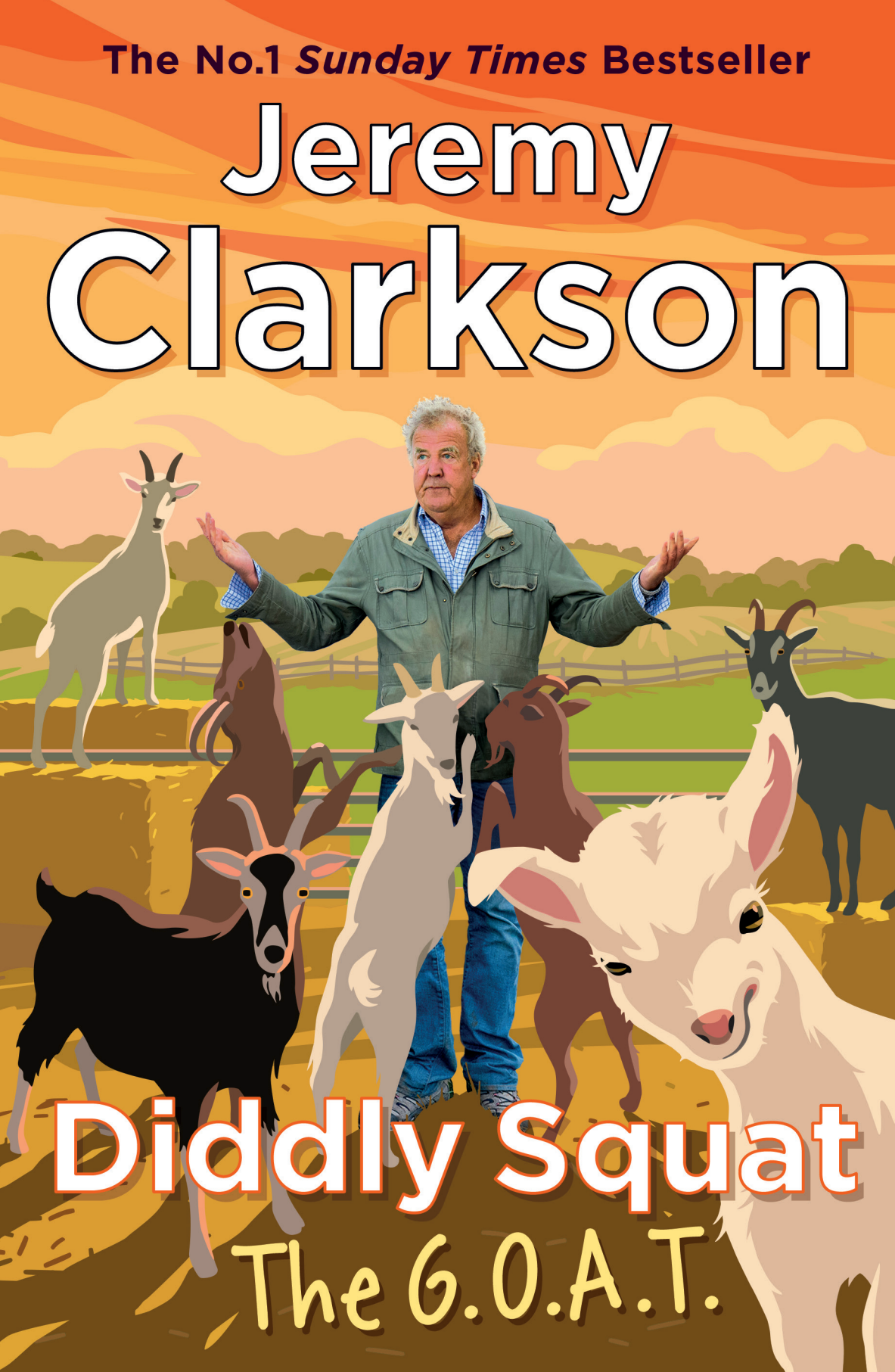
The No.1 *Sunday Times* Bestseller

Jeremy Clarkson



Diddly Squat

The G.O.A.T.

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Clarkson on Cars

The World According to Clarkson

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And Another Thing

Don't Stop Me Now

For Crying Out Loud!

Driven to Distraction

How Hard Can It Be?

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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Diddly Squat: Home to Roost

Diddly Squat: The Farmer's Dog

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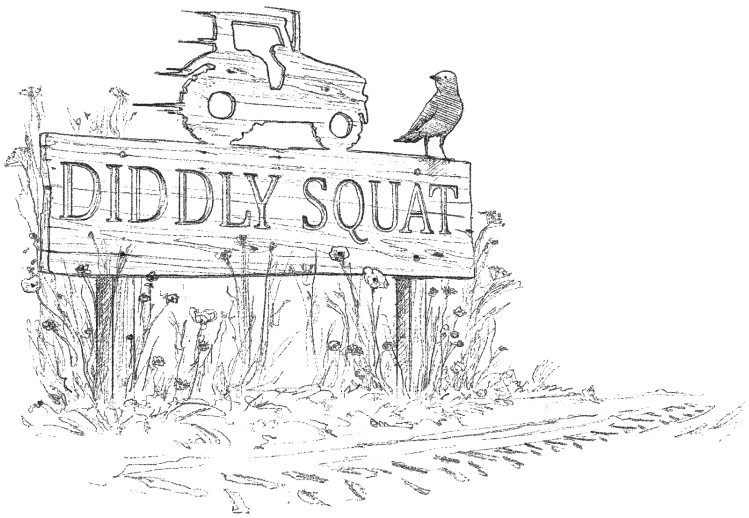

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The contents of this book first appeared in Jeremy Clarkson's *Sunday Times* column. Read more about the world according to Clarkson every week in the *Sunday Times*.

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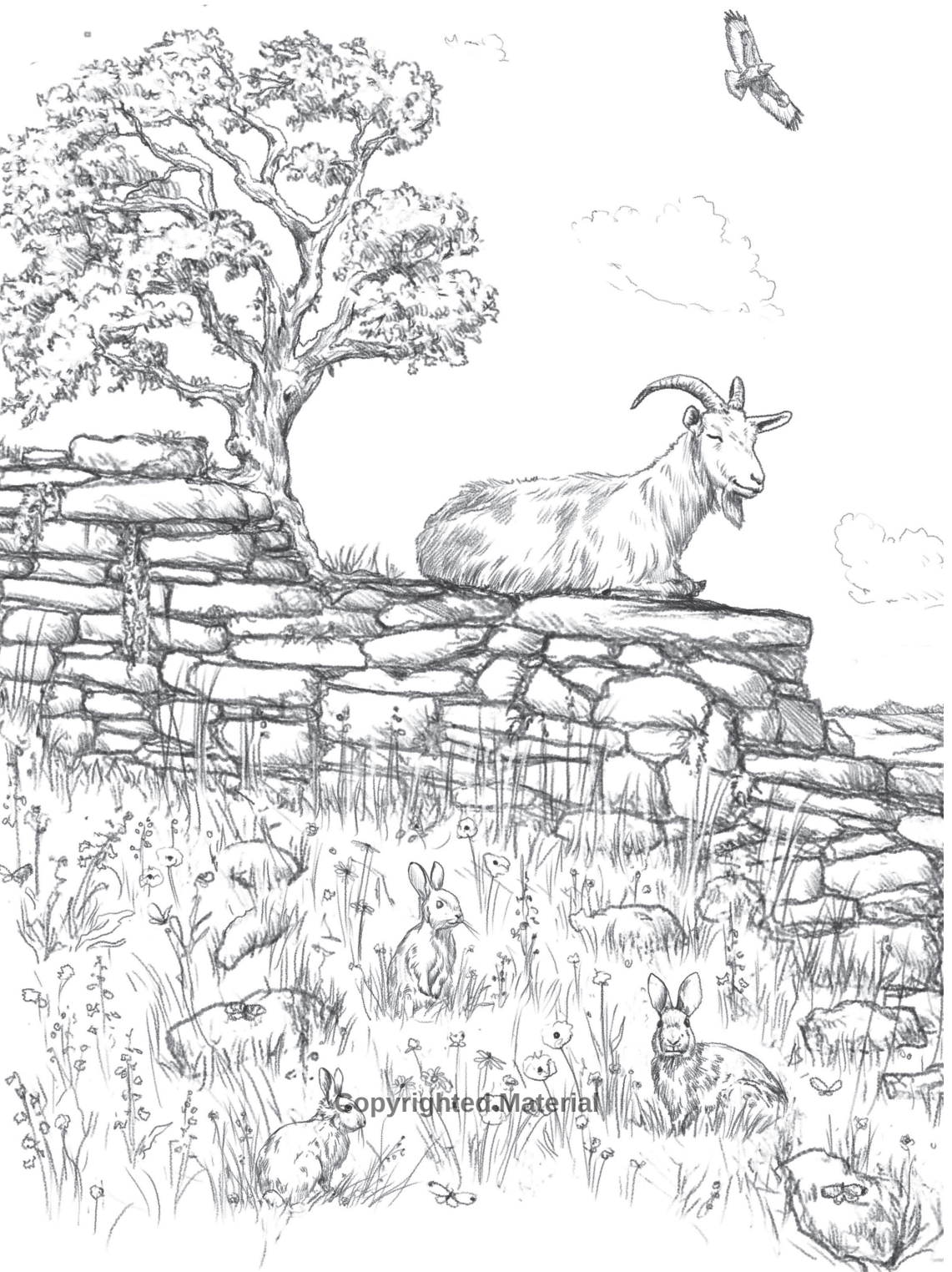
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SUMMER



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The Gents



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For reasons that aren't entirely clear, even to myself, I've been binge watching *Downton Abbey* over the last couple of weeks, and I must say it's completely preposterous. But there's no getting away from the fact that it does a good job of explaining what Englishness is.

There are scoundrels and rotters and people so wholesome it appears they are made from the tears of an angel, but they all have one thing in common. Impeccable manners. They stand when a lady enters the room. They don't guzzle their wine. And even when they have something rude to say, they dress it up in such a way that it seems they're being polite. Lord Grantham, in particular, is the very definition of an English gentleman.

Or is he? I only ask because, last week, I was waiting in the car park at Charlbury railway station to pick up my son from the train. And my eye was caught by a Mercedes G-Wagon that had been customised to make it extremely revolting. Having come to a halt with the car in two bays, a man got out and I don't think I've

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ever seen such a disgusting specimen in my entire life. Tracksuit trousers, white trainers, jowls like saddle bags, the complexion of a King Edward and Albanian gangster hair.

As he gathered both his phones from the car and wandered over to the platform, I was, to my eternal shame, wondering what such a terrible man was doing on my patch. A patch that has always been rather genteel. He was as out of place as Cole Palmer at a literary festival. Because he was plainly the sort of man who believes that farting is funny and that money should be used to buy things, not time.

And then I became depressed because it occurred to me that today, this wobbly cretin was actually more typically English than Hugh Bonneville's Lord Grantham. His blinged-up life is what people aspire to nowadays. No one would be happy any more to spend the afternoon wondering whether their cucumber sandwiches had been cut with a knife made from silver or stainless steel. Because they'd rather be going large on K in Marbella.

If you go out for dinner now, the pub or restaurant is extremely unlikely to feature a family who sit up straight and are impeccably polite to the staff. Instead, it's likely to be full of braying yobbos who talk with their mouths full and use their cutlery to point at things. We live in a

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time when girls can make a better living than a dowager countess by filming themselves being sick.

No one strives to have good manners. We are all Ronnie Pickering, waiting for a spark to set us on the path of spittle and confrontation. Reporters used to ask the prime minister if he had anything he'd like to add to his statement. Now they shout insults at him across Downing Street. 'Have you murdered anyone today, prime minister?'

This attitude is everywhere. I know probably half a dozen people here in the formerly Cotswolds who are fastidiously polite. But even the local dukes will sometimes turn up at a black-tie event in jeans.

So does this mean that good manners are now a thing of the past? Is there anyone left who knows which spoon to use? Well I've given the matter serious thought, and the answer is yes: the Arabs.

In recent years, for all sorts of reasons, I've encountered a few of them at various social functions. Some have even become friends. And they are so well mannered they make Lord Grantham look like a Millwall supporter on a coke bender.

We had an actual Arab prince to the farm for lunch last week. He was a teenager so you'd imagine he was both surly and entitled. But he wasn't. Every time a lady came past the lunch table, he stood up and when our

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housekeeper arrived to clear away the plates, he leapt to his feet, helped her and even loaded the dishwasher.

When my children were young, I took them to meet an Arab friend at his Bedouin camp in the desert. And when they walked into the dining area, their chins damn near hit the ground. 'I didn't know what they might like,' he said, 'so I got them everything.' And he really had. There were Big Macs and KFC buckets at one end and over the next hundred yards, there was every foodstuff you could think of, ending up with a massive goat meze on a 6ft silver platter. I've seen some hospitality in my time but nothing has matched that. And nor has anyone matched the grace with which he served it.

Of course, these guys are rich and so they can afford it, but you should see how they treat their chauffeurs and their helicopter pilots and their security teams. It's immaculate.

Many were educated here and many have houses here and most freely admit they aspire to the shooting and fishing life of an English gentleman. So they must wonder what on earth has gone wrong when they see those tattooed and noisy Englishers moving in their droves to Dubai every year.

So what's happened? Why have we become so uncouth and ill mannered and why are they now the guardians of the Downton spirit? Well, the funny thing

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is that despite all the old houses and our royal family and our sense of history, an awful lot of the people in this country who have money think it buys them the right to swagger and boast.

Whereas the rich Arabs have been wealthy for more than a hundred years. They've been through the boastful Ferrari stage but now they have no need to show everyone how rich they are. Because we know already. So now, if you want to know what Englishness is, don't bother looking at an actual Englishman. Go and talk to the modern-day Lord Grantham. He's called Al-something. And you'll find him in St James's choosing some tweed for the 12th.

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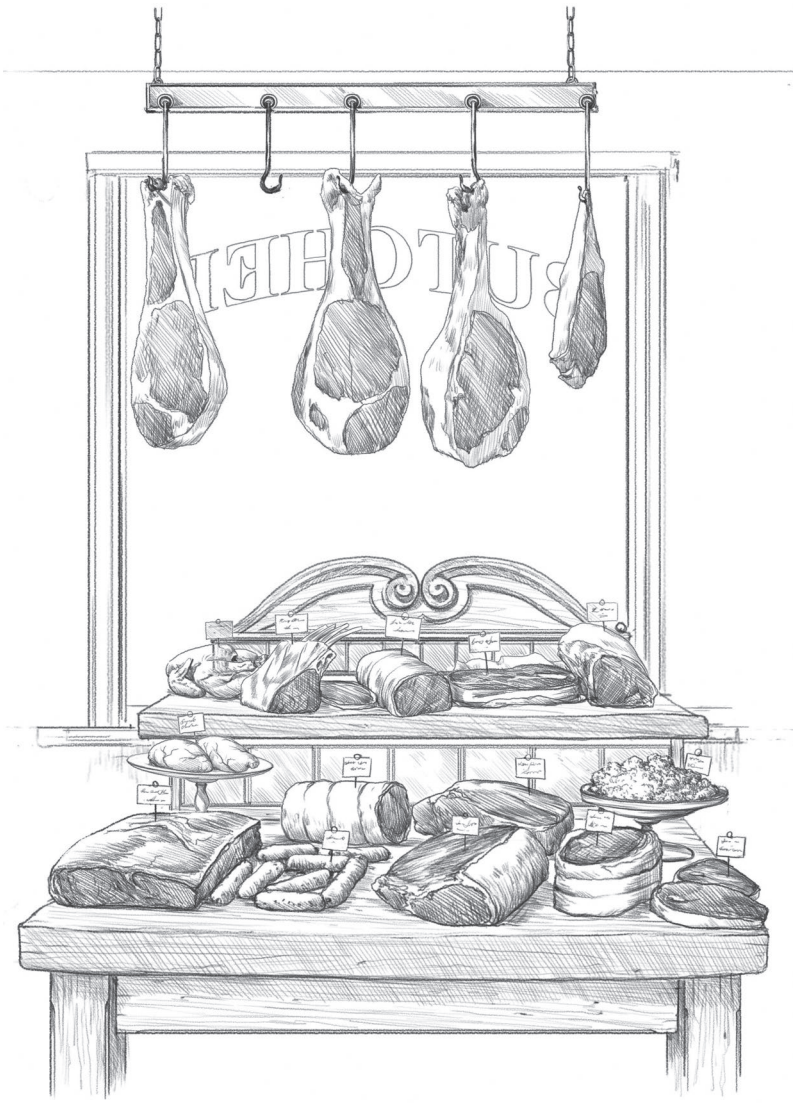
No, Me Neither



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A lot of young people who know everything seem to be very concerned at the moment that various local disputes around the world will soon engulf us all, and that any day now a hailstorm of missiles will rain down on Britain, cutting off our access to Instagram, essential moisturising creams and all the wellness mental health treatments that are so vital for people in the acronym community. It terrifies them.

I was speaking to some of them last weekend and suggested that maybe the biggest problem might be the empty supermarket shelves. But they didn't seem to understand that at all. No quinoa? It didn't compute. And anyway, why do you need food when you have Ozempic?

As I live on a farm, you might imagine I feel quite smug about the forthcoming date with Armageddon because while you are all murdering your next-door neighbour to steal his last tin of pilchards, I'm surrounded by all that I need to survive. I can make bread and pasta and I have enough potatoes to keep me in chips for a thousand

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