytail baa-ing loudly for him. He excused himself and hurried to her.

“Snookie Boobytail,” said his mama in a stern voice, “Who have you been playing with?”

“Licorice Drop. He's lots of fun!” panted Snookie.

“Snookie, don’t you ever let me catch you playing with him again. You may gambol and frolic all you like with the little white lambs, but you must ignore that miserable little black thing! Do you hear me?” she demanded.

Snookie felt hurt and bewildered. “But why, mama? He . . .”

“Black lambs,” she stated in a decisive tone, “are not as good as white lambs. They have black fathers and black mothers. They are funny-looking. They are different from us. We ladies never speak to that Mrs. Ebony. She cleans stalls for a living.”

“Did she do something bad?” asked Snookie timidly.

“No, but she is black. She is disgustingly black,” sniffed Mrs. Boobytail disdainfully.

And that was the end of that.

After lunch, Snookie and Snowdrop were playing “house.” They were the make-believe mama and papa of several make-believe lambs.

“We must give them their lessons,” said Snowdrop to Snookie, and bustled about, lining the make-believe babies into a neat row.

“Now, Children,” she said, “You must never get close to barbed wire. You must never get mud on your nice white wool. You must never annoy the big lady sheep.” She paused. “Have you any advice for them, papa?”

“Never, never,” said Snookie firmly but a little sorrowfully, “play with little black lambs. They are no good.”