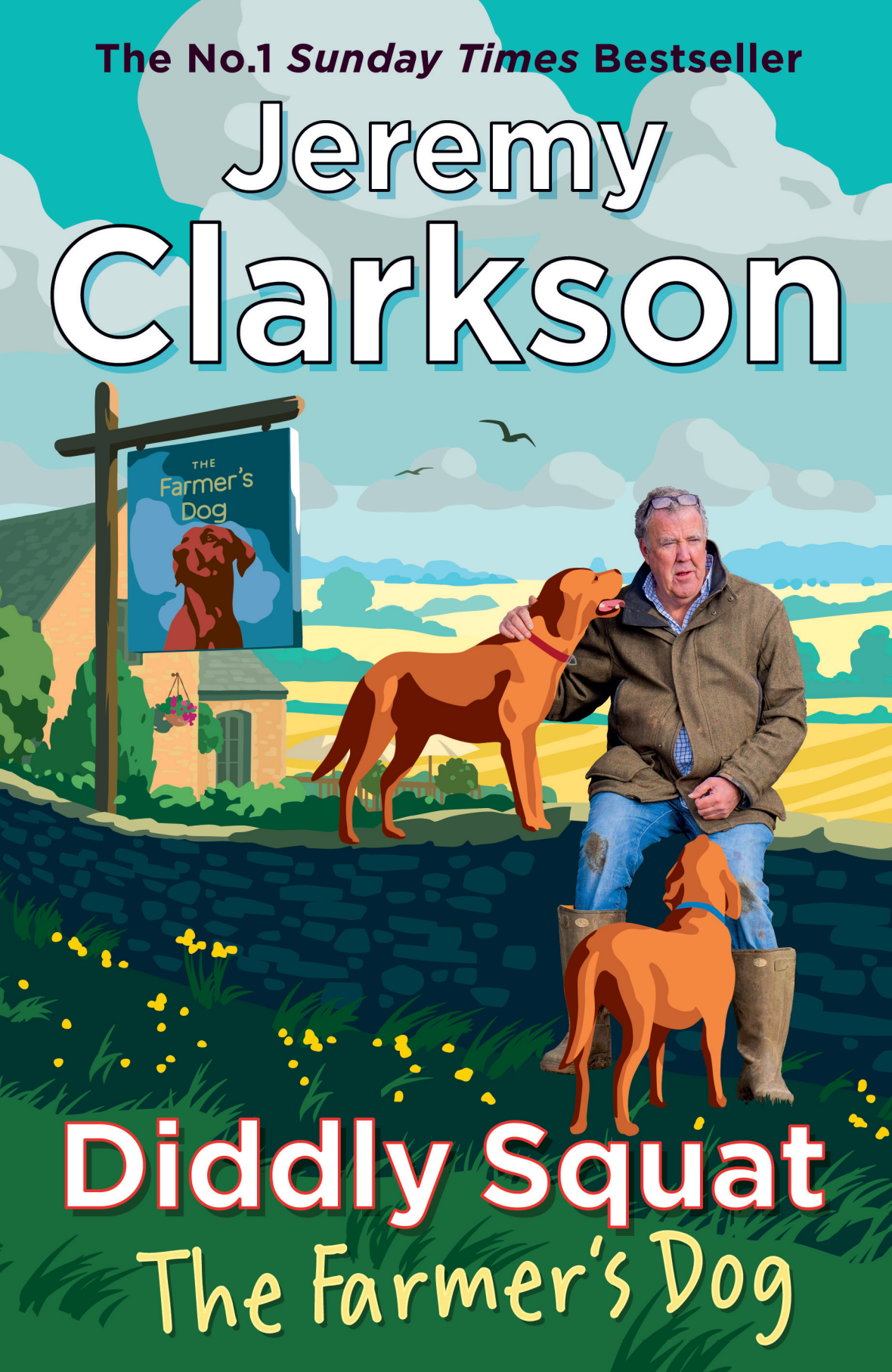
The No.1 *Sunday Times* Bestseller

Jeremy Clarkson



Diddly Squat

The Farmer's Dog

Diddly Squat

The Farmer's Dog

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And Another Thing

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For Crying Out Loud!

Driven to Distraction

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Round the Bend

Is It Really Too Much To Ask?

What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

As I Was Saying . . .

If You'd Just Let Me Finish!

Really?

Can You Make This Thing Go Faster?

Diddly Squat: A Year on the Farm

Diddly Squat: 'Til the Cows Come Home

Diddly Squat: Pigs Might Fly

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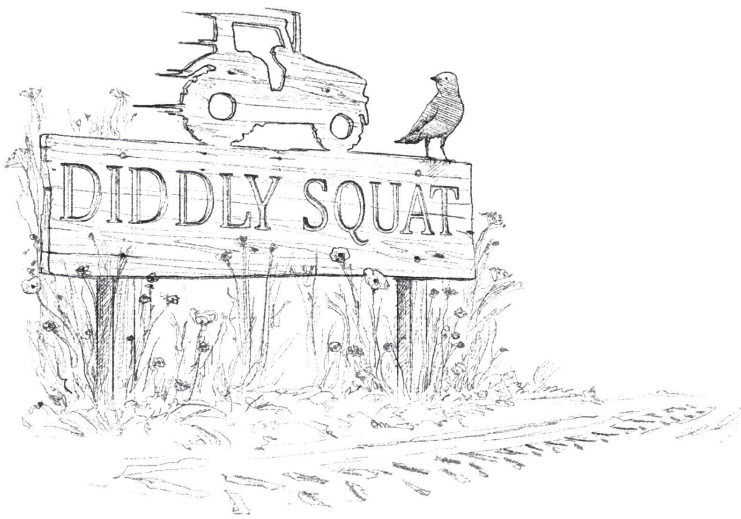

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The contents of this book first appeared in Jeremy Clarkson's *Sunday Times* column. Read more about the world according to Clarkson every week in the *Sunday Times*.

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SUMMER



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There's Nothing to See Here



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When friends bring young children over to Diddly Squat Farm, they are always very interested in seeing the animals. The wheat bores them. So does the barley, and none of them is terribly interested in why I'm growing a Whitehall acronym this year instead of oil-seed rape. No. All they want to do is cuddle a piglet and stroke a cow and collect a egg. And their parents are always keen to photograph them with some baby sheeps.

Sounds lovely, yes? Getting London kids into the countryside and showing them where their meat comes from. But there are a couple of problems. One: if the animals are behaving, the children in question all vow to become vegetablists. And two: if they are not behaving, it's like sitting a child down and introducing it to the darker side of Pornhub.

Of course, if we visit the cows, and the bull – a mighty Angus called Endgame – is busying himself on the back of one of them, that's great. It's a valuable lesson about the birds and the bees. But for some reason, Endgame rarely mounts any of the cows in his

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harem because he prefers to stand behind them, licking their bottoms. This is much harder to explain to a six-year-old.

But it could be worse because in the woods, where the pigs live, we currently have a weaner (think teenage boy) who is noticeably smaller than all his brothers and cousins. To begin with they beat him up and bit his ears, but he's worked out how to stop this, so now he spends most of his time performing sexual favours. And again, it's hard to explain to a six-year-old why the adorable little piggy is suckling on his brother's willy.

So off we go to collect some still-warm eggs, and how bucolic is that for a kid from Fulham? Not very, I'm afraid, because quite often we arrive at the copse where the hens live to discover a mink, or a fox, has got through the fencing, and it looks as if there's been an explosion in a Slumberdown factory.

Wild animals are getting ridiculously good at breaching fence lines these days. I saw video footage of a badger last week climbing an eight-foot chain-link fence, and then when it reached the razor-wire twirls on top, it turned round and climbed backwards down the other side. How it wasn't torn to shreds, I'll never know. Gerald did, though. He told me that if you could make a pair of shoes out of a badger's skin, they'd last for ever.

The geese? Whenever I go on my own to put them

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away at night, they are lovely and kind, clucking and strutting gently as they go peacefully into their house. But whenever I take a child, to help them get over the sexual depravity they've witnessed elsewhere, they put their arms out and charge, their faces twisted by a murderous rage into the very embodiment of beak-fronted savagery.

If I'm lucky, the lambs provide some heartwarming ruralness, but usually they are rotting or they've sawn their own heads off or their entire back end is full of maggots. They're supposed to be family-friendly PG animals but mostly they're as X-rated as that inside-out dog in *The Thing*.

Unless, of course, we are talking about the five sheep Lisa has just bought for no reason that I can understand. I can't remember what they are called but they are Swiss and they have no faces. Which means they are also like something out of a horror film. Still, at least they were ruinously expensive to buy and they will be ruinously expensive to keep and we can't ever sell or eat them. Instead, we just have to wait for the day when they think of a particularly revolting way of killing themselves. And then Lisa will be sad, and I'll have to pretend I'm sad as well.

So you might imagine that there's no safe space for children at Diddly Squat. And that a quick tour will give

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them such terrible mental health problems and they'll all end up on the streets, bent double and rendered comatose by xylazine.

Aha, but that's where you're wrong because I have 29 goats. I bought them as castrated boy kids about fifteen months ago and Kaleb thought I'd taken leave of my senses because you can't get cheese from a boy. He urged me to fatten them up and then sell them as quickly as possible for meat.

But I had a plan. About six acres of the farm is completely inaccessible to any kind of machine, and as a result it's been completely overrun by brambles. I reckoned I could put the goats in there and they could rush about like a fleet of horned lawnmowers. Plus, there was a financial side to the plan. The goats had cost me a tenner each, so £290 in total. But the six acres of land they'd create is worth £60,000. That's one hell of a return.

To begin with, I had to feed them the goat equivalent of formula milk, which was expensive, then I had to teach them about electric fencing, which I'm ashamed to say I found quite funny. But last week they were finally big and well-trained enough to be unleashed on the jungle of brambles.

Their work rate is phenomenal. It's like they're Polish. In just one day, they'd cleared a quarter of an acre and

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they were crapping all over the place, which is better for the soil than, say, not having animals.

But the best thing about the goats is that they are children-friendly. They don't perform disgusting sex acts on one another. They don't put their arms out and charge, and they don't want to rot. In some ways they are like dogs. They will walk to heel and they like it when you tickle them behind their ears.

In other ways they are not like dogs at all because they are far more intelligent. They are the most intelligent animals on earth. Forget dolphins. If you asked these guys to plant a mine on the underside of an enemy battleship, they'd quickly work out it was dangerous and tell you to bugger off.

When they were younger, they used to headbutt me quite a lot. And not in the thigh or on the knee. Oh no. They knew to go for my bollocks. Possibly because it was someone shaped like me who'd cut theirs off.

They are so intelligent that they see every toy you give them as a useful tool for escaping. If I let them have an old bicycle and some sails, I'm fairly sure they'd be up a tree in moments with a fully functioning glider. Certainly, children love it when they see them riding up and down the fence line on their Triumph motorcycles or carrying one another about in vaulting horses.

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I spend a lot of time every day with all my animals but I'm always happiest when I'm with the goats. And that means that this morning, I can leave you with a top tip. If you have a paddock, forget sheep or a donkey. And definitely forget a horse. Get goats. They'll do the gardening for you, they're cheaper to keep than a dog and they won't turn your children into drug addicts or vegetarians.

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AUTUMN



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