

AMY THE GOAT

by

Alicia Masson

Chapter 1 – Sensible Schoolgirl
Chapter 2 – Un-Happy Birthday!
Chapter 3 – The Circus
Chapter 4 – Competitive Cross Country
Chapter 5 – Goat Noises
Chapter 6 – Oh, Pong!
Chapter 7 – Expressing your inner goat-ness
Chapter 8 – Top Grades
Chapter 9 – “You’ve Been Caught”
Chapter 10 – To Date a Goat
Chapter 11 – The Transformation
Chapter 12 – The Morning After the Night Before
Chapter 13 – Into The Woods
Chapter 14 – There was no doubt in Amy’s mind that she would get in severe trouble
Chapter 15 - Monday Morning Breakfast
Chapter 16 – A Goat at School
Chapter 17 – The Chase
Chapter 18 – Mrs Moplevelton
Chapter 19 – The Large Cardboard Box
Chapter 20 – The Smirking Door
Chapter 21 – Chaos in the Corridors
Chapter 22 – Opening Night
Chapter 23 – The Ask
Chapter 24 – The Show Must Go On

Chapter 1 – Sensible Schoolgirl

Before the age of ten, Amy Bloomsy was a sensible schoolgirl. Or rather, she was *forced* to be a sensible schoolgirl.

Two weeks before her tenth birthday, Amy's mother ripped her from her happy school with all her friends and dropped her in *St Andrews School of Controlled Excellence & Unoriginality*. Engraved on the large, iron school gates was the school motto:

CLOSE YOUR MIND AND DO AS YOU'RE TOLD

At this school, being yourself wasn't allowed. Actually, worse than that... it was forbidden. Lessons like Art, Drama and Creative Writing were banned because they encouraged new and different ideas. Mrs Moogleton, the controlling headmistress, enjoyed punishing children who'd had any of these new and different ideas. Be it humming a song outside the Top 40 charts or having a family camping holiday in Madagascar, they were sent to her office and painted grey.

Painted grey? Yes, painted grey. Once, a quiet school girl called Jenny said in passing that she preferred almond milk to regular cow's milk and was sent straight to Mrs Moogleton's office. Jenny said everything in that office lacked colour and was painted a dull grey. The carpet was grey, the walls were grey and everything smelt a bit grey. Inside she was ordered to step into a large bucket of grey paint and was painted head to toe with a stiff old paintbrush.

"Stop thinking you're different to everyone else," Mrs Moogleton had hissed like a crazed decorator.

Now, for Amy, the bright young spark of our story, this didn't go down too well. Amy was naturally quite... different. She thought differently, she felt differently and she smelt differently (we'll get to that later). Miraculously she hadn't been painted grey yet, despite

finding the normal way of life *painfully* dull. Why did no one do what they really wanted to do? She often thought to herself.

“Maybe I’ll leave school and live in a treehouse,” said Amy, wearing a dirty saucepan on her head like a hat. “Or maybe I’ll start walking backwards everywhere I go.” She demonstrated by falling over a stool and flattening Stewart, her pet cat.

“You could take up cleaning!” suggested Colin, turning on the Hoover.

To any other child, that suggestion may seem odd, but not to Amy. Colin, Amy’s step-dad, tried to be supportive but his attention always turned back to cleaning. Being allergic to almost every single thing in the world (dust, animals (even fish and snails), perfume and the little rubbers you get on the end of pencils) meant he was always vacuuming to stop his sneezes. Quickly Amy learnt it wasn’t normal for dads to vacuum the garden or family members as they slept. Nor was it normal to spray disinfectant into the face of everyone who stepped in the house.

“Welcome to our home!” he’d cheer, then spray and run away.

As for Amy’s mother, well, she did all she could to stop Amy being different. She told Amy what to say, what to wear and what to do every minute of every day. She felt it important no time was wasted on dillydally daydreaming.

“Everyone should always be striving for the best, not sat in front of the TV,” she’d say on a daily basis... even when the TV was off and no-one was in.

Mum packed Amy’s day with violin lessons, stamp-collecting, Responsible Recycling classes, ballet lessons, Extra-Boring Maths, trumpet playing, Judo, swimming lessons, how-to-do-a-headstand-classes, tap dancing, Girl Scouts and pancake making classes... and that was just on Monday afternoons! Amy felt her mother did this to control her; to make sure there was no time left for her to dream up her own ideas about the world.

Despite this, Amy secretly stole seconds each day to imagine how'd she like to live her life. One small thing she could control was her hygiene so she'd stopped washing every day.

“Why do I have to have a shower *every day*? I don't want to do what everyone else does!” she argued with Mum as she linked her arms round the staircase bannister, refusing to budge.

“For heaven's sake, Amy, it's not a case of being like everyone else. It's because you STINK!”

On that occasion, Amy lost the battle as Mum chased her and Stewart the cat into a wardrobe and scrubbed them with soap. But other times it would be different. Take tomorrow for example; it was Amy's tenth birthday. She finally felt like she was becoming an adult.

Surely everything would change...

Chapter 2 – Un-Happy Birthday!

“I can only apologise for the quick dinner,” said Mum as she plonked down a plate of toasted *and* untoasted bread. “I’m in a bit of a rush tonight as it’s the first dress rehearsal at Circus Training. We’ve got our big show opening in only a few weeks!”

Amy nor Colin stopped eating to see mum flitting around. She pushed another piece of bread into the toaster.

“In just a few weeks I need to perfect the art of balancing on the tip of my head while riding on the back of a camel. It’s not as easy as it sounds.”

Colin took a large bite into his toast. “Amy, could I trouble you to pass the marmalade?”

Amy leant back in her chair and opened the dusty cupboard behind her.

“Ewww, it’s use-by-date is 1972,” she said, inspecting the sticky, orange jar.

Eating stale, forgotten food that lurked in the back of cupboards was quite normal in Amy’s house. Colin was useless at doing a weekly food shop and mum was far too busy spending every second practicing something. Be it tap dancing, yoga or circus skills, every evening she’d be prancing round the kitchen in her own world.

Colin swallowed his mouthful. “1972 was an excellent year for marmalade.”

“But it’s got furry green bits in it.”

“Oh, will you stop moaning, Amy,” said Mum, pushing up into a headstand in the centre of the kitchen. “You’re always trying to be different to everyone else, why don’t you eat the mould.”

“Nonsense!” said Colin, taking the grubby jar from Amy. “We can both eat around it.”

He rattled the tip of his knife round the jar, trying to find a less mouldy bit.

“Ahh, here we are,” he said, smearing an orange clump on Amy’s plate.

“Gosh, what a gift that is,” replied the girl.

Suddenly Colin’s face lit up like a child on Christmas day.

“Gift! That reminds me!” He pushed back his chair and dashed out the kitchen to return holding a beautifully wrapped present. “Happy birthday, Amy.”

This instantly brought a smile to Amy’s face. What a terrible day she’d had at her new school where it’s against the rules to celebrate birthdays. It’s important everyone remains unnoticed. Amy being Amy, had challenged this no-birthday nonsense and worn a birthday badge in the morning assembly. Mrs Mopleton saw it instantly.

“Stop thinking you’re different to everyone else!” she’d hissed in Amy’s face, ripping the badge from her blouse.

Quickly, Amy tore through the wrapping paper, trying to shut out thoughts of Mrs Mopleton. Once unwrapped she was sat holding a regular-looking cardboard box in her lap. She carefully folded back the lid to see a collection of household cleaning products. There was a packet of yellow dusters, some carpet cleaner and a super-saver size bottle of Fairy Liquid.

Colin grinned at his step-daughter, trying to suppress his excitement. “You always seem so interested when I’m cleaning so I thought it’d be nice to do some together.”

“Thanks, Colin. That’s really...urm...hygienic of you.”

“Oh goodness!” shouted Mum, jumping down from her headstand. “Of course, it’s your birthday *today!* The big nine...no, ten! I urm...must have left your present in the car. Yes, that’s right, it’s in the car”.

“I’ll go get it shall I?” offered Colin, a mouth full of toast.

“No!” snapped Mum, eyes searching for her car keys. “It’ll ruin the surprise! I’ll...urm, go and get it. What was it you asked for again?”

Unlike most ten-year olds, Amy hadn't asked for anything. She knew what she wanted couldn't be bought with money. What she wanted was quite plainly, to be able to be herself.

"I've got it!" shouted Mum, interrupting Amy's train of thought. "Your present can be to come to my circus rehearsal tonight. It's our first dress rehearsal so you'll be the lucky girl who sees it before all your friends. That's sure to impress the *coool* group at school."

"That's alright Mum. I've got a lot of homework to do," Amy lied, jumping off her chair, ready to make a run for it.

Mum danced her way to the kitchen door, blocking the only exit. "Nonsense, it's your *birthday*. You don't have to do your homework." She paused, instantly regretting such a ludicrous suggestion. "Well you can get up extra early and do it tomorrow morning before school."

"That'll be a treat!" piped in Colin.

"And you can come too."

Colin gulped loudly, swallowing his final crust of bread.

Amy giggled at her step-dad. The two of them were often dragged along to mum's shows and it involved them sitting around bored for hours.

All at once, the front door slammed shut and in strutted Sebastián. He dumped his bag on the floor, narrowly missing Stewart the cat, then dumped himself in front of the kitchen TV.

Now, one un-important person we failed to introduce earlier was Amy's big brother by four years, Sebastián. He wasn't like a normal big brother who would punch, pinch and fart on his little sister. Instead, he did the meanest thing a big brother could possibly do.

He completely ignored Amy.

He chose to believe she didn't exist.

“I can smell something,” he said, pointing the remote at the TV to switch on the music channels.

“Oh, that’ll be the toast burning!” said Colin, running over to the smoking toaster.

“No, I can smell something like, *really* disgustingly bad.”

Amy glared at the back of her brother’s head. He was talking about her.

“Why don’t you just say what you think the smell is,” she shouted across the kitchen.

Sebastián yawned widely, eyes fixed on a Lady Gaga music video.

This is what Sebastián did. He communicated with Amy by saying there was a bad smell. He found her repulsive so never spoke or looked at her. She was invisible to him. Most younger sisters would love to be ignored by their older brother, just to have a break from the bullying. But not Amy. She longed to be tripped-up or spat at. Anything that meant he saw her.

Sebastián even ignored Amy at school. What made it all the worse was that he was already the most popular boy there. He never said or did anything interesting but the girls would flock and wait for him at the school gates for hours. To be fair, he was rather handsome for a 14-year-old. He’d had braces at a young age so his teeth were now perfectly straight. He had shiny golden hair and unlike most teenagers, had just a thin covering of spots across his face. He took no interest in the girls as his main focus was the boys cheerleading team. He wanted to become captain but had to prove himself first. Having a smelly younger sister that tried to be different didn’t help his cause.

“Hello my dear, Sebastián!” said Mum. “How was school? Did you learn anything that will change the world?”

Sebastián ignored his mother. He was busy flicking through the music channels. Behaviour only he could get away with.

“That’s excellent,” she replied to the unanswered question. “And shall you be joining me at my circus rehearsal tonight? I’m not sure if I’ve mentioned it but it’s the first dress rehearsal -”

“We know!” shouted Colin.

Amy’s mother continued. “It’s the first dress rehearsal for the Circus Society before our big day and the whole family have decided to show their support.”

“I thought it was for my birthday?” said Amy.

“Yes, and that too...I suppose,” Mum squeezed Sebastián’s left shoulder. “What do you say, My Little Hero?”

Sebastián wrinkled his nose at the words, ‘My Little Hero’. Mum called him this when she wanted him to do something for her.

“No. TV.”

“Okay, that’s fine. I’ll leave out a big bowl of crisps and chocolate for you.”

“That’s not fair!” argued Amy. “It’s *my* birthday.”

Mum clapped her hands together showing the matter to be closed. “Right, now where did I hide the expensive chocolate?”

“But I don’t want to go either, Mum!” said Amy, stamping her foot.

“Nonsense, Amy. Now go change into something dull which doesn’t reflect your personality. I don’t want you attracting attention away from the clowns.”

“I want to wear my birthday badge.”

Mum flung round and threw her arms in the air. “Absolutely not! These are important members of the circus community we are trying to impress. I can’t have you turning up, being ‘different’.”

“But -”

“Be gone!”

Mum started shooing the girl away as if she were a stray cat. Amy trudged up the stairs to her room, untying the fun rainbow ribbon from her ponytail.

“Ahh, I can finally smell fresh air,” said Sebastián, loud enough so Amy could hear.

Amy opened her mouth to shout something back but quickly realised there was no point.

Inside her room she stared into her open wardrobe, admiring all the colourful clothes she had cut and designed herself. She loved to find random bits of material and sew them together to create new clothing ideas that didn't yet exist.

three illustrations of Amy wearing impractical clothing that make it impossible for her to see and walk

Amy changed into a grey hoody and leggings and wondered to herself if anything would ever change. Would she forever be told what to do?

She was about to find out how very wrong she was.

Chapter 3 – The Circus

Amy and Colin sat on the rickety benches waiting for the show to begin. The circus tent was huge, filled with the smell of warm popcorn and donkey poo. The performers were frantically rushing around, leaving trails of glitter.

“All seems a bit chaotic,” said Colin, shoveling salty popcorn into his mouth.

Amy shrugged her shoulders. She was sulking and much to her annoyance Colin was too excited to notice.

All at once the lights dimmed and the audience hushed. The show was about to begin.

“Here we go!” squealed Colin, waving his flashing plastic sword (which he had originally bought for Amy).

A very fat ringmaster bounced into the centre of the ring. He was dripping in sweat and wearing a tight sparkly blue blazer.

“Lords and ladies, are you ready to be entertained!?”

His eyes searched the silent audience of about seven people. All of which were the unlucky chosen family members.

“I said...ARE YOU READY TO BE ENTERTAINED?”

He flung his arms open, sending beads of sweat flying. One landed on the face of a snoozing old man sitting at the ringside. He jumped awake.

“Fantabulous! I have everyone’s attention. Thank you for coming to our first dress rehearsal because in just a few weeks we’ll be live to the world...well, to Kent!”

“Yeah!” cheered Colin, alone.

“Thank you. We’ve got a thrilling show lined up. There’s acrobatics, live animals, and even the bit of riskeeeey dancing!”

Amy cringed at the thought of mum wearing something short and sparkly while shaking her bottom a lot.

“So, without further ado, let’s bring out our first act. It’s Hulaaaa Hoooooop Helennnn!”

The lights started flashing, *Dancing Queen* by Abba started playing and out strutted Hula Hoop Helen. Amy looked up, shocked at who she saw.

“That’s Mrs Dribblebum, my old math’s teacher! She’s almost 90! She retired *years* ago.”

Mrs Dribblebum skipped to the centre of the stage like an enthusiastic antelope. She clearly had a lot of life still left in her. Her body was very angular with wrinkles of skin hanging from her arms. Despite this she proudly wore a fluffy pink bra and mini skirt.

“Afternoon,” she winked to the old man sitting in the front row.

She stepped into a large striped hula hoop, lifted it up to her waist then nodded at the boy sat at the DJ desk. The music started up again and Mrs Dribblebum flung the hula hoop flying round her hips. Carefully she rocked back and forth to keep the hoop spinning.

“Very impressive,” whispered Colin.

Amy stared at the woman and frowned. “Is that it?”

Amy was hoping for an extra hoop to be added, maybe around the woman’s arm or leg, but no. Instead, Mrs Dribblebum simply smiled out to the audience, thrusting her hips back and forth, back and forth...for 40 long minutes.

“Very, *very* impressive,” said Colin, 41 minutes later.

“Hmmm,” yawned Amy, checking the empty box of popcorn. She sunk back on the bench, bored.

The acts that followed were very similar. Soon Amy realised this circus was just an odd jumble of people from the town doing everyday things. Mr. Bucket, the postman, came

out and took his labradoodle for a walk around the ring. Then Golnessa Hamedi from the bakery appeared and balanced on one leg (that was it!) Amy's own mother, as feared, wore a tight sparkly dress and simply shook her bottom a lot.

By the time it was the final act, the old man in the front row was back to snoring very loudly.

"Let's get on with it," said Amy, blowing into her hands to keep warm. She had been sitting in the cold tent for nearly three hours.

And then it happened. Out marched the final act: Norman, the local milkman. Norman was a man who enjoyed wearing women's clothing and being called Jessica in private. He was short and square with chest hair so curly it looked like the hairs had been scribbled on by a small child. Like Mrs Dribblebum previously, Norman was also wearing a pink fluffy bra. The main difference was that Norman had stuffed his fluffy bra with two apples.

The milkman started his performance, slowly belly dancing whilst the apples fell from his bra.

"You've got to be kidding me," said Amy, rolling her eyes like a stroppy teenager.

"This is the best one yet!" said Colin, squeezing Amy's hand.

After a few minutes of this high-class entertainment, Norman suddenly brought out a real goat. The goat was beautiful. It was large for its breed with its back reaching up above Norman's shirtless belly. The animal's shiny brown coat reflected the circus lights. It had a completely black face except for a white spot on its floppy ears.

"Wow! Look at that goat, Colin!" yelled Amy, pulling at his sleeve.

"Oh I wish your mother had warned me, goats affect my sneezes terribly...ACHOOO!"

"Shh, Colin! You're disturbing the show!"

Norman the milkman danced to the opposite side of the ring and called, “tip tip tip tip,” hoping the goat would follow him, as practiced.

The goat however wanted nothing to do with him. It gobbled up the juicy dropped apples then rolled around on its back like a dog in long grass. What’s more, every time Norman neared the animal it would cheekily trot just out of reach. This made the milkman look very foolish.

“Outsmarted by a goat!” giggled Amy.

You could see Norman’s anger building. He was exhaling loudly and kept re-adjusting his fluffy bra.

“Come on mate, you gonna do anything worth watching?” shouted a member of the audience.

Upon hearing this, Norman saw red. He marched to the side of the ring, leant over and grabbed a very thick, leather whip. One whack with it would break the skin, human or animal. Norman knew this which is why he wanted to whip the goat.

“Now, we’ll see who’s laughing,” he hissed behind gritted teeth.

He cracked the whip which made the audience jump awake. Suddenly it was like watching a bloodthirsty battle in a Roman colosseum.

“Wait...wait...what’s he doing, Colin?” said Amy, concerned.

“Look away, Amy!”

The angry milkman stomped across the circus ring. The goat had its back to the man, busy chewing on the microphone wires. It was completely clueless about what would happen next.

“No!” screamed Amy, grabbing Colin’s hand to cover her eyes.

Slowly, Norman raised his arms and just as he went to strike the helpless goat, it spun round and bit the whip in two. The whip never touched the animal. Instead, it fluttered to the ground like a falling leaf.

Everyone paused.

“Hooray!” cheered Amy, clapping her hands so fast she felt her arms may fall off.

“Wait, what’s happened!?” said Norman, fumbling over the whip.

Accepting defeat, the lights quickly came up and the show was over.

“Oh my, did you know I’m more allergic to goats than anything else in the world,” said Colin sneezing into his soggy hanky.

Amy wasn’t listening. She couldn’t stop watching the defiant goat, who, at this moment was chasing Norman round and round the ring.

“They’ll need to catch it ready for the next show,” he continued, stretching his back as he stood up.

“I don’t want them to catch it,” said Amy. “It’s not fair it has to do what Norman says.”

“Oh, well it’s not up to the goat I’m afraid... *achoo*.”

“But it should be.”

The goat grew bored of chasing Norman and trotted to the side of the ring. It could easily jump out and escape, leaving the circus forever. In fact, the animal was thinking exactly this.

“Don’t even think about it!” hissed Norman across the ring. “You will be in **big** trouble!”

“*Mehhhhh*,” bleated the goat back at the man.

And just like that, the goat jumped over the ring side and left the tent. This animal didn’t listen to anyone, instead it did what it wanted, when it wanted.

“Look at it go!” said Amy, pointing after the escapee.

Colin turned around just in time to see the tail of the goat disappear.

“You were right, Amy” he said, gathering up his coat. “What a confident goat.”

“That goat has really opened my eyes. I feel empowered. Almost like I could do anything.”

Colin was busy scanning the tent, looking for Amy’s mother. “That’s nice, my dear,” he said with a yawn. “A good theatre show should always get you thinking.”

Amy looked to where the goat left the tent and cheekily smiled to herself. She had meant something quite different.