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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FREECHILDRENSTORIES.COM COLLECTION ***

FREECHILDRENSTORIES.COM COLLECTION

BY

DANIEL ERRICO

FREECHILDRENSTORIES.COM

2009

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I

BEARPAWS NATHAN ZEBRATAIL

There was once a boy named Nathan Green.
He was never rude and never mean.
But everyone was scared of him,
Nancy, Dennis, Tom and Tim.

Nick and Susan, Mike and James,
Never let him play their games.
He knew why, but didn't say.
His mom said he was born that way.

Nathan's hands aren't hands at all.
They're bigger than a basketball.
They're covered brown by furry hair,
Just like paws on any bear.

Nathan hated both his paws.
He never used their mighty claws.
It's also hard to make a friend
When there's a tail on your rear end.

It's black and white and wags around.
When it swats, you hear a sound.
His mom said, "Never be ashamed",
But classmates said, "He should be tamed!"

He taped his tail down everyday,
But still they wouldn't let him play.
"He can't join; he'll pop the ball!"
So recess wasn't fun at all.

He wished his tail were off his rear.
He wished his paws would disappear.

But then one day...

In class he learned about a creature.
"It's very special," said his teacher.
"Tail of a beaver, bill of a duck,
Feet of an otter, just his luck!"

"He needs them all to stay alive,
They're each a gift to help him survive."
"What is it?" called out Nathan loudly.
"A PLATYPUS!" said teacher proudly.

Nathan couldn't help but smile.
All this time, all the while,
He had never seen the truth-
His paws and tail must have a use!

From that day on, he changed his ways.
No one's scared of him these days.
His tail is wagging when he sits,
His paws are helpful baseball mitts.

Kids love to see him open drinks.
They like the splashing, Nathan thinks.
His tail, in summer, keeps him cool.
His friends crowd round when he's at school.

His newest classmate wants to meet him.

Nathan wonders how she'll treat him.
Teacher makes the class grow quiet,
"No one speak, don't even try it."

"There's someone here you all should meet.
This is Martha Hippofeet."

Nathan likes her.

II

BILLY SITS HERE!

"Billy sits here and Walter up front,
And, Walter, I'm watching, so don't try a stunt."
First day of class, Miss McClaire sets the seats.
And she doesn't know it, but Bob always cheats.

He hides in the back till he hears the bell ring.
She's too busy leaving to notice a thing.
"I'll finish this later when we're all back from eating.
We're not done yet, and remember your seating."

He sneaks and he creeps to her new seating chart.
She wrote it in pencil, a very good start!
He grabs the eraser and scratches his head,
"She's nuts if she thinks that I'll sit next to Fred!"

He switches with Kathy, next to the door.
Class can be fun, but he likes leaving more.
"My best friend Sebastian will sit next to me.
If we mess around, there's no way she can see."

"Willy's with us since he gives me his snack.
Richard is smelly-I'll throw him in back.
Sam's next to Richard for being too tall.
Hope is annoying, so she's by the wall."

"Edgar's up front with his huge bushy hair.
He'll like his seat 'cause he loves Miss McClaire.
Kelly's behind him, so his head blocks her view.
And Jill to her left, that'll bother her too!"

"There's no switching Walter-she'll notice a change.
Rod's in the corner. He's always been strange.
Lucas makes jokes so I'll put him close by,
But I'll move Maryann since he might make her cry."

"Maybe Hope is okay. She can sit on our side.
She's not so annoying on the morning bus ride.
Frank can be mean, he should sit in the hall.
If not, then it's either the back or the wall."

"The Hellerman twins go next to each other-
It's written in stone by their father and mother.
Well, eating a snack is a little bit silly.
Last thing I'll do is switch Hope with Willy."

Bob hides in the closet, a very tight crunch.
They all shuffle in from the afternoon lunch.
Miss McClaire tells the class something he can't believe.
He muffles his shouting and bites on his sleeve.

All of his work is finally complete,
And she tells the class, they can pick their own seats!

III

BOUNCE!

Jimmy has a favorite ball. His parents call it his "Jimmy Ball."

Bounce! goes the Jimmy Ball onto the table.

Bounce! goes the Jimmy Ball into the pudding.

Bounce! goes Jimmy after his ball.

Bounce! goes the Pudding Ball into the ice bucket.

Bounce! goes the Freezing Ball onto the couch.

Bounce! goes Jimmy after his ball.

Bounce! goes the Couch Ball hitting the ceiling.

Bounce! goes the Ceiling Ball into the water.

Bounce! goes Jimmy after his ball.

Bounce! goes the Wet Ball up all the stairs.

Bounce! goes the Bouncy Ball into his room.

Bounce! goes Jimmy after his ball.

Bounce! goes the Jimmy Ball onto the bed.

Bounce! goes the Sleepy Ball onto his pillow.

Bounce! goes Jimmy after his ball.

And all night long Jimmy dreamt of bouncing.

IV

BUCK'S IN CHARGE!

Buck just got a new baby brother! Buck's baby brother might not know it yet, but around here...
BUCK'S IN CHARGE!

From the moment he wakes up in the morning, Buck's in charge. He uses his imagination to be in charge of everything he does. Buck has quite an imagination.

Commander Buck is standing in front of the bathroom mirror. He sees hundreds standing at attention before him. With one swipe of his hand, they all lay down in place. Do you know what Buck is doing?

He's combing his hair!

Head Zoo Keeper Buck is looking down at his bare feet. He's called in because ten are on the loose, wiggling around like wild animals. Buck covers them up and ties them down. Do you know what he's doing?

He's putting on socks and shoes!

Chief Buck of the Rescue Team sits down at the kitchen table. Dozens are drowning in a sea of white. He scoops them up with just one arm, but none of them are going to make it. Do you know why?

Because he's just eating his cereal!

When Buck's in his room, he's the Construction Boss.
He oversees the building of a skyscraper! Do you know how he does it?

He's playing with building blocks!

When it's getting time for bed, Buck's the Mayor. He's sitting in a deep canyon. Mayor Buck orders the dam to be broken, and warm water fills up the entire hole. Do you know what he's

doing now?

He's taking a bath!

When Buck is playing with his little baby brother, he's careful not to play too rough, and he listens to his Mom and Dad. Do you know what Buck's doing now?

He's being a good brother!

Even Buck can't be in charge all the time.

V

CHRISTMAS EVE UPON THE NORTH POLE

(Inspired by "A Visit from St. Nicholas" by Clement Moore)

'Twas the night before Christmas upon the North Pole.
Not a creature was sleeping, not one single soul.

All the elves were done working, now cozy in bed,
While Christmas Eve jitters danced around in their head.

Did they make enough gifts for the good girls and boys?
Would the children wake up to find half-broken toys?

Then from the shop, they all heard a great BANG!
And the high-tech security elf alarm rang.

They put on their shoes and ran down in a flash
To make sure some thief wasn't after their stash.

When they turned on the lights, can you guess who appeared?
It was jolly St. Nick with his white fuzzy beard.

"Santa!" they yelled, "We're surprised that you're back.
Did your suit rip again? Do you need a new sack?"

He said, "Comet is tired, so are Vixen and Prancer,
And Cupid is mad at both Blitzen and Dancer."

"Dasher and Donder have just run away-
I can't do my job if they don't pull my sleigh."

"Go up on the roof and help save Christmas Day!"
The elves did just that, without one word to say.

But a reindeer dilemma is not what they found,
From Cupid to Comet, they were all safe and sound.

They saw Christmas trees and stockings galore,
And enough milk and cookies, that they'd never need more.

With no explanation and without a goodbye,
Santa hopped on his sleigh and started to fly.

So there they all were, on the roof by themselves,
When they noticed a sign that read, "WE LOVE THE ELVES!"

And children popped up from behind rows of trees.
They were hiding all over, behind tables and wreathes.

They circled the elves as they started to cheer
So loudly that elves at the South Pole could hear!

And under the tree, which was grandest of all,
Presents were waiting, some large and some small,

Some wrapped with bows, some with bells that would jingle,
But each with a note that was signed by Kris Kringle.

All the elves got a gift, and they liked every one.
Just a few trades were made before gifting was done.

By the end, they were speechless with such gratitude.
(And elves always talk, unless chewing their food.)

It was time to turn in, for the younger elves' sake.
They'd be working tomorrow (enough of this break).

And as he lay down to sleep, filled with holiday spirit,
A little elf spoke, but it was quite hard to hear it.

He whispered the words with a childish delight,
"Merry Christmas to all, and to all a goodnight..."

VI

CLOUDPLAY

Everyday nightly, the clouds get together.
They all float with ease since they're light as a feather.

They form into shapes, like a man molding clay,
And they laugh at each other because that's how they play.

The wind swirls around and it sets them off spinning,
While the moon keeps an eye on them, constantly grinning.

And the stars start to twinkle and whistle a tune,
Which never gets old for the ocean and moon.

The waves applaud loudly by crashing the shore,
While the trees grow up higher to listen some more.

If you wander outside and you look up by chance,
You may catch the clouds in the midst of their dance.

But you have to be quick because clouds move along,
And they float through the sky at the end of the song.

They drift all directions, this way and that,
The fluffy clouds, droopy clouds, skinny and fat.

And when each of them settles in its own patch of sky,
They're sad that it's over, and some of them cry.

A tear from a cloud is not like yours or mine.
It falls from the sky in a very straight line.

It wets all the grass and it splashes the lakes.
And the animals love all the sounds that it makes.

We know those tears by their other name-rain.
(If you ask me, that word is entirely too plain.)

So remember, the next time the clouds cry at night,
The dance is now over and it's time to sleep tight!

VII

DAMSEL IN A DRESS

There once lived a brave knight who was always saving princesses. One day he rode by a tower with a princess inside and a horrible dragon nearby. The knight charged at the dragon and drove him off. Victorious, he burst through the tower door and found the princess.

"I am here to save you!" said the brave knight.

"Save me from what?" asked the princess, looking angrily at her broken door.

"Why, the horrible dragon that I chased away, of course," said the brave knight.

"That dragon was my pet and there's nothing horrible about him!" she yelled. "You'd better get him back or you'll never be a knight again," she said (and she meant it).

The brave knight left right away to find the dragon that he was no longer allowed to call horrible. The dragon was already miles away because dragons fly quickly after a knight charges at them. It took the knight days to find the dragon who was resting in a cave. The brave knight crept up on the beast as he slept.

The dragon was having such a wonderful dream that fire came shooting out of his nose. (You see, dragons breathe fire when they are scared and angry, but also when they are very happy.) The fire made the brave knight's armor extremely hot, so he started removing it until he was wearing only the raggedy clothes underneath. He took his armor and horse outside before waking the dragon.

"Excuse me," said the knight to the dragon.

"Mmmrph," said the dragon. "I've been chased from my home by a horrible knight. Leave me alone!"

"That's awful," said the brave knight, realizing that the dragon did not recognize him, "but maybe it was just a mistake. What if the knight is not so horrible after all?"

"He is the most horrible knight ever!" answered the dragon. "I hope I never see him again."

"If you take me to your home, I will talk to him for you and sort all of this out," said the knight.

Before they left, the knight snuck outside, set his armor on the horse, and told it to ride back to the tower. Riding on top of the dragon, it did not take long for the knight to find the princess's tower.

"I don't see him," said the knight, "where is the horrible knight?"

"I don't know," said the dragon.

After a few short hours of looking for the knight, they saw a horse who came riding up to them, carrying shiny armor on his back (horses are much faster without knights riding on them).

"That is the horse and that is the armor of the horrible knight," said the dragon.

"Oh no," said the knight, "It looks like he is gone. A knight does not usually leave his horse or take off his armor. But what will become of his kingdom? The townspeople will need a new knight to fight for them."

"You could take over for him!" said the dragon who was now so happy that fire shot out of his nose again.

So the knight put on the armor, and it fit extremely well. He hopped on the horse and rode it perfectly. The dragon was very impressed. With the pet dragon now safely home, the brave knight went inside to tell the princess the good news.

"That's fantastic!" said the princess, "Now you have time to fix that door that you broke."

As the brave knight fixed the tower door, the dragon watched him and laid down for a nap. The dragon felt much better knowing that despite the same armor, this new knight was not so horrible.

VIII

DISHWASHIA!

Who washes the dishes, inside the dishwasher?
It can't be the work of the furry mish-mosher

You might think they're cleaned by a set of scrub-tubbers
Or even a pair of guck blasting dirt clubbers

I assure you, my friends, that this isn't the case
Creatures like those don't belong in this place

The truth is more simple, without clubbing troubles
It's a traveling crew of tiny blue bubbles

The dishwashing bubbles are famously famous
As you probably know, so no need to explain this

At first a few bubbles go collect the detergent
They spread it around, in a manner most urgent

The smart bubbles talk and they formulate plans
While younger ones scour the pots and the pans

DJ Bubbles is always in charge of the tunes
As they dance down the forks and then dance up the spoons

Parachute Bubbles drop down from above
And they ski down the plates to help give them a scrub

Then out comes the water from every direction
But not from up top, that's the only exception

When the warm water sprays, if you're not very choosy
The teacups get filled and they make a jacuzzi

Some bubbles swim round, in the pool at the bottom
Where goggles are best for your eyes if you got 'em

The talented bubbles put on soap-sudsy skates
And they fly down the bowls to jump over the plates

Every once in a while there's a new kind of mess
And only a master of dishwash-i-ness

Could possibly clean such a strange gucky muck
And no everyday bubble would have any luck

That's when they call in the world's greatest cleaner
She's a little pink bubble, as you know if you've seen her.

She studies the stain and she tests out the dirt
She doesn't use water, not even a squirt

Before you can blink she has cleaned it all up
It's not on the pots, or the forks, or the cups

She cleans the whole place, in a short little while
She can't help herself, it is kind of her style

And then comes the part that the bubbles like least
When the dishes are clean for their next messy feast

And the water shuts off and the steam starts to fade
And the bubbles slide off in a farewell parade

Soon they'll be needed to scrub up more food
And more dirty dishes will lighten their mood

IX

HOW THE FIREFLY GOT ITS LIGHT

Back in the days before the days, the sun and the moon were always in the sky. There was no nighttime, and there was no daytime. The sun and moon were quite content in the sky together.

After a while, the animals called to the sun and the moon and asked them to come listen for a moment. The Moon came swooping down and was followed by the sun.

"We do not know when to start sleeping," said the elephant to the moon, "because you are always so full in the sky."

"And we do not know when to wake," said the zebra to the sun, "because you are always out and never rising."

All but the sleepy-headed dulfly were there to complain. The sleepy-headed dulfly looked like a firefly, but he did not glow in anyway like you are used to. His body was dark and dull and all together boring.

The sun, because he was always a little brighter than the moon, thought hard about what to do. "I will stay in the sky half of the time," said the sun, "and the moon will stay in the sky when I am not so that you may know when to sleep. But one of you will have to signal when it is time for us to switch, for that is how these things are done, and otherwise we will not know."

"It cannot be me," said the lion, "I am far too busy tending to the plains."

"It cannot be me," said the monkey, "I am far too busy picking fruit from the trees."

One by one, all the animals explained why they could not possibly be the one to help the moon and the sun. One by one, until only the sleepy-headed dulfly remained.

"Wake up dulfly!" yelled the sun.

"Why do you bother me?" asked the sleepy-headed dulfly.

The sun replied, "My friend the moon and I must part ways, and this makes me sad. But it is the only way that the animals can sleep well. So once a day you will signal me to rise, and the moon will know that it is time to fall, and we will call it dawn. And once more you signal the moon to rise, and I will know that it is time for me to set, and we will call it dusk."

"I couldn't possibly!" said the sleepy-headed dulfly, "How could I signal someone as large as you, when I am so small. You will not be able to see me!"

The sun breathed in slowly and then sent a burst of light right into the dulfly's behind where it stayed glowing brightly.

"Owwwwwww!" screamed the sleepy-headed dulfly who was now very frightened of the sun.

The sun commanded him in a loud voice, "You will fly around and flash the light in your behind at dusk and dawn, and the moon and I will know that it is time to switch. The rest of the time you may sleep."

Ever since that day, the sleepy-headed dulfly has been known as the firefly, and the sun and the moon have risen and set without fail because he does his job well.

And so, if you are outside at dawn or dusk and you happen to catch a firefly, you must be sure to let him go because even though he is small, it is he who decides when the sun rises and sets.

X

I DON'T WANT A HAIRCUT

Sammy and haircuts didn't get along. "I don't need a haircut!" he would always argue. One day Sammy got his worst haircut yet. After that, he decided he would never get another haircut again.

For a while he loved his long hair. It grew past his eyes, and he liked how it blew in every direction when it was windy outside. It grew past his nose, and he liked how it moved when he shook his head around. It grew past his chin, and he didn't miss the barber at all.

But as his hair got longer, some things got harder. It was harder for Sammy to see since the hair covered his eyes. He ate two stacks of napkins before he realized they weren't pancakes.

It was also harder for Sammy to wash his hair since it was so long. In the shower, he found two potato chips and a paper clip stuck in his hair. It was even harder for Sammy to wear hats. His baseball cap couldn't possibly fit on a head with so much hair.

His hair grew past his shoulders, and Sammy didn't know what to do with it. It grew past his belly button, and Sammy wasn't enjoying his long hair as much as he used to. It grew past his feet, and Sammy kept tripping over it. Sammy was not so happy with his long hair anymore.

Finally, one morning his parents had enough, so they marched up to his room to take him to the barber. But by that time his hair had filled up the entire room, and it was still growing!

Sammy squeezed out the front door, and his hair followed behind. He sat in the backseat of the car, and his hair dragged behind him. His parents sat him in the barber chair, and his hair filled up the entire shop!

When the haircut was over Sammy felt great. When he looked in the mirror he decided that maybe he was wrong about haircuts.

Everyone was happy... except for the barber who spent the next three days cleaning up all the hair he had cut.

XI

IN SPACE

I've decided I'm moving, I'm running away.
I'm bored of this room, and I'd rather not stay.
The best place to live for a girl such as me
Is in space with no rules and no gravity.

My cat Bill and I will need astronaut suits.
Our feet should be fine if we take some snow boots.
We'll wear yellow gloves that you use to wash dishes,
Since dad doesn't use them, like mom says she wishes.

For my helmet, I'm going to bring a fishbowl.
My goldfish won't mind since Bill swallowed them whole.
For the rest, I have found us some trash bags to wear.
With our shiny new suits, we will be quite the pair!

The spaceship dilemma is easy to fix.
I built one last summer, you know, just for kicks.
Space is enormous- you can fly all around.
I bet I'll see planets that nobody's found!

As for Space Monsters, I am not that afraid.
A monster's a friend that you haven't yet made.
First thing I'll do is go looking for Saturn.
I can fly through its rings in my zag and zig pattern.

Next I'll go zipping by Venus and Mars.
It's nice because spaceships are faster than cars.
Bill thinks that on Neptune there are birds everywhere.
I think he'll be mad if we don't stop by there.

Mercury seems like a great place to tan,
But it might be too hot if I don't pack a fan.
When I'm hungry I'll munch on some Jupiter fruit.
I hope that the juice doesn't drip on my suit.

On Uranus I'll put on a wonderful play.
The whole solar system can come, if they pay.
It's freezing on Pluto, especially at night,
But it's famous for hosting the best snowball fight.

Eventually I will fly back to the Earth.
It's really quite beautiful, for what it's worth.
I guess there's no rush to explore space just yet.
There are creatures down here that I still haven't met.

I can't help but dream about all that's in space.
But for now I'll enjoy what is here in this place.

XII

JERRY'S BOX

Jerry woke up on Monday. He grabbed a box he was keeping under his bed. When he came downstairs, his parents asked him what was inside. "Something really fun," he said, but nothing more.

Jerry walked to his bus stop with the box in his hands. Everybody at the bus stop asked him what was in it. "It's very important," he said, but nothing more.

When he got to school, the teacher asked him what was in his box. "It's a secret," he said, but nothing more. At lunch his friends all crowded around and asked him to open it. "I can't-it's a gift," he said, but nothing more.

The box sat with him all day, and no one in class could think about anything else. His teacher didn't let Jerry know, but she was curious too. She decided to send him to the principal for disturbing the class, hoping to get an answer. The principal asked Jerry what he was keeping in the box and if it was dangerous. "It's not for you," he said, but nothing more.

Jerry went back to class and sat down. The entire class was watching as he handed the teacher a note from the principal. "Well, if it's a gift, Jerry, I suggest you deliver it now." Jerry turned around and faced the class. He walked down the aisle and stopped at the desk of Oscar.

Oscar's eyes lit up. Nobody paid attention to Oscar. Nobody talked to Oscar. And nobody had ever stopped at Oscar's desk, until now. Jerry handed him the box, with a new note tucked inside. Oscar read the note. "Dear Oscar, This is my box. Enjoy. P.S. It works better if you don't open it!"

On Tuesday, nobody had more people at his desk than Oscar.

XIII

MARTIN AND THE WAVE

Martin was hot as he sat by the shore.
They'd come for the ocean, but he liked the sand more.
"The water is fine, come on in!" said his dad.
But the waves looked so big, that idea sounded bad.

His mother insisted, "You should go in."
No point in fighting- his mother would win.
She covered his face up with strong suntan lotion,
Then they walked down to the edge of the ocean.

His pinky toe was first to enter,
Then the big toe, front and center.
An hour later he was up to his knee,
And he was turned round, so he didn't see...

A monstrous wave came up from behind,
It knocked off his suit (which was quite hard to find).
The wave knocked him down, and he cried for a while.
It was half a day later before he could smile.

"I'll never go back, not ever!" he said.
"I'll stay in my room, under covers in bed."
Martin was happy, that he'd arrived home,
But that wave was special: it knew how to roam.

The wave was now hiding behind his oak tree.
When it peaked out at him, Martin could see.
He ran inside quickly and slammed his front door.
What would a wave want to follow him for?

The wave didn't leave- it was always around.
He could tell where it was by the swoosh-swooshing sound.
He heard it at dinner while eating some rice,
But no one else could, he even asked twice!

The wave followed close on his way back from school.
When someone was coming, it hid in a pool.
It was waiting outside while Martin was playing,
Pretending to be water that the sprinkler was spraying.

By the end of the week, Martin was through.

He needed it gone, and he knew what to do.
He went to the ocean, on the very next day.
He turned to the wave and had something to say.

"I'm sick of you wave, now get back in there,"
Being scared of this wave was too hard to bear.
He jumped in the water, the wave jumped in too,
"Let's settle this now, just me and you!"

The wave came up fast, but Martin was brave,
He was no longer scared of this meddlesome wave.
With both arms stretched out, he rode the wave back.
It seemed that with swimming, he had a knack.

For the rest of day, Martin had fun,
With the water, the waves, the sand and the sun.
The wave didn't scare him, once he gave it a try,
And when he left the water, he waved it goodbye.

XIV

MICROBUG TUG

Microbug Tug is small. He's smaller than a peanut. He's even smaller than a crumb!

MicroBug Tug wants to go on a vacation, and he's visiting the human body. The problem is, he doesn't know his way around too well, and he gets lost very easily.

Can you help him figure out where he is?

Tug is in a deep cave. He's surrounded by two rows of white stumps, one row on top and one row on bottom. It looks like there's some food caught between two of them. Do you know where he is?

He's in the Mouth!

Well, that's not where he wants to be- he might get eaten! He moves on and now he's crawled inside a funny looking shape. Every sound is louder inside. He can hear an echo as the sound bounces around and hits a "drum." Do you know where he is?

He's in the ear!

Tug can't enjoy his vacation with all that racket. He climbs up further until he's surrounded by tall stalks everywhere. There are thousands of them all next to each other and when a wind comes, they get blown all around. Do you know where he is?

He's in the hair!

Tug sees something coming towards the hair and hops on when it gets there. Now there are five things he's never seen before next to him. Four of them are longer, and one of them is shorter. Each of them has a hard plate on the tip of it. Sometimes they point, sometimes they wiggle, and sometimes they get together and snap! Do you know where Tug is?

He's on the hand!

Gosh, there's way too much excitement on the hand, so Tug hops off when the hand starts scratching another part of the body. Now he's looking into two tunnels and air is coming in and out of each of them. Tug notices that he's close to the mouth again. It looks like there are some short hairs inside, but he doesn't want to get any closer. Do you know where he is now?

He's in the nose!

All of a sudden there is a SNEEZE! Tug is thrown in the air until he falls into a bowl shaped hole. He crawls to the top, but there's nothing close by. It's like he's in the middle of nowhere, or maybe it's the middle of the human body? Do you know where he is?

He's in the belly button!

Wow, you really know the human body! Tug would be lost without you, but he has had it with this vacation. The human body is not for him, so he grabs his bag and hops off.

Thanks for helping!

XV

MUDDY FEET

When I woke, my feet were clean,
Spotless with a sparkling sheen.

First things first, I put on socks,
Then my shoes to walk on rocks.

Shoes are great for tricky jumps
Over puddles, logs, or stumps.

Once I laid them on the floor,
Off I went, out the door.

Just before I reached the grass,
Down came raindrops falling fast.

They weren't cold, I didn't mind.
Warm rain is my favorite kind.

Hitting dirt, it mished and moshed.
Pretty soon it splished and splashed.

The ground was wet and getting wetter.
Dirt is nice, but mud is better.

'Cause nothing ever will compete
With hopping round on muddy feet.

I like grass between my toes
Even though it stains my clothes.

I like sand from on the beach.
It gets in places hard to reach.

With leaves, I like them by the pile.
Never fails to make me smile.

But nothing's even half as sweet
As hopping round with muddy feet.

So that is why my shoes came off
And that is why I caught a cough.

All stuffed up and feeling ill,
I wonder if my mother will

Clean the dirt that's on my sheet
From laying here with muddy feet.

XVI

MY DOG IS FROM NEPTUNE

Don't get me wrong, I think my dog is the greatest, but it just so happens that he's not from this planet.

My parents are part-time astronauts, and one weekend they took a trip to Neptune (they love it in the summer). Sometimes when they go to outer space, they bring me back space rocks or plants from Mars or my favorite dish, Pluto pancakes, but not this time...

When they arrived home from Neptune (after they parked their space ship in the garage), they had a big cage with them. I had never seen a creature like what was inside, so I named it after the first thing it ate: a shoe.

They said that Shoe was the smartest dog on Neptune. He could play dead, roll over, shuffle cards, cook, and use a computer. BUT, since I don't speak Neptunian, I couldn't get him to do any of those things, and I had to start teaching him all over again.

I think that on Neptune dogs must eat human food because Shoe likes to eat what I'm eating, but he hates his earthly dog food. He's a lot faster than any of the earth dogs in the neighborhood. He can beat any of them in a race, but he never rubs it in, because all Neptunians are good sports.

I think dogs and squirrels are sworn enemies on Neptune because Shoe is always barking at them. Also, I think that on Neptune, dog bowls are shaped like toilets because Shoe loves drinking from ours.

Shoe can eat more food than ANYONE on earth ever could. I know this for certain because my uncle can eat the most food in the entire world, and Shoe eats more than he does for a snack.

I think that Neptune is as good a place as any to come from, and I'm glad Shoe is from there. I wouldn't change a single thing about him.

Next weekend my mom and dad are going to Saturn for a barbeque. Shoe and I are both hoping that they don't bring back a cat.

XVII

NEIGHBORS

When I go to bed, I just lay down my head
On a bed goes my head, when I lay down for bed

In a room sits my bed, with four legs on the floor
On a bed in a room with a floor and a door

A door with a lock to a house that's my home
A home with a door to the street where I roam

A bed in a room in a house on my street
In a house with a floor for my bed where I sleep

A room in my house in a town, on my block
In my town at my house is the door with a lock

On my street, here on the Earth, in the center of town
On top of the Earth that is spinning us round

On the Earth in my house with four legs on the floor
On my bed, in our galaxy, with a front door

In the Milky Way galaxy, down on my block
In the house with four legs, and a door with a lock

On the Earth, in the Universe, I lay my head
On a street in my town with a room and a bed

And somewhere out there is your very own street
In a room with a floor and a bed with four feet

XVIII

NEON CAN BEAT ANYONE!

Neon is better than everyone at video games.

He has a game where you can race the fastest cars in the world. No one is faster than Neon. He has a game where you can play football. No one can tackle Neon.

He has a game where you can battle monsters. The monsters run away when they see Neon coming. He has a game where you can catch fish. Neon catches fish bigger than the boat.

Sometimes Neon plays his with brother Greg. Neon always wins. They play a game where you fly planes to see who's a better pilot. Neon flies circles around Greg. Neon's so good that none of his friends want to play him. They go outside instead. Sometimes Neon wishes he were outside playing with his friends.

One Monday, Neon gets a new video game. He plays it all day Tuesday and sleeps with the remote in his hand. He beats it on Wednesday. He is so excited that he goes outside to tell his friends during their soccer game.

He is going to ask them "Have you ever beaten a game in three days?" He's sure they will say "No," and then he will tell them that he did something they have never done. "Wait till the game's over," they say.

So he waits. And waits. And waits. "Can I play," he asks, and they say, "Yes." Neon has never played soccer before, but he actually likes it. He's not the best player on the field, but that's okay and nobody makes him feel bad about it. After the game he is very tired, but he's glad that he played.

"What did you want to ask us?" they say. "Can we play again tomorrow?" he asks. Now Neon is better at real soccer than he is at video game soccer.

XIX

NIGHT HIPPOS

By an African river known as the Nile,
The sun fell away and it rested a while.

The rhinos were tired from the smoldering heat,
So they laid down to sleep and they wiped off their feet.

The elephants marched to their elephant beds
And gently they rested their elephant heads.

But the hippos were bathing in the shallowest pools,
Thinking the rhinos and elephants fools.

Slowly the hippos sank into the river,
The water so cold that it gave them a shiver.

(Hippos can't swim, despite what you may think.
Since they also can't float, they could easily sink.)

They dove underwater to the soft river bed,
Onto darkish green plants with a smidgen of red.

They strolled on the bottom, then bounced up for air,
And they did it for hours, without any care.

The fish followed closely, weaving in, weaving out,
Swimming under their bellies, and up to their snouts.

And then, one by one, hippos headed for shore
To feed on the grass by the river once more.

They dried off their bodies by shaking and stomping
And took bites of grass, chewing and chomping.

With the night fading fast, they were full from the feast,
As the sun returned back, rising up from the east.

The hippos crept off to collapse for the day
While the rhinos and elephants got up to play.

Enjoying the warmth of the sun and its light,
Never knowing the story of hippos at night.

XX

NO DANCING AT THE DINNER TABLE!

When Taylor was a baby, he wiggled his toes.
When Taylor could walk, he jiggled his hips.
When Taylor got bigger, he started to dance.
Taylor danced anywhere, everywhere, and no one knew why.

On the way to school, he tap-danced.
On the way back, he shimmied and shook.
Getting clean in the tub, on top of his bed,

And out in the yard, Taylor danced.

One night his father had finally had enough.
"No dancing at the dinner table!" he shouted.
But it didn't stop there.

"No dancing in the car!" he yelled the next morning.
"No dancing in the store!" he hollered that weekend.
Until one day he said it: "NO DANCING AT ALL!"

But even if he wanted to, Taylor just couldn't stop.
So when Taylor was in school, he tapped his fingers.
When Taylor was in bed, he hummed to himself.
And when Taylor was alone, he danced.

It was hard to find places to dance all alone.
He tried the garage, but the car made it crowded.
He tried the closet, but his clothes kept on falling.
Finally he tried the basement.

And that's where he found a small, dusty, crusty piano.
He tapped his fingers on the keys and hummed a tune.
Then the tapping turned into playing, and the humming turned
into singing, and the noise turned into beautiful music.

Everyday, he played his song.
Taylor had never been so happy.

But one day his parents came looking for him.
"What are you doing down there?" yelled his father.
Without waiting for an answer, they marched down to see.
"I'm playing my song," Taylor replied. "The one I dance to."

He was scared and nervous as he started to play for them.
But as he did, something began to happen.
His father started to jiggle his toes.
His mother started to wiggle her hips.
They were moving and shaking and didn't know why.

And then, they danced.
They danced around the room.
They danced down the hall.
And they most definitely danced at the dinner table!

XXI

NOBLE GNARBLE

Far below the ocean waves, a gnarble laid in bed,
All night long his gnarble dreams kept swimming in his head.

He dreamt a dream of swimming up to see the sky above,
Lit up by the sun in colors he just knew he'd love.

But gnarbles never swam that high, their fins were much too small,
Their tails were thin and floppy, which didn't help at all.

This gnarble liked his fins and had no problem with his tail,
So when he woke he knew that he just couldn't, wouldn't fail.

"I'm swimming up above the waves to see the sky of blue;
I've never seen it even once, and now it's time I do."

But the other gnarbles warned him that he shouldn't swim so high,
As did the blyfish family that always swam close by.

"No gnarble's ever swam that high, it simply isn't done,
A blyfish might just make the trip, but we know you're not one."

"Gnarbles don't have flappers like all us blyfish do,
You don't even have koggers like the swimming gungaloo."

But the gnarble didn't listen and he left his friends behind.
No silly blyfish family could ever change his mind.

He swam up past the boulders made of spongy gishy-gosh,

And flew right by the herd of floating feeding fipple-fosh.

His fins were getting tired but he knew he couldn't stop,
So he kept swimming faster, trying hard to reach the top.

Just then a hungry warckel blocked the gnarble with his fin.
He grabbed him by his tail and brought him right up to his chin.

"I've never had a gnarble, this would be a tasty treat,
But you're much too thin and tiny for big old me to eat."

So the gnarble just kept swimming, and didn't dare to stop,
Until he heard the sound of a great big bubble POP!

He turned around to see that he was in a bit of trouble.
The sound he heard was that of a silver subbalubble.

The gnarble tried to hide somewhere that he could safely stay,
But the subbalubble saw him and was headed right his way.

"Oh Mister Subbalubble, please don't eat me up for lunch,
I'll bring a yummy plant instead, for you to sit and munch?"

"I've never seen a gnarble try to swim this high before.
What is it, little fishy, that you're up here looking for?"

"If I could see the sky just once, I'd be a happy fish.
To do one flip above the waves would be my only wish."

"Well sorry silly gnarble, but I cannot let you go.
It's subbalubble dinner time- you should've stayed below."

The gnarble cowered back in fear and shook from fin to fin,
But then he saw a school of fish called shiny glimmy glin.

The glimmy glin swam right past the subbalubble's face,
And the gnarble grabbed a glimmy fin and quickly left that place.

The gnarble swam up higher still, until he saw some light.
He knew it had to be the sun and, Oh was it a sight!

Closely by a plink was sleeping, lying on his back.
He rubbed his giant belly as he dreamed about a snack.

The gnarble smiled happily and set his fins a swimming
But he didn't see the plink wake up, for he was busy grinning.

The gnarble almost made it to the surface of the sea,
But the plink chomped down and swallowed him as if he were a pea.

The gnarble sat inside the plink and started softly crying.
He'd never make it out, so was there any point in trying?

But the Gnarble knew he'd come too close to quit and give up now,
"There must be some way out of here. There's got to be somehow."

So the gnarble swam around inside, trying very hard to think,
And while he did, his floppy tail was tickling the plink.

The plink was very ticklish and he couldn't hold it in.
He tried to cover up his laugh with his giant plinkish fin.

But his mouth was open long enough for the gnarble to swim free,
He swam so fast the hungry plink did not have time to see.

Far above the ocean floor, above the gnarbles' homes,

Above the blyfish families and dancing water-gnomes,

Above the swimming gungaloo and slimy dundledun,

A gnarble flipped above the waves and smiled at the sun.

XXII

ODE TO BURPING

My name is Tyler, King of burping,
Champion of stomach chirping.
No one else can belch like me-
A mouth explosion symphony.

When I start a burping session,
It sounds just like a bear impression.
Sometimes I can shake the room
With my burping bellow boom.

I'm famous for my great technique,
But, mind you, it's not for the meek.
Some tips when burping for a crowd,
To help your belch be extra loud:

Arch your back for full projection.
Cover up for their protection.
Throw some soda down the hatch
For burping volume none can match.

But most important, don't forget
The golden rule of etiquette.
In terms of manners, I'm not choosy
But always, always say "Excuse me."

XXIII

PHILIP LOSES EVERYTHING!

Philip had trouble holding onto things. His parents were always getting angry with him for losing his clothes, or his toys, or his homework. They didn't realize that it really wasn't Philip's fault- his things actually liked to run away from him!

When Philip was two, his blanket grew legs and ran out of the house. His mother and father weren't very happy. They thought that it was his fault.

When Philip was three, he loved playing with his toy airplane. One day it flew right off the shelf and out the window, all by itself. Somehow Philip got blamed again. "You need to learn how to take better care of your toys," his parents said.

A year later Philip had 12 pairs of socks run away from him! Obviously they were smart and had planned their escape well because Philip never figured out how they did it. When his mother went to buy him more socks, she asked what kind he wanted. "The kind of socks that can't climb out of a sock drawer," he said. She thought he was joking.

Whenever Philip did his homework, he had to hold the paper down. If he let it go for one second, it would run off the desk and try to go outside by sliding under the front door. If you thought Philip's parents didn't like his explanations, you should have seen his teacher's reaction!

One day Philip's mom bought him a brand new ruler for him to bring to school. "Everyone will need a ruler tomorrow," his teacher had said. His mother was very clear that Philip had better not lose the ruler.

Philip took extra care to make sure that the ruler didn't run away. He took a string and tied one end around the ruler and the other end around his dresser. All night long he kept one eye on the ruler, even as he was falling asleep.

Philip thought he had outsmarted the ruler, but he was wrong. It grew arms and legs and ran straight for the door. The string stopped it from getting out, but Philip had fallen asleep and didn't notice. The ruler used its hands to untie the string and crept out the door, trying not to wake Philip up.

Because the ruler was so tall and thin, it had trouble keeping its balance on the stairs and it fell down, hitting every single step on the way. The noise was loud enough to wake Philip up. He chased the ruler all through the house.

The ruler ran through the dining room, and Philip followed after. It ran through the kitchen and then straight out the front door. Philip caught it right before it reached the sidewalk.

“Gotcha!” he said. And just like that, the ruler stopped trying to run away. Philip put it on the ground and it happily walked right back up to his room. Philip finally understood why the ruler was running way- it was playing a game! It just wanted to have some fun.

After that, Philip found a way to keep his toys entertained without having them run away. His parents never yelled at him for losing things anymore. But occasionally they would see him playing board games against a ruler...

XXIV

PRESCOTT HAWTHORNE

Prescott Hawthorne talks to birds.
Amidst their chirping he hears words.
They tap his window all day long,
To sit and joke or crow a song.

His cat Melinda watches, waiting,
All the while, contemplating.
She would like some feathered snacks,
And when he leaves, the cat attacks!

She shuts the window, birds inside.
They fly in panic, some collide.
Melinda chases everyone.
They're all scared, but she has fun.

The brave woodpecker bites her ears.
Prescott hears the roaring cheers.
He races back and starts to holler,
“Stop it Mel,” and grabs her collar.

She hides a crow between her claws,
Too tight to hear the “caw cah caw’s”.
The hummingbird, who saw it happen,
Flies to Prescott, wings a flappin’.

“She’s got my friend, please help him out.”
They knew he would, they had no doubt.
“Okay Mel, I’ll make a deal.
Let him go, you’ll get a meal.”

Prescott waits, Melinda chooses,
Shakes her head and still refuses.
“Fine,” he says, “I’m sorry Mel,
but if you don’t, I swear I’ll tell.”

“I’ll go tell mom you ate her pie.
I’ll go tell dad you chewed his tie.
All the other cats will know
your secrets till you let him go.”

The birds gave Prescott loud applause
As Mel released him from her claws.
The crow said, “How did you do that?
You talk to birds, but she’s a cat?”

“All the creatures large or small,
I can understand them all.”

“Sometimes they just ask for food,
And other times they’ll be quite rude.
But always as I pass them by,
They tell me how they want to fly!”

XXV

SIMON AND BARRY

Simon found a four-leaf clover.
He was proud of himself until Barry walked by.
"I found a five-leaf clover once," said Barry.

Simon got an A on his homework.
He was proud of himself until Barry talked to him.
"I get A+'s all the time," said Barry.

Simon learned how to ride a bike.
He was proud of himself until Barry stopped by.
"I can ride my bike backwards," said Barry.

Simon got his first allowance ever from his parents.
He was proud of himself until Barry saw him.
"I get so much allowance that I give my dad an allowance now," said Barry.

Simon got the lead in his school play.
He was proud of himself until Barry found out.
"They wrote a play about me once, called "Barry is Amazing," said Barry.
"They're working on a sequel now," he added.

On his birthday, Simon's parents threw him a wonderful party.
He was proud of his party until he realized Barry was there.
"My party had twice as many people and five times as much cake!" said Barry.

By then, Simon was sick and tired of Barry ruining his moods. Also, he was sure that five times as much cake would be way too much for any party.

Simon's parents came outside and brought him a huge present. It was a dog with big floppy ears inside of a cage, and it was the best present he had ever gotten!

Barry opened his mouth to speak, but Simon interrupted.

"I don't care if you've had a better present, or if you own a bigger dog, or if you have the greatest pet ever. This is my dog, and I wouldn't trade him for anything," said Simon.

Simon played with his dog outside on his lawn.
He was proud of all the tricks that his dog could do, especially when Barry walked by.

XXVI

THE BOULDERS AND THE BEAVERS

Jenny the Beaver was late for her job. She gets wood for the dam from a tree or a log.
But today she was late and her boss was not happy.

"Before we begin,
tell us where you have been!"
said her boss, very meanly, while wearing a grin.

I was feeding the fish that swim here in this pond.

"Beavers build dams, that is what Beavers do.
The only one worrying about fish is you.

And the beavers worked hard for the rest of the day.

The next day young Jenny was late once again. And when she arrived, she heard it right then:

"Before we begin,
tell us where have you been?"
said her boss, very meanly, while wearing a grin.

I was bringing the wolves some new leaves for their bed.

"Beavers build dams, that is what beavers do.
The only one worrying about wolves, is you.

And the beavers worked hard for the rest of the day.

The next day young Jenny was later than ever. She tried to sneak up, but her boss was too clever.

"Before we begin,
tell us where have you been?"
said her boss, very meanly, while wearing a grin.

I was bringing the coyotes some roots for their pup.

"Beavers build dams, that is what beavers do.
The only one worrying about coyotes, is you."

And the beavers worked hard for the rest of the day.

The next day young Jenny was latest of all. And all of the beavers waited right by the wall.

"Before we begin,
tell us where have you been?"
said her boss, very meanly, while wearing a grin.

I was bringing the hawks some twigs for their nest.

"Beavers build dams, that is what beavers do.
The only one worrying about hawks, is you.
Arrive late again, and your time here is through."

And the beavers worked hard for the rest of the day.

The next day young Jenny arrived rather early. But, still Jenny's boss, reacted quite poorly.

"You see it's not hard to show up when I say,
Why did you finally listen today?
said her boss, who still grinned in a mean sort of way.

"I was going to talk to my friend the bear,
but beavers build dams, that is easy to see.
And the only one worrying about bears is me."

And the beavers worked hard until catastrophe struck.
A huge rock came barreling down the river and crashed right into the dam.

"Where did this come from! Someone must know,
Jenny go ask all the fish if they know!"

Jenny went off to ask the fish, and then reported back.

"The current is strong and they could not go see,
I'll go ask the wolves what the problem could be."

So Jenny went off to ask all the wolves, and then reported back.

"The brush is too thick and they could not get by,
I'll go ask the coyotes, if they might know why."

So Jenny went off to ask the coyotes, and then reported back.

"They said that the boulder came falling from high,
The hawks might have seen, since we know they can fly."

So Jenny went off to ask the hawks, and then reported back.
This time she came back looking sad and upset.

Her boss yelled, "If the birds did not see, then you must ask the bear.
Surely he knows, since his cave is up there."

"No need," said Jenny (since the hawks had just told her).
"The bear will not help, since HE threw down the boulder."

And ever since that day, Jenny showed up when she pleased.

The richest story ever told,
Is California's rush for gold,

At Sutter's Mill the gold was found
The masses came from all around

As rumors first started the skeptics all laughed
Until confirmation from President Taft

Word spread out quickly of bona fide gold
The families packed up, and the east wagons rolled

They left lives at home, to try out being miners
Named for the year, they were called forty-niners

Hundreds of thousands had rushed to the site
They all saw gold nuggets, and wanted a bite!

Half came by the land, and the rest came by sea
For riches untold and some prosperity

From countries like Mexico, Chile, Peru
Then China and Britain and even France too

At first they were profiting, fortunes galore
Compared to back east they made fifteen times more!

The economy saw what was known as a boom
There was wealth to be found in a shop or saloon

But as the time passed gold was harder to find
More people had come, and more land had been mined

The average prospector did not make out well
Living was costly without gold to sell

Gold mining companies learned to survive
And only they stood by eighteen fifty-five

Gold is worth money, and it's fine decoration
But during the gold rush, it helped shape a nation

XXVIII

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DOT MAKES

In the middle of his dream, an artist awoke. He reached for his pencil and started to draw. He started with a single dot. It took the artist hours to finish his picture, and afterwards he collapsed back into bed. Soon he was asleep again, still smiling from thoughts of what he had drawn.

The dot, on the other hand, was not as happy. It looked around the page and saw lines all around. They were long and colorful, and the dot was neither. "I don't belong here," it thought, "I am just a small, meaningless dot and this picture does not need me." So the dot jumped off of the page.

It approached a newspaper that was lying nearby. There were dots all over the newspaper. "Surely this is where I am meant to be," it said aloud. As soon as the dot hopped onto the front page of the newspaper, all the other dots started to yell. "You cannot stay here!" they said. "Why not?" asked the dot. "You are dots, and you are here."

"We are not dots," they said, "we are periods, and we belong in books, and stories, and newspapers. You are just a dot." The dot felt silly, so it left the newspaper.

Then the dot saw a white cube with dots on every side. "This is where I belong," it thought to itself. "Excuse me," it said politely to four dots sitting on a side of the cube, "I am a dot and you are dots, so may I join you?"

"No, you may not," said the four dots. "We are dots on a pair of dice. An extra dot would ruin a pair of dice." The dot felt silly again and hopped over to the artist who was sound asleep.

"I wonder why he drew me..." thought the dot. And that's when it saw dots on the artist's hand and arm. "Perhaps this is where I was meant to be," said the dot as it crawled onto the artist's hand and rested.

"Ahem," said one of the dots on his arm. "AHM!" said the arm dot even louder. "You are not a freckle. You are a dot, and only freckles belong here." "Aren't freckles a type of dot?" asked the dot, who was not feeling welcome anymore.

"Yes, we are," said the freckle, "We are a special kind of dot, and you are definitely not one of us." (Of all the dots it had met, the rejected dot felt that freckles were clearly the rudest.) The dot did not know what to do. It didn't belong with lines, or periods, or dice, or rude freckles.

The artist woke up at that very moment and went to look at his picture, but he was heartbroken by what he saw. He held up the drawing and sighed. "Where has my seed gone?" he cried.

"This is supposed to be a picture of a seed in the soil before it grows into a mighty tree, but without the seed, it is useless, and I cannot draw another so perfect as I did the first time," said the artist sadly.

The dot began to feel silly one last time. It had not realized that all along it was not just a dot, but also a seed. A seed may start off small, but there's no telling how large it will become, how many beautiful leaves it will grow, and how many people will find shelter under it.

The dot jumped back onto the page. It jumped onto the exact spot it had left because it knew that, although it was just a small dot, it meant much more in the big picture.

XXIX

THE ISLAND OF BUM BUM BA LOO

Have you sailed to the island of Bum Bum Ba Loo?
It's something that all great explorers must do.

Ten years ago, I set off with my crew
In search of the island of Bum Bum Ba Loo.

The waves on the sea made me wish that I flew
To get to that island of Bum Bum Ba Loo.

The path on my map led us slightly askew,
And we sailed every ocean before we were through.

But when we arrived it was then that I knew
That all of the stories I heard must be true.

The water surrounding it shone a bright hue,
A magnificent color, like no other blue.

A sign made with vines held together by glue
Stood on the shore, reading "We Welcome You!"

The king had arranged for a great big to-do,
And the queen herself shouted the loudest "Woohoo!"

The Bum Bum Ba Lites gave us bowls of their stew
Which they made from the roots of the Great Bum Ba Doo.

The food could have fed seven hundred and two
At the feast on the Island of Bum Bum Ba Loo.

Our drinks were quite tasty, a tropical brew.
If you ask what was in them, I haven't a clue.

They served us desserts made with Bum Berry goo
As we danced to the tune of the didgeridoo.

We all thanked the King for the party he threw,
Of course, not forgetting to thank the Queen too.

From their palace they showed us the wonderful view,
And we saw all the fields where the Bum Berries grew.

As gifts, I gave both of them gumballs to chew.
When they asked me for more, I had only a few.

So we hopped on the ship where we kept a whole slew,
But it got carried off when the northern wind blew.

The island has since waited to be found anew
Till I pick someone worthy to give the map to.

And now I've decided to pass it to you
To discover the island of Bum Bum Ba Loo.

XXX

THE PARTICULAR WAY OF ODD MS. MCKAY

Say what you will or say what you may,
There's nobody else who is like Ms. McKay.

To all whom she passes, she gives a "Good Day!"
And she's ready with maps if you've gone astray.

Her hair may be orange with two streaks of gray.
Her purse may be made out of flowers and clay.

But her hugs have been known to go on for a day,
And she wakes up each morning with something to say.

She had her house built in a tree by the bay,
And she dangles a tire swing down every May.

She's famous for making a carrot soufflé.
She'll give you five boxes, but won't let you pay.

She only eats food when it's served on a tray,
And she cuts up her meals in a very odd way.

She owns her own pony who's known for his "neigh",
And when she's out riding, people stop and they pray.

She'd lend you her coat, with no sign of delay.
(She wove it from tree leaves and piles of hay.)

On Sundays she puts on her purple beret,
And never, not once, has she missed the ballet.

Her voice is quite bad, but she sings everyday.
If she's holding her trumpet, don't ask her to play!

I think she should meet you as soon as today,
And if you stop by, she'll insist that you stay.

And say what you will or say what you may,
You'll remember the day that you met Ms. McKay.

XXXI

THE STORY OF YES AND NO

Before words were words, a boy named Yes lived in a small village in a small kingdom. Yes was good at everything. He was the best, smartest and most liked person in his village.

Yes had a brother, and his name was No. No was jealous of his brother because he was not much good at anything himself. Whenever the villagers asked No for help, he refused because he didn't like people very much. Whenever someone asked Yes for a favor, he would gladly help, and he secretly didn't mind the fact that it irritated No when he did.

One day Yes and No's father, Okay, went on a long journey and he left his two sons in charge of all the animals. Yes took good care of the great guck, and the icks, and the three-toed yock. [Keep in mind, my dear friend, that the guck, ick, and three-toed yock were ancient animals, so you might know them by different names today.] No didn't want to be bothered with the boring tasks involved with taking care of the animals. So instead of helping his brother, No went down to the lake and threw rocks into the water.

A few days after his father left, Yes asked his brother to watch the three-toed yock while he went to find some food to eat. Instead of doing what Yes had asked, No lay down, shut his eyes, and forgot about the yock.

It just so happened that the King had a personal road nearby, and he traveled on it often. So often, that when the three-toed yock wandered onto the road, the King's carriage was passing by and had to swerve to avoid hitting it. The King was thrown from the carriage, fell to the ground, and was badly injured.

The King demanded to know why a three-toed yock had been allowed on his road alone and he asked all the villagers for an explanation. Yes was always honest, so he told the King the entire story.

The King thought for a moment, and then he came up with an idea that he was quite happy with. Yes and No were to work in the castle as his personal assistants as punishment for what was later referred to as "the worst three-toed yock and carriage accident in the Kingdom's history".

The King needed help with many things around the castle because a King cannot be bothered with the daily tasks involved with running a kingdom. However, soon after his decision about the two brothers, the King realized that only Yes would be of any use to him as a servant.

Whenever the King asked No to bring him anything, it would get thrown away, broken, or eaten, without exception. The King was quite sure that No was the worst servant in the entire world.

The brothers' most important task was to help pick the food for a grand party that the King was throwing later that night. Cooks from all over the kingdom lined up at the castle's gate to offer the King their food for the party. Of course, the King could not go and grab the food himself, so he asked Yes and No to do it for him.

The first cook came up the gate and yelled to the Gatekeeper, "I bring my delicious ugberry pie for the King's banquet!" The King heard this and thought that ugberry pie would be perfect for such an event (and he knew that he would love to eat the leftovers). Because he didn't want anything to happen to the ugberry pie, the King yelled "Yes!" and then asked him to go fetch it.

The next cook stepped up to the gate. "I offer the King grukie soup!" he said. The King didn't like grukie soup very much and he knew just how to get rid of it. "No!" he yelled and then sent No out to retrieve the soup. No dropped the soup before the King could even smell it.

This went on for hours. If the king liked a dish, he would yell "Yes!" and it would be included in the night's feast. If he did not, everyone would hear a loud "NO!" and the dish would be destroyed moments later by a servant with a very bad attitude.

Pretty soon this started catching on around the kingdom, for if a King does something, his loyal subjects are never far behind. If the villagers didn't want a second scoop of potatoes, they would say "No." And if they liked what someone was offering, they would say, "Yes." And ever since that day in a small village in a small kingdom, Yes has meant yes, and No has meant no.

This small kingdom also happened to be the birthplace of Yes and No's cousins, Please and Thanks, but that is another story for another time...

XXXII

THE THREE BROTHERS OF MALADIME

From the Valley of Lingus to the River Waduckus,
To the mystical Mountains of Huckus Amuckus,
From the Shores of Madiddy to the Applestone Sea,
No tale's as famous as the Troll Brothers Three.

Their small little hut was in Old Maladime.
Their tempers were short and they fought all the time.
One day their Mother had seen more than enough.
She packed up her Hackeling bag with her stuff.

She slammed the front door with a sigh and a huff.
Without her around, they fought even more rough.
(But do not be worried for the Troll Brother's fate.
Trolls are grown up by the time they turn eight.)

Later the smallest, named Small Itty Brother,
Came in with a note from the Three Brother's Mother.

The next biggest brother grabbed the note right away.
"I'll read this letter," he started to say.

"No you will not, Sorta Kinda Big Brother,
The biggest should read it, that's me and no other."
They both sat and listened to Brother Enormous
"It seems that our mother wrote this to inform us."

"She's splitting us up, since we fight everyday.
And our Troll Dad agrees that there's no other way.
One of us trolls has to leave by the morning,
And also she added a personal warning."

"If no one has left by the time she comes back,
She'll eat us all up for her afternoon snack!"
(Now even though trolls are ugly and tough,
I assure you this warning was merely a bluff.)

The Trolls became panicked- one had to go!
Who should it be? And how would they know?
The Three Troll Brothers all started to shout.
Itty proclaimed, "You two can't kick me out!"

Sorta Kinda Big Brother was yelling now, too.
"If someone must leave, it should be one of you."
Brother Enormous said, "It won't be me!
You can't push me out, you just wait and see!"

Then Itty thought of his best idea ever.
It was mean and despicable, but also real clever.
"It you two don't leave," Itty said with a laugh,
"I'll take all your clothes and I'll tear them in half."

Sorta Kinda Big Brother answered back with a squeak,
"You tore all the pants that I own just last week!
Now if someone won't pack and get out of this hut,
I'll taunt both of you till your ears will slam shut."

Brother Enormous just laughed as he spoke.
"You already do that, this must be a joke.
Now leave or I'll pick you both up by your toes,
And then I'll stick Wickerloo bugs up your nose."

Itty said, "Well, I would like to see how,
Since you already did- there are two up there now!"

"HmMMMM," said Itty Brother.
"HmMMMM," said Kinda Sorta Big Brother.
"HmMMMM," said Brother Enormous.

They realized the truth, each one by one.
There was nothing to do that hadn't been done.
But what would occur when their Mother got in?
Whenever she argued, they just couldn't win.

It seems that they'd have to try something quite new,
And stick with each other till it was all through.

When Troll Mom came home, she got a surprise:
No loud sounds of yelling, no insults, or cries.
Small Itty Brother was sewing up clothes,
While Brother Enormous pulled bugs from his nose.

Kinda Sorta Big Brother was just very kind.
Three better brothers would be hard to find.
When she asked who was leaving, they simply refused.
Needless to say, this left her confused.

"When we weren't being horrible," said Itty Brother,
"We found that we actually like one another."
She smiled when they said there would be no more fighting,
But as she hugged them, she asked if they'd put that in writing.

TREMENDOUS STUPENDOUS!

It was the day that Farmer Duff waited for all year round: Today was Family Funday Sunday! The kids came rushing onto the farm as soon as the gates opened. They fed the goats. They rode the horses. They watched the pigs roll in the mud and tried to jump in with them. The rest of the day was spent running away from the goats who were looking for more food.

When everyone had left, all the animals gathered in the barn to fall asleep. Just as the last chick had closed its eyes, and everything was silent, all of a sudden... BOOM! CRRRRACK!

Something fell from the ceiling into a pile of hay. The dog started barking loudly and the chickens ran in circles, bumping into each other. Then the something on the floor started moving and dusting itself off. It had the oddest little vest and a very tall top hat. (How it had stayed on his head, we'll never know.)

"Please excuse my entrance, all my furry little friends.
Give me just a moment and I'll try to make amends,"
said the something with a hat and vest.

Then he pulled out from his vest an old wooden spoon. He waved it at the ceiling and said, "TREMENDOUS STUPENDOUS!" And with that, the roof was fixed, just like new. "Where did you come from?" asked the sheep. "How'd you'd that!" said the dog.

"I arrived today from Walden where I lived inside their Zoo.
I was raised in Southern France, but I was born in Timbuktu."

About this time the hawk and the blue jay came to see what had made all the noise. (The hawk never went anywhere without his friend, the blue jay.) They sat high up on the windowsill and watched below. "That's all well and good," said the hawk, "But who are you?"

"How rude of me-my name is Ferret R. Fable," he said as he bowed. Ferret R. Fable adjusted his vest and removed his hat, carefully placing it in the middle of the floor.

"I've traveled far to bring this here, and leave you all a treat-
My famous stew, like none before, the greatest you will eat!"

And with a wave of his spoon over the large hat, he roared, "TREMENDOUS STUPENDOUS!"

The hat was magically filled with a stew that smelled delicious to every single animal in the barn (which is hard to do because the pigs and the sheep never agree on a meal). One by one the animals came up to the hat. "I don't think it's wise to eat from this ferret's magic hat," said the blue jay. "I would find out what's in that stew before I ate it," said the hawk. But no one listened.

The pigs slopped the stew up. The dog slurped it off the floor. One goat liked it so much that he gobbled up the ferret's hat, as well. "It's delicious!" said the horse, "The best I've ever had. It's ... it's...." "TREMENDOUS STUPENDOUS!" cried the dog. "Can you make us some more?"

"Of course I can, dog, I'm Ferret R. Fable!
I'll bring a new batch as soon as I'm able.
I take credit cards, checks, and cash does just fine,
If you'll stand to my left and please form a straight line."

All the animals looked at each other. "But we have no money," said the dog. Ferret R. Fable didn't say a word. He just held out his hand, and the goat coughed up his hat. Then he put the spoon back in his vest and he walked towards the door.

"But we have food," said the horse in a soft little voice. Ferret suddenly stopped and scratched at his head.

"For your food," said the ferret, "I'll give you a trade.
I'll share with you all how this stew can be made."

The hawk tried to stop them, "That deal is horrendous!" But it was too late, "TREMENDOUS STUPENDOUS!"

With a flash, the ferret was gone. He took all the grain, all the oats, all the apples, all the carrots, all the chickenfeed, and the slop and the hay. (How he carried it all off, nobody knows.) All that was left in the barn was a note. The dog picked it up and read it aloud:

Recipe for Tremendous Stupendous Stew

- 1 Part Carrot
- 2 Parts Apple
- A bag full of grain

-A bucket of slop
-Some hay and some chickenfeed sprinkled on top

The animals looked around for the ingredients, but there wasn't a scrap of food left. Realizing what a bad mistake they had made, they cried themselves to sleep.

The next morning Farmer Duff woke up and saw that all the food was gone. (How they'd eaten all of the food on the farm in one night, he couldn't imagine.) He spent the whole afternoon gathering food from the market. The animals worked all day without anything to eat, except for the blue jay and hawk who dug for worms. (If you've ever tried to work on an empty stomach, then you know how terrible that can be.)

Afterwards, when all the animals were tired and hungry, the farmer gave them a plate full of the only scraps he could find at the market. Then the blue jay asked all the exhausted animals, "How does it taste?" "TREMENDOUS STUPENDOUS!" they happily replied. And they ate till their bellies were full.

XXXIV

WHY THE CRICKET CHIRPS

Before things were the way they are, the cricket could fly. He flew faster than the bumblebee. He flew higher than the falcon. And he flew fancier than the flying marmaduck (who was quite a fancy flier).

The cricket wanted to fly all over the world. He flew to the East. Then he flew to the West. And then he flew to the South. But he had never flown to the North.

The ant tried to warn him that he should not try. "It's very cold up north," said the ant, "It's too cold for an ant and too cold for a cricket."

The cricket, however, did not listen to the ant, because crickets do whatever they want. He set off for the North that very night. It did not take him long to get there because he was such a fantastically fast and fancy flier.

The cricket landed next to a pine tree as the sun began setting. There was snow everywhere he looked. There was snow on the trees. There was snow on the ground. And there was snow on top of the mountains.

The moose came walking over to him very slowly. He spoke even more slowly. "Ohhhh...Hello," said the moose. "Bundle up, nighttime is coming." The cricket, however, did not listen to the moose because crickets do whatever they want.

He flew up into a pine tree to settle in for a good sleep. It did not take him long to get there because he was such an incredibly fast and fancy flier. The owl came flying over to the same branch. "You should find some shelter from the cold night," said the owl. The cricket, however, did not listen to the owl because crickets do whatever they want.

He crawled away from the owl and the branch, and he rested on a pile of twigs. All the remarkably fast and fancy flying made him sleepier than he had ever been. The cricket slept all through the night until morning.

When he woke up, he was ready to go back home and tell the ant about his trip. He hopped high in the air to start flying, but he couldn't. Instead, he fell right back into the snow. He hopped again, even higher this time, but his wings would not work. They had been frozen solid during the cold night.

He tried to warm them up by rubbing them together, but it was no use. The cricket had no choice but to hop all the way home. It took him days and days to return. By the time he got back, his wings had almost become unfrozen.

But it is important to know that wings are very special and very fragile, which is why the greatest care should always be taken around them. They are not meant to be frozen, and once they are, they may never be the same again.

So even though the cricket's wings were no longer frozen, they still could not fly anymore. And ever since then, the cricket stays on the ground like his friend the ant, and he hops from place to place. And now the cricket is the fastest and fanciest hopper there is.

At nighttime, you can hear him chirping from rubbing his wings together to keep warm. But he is doing much more than just that: At bedtime, the cricket is telling you how warm or cold it is by his chirping. He chirps faster when it is warm, and he chirps slower when it is cold. This way you

will not make the same mistake that he did. However, that is only if you decide to listen*.

* Dolbear's Law states that if you count the number of times a cricket chirps in 15 seconds and add 40, it will give you (roughly) the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

XXXV

WILL YOU WALK MY WIKOSH?

I'm terribly sorry, but if you wouldn't mind,
Could you please feed the mazonias that I must leave behind?

I'll be back in a week from my trip to Mount Poe,
And they cannot come with me, for they shiver in snow.

They're wonderful plants-they won't give you much trouble.
Just give them a drink and a hubble-gum bubble.

And just before bed, sing the mazzaloo song.
But watch out! They get mad if the song is sung wrong.

To anger mazonias is not very wise.
If you're close, they will try to throw dirt in your eyes.

You know that I really do hate to impose,
I just need to make sure my mazonia patch grows.

There are more things to do while you're thinging about.
You could pet the galosh and then let the wug out.

Or just leave them alone, if you aren't in the mood.
But ignoring galoshes and wugs is quite rude.

A galosh that gets petted, grows beautiful hair.
Unpetted galoshes get sad and go bare.

When Wugs are inside they curl up into balls.
If they don't go outside, they start bouncing off walls.

And will you walk my Wikosh (it won't be very tough).
If you don't, he'll get bored and might hide all my stuff.

His favorite is watching me search all around,
And when I find things, he lets out a "Wik-Woshing" sound.

Would you do one more thing, as a favor to me?
My Dugalug gets a bit lonely, you see.

He's a great checkers player, but he doesn't like losing.
He's also a cheater, so don't get caught snoozing.

And would you please fill the tub for my green sprinter fish?
But watch out for the splash of his flipping tail swish.

I know I can trust you. You won't let me down.
Would you watch them again, next time I leave town?

XXXVI

WOOLLY NOT SO MAMMOTH

By the Arctic Ocean, atop a frozen lake,
Above the icy water and the sheets of snowy flake,

A Woolly Mammoth mother walked her son, Elan, to school.
She combed his hair, said goodbye, and wiped a little drool.

Elan was not so large, as far as woolly mammoths go.
His friends thought he was puny, and they always told him so.

And although he tried his hardest, he never really grew.
Perhaps there was a special trick that bigger mammoths knew.

His biggest friend would tell him, so he tapped him during class.
Their teacher wasn't watching, so he tried to talk real fast.

"How'd you get so big," he asked, "I'd really like to know.
Tell me what the secret is, tell me how to grow."

"Well, my father is a mammoth, and my mother is one, too.
It's all about your family- if they're big, so are you."

When Elan went home he asked his dad, "Why am I so small?
You're enormous, so is mom. Shouldn't I be tall?"

"It's simple," said his father, "like I've told you all along,
Eat your veggies, drink your milk, and you'll be big and strong.

"No way!" he thought, "Not a chance! Veggies are the worst.
And my brother, Eli, never eats them. I should've asked him first"

"I know you're really busy, Eli, but I need some advice.
How can I get bigger (and quickly would be nice)?"

"Take naps," his brother said, "Sleeping is the key.
Sleeping lets your body grow. Just take a look at me!"

But napping like his brother meant he'd never be awake.
Asking other mammoths was a terrible mistake.

So Elan gave up on growing, it was such a waste of time.
Size was overrated; being short would do just fine.

And every night he laid in bed, happy with his fate.
Until one day the bed collapsed, broken by his weight.

It was time that made him mammoth, and it would not, could not, hurry.
There was never any need for him to panic or to worry.

A woolly mammoth mother walked her son, Elan, to school.
He was healthy and enormous, but his mom still wiped his drool.

XXXVII

WORSTDAY BIRTHDAY PARTY

Today was the day that my sister turned eight.
At times it was sour, but started off great.

We disguised the surprise of a party at night.
The balloons filled the room, which was really a sight.

By request every guest came around to the back,
To ensure, that for her, the surprise stayed intact.

And at five she arrived, so we all started cheering.
Grandma Beau didn't know (she was quite hard of hearing).

We were greeted and treated by Lee the Magician,
But no one, not one of us, sat down to listen.

My mother said brother had taken the cake.
"Don't bother," said father who started to bake.

In an hour the flour was dry on his face.
The splatter of batter soon covered the place.

He had, for a dad, done an excellent job.
I knew this was true when I tasted a glob.

Amazed by the glaze that was mixed in the icing,
We agreed that to feed us, this cake would need slicing.

But Tim dug right in and he ate like a hog.
He was done, leaving none, which upset "Rash" the dog.

I was there in a chair when the presents came out.
Sister shook from one look and she started to pout.

Whatever upset her, the gifts weren't enough.
It was clear from the tears that she wanted more stuff.

A fifth of the gifts got thrown out in the trash.
She messed with the rest and then gave them to "Rash".

She broke every spoke on the new bike they gave her.
By then all her friends had walked out with a favor.

But dad always has his own great back-up plan,
And to keep it a secret, he held one gift in hand.

I could tell from her yell, as he gave her one more,
That this was the gift she had been waiting for.

Her tears, it was clear, had completely diminished.
The pouting and shouting were pretty much finished.

I crept when she slept, and I gave it a look-
Very odd, not a rod, just a new fishing hook.

What I saw dropped my jaw, what a strange birthday wish!
It appears that for years she'd been learning to fish.

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