

Feed My Sheep

by

Scott Ennis



Illustrations

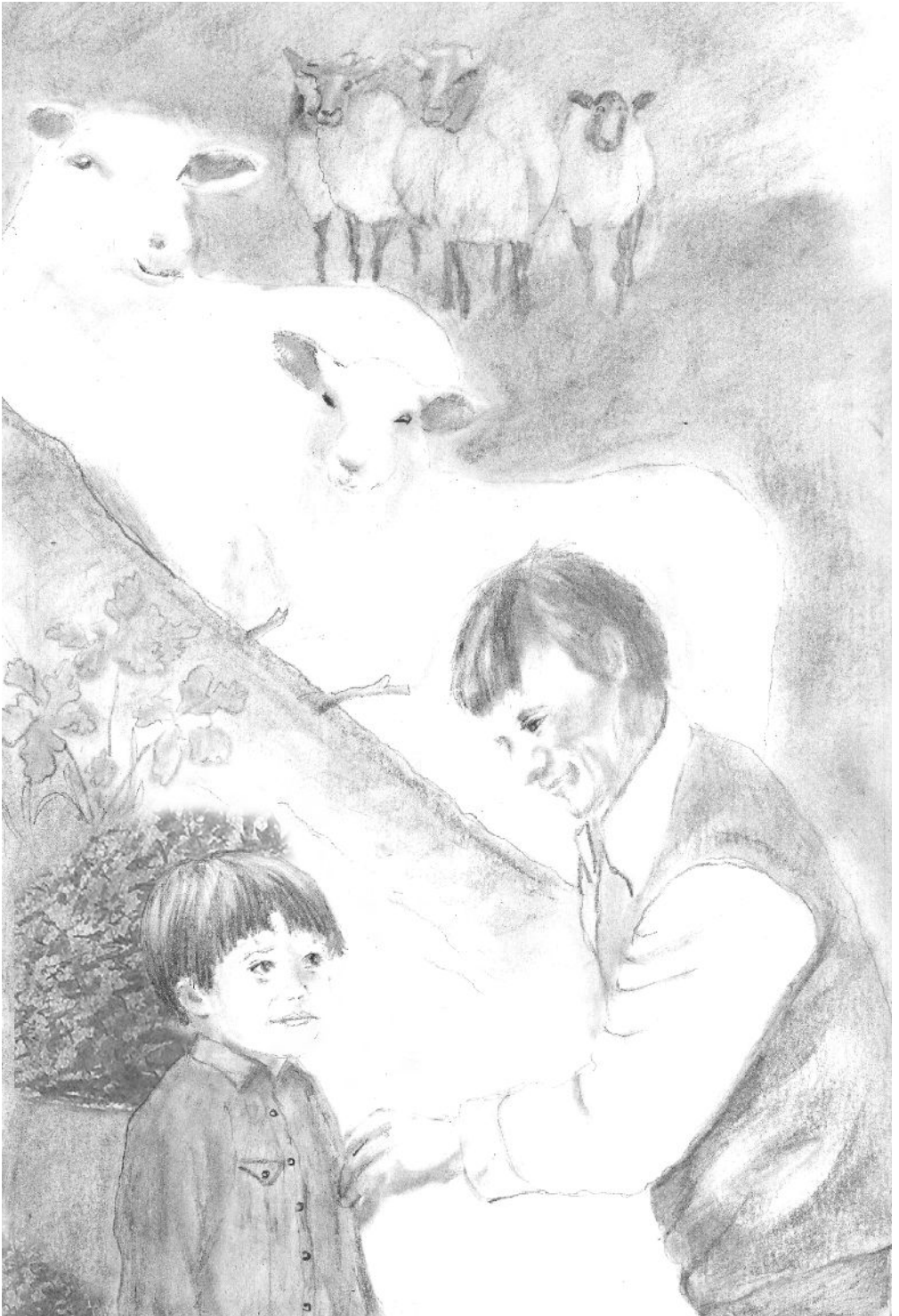
by

Karin Sköld

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Once there was a boy whose father raised sheep.

One day the father said to his son, “I must go away for a while. While I am away you must feed my sheep.”

The boy had never been left alone with the sheep. “Father,” said the boy, “how can I care for your sheep as well as you have always done?”

The father smiled and said to his son, “If you do all that you can, it will be enough.”

The father left and the boy was alone with the sheep.



In the morning the sheep cried because they were hungry. Their feeder was empty.

The boy went to the barn and fetched some food to fill the sheep's feeder.

The sheep were very hungry and the boy had to make many trips to the barn to fetch enough food to fill their feeder.

The boy worked all morning long. It was hard, heavy work, but he remembered his father's words: "If you do all that you can, it will be enough."



In the afternoon the sheep cried because they were thirsty. Their water trough was empty.

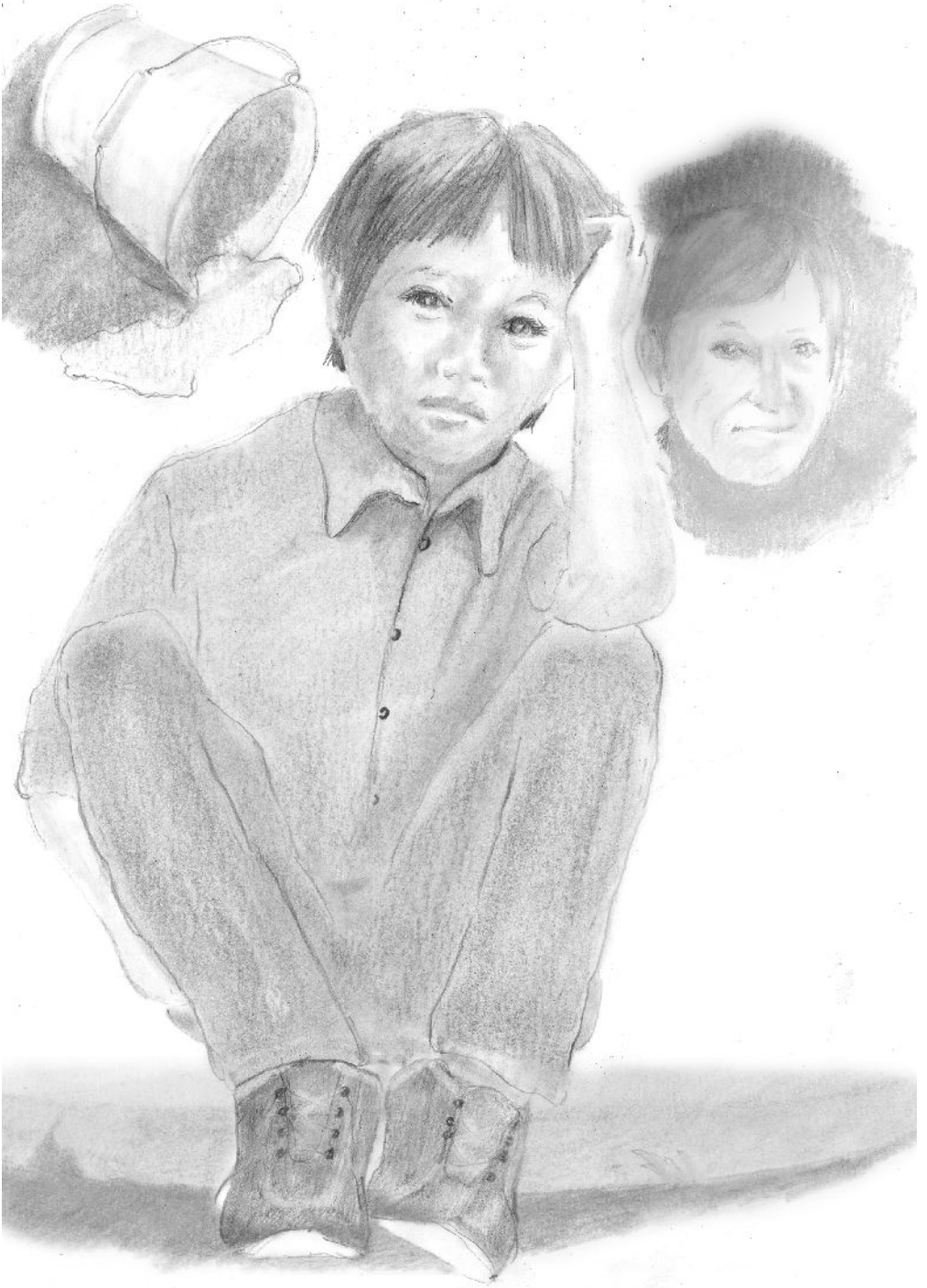
The boy went to the well and fetched water to fill the sheep's trough.

The sheep were very thirsty and the boy had to make many trips to the well to fetch enough water to fill their trough.

The boy worked all afternoon. It was hard, heavy work, but he remembered his father's words: "If you do all that you can, it will be enough."

In the evening the sheep were filled and they lay down peacefully for the night.

The boy was so tired from his labors of the day that he ate his supper and went to bed right away.



The next morning the boy awoke to the sound of the sheep crying in hunger once again.

The boy was sore from his work of the previous day. He thought, "I'm very tired. These sheep will have to wait until I am rested."

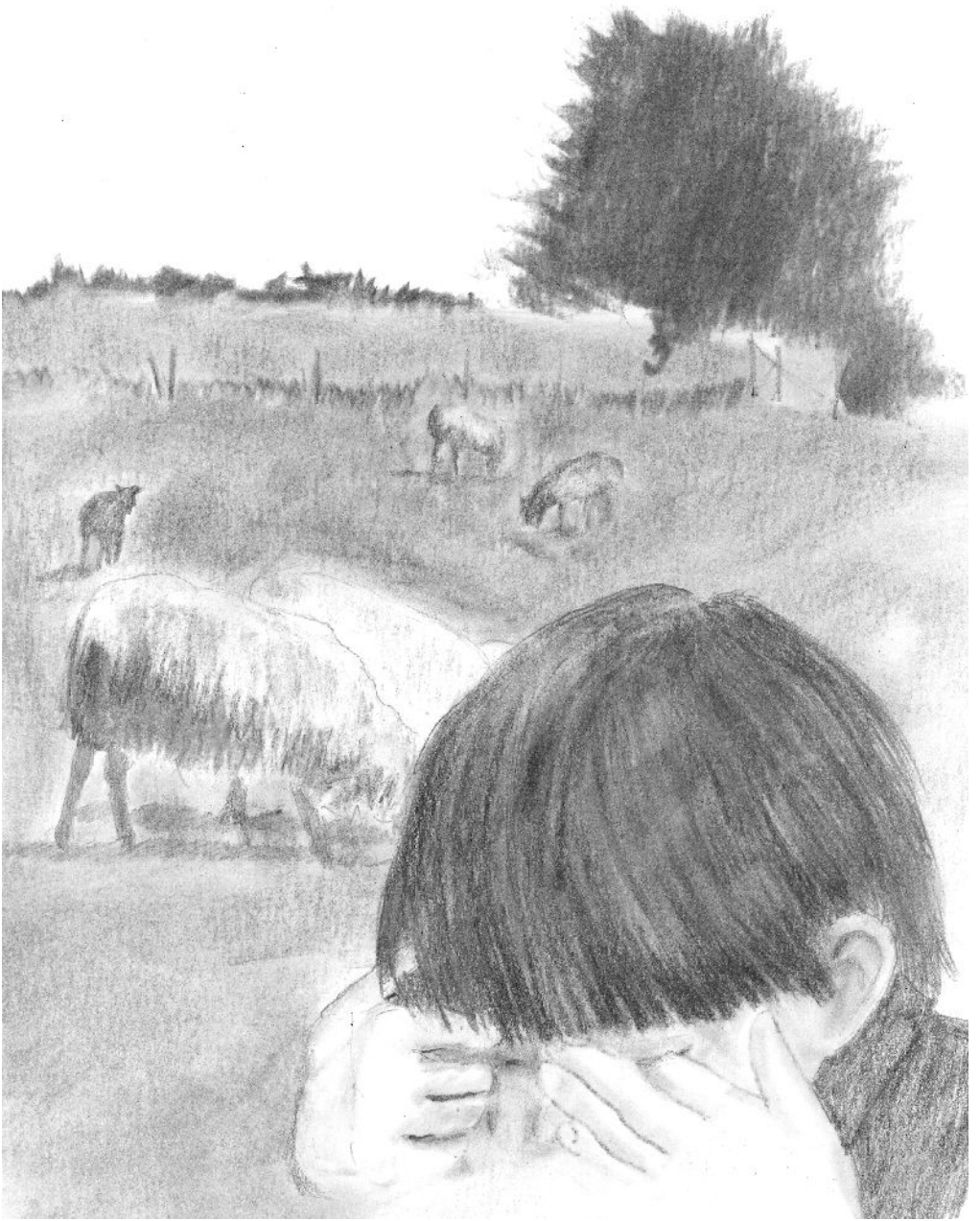
But then the boy remembered that these were his father's sheep. He knew that his father would never leave the sheep to cry in hunger, and he felt ashamed.

"But I am so tired," cried the boy. "And I am only one boy. How can I ever do enough for all these sheep?"

Then the boy remembered the words of his father: "If you do all that you can, it will be enough."

So the boy set out to fetch food for the hungry sheep from the barn and brought it to them all morning long.

And he fetched water for the thirsty sheep from the well all through the afternoon.



By the time the sheep had eaten their fill of food and drank their fill of water it was late in the evening.

The boy was too tired to eat his own supper that night and he went straight to his bed to sleep.

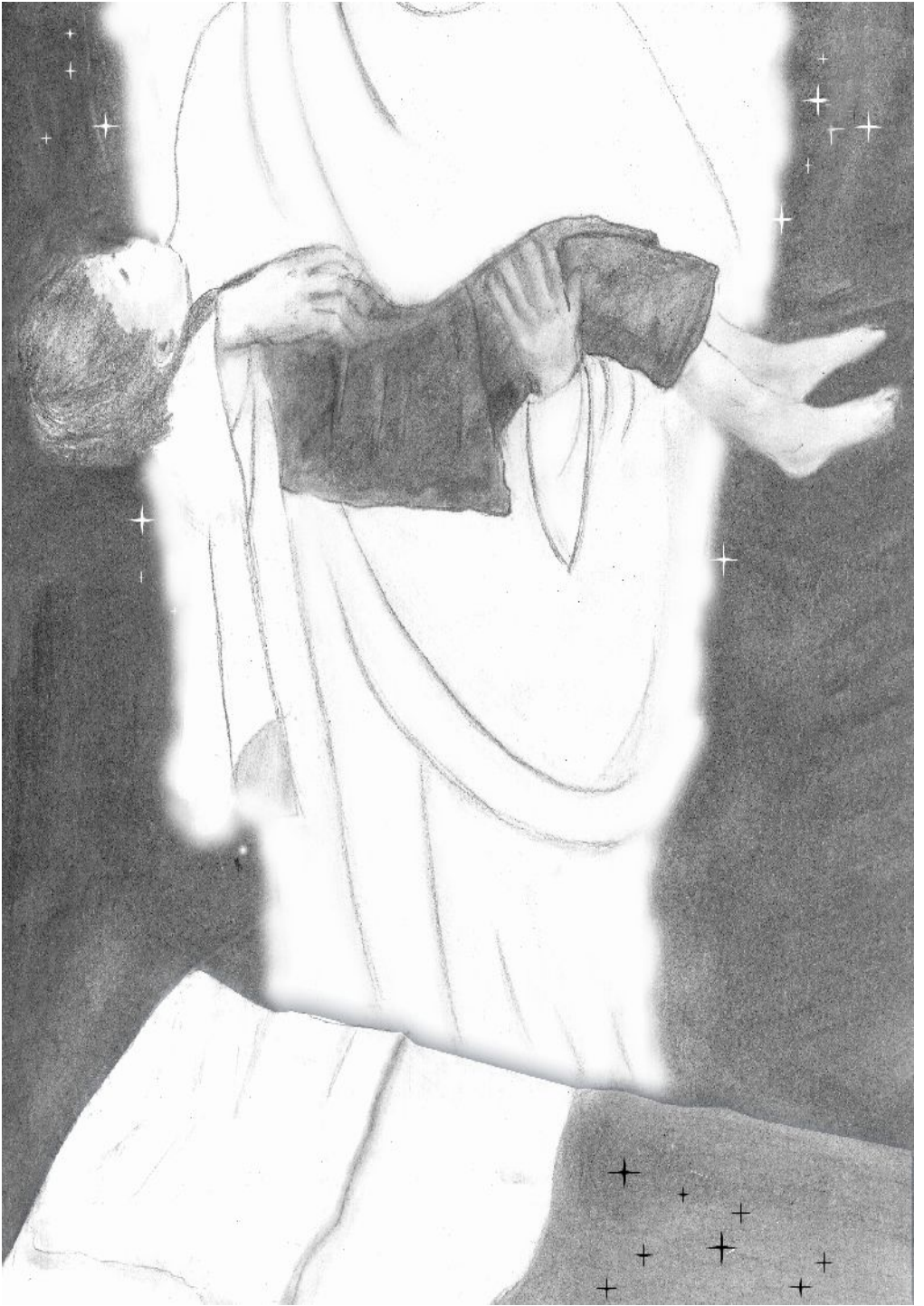
In the morning the boy awoke sore and tired and hungry, and once again the sheep were crying in hunger.

“Father,” cried the boy, “I am so tired and sore and hungry. Where are you father? Why have you left me all alone?”

Then the father’s voice came into the boy’s mind and repeated these words in a still, small way: “If you do all that you can, it will be enough.”

And the boy knew that his father was counting on him to feed his sheep.

So the boy went to the barn to fetch food for the sheep, and he went to the well to fetch water for the sheep.



All day long the boy labored to care for the sheep. And all day long he cried for his father to return. And all day long he heard his father's words in a still, small voice: "If you do all that you can, it will be enough."

It was very late into the night when the sheep had enough to eat and drink and finally settled down to a peaceful sleep.

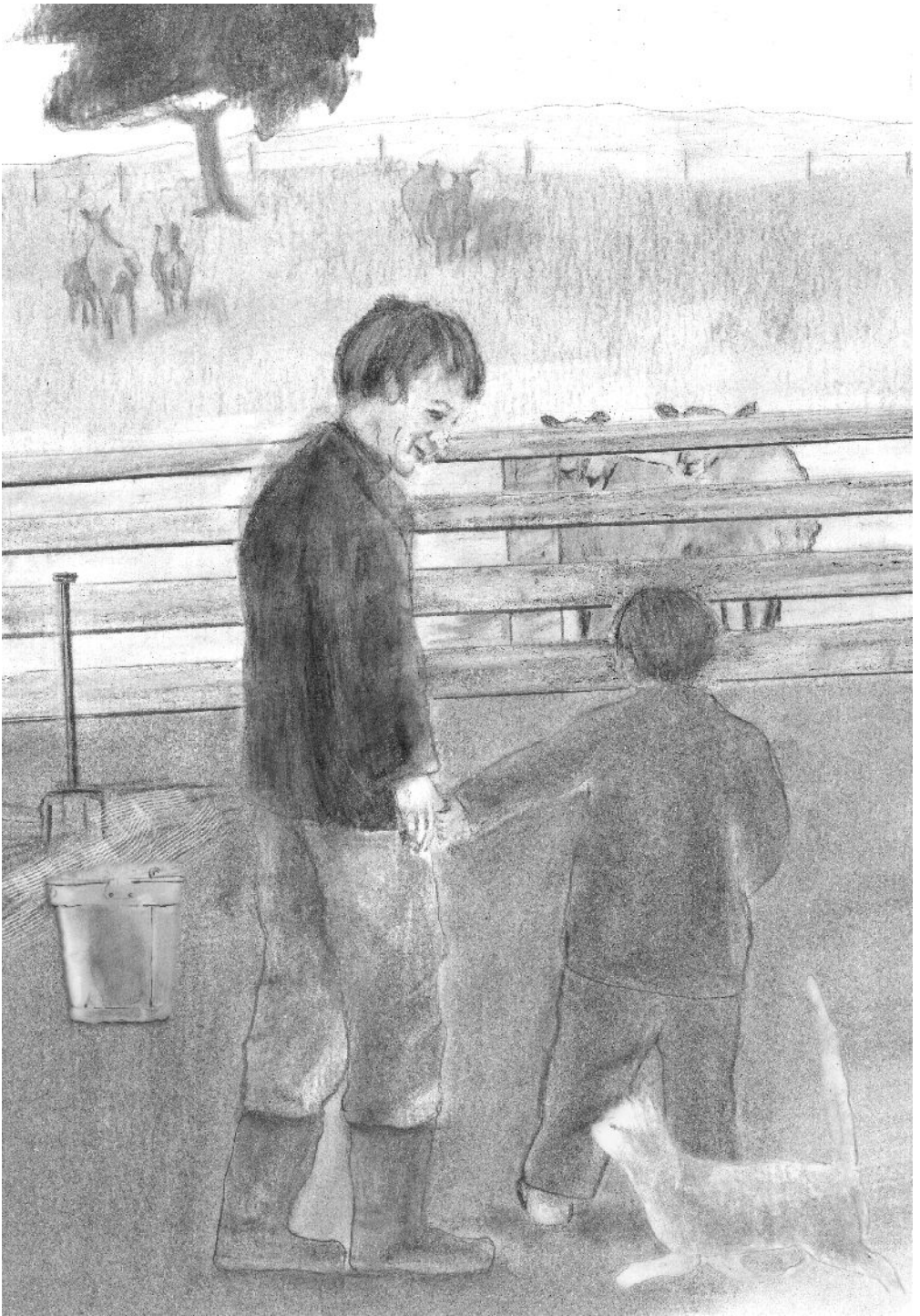
The boy was so tired that he lay down and fell asleep in the pen with the sheep.

That night the boy dreamed that an angel came down and carried him away in his arms and laid him down on a soft, comfortable cloud.

In the morning the boy awoke once again to the cries of the hungry sheep, but he was lying in his bed and his father was standing over him.

The boy cried out and threw his arms around his father's neck. "Oh father, I am so weary. I am hungry and sore and I do not think I can do any more."

The father smiled and said, "Follow me."



The boy followed his father to the sheep pen.

The father opened the gate and told his son, “Go and stand just inside the gate.”

The sheep were all gathered expectantly at the feeder and water trough on the other side of the pen. But when the boy entered the pen, they all turned and flocked around him.

“Now,” said his father, “let’s walk.”

The father and son walked together along the road which led to a green pasture.

When the son looked behind, he was surprised to see all the sheep following orderly and quietly.

The father opened the gate to the pasture which was a beautiful deep green, full of grass and clover, with a small clear stream of fresh water flowing through its center.

“Go into the pasture a little way,” the father said to his son. And the son obeyed the father without question.



The sheep followed the boy into the pasture and immediately began to graze on the rich, green grass and to drink from the clear, fresh stream.

“Thank you father,” said the boy. “I don’t think I could have cared for your sheep much longer.”

“My son,” replied the father, “these sheep are now yours. You must care for them from now on. All that was mine is now yours.”

“But father,” said the boy, “I was failing. If you had not returned when you did, the sheep would have gone hungry.”

“Son,” explained the father, “I told you that if you did all that you could, it would be enough. I knew just when to return. I know that you did all that you could. I know that it was enough. And now you should know it too.”

The son was puzzled. “I don’t understand,” he said to his father.



“You have loved these sheep and cared for them,” said the father. “You did all that you could for them. The sheep know that. That is why they came to you when you entered their pen. That is why they followed you along the road. These sheep know that you will always love them and care for them. These sheep are not difficult to tend. Now that they know you and trust you, all you have to do is lead them to a green pasture and they will feed themselves.”

Then the son knew that he had indeed done all that his father had asked of him. And he knew that it was enough.

The end.



Scott Ennis is an award winning poet and writer who lives near Washington, D.C.

“I wrote this story to illustrate the point that our efforts of service and love are never wasted, even when we feel beneath the task.

Sometimes the love is shown more deeply because of our imperfect attempts at expressing it.”



Karin Sköld is an artist and illustrator who lives in the countryside outside Nyköping, Sweden. With her husband and two daughters.

She enjoys working in a variety of different media, such as: pencil, charcoal, pastel, colored pencils and computer.

In this book she is working in her favorite media, pencil and charcoal.

"I have really found that graphite pencil is a fantastic tool to use. It has a lot of possibilities with the greyscales. Charcoal is also good to use in this context, so flexible. Graphite pencil is a

fantastic artist tool to work with, so often underestimated."