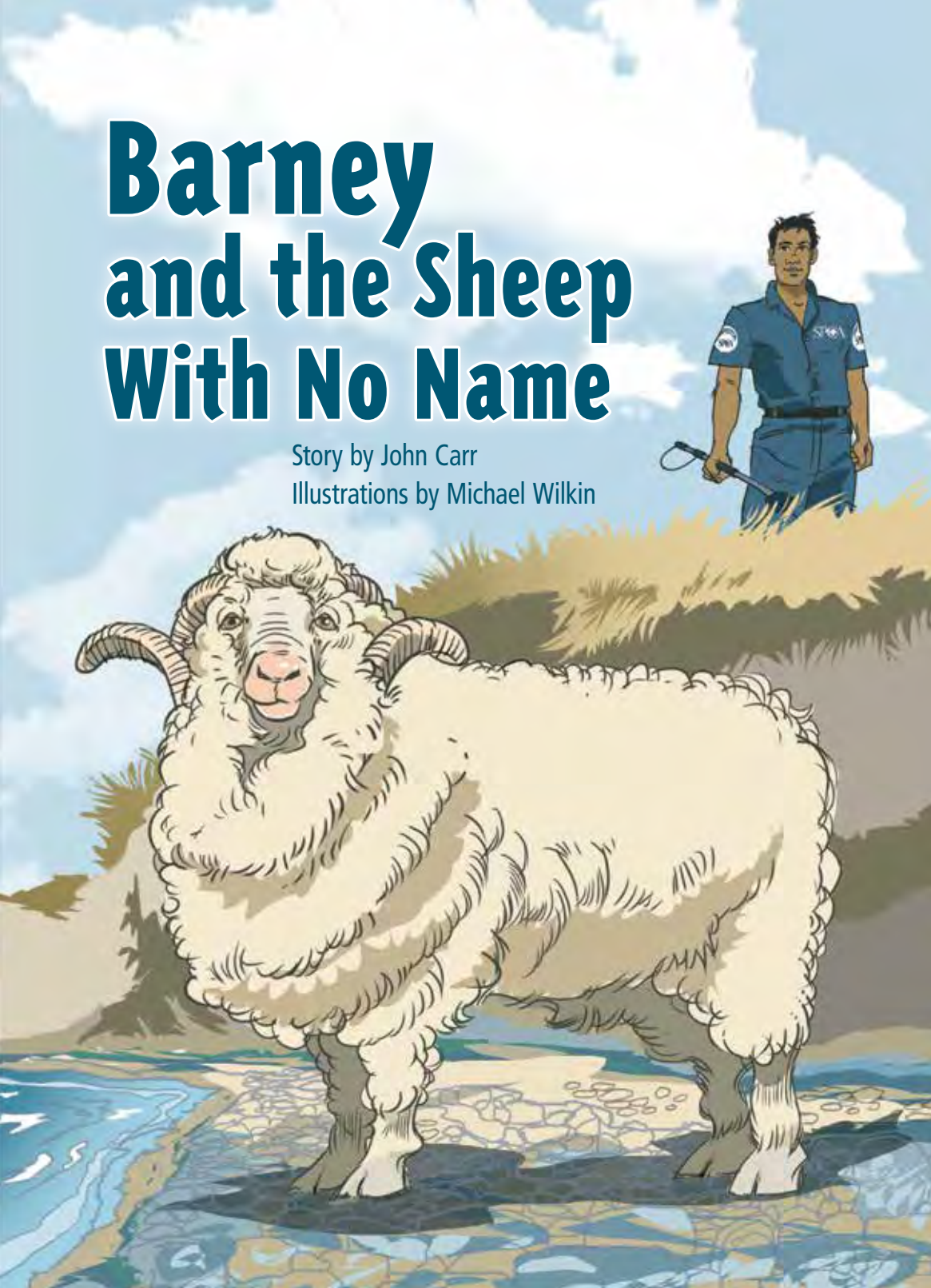
Barney and the Sheep With No Name

Story by John Carr
Illustrations by Michael Wilkin



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Text by John Carr
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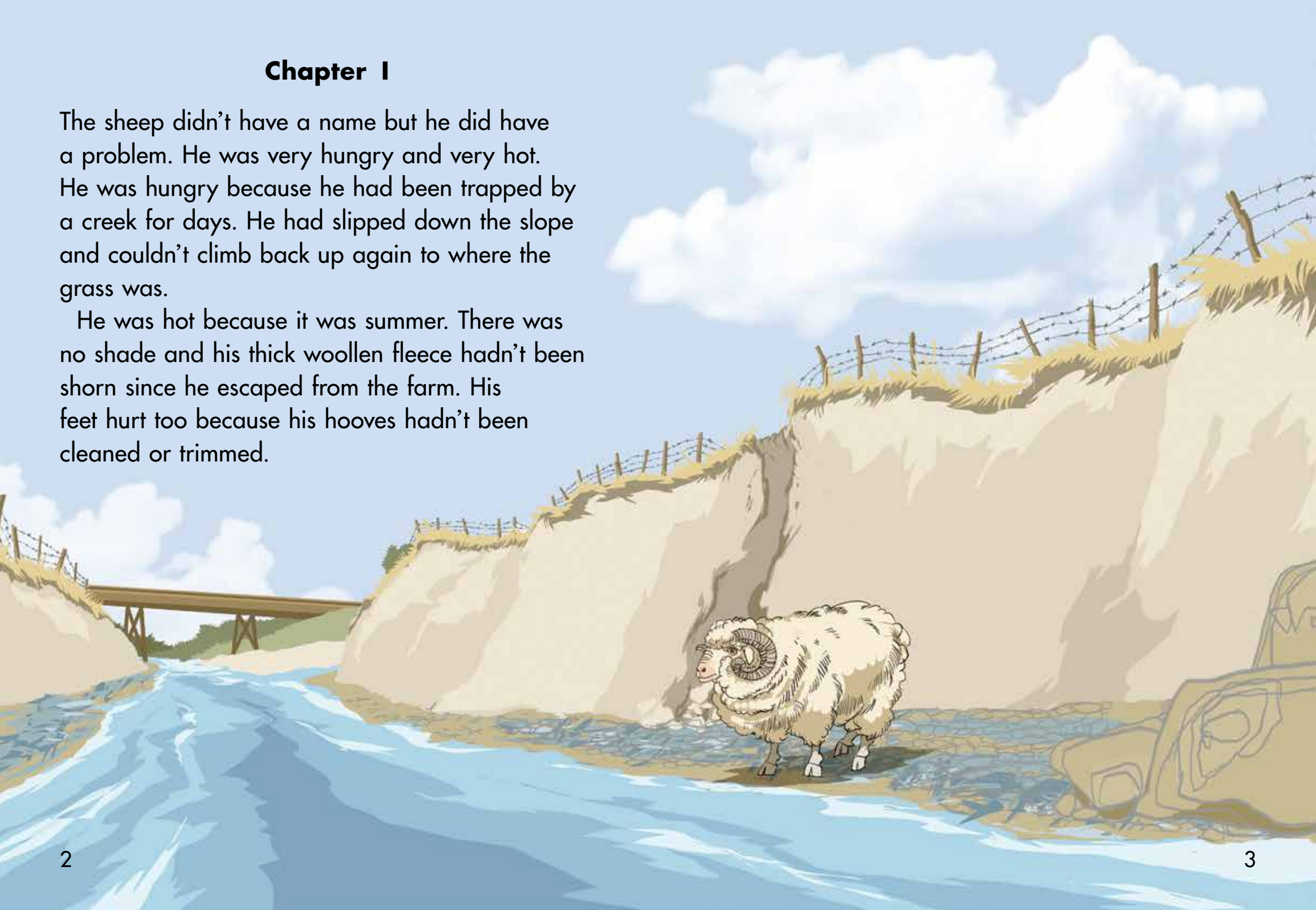
Chapter 1

The sheep didn't have a name but he did have a problem. He was very hungry and very hot. He was hungry because he had been trapped by a creek for days. He had slipped down the slope and couldn't climb back up again to where the grass was.

He was hot because it was summer. There was no shade and his thick woollen fleece hadn't been shorn since he escaped from the farm. His feet hurt too because his hooves hadn't been cleaned or trimmed.

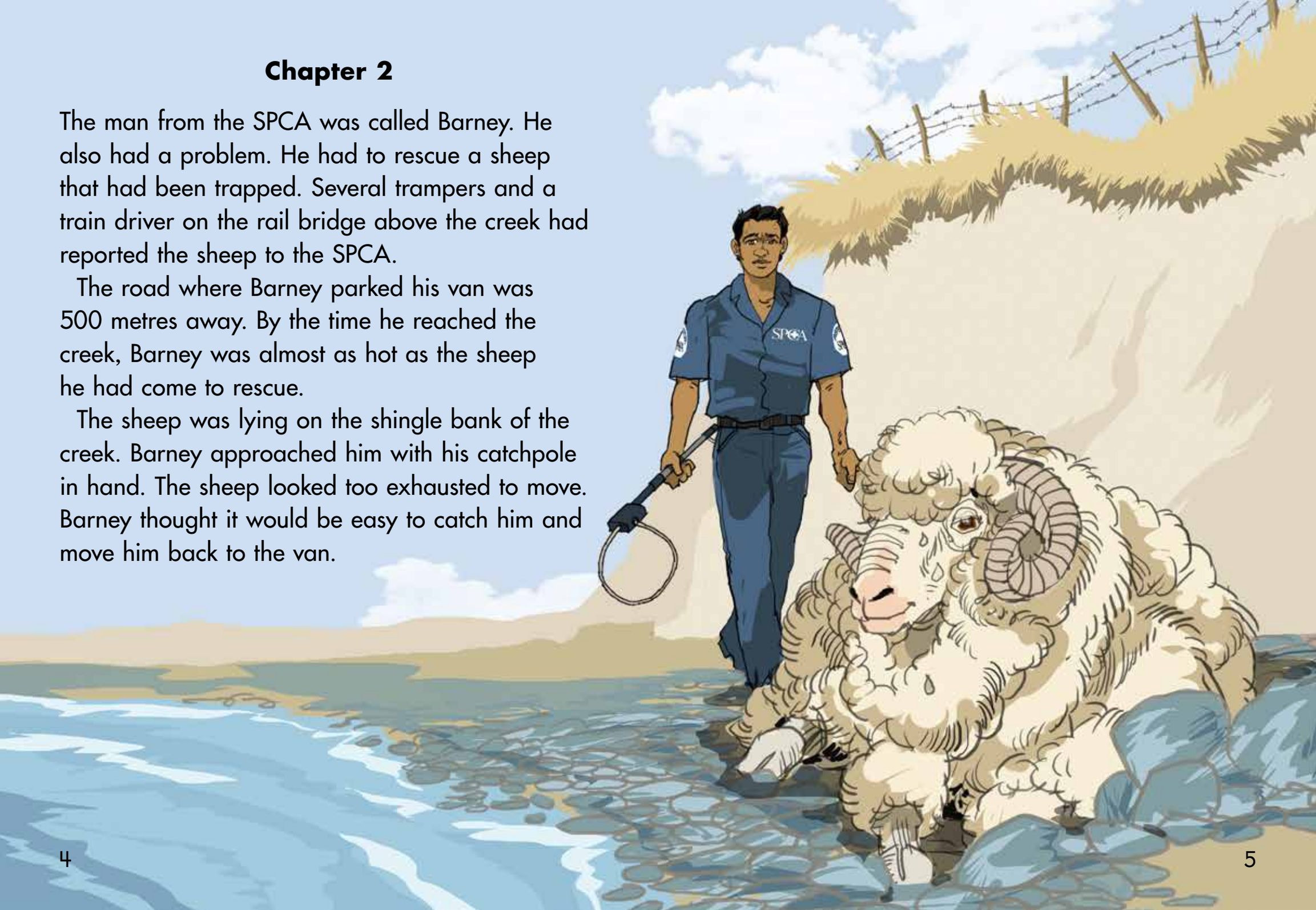


Chapter 2

The man from the SPCA was called Barney. He also had a problem. He had to rescue a sheep that had been trapped. Several trampers and a train driver on the rail bridge above the creek had reported the sheep to the SPCA.

The road where Barney parked his van was 500 metres away. By the time he reached the creek, Barney was almost as hot as the sheep he had come to rescue.

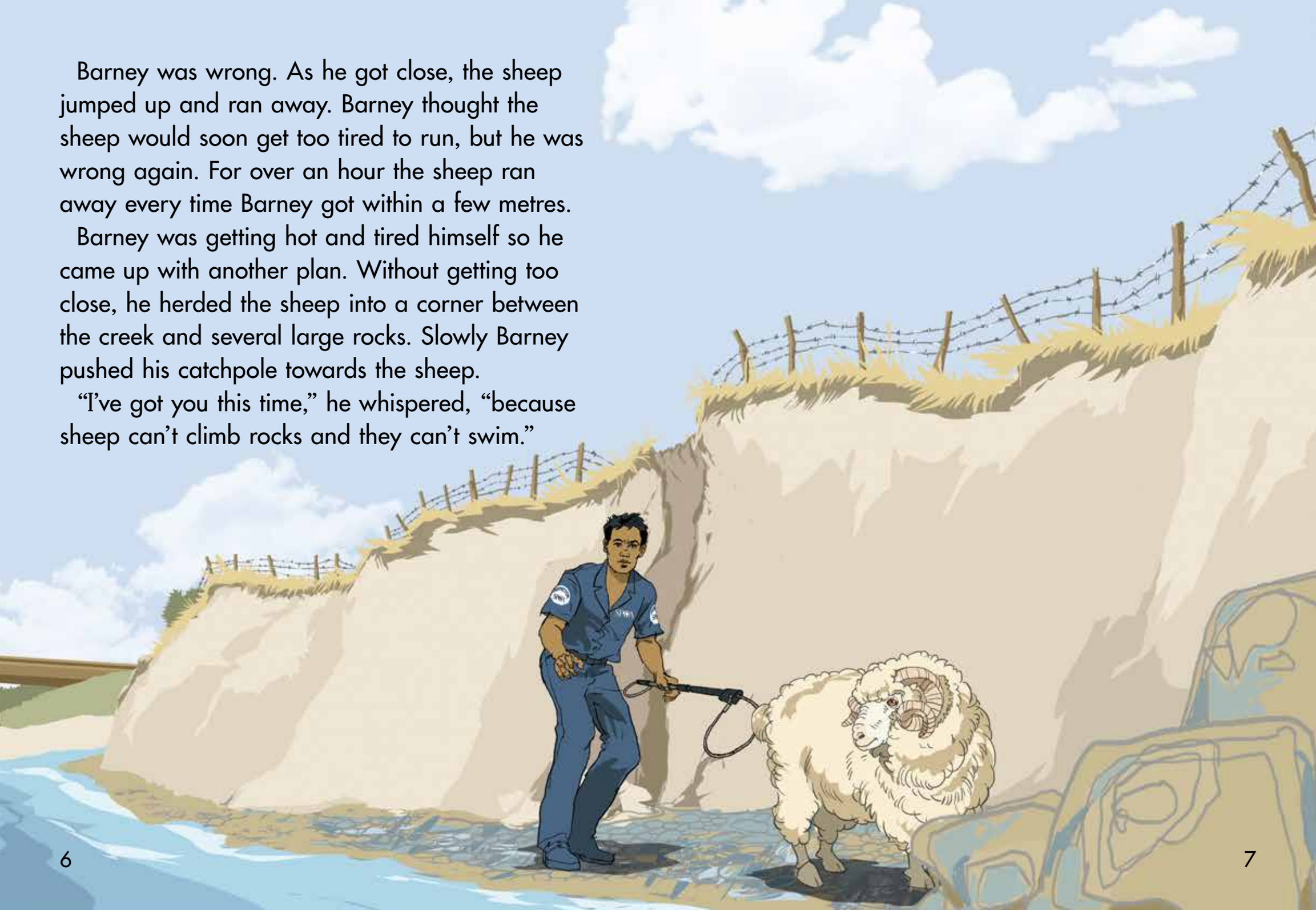
The sheep was lying on the shingle bank of the creek. Barney approached him with his catchpole in hand. The sheep looked too exhausted to move. Barney thought it would be easy to catch him and move him back to the van.



Barney was wrong. As he got close, the sheep jumped up and ran away. Barney thought the sheep would soon get too tired to run, but he was wrong again. For over an hour the sheep ran away every time Barney got within a few metres.

Barney was getting hot and tired himself so he came up with another plan. Without getting too close, he herded the sheep into a corner between the creek and several large rocks. Slowly Barney pushed his catchpole towards the sheep.

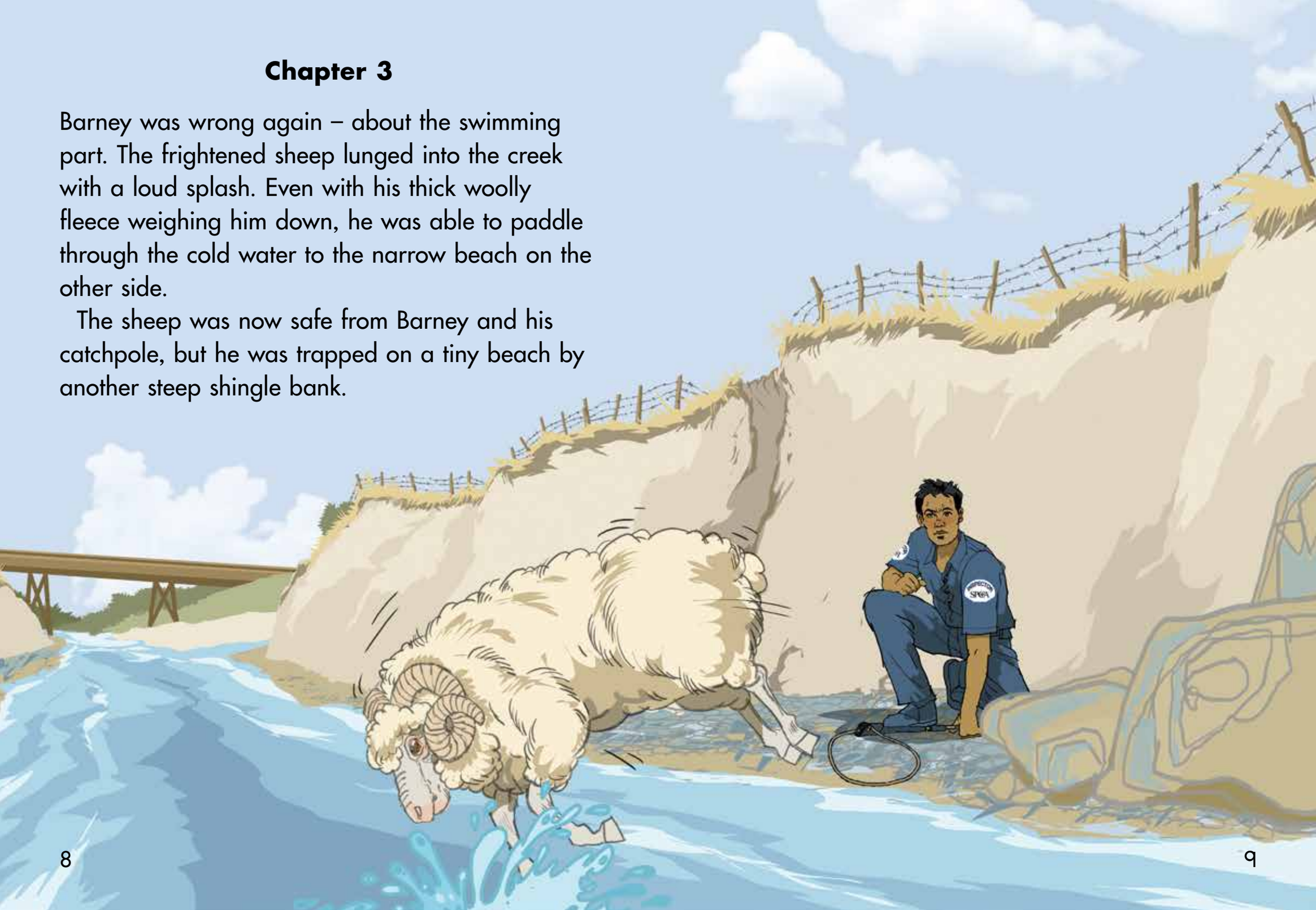
"I've got you this time," he whispered, "because sheep can't climb rocks and they can't swim."



Chapter 3

Barney was wrong again – about the swimming part. The frightened sheep lunged into the creek with a loud splash. Even with his thick woolly fleece weighing him down, he was able to paddle through the cold water to the narrow beach on the other side.

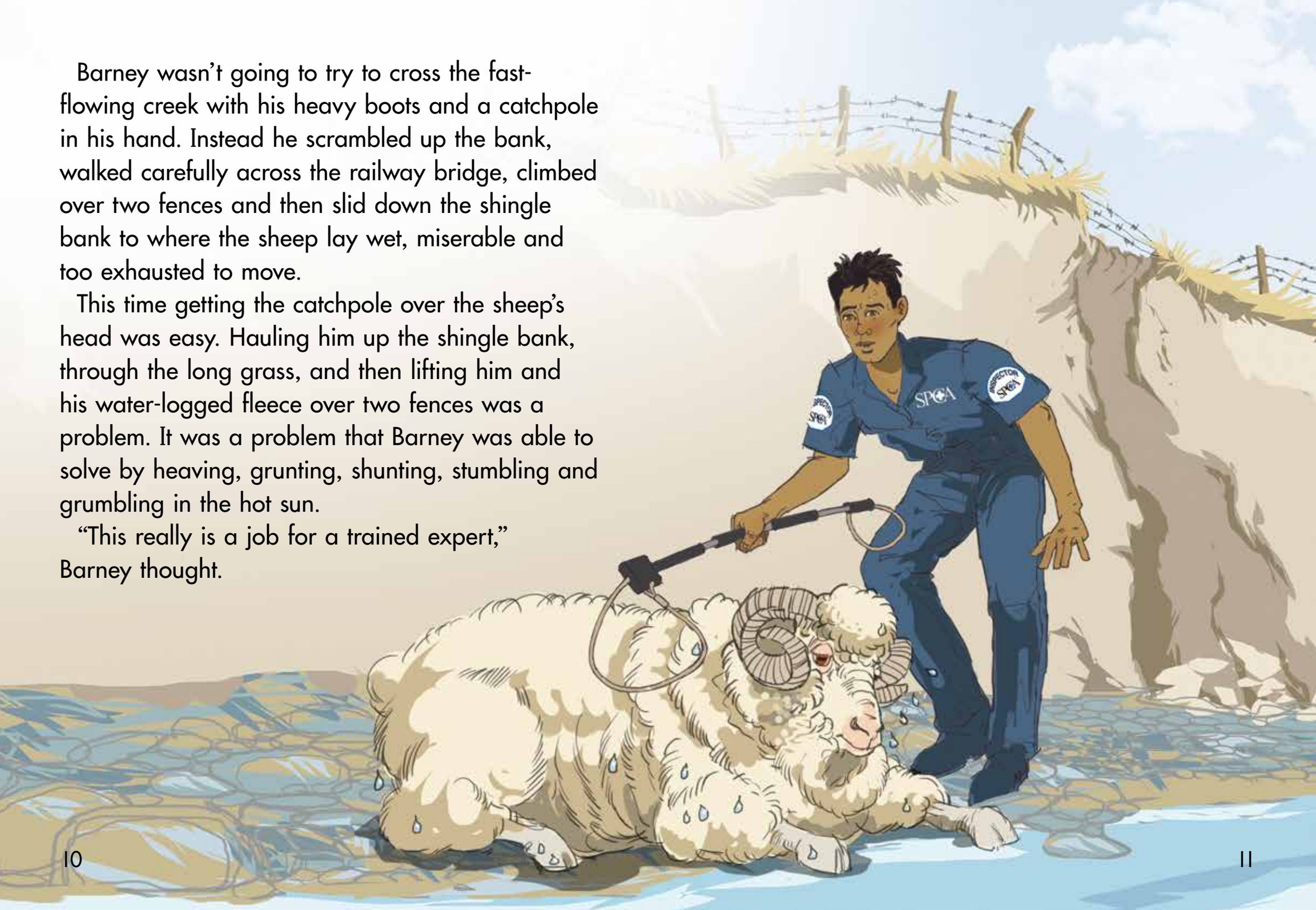
The sheep was now safe from Barney and his catchpole, but he was trapped on a tiny beach by another steep shingle bank.

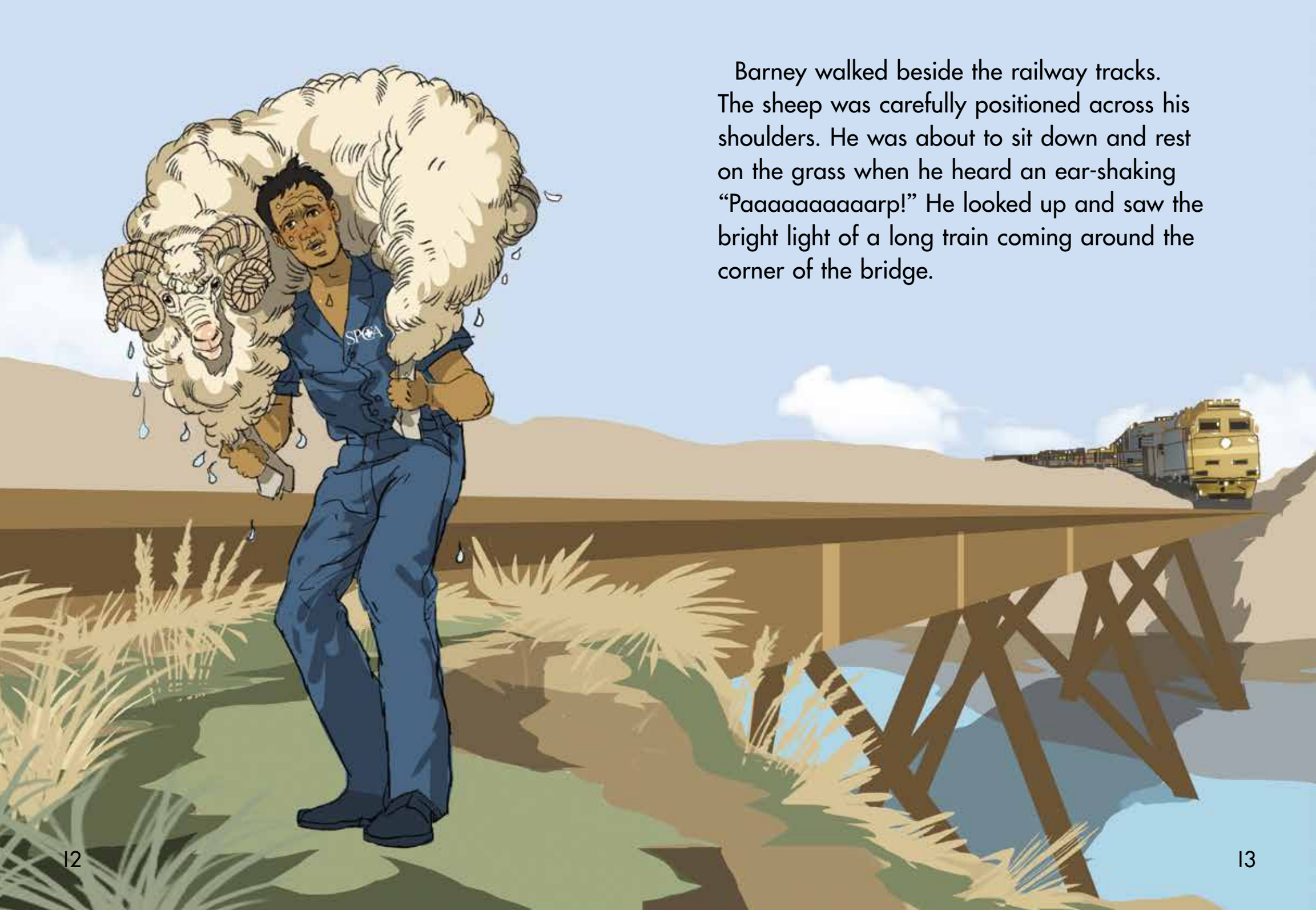


Barney wasn't going to try to cross the fast-flowing creek with his heavy boots and a catchpole in his hand. Instead he scrambled up the bank, walked carefully across the railway bridge, climbed over two fences and then slid down the shingle bank to where the sheep lay wet, miserable and too exhausted to move.

This time getting the catchpole over the sheep's head was easy. Hauling him up the shingle bank, through the long grass, and then lifting him and his water-logged fleece over two fences was a problem. It was a problem that Barney was able to solve by heaving, grunting, shunting, stumbling and grumbling in the hot sun.

"This really is a job for a trained expert," Barney thought.





Barney walked beside the railway tracks. The sheep was carefully positioned across his shoulders. He was about to sit down and rest on the grass when he heard an ear-shaking "Paaaaaaaaaarp!" He looked up and saw the bright light of a long train coming around the corner of the bridge.

Chapter 4

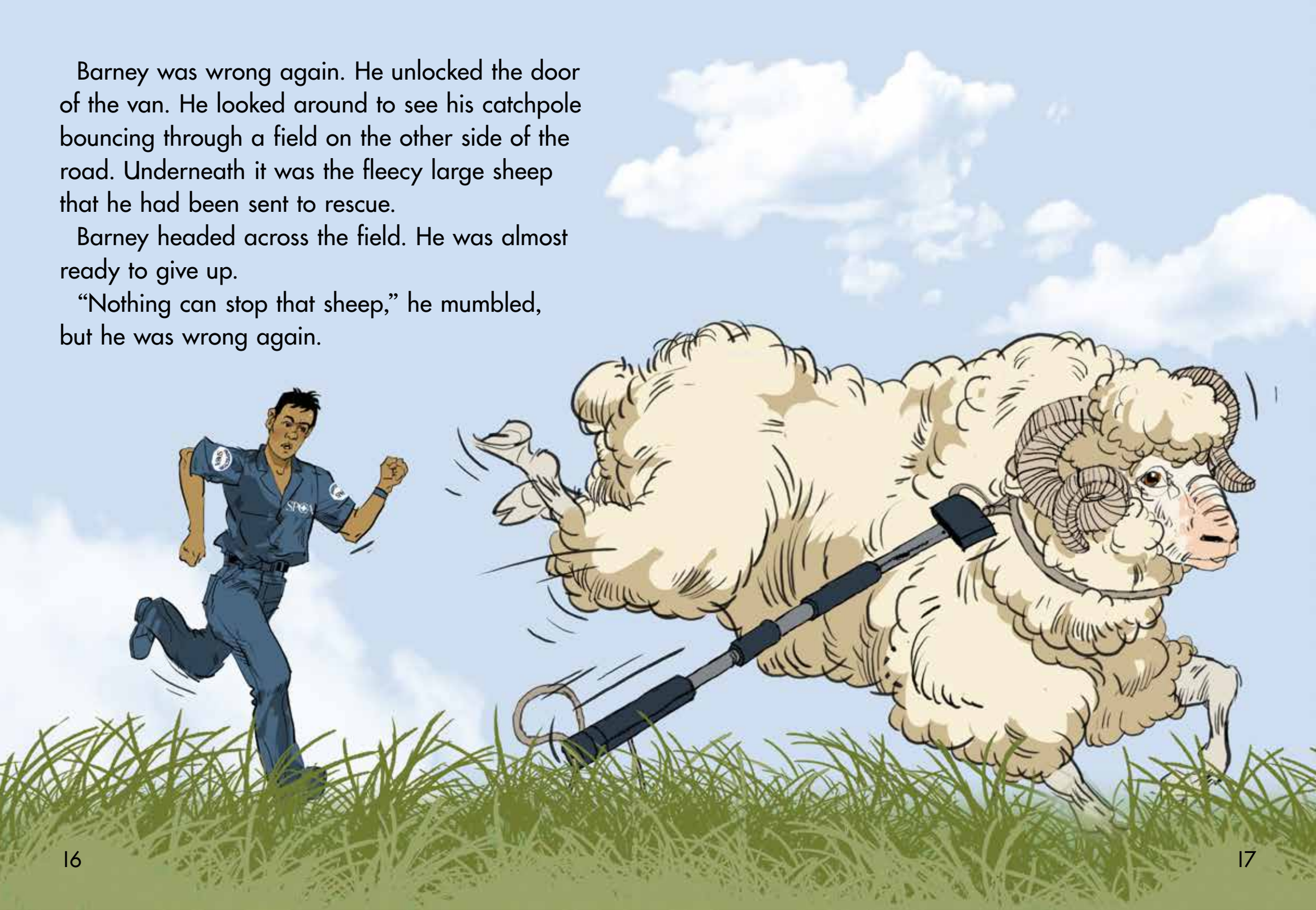
Barney knew being too close to a fast train would frighten the sheep even more. As another louder "paaaaaaaaarp!" rang out, Barney slid down the bank. He came to a stop in the long grass below the bridge. He was glad that his slide was cushioned by the grass. The sheep's slide was cushioned by Barney himself. Barney wasn't so glad about that!

Hot, tired, sore and thirsty, Barney carried the sheep back to the van. When he put the sheep down on the ground to open the van he thought the sheep would be too tired to run away.

Barney was wrong again. He unlocked the door of the van. He looked around to see his catchpole bouncing through a field on the other side of the road. Underneath it was the fleecy large sheep that he had been sent to rescue.

Barney headed across the field. He was almost ready to give up.

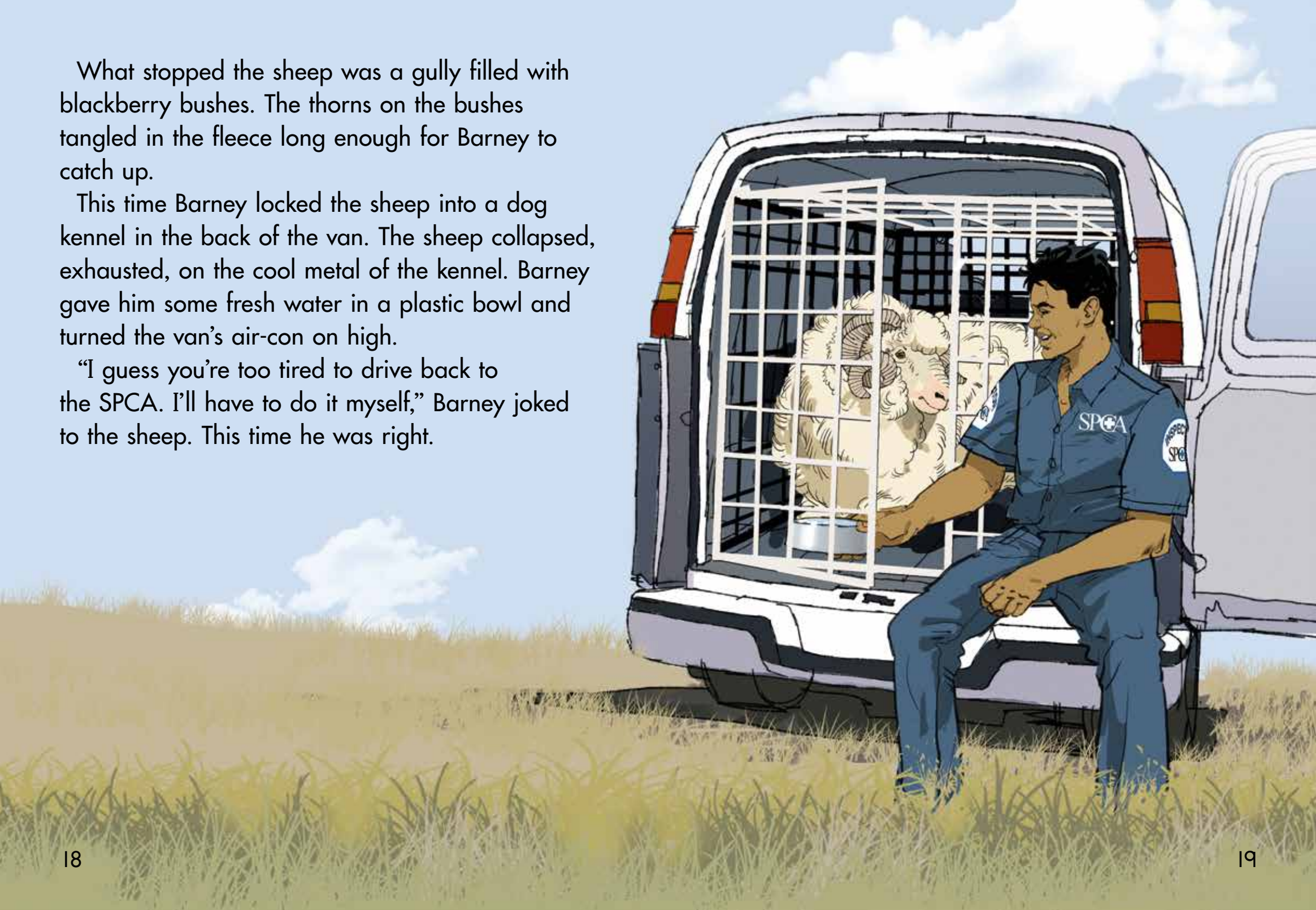
"Nothing can stop that sheep," he mumbled, but he was wrong again.



What stopped the sheep was a gully filled with blackberry bushes. The thorns on the bushes tangled in the fleece long enough for Barney to catch up.

This time Barney locked the sheep into a dog kennel in the back of the van. The sheep collapsed, exhausted, on the cool metal of the kennel. Barney gave him some fresh water in a plastic bowl and turned the van's air-con on high.

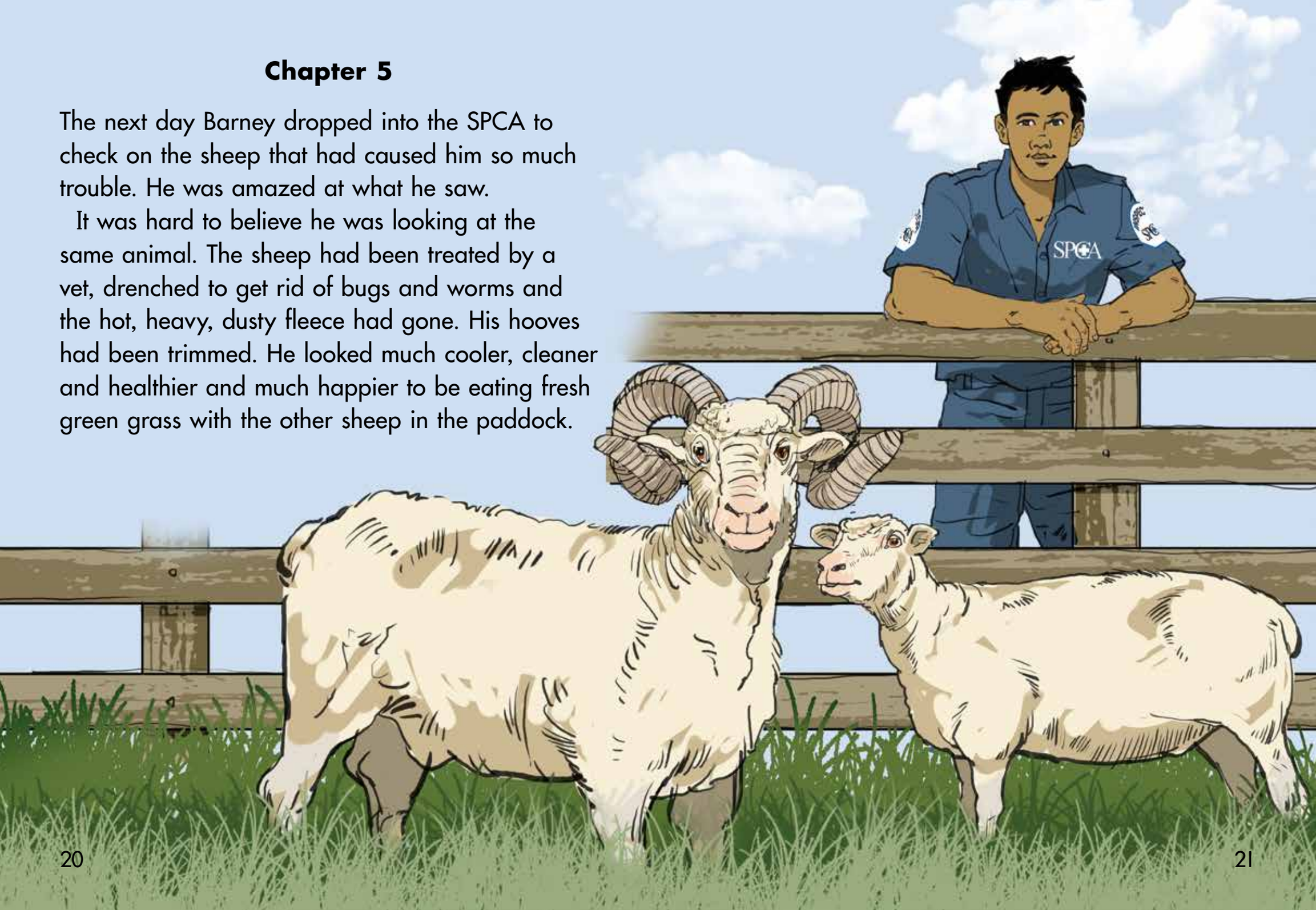
"I guess you're too tired to drive back to the SPCA. I'll have to do it myself," Barney joked to the sheep. This time he was right.



Chapter 5

The next day Barney dropped into the SPCA to check on the sheep that had caused him so much trouble. He was amazed at what he saw.

It was hard to believe he was looking at the same animal. The sheep had been treated by a vet, drenched to get rid of bugs and worms and the hot, heavy, dusty fleece had gone. His hooves had been trimmed. He looked much cooler, cleaner and healthier and much happier to be eating fresh green grass with the other sheep in the paddock.

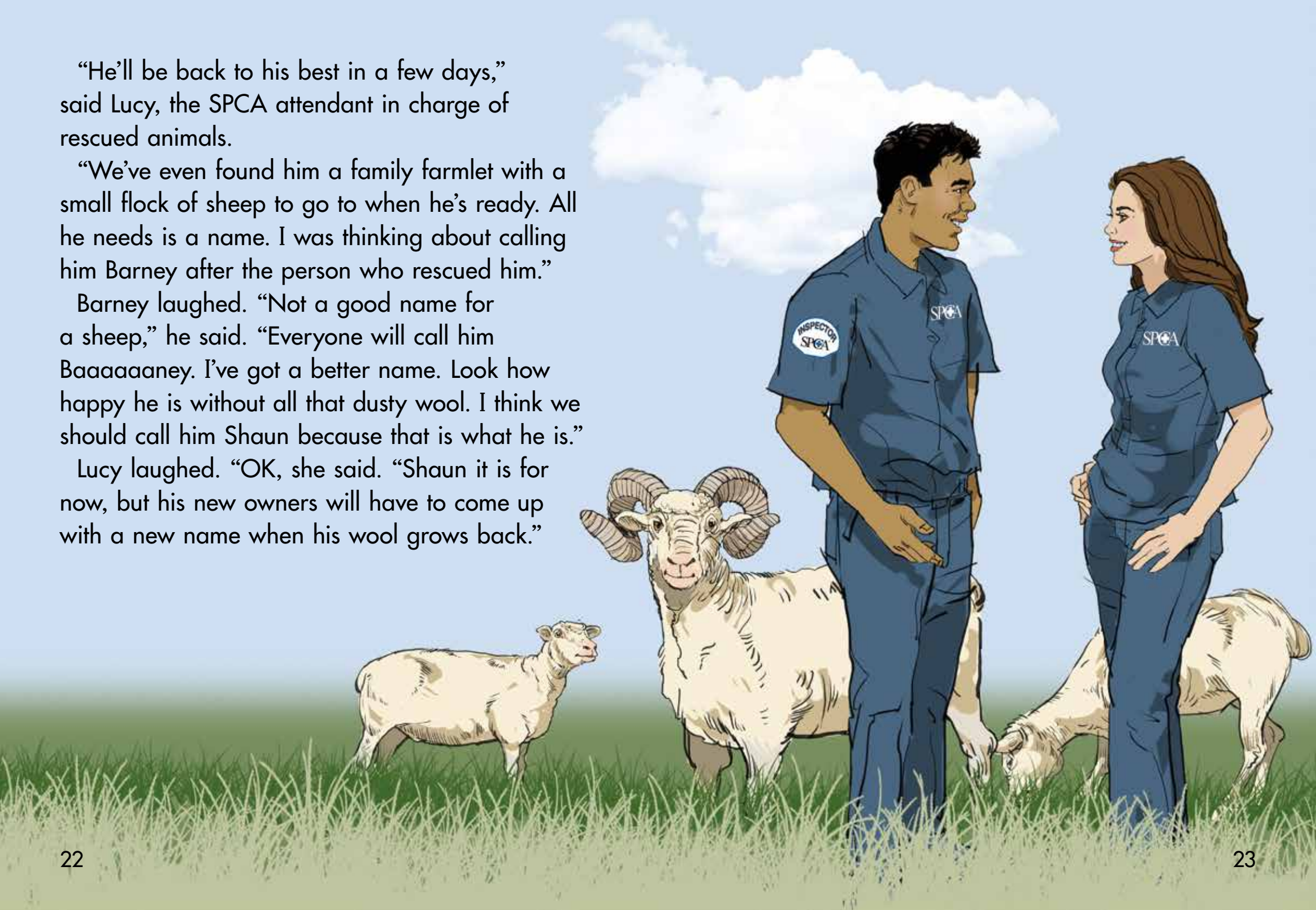


"He'll be back to his best in a few days," said Lucy, the SPCA attendant in charge of rescued animals.

"We've even found him a family farmlet with a small flock of sheep to go to when he's ready. All he needs is a name. I was thinking about calling him Barney after the person who rescued him."

Barney laughed. "Not a good name for a sheep," he said. "Everyone will call him Baaaaaaney. I've got a better name. Look how happy he is without all that dusty wool. I think we should call him Shaun because that is what he is."

Lucy laughed. "OK, she said. "Shaun it is for now, but his new owners will have to come up with a new name when his wool grows back."



Care of Sheep

- Sheep need grass to eat and fresh water to drink. They also need other sheep with them in the paddock so they feel happy and safe.
- Sheep graze for around seven hours a day and they need good grass. In the winter, they may be given hay.
- Sheep can be nervous animals. They don't like loud noises and fast movements. Speak calmly and quietly around sheep and keep barking dogs away.
- Sheep need to be in fenced paddocks so they can't wander onto the road or into waterways. Fences also keep other animals out, so the sheep stay safe.
- Sheep need shade from the hot sun in summer and large trees to shelter from the wind and rain in winter.
- Sheep are shorn of their wool once or twice a year. They also have the wool around their bottoms cut off so that flies don't land there.
- Orphaned lambs need feeding four or five times a day with special milk that is warmed up for them. This milk is very important for newborn lambs. It gives them energy and antibodies. These antibodies protect them from common diseases.

Visit kids.spcaeducation.org.nz to learn more about caring for sheep