



BARNHEART

the INCURABLE LONGING FOR A FARM OF ONE'S OWN

a memoir

Jenna Voginrich
author of *Made from Scratch*

Praise for
Made from Scratch

“This fine, simple book is the real deal — and it will come as a great relief to people feeling some silent dread in a time of rising gas prices, food shortages, and the like. Much can be done — in your home!”

— **Bill McKibben**, author of *Deep Economy*

“This is an outstanding book for anyone yearning for the satisfactions that come with a simpler, more self-reliant, and sustainable life. I highly recommend it, for both country and city homesteaders.”

— **Cheryl Long**, Editor in Chief, *Mother Earth News*

“If you’re tired of being just another consumer, and want to take charge of creating your own life, this book is for you. It has both the how-to and the why-to. It reads like fiction but delivers a wealth of useful, down-to-earth information.”

— **David Wann**, author of *Simple Prosperity* and coauthor of *Affluenza*

“Woginrich writes with an infectious enthusiasm and a dry wit that may have you ordering hens before you reach the last page. A delightful introduction to the simple (and not-so-simple) life.”

— **William Alexander**, author of *The \$64 Tomato*

“I can’t get enough of Woginrich’s life on her Vermont farm ... this book left me wanting much, much more.”

— **Debbie Stoller**, *Bust*

“It’s a how-to as well as a what-not-to-do.”

— **Boston Sunday Globe**, “Shelf Life”

“This book isn’t about having a farmhouse on acres of land, or a barn full of livestock, but about being more open to learning the simple skills most of us have forgotten.”

— **Deseret News**

“*Made from Scratch* is about being more open to learning the simple skills most of us have forgotten, and finding joy in the process.”

— **Homegrown.org**

“The book is chockablock full of ‘simple life’ advice on everything from creating

storage from scratch to gardening, with loads of 21st-century homespun philosophy to boot.”

— *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“Her essays, supplemented with how-tos, are philosophical, humorous, and remarkably poised for a newbie writer.”

— *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

“Woginrich’s comfy writing style and gentle humor make this book a must-read for anyone who dreams of a simpler, handmade life.”

— *ForeWord*, November 2010

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a memoir

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Storey Publishing

Thanks So Very Much

How to Tell If You're Infected

A CABIN IN THE WOODS

A VERY LONG WINTER

SHEEP 101

THE ARRIVAL OF RUFUS WAINWRIGHT AND BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

INTO THE GARDEN

MEET THE LOCALS

THE SOCIETY OF LAMB AND WOOL

THE HOOVES HAVE LANDED

GETTING MY GOAT

YOU NEED A TRUCK, GIRL

BUILDING PARADISE BROKE AND ALONE

SAVING SARAH

TURKEY DRAMA

A NOTE ON THE DOOR

THE SEARCH BEGINS

GOING HOME

Thanks So Very Much

Thank you to my parents, Pat and Jack, who have watched with grace and support (even when it confused the hell out of them) as their daughter evolved from an urban designer to a rural shepherd. My parents are the only reason I ever believed I could achieve whatever I wanted in this world, even if what I wanted was to be sitting with a flock of sheep on a hill.

Thank you to my brother and sister, John and Kate, who relentlessly support me, nod in approval, and make me laugh at my own antics. Thanks to Kevin Boyle, who has been my best friend for over a decade and has always loved me, even when I let him down (which I do from time to time). Thank you to Erin Griffiths, Raven Pray, Leif Fairfield, Phil Monahan, Steve Hemkens, Sara and Tim Mack, and Nisaa Askia — all of you are part of this story. It's the folks who stay in touch, visit, call, and heckle that make a life that makes a book.

And of course, big thanks to everyone at Storey, most of all to my grand editor, Carleen Madigan, whose own work and writing fuel my dreams and constantly make me want to learn new skills and take on new adventures. Thank you to everyone at Orvis — coworkers and friends who are wonderfully tolerant of me (possibly the most unorganized person in New England to hold down a day job) and make that place a dream career. Not a lot of offices let you bring your kid to work (when it's a bottle-fed Toggenberg).

Thank you to James Daley and Phil Bibens, who have helped me build sheep sheds and amazing friendships. You guys made Vermont feel like home first. Thanks to everyone at Wayside, especially Doug and Nancy Tschorn, who are my unofficial grandparents and run the best country store in the state of Vermont. This fact can be argued, but the argument is pointless. Thank you to Tim Bronson, who helped me get this book started and earnestly supported me at a point when the book you're holding in your hands was just a shot in the dark in a conference room. Thank you, Paul Fersen, fellow Civil War buff, farmer, and friend who keeps me laughing and lends me old calf hutches he's not using to house my bum goats. Thank you to Eric and Erica Weisleder, Suzanne and Allan Tschorn, Jo and Bob Wise, Nancy and Dean Bishop, the Daughton family and Roy next door — neighbors like you made this farm (and the future of this farm) possible. Thank you, members of NEBCA, especially Barb and Denise, important members in the great club of shepherds who are just beginning to show me the ropes of this new life. Thank you all, over and over.

And thanks, of course, to Jazz and Annie, still the best roommates a girl could ever have, and Gibson, the finest farmhand and business partner I've ever known.



*For Mom and Dad
The only reason everything happened*

How to Tell If You're Infected

Certain people, myself included, are afflicted by a condition that's difficult to describe. It's not recognized by physicians or psychoanalysts (yet), but it's really only a matter of time before it's a household diagnosis. It's a sharp, targeted depression, a sudden overcast feeling that hits you while you're at work or standing in the grocery-store checkout line. It's a dreamer's disease, a mix of hope, determination, and grit. It attacks those of us who wish to God we were outside with our flocks, feed bags, or harnesses instead of sitting in front of a computer screen. When a severe attack hits, it's all you can do to sit still. The room gets smaller, your mind wanders, and you are overcome with the desire to be tagging cattle ears or feeding pigs. (People at the office water cooler will stare and slowly back away if you say this out loud. If this happens to you, just segue into sports banter and you'll be fine.)

The symptoms are mild at first. You start reading online homesteading forums and shopping at cheese-making supply sites on your lunch break. You go home after work and instead of turning on the television, you bake a pie and study chicken-coop building plans. Then somehow, somewhere along the way you realize that you're happiest when you're weeding the garden or collecting eggs from the henhouse. It's all downhill from there. When you accept that a fulfilling life requires tractor attachments and a septic system, it's too late. You've already been infected with the disease.

This condition is roughly defined as the state of knowing unequivocally that you want to be a farmer but, due to personal circumstances, cannot be one just yet. So there you are, heartsick and confused in the passing lane, wondering why you can't stop thinking about heritage-breed livestock and electric fences. Do not be afraid. You are not alone. You have what I have. You are suffering from Barnheart.

But do not panic, my dear friends; there is a remedy! The condition must be fought with direct, intentional actions that yield tangible, farm-related results. If you find yourself overcome with the longings of Barnheart, simply step outside, get some fresh air, and breathe. Go back to your desk and finish your office work, knowing that tonight you'll be taking notes on spring garden plans and perusing seed catalogs. Usually, those small, simple actions that lead you in the direction of your own farm can help ease the longing.

At times, though, you might find yourself resorting to extreme measures — calling in “sick” to work in the garden, muck out chicken coops, collect eggs, and bake bread. After all, this is a disease of inaction, and it hits us hardest when we are furthest from our dreams. If you find yourself suffering, make plans to visit an orchard, a dairy farm, or a livestock auction. Go pick berries at a local U-pick farm. Busy hands will get you on the mend.

And when you find yourself sitting in your office, classroom, or café and your mind wanders to dreams of the farming life, know that you are not alone. There are those of us who also long for the bitter scent of manure and sweet odor of hay in the air, to feel

the sun on our bare arms. (I can just about feel it, too, even in January, in a cubicle on the third floor of an office building.) Even though we straighten up in our ergonomic desk chairs, we'd rather be stretched out in the bed of a pickup truck, drinking in the stars on a crisp fall night.

When your mind wanders like this and your heart feels heavy, do not lose the faith, and do not fret about your current circumstances. Everything changes. If you need to stand in the slanting light of an old barn to lift your spirits, go for it. Perhaps someday you'll do this every day. For some, this is surely the only cure. I may be such a case.

We'll get there. In the meantime, let us just take comfort in knowing we're not alone. And maybe take turns standing up and admitting we have a problem.

Hello. My name is Jenna. And I have Barnheart.