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Day's Eyes

(adapted from Donald Bisset)

Mr. Jones, the joiner, and Grimble, his cat, and his blue parrot, Annie, all lived together in a little house. They were very happy. Most of the day while Mr. Jones was away working, Grimble lay on a chair in the kitchen and slept, while Annie swung backwards and forwards on her perch or looked in her mirror or ate seeds. Sometimes Grimble woke up and stretched and looked at Annie swinging backwards and forwards and then went back to sleep again.

One day Grimble woke up and looked at Annie's cage, but she wasn't on her perch. She was sitting rather quietly in the corner of her cage and she was covered with little red spots.

"Bless my claws and kittens!" said Grimble. "She's got measles! I'd better fetch Mr. Jones home so that he can go for the doctor."

But Mr. Jones worked in a big factory at the other end of the town and Grimble didn't know the way there. He didn't know what to do. He sat and thought for a moment, then he had an idea. He was a very clever cat. He went to the window and jumped right up and out on to the lawn.

It was a lovely morning and the sun was shining and all the daisies in the grass were looking at the sky.

Grimble walked over the grass and said to the daisies, "Will you, please, close your petals up like you do at night?" So all the daisies said, "Yes, Grimble," and they closed their petals up.

As they closed their petals it grew dark just like it is at night. But it was still day in the next garden. And the day, in the next door garden, looked over the wall and saw that it was night, so it closed its eyes too and grew dark. And the day in all the other gardens saw it was growing dark and, thinking it must be night-time, it grew dark as well, till all the town was quite dark.

The town hall clock which had just struck eleven was very surprised and scratched its head. "I must be slow!" it thought. "It's evening already." So it tick-tocked faster than ever before in its life and then struck six o'clock.

When the manager, at the factory where Mr. Jones worked, heard the town hall clock strike six and, looking out of the window, saw that it was dark, he thought it was time for the men to go home, so he sounded the hooter and all the men stopped working and put on their coats and went home.

As soon as Mr. Jones arrived home and saw the red spots on Annie, he went for the doctor.

The doctor came at once when he heard that Annie had red spots. "Mmm!" he said. "Yes, just a slight case of measles, I think. We'll soon get you better."

He gave Mr. Jones some medicine to give to Annie and said he'd call again next day. "Meanwhile," he said, "perhaps Grimble will stay and look after her." "Oh, yes," said Mr. Jones. "He will. He's a very clever cat."

A few days later Annie was quite better and sat swinging on her perch all day long and Grimble lay asleep in the chair. In the evening he woke up and stretched and had a drink of milk. Then he jumped out of the window and went out on the lawn. It was growing dark and some of the daisies had begun to close. He felt glad that Annie was better and sat on the garden wall and purred as the daisies closed one by one, as if the day's eyes were closing. "Perhaps," thought Grimble, "that's why they are called day's eyes or daisies."

Fog

(adapted from Donald Bisset)

Once upon a time, on the Queen's birthday, the fog had come to London to see the Trooping of the Colour. But when it got there the Queen said to the General, "We won't have the Trooping of the

Colour today because it's foggy." And this happened every time the fog came. So it felt sad, it did want to see the Trooping of the Colour. But how could it if every time it came to London the Queen said, "Cancel the Parade!"

Now, at Buckingham Palace, under the Queen's chair, there lived a cat, whose name was Smokey, and he felt very sorry for the fog and wanted to help it. So next year, just before the Queen's birthday, he wrote it a letter:

*Under the Queen's chair,
The Palace.
Tuesday.*

Dear FOG,
Please come to the Palace.

Yours sincerely,
SMOKEY

That night, before she went to bed the Queen put the cat out at the back door at Buckingham Palace and went upstairs to bed. And, sure enough, before Smokey had time to miaow three times, he saw the fog. They were pleased to see each other.

"I do want to see the Trooping of the Colour," said the fog, "But they always cancel the parade when it's foggy, so I never get to see it."

"I know," said Smokey. "Now, tomorrow you must arrive just as the soldiers are going on parade and when the General sees you, he'll say, 'Your Majesty, there's a fog. Shall I cancel the parade?' "

"Yes, he always says that," said the fog with a sigh.

"Then," continued Smokey, "just as the Queen is going to say, 'Yes, cancel the parade!' you miaow."

"All right!" said the fog. "But how do I miaow?"

So Smokey showed him and the fog practised till it was good at miaowing.

Next morning the soldiers were all lined up for the parade when the General said, "Shall I cancel the parade, Your Majesty? I see a fog."

"Where?" said the Queen.

"There!" said the General, pointing to the fog.

Just then the fog miaowed.

"Really, General," said the Queen. "Can't you tell the fog from a pussy cat? I distinctly heard it "miaow". Of course you can't cancel the parade!"

So the fog stayed and saw the Trooping of the Colour after all. It felt happy now and went away to live on the top of the mountains in Wales where there were other fogs to play with.

Once the Queen wrote to it:

The Palace.

1st June.

Dear FOG,
Please stay away.

Yours sincerely,
The QUEEN

And the fog wrote back:

Wales.

Friday.

Your Majesty,
I am very happy here.
It was fun seeing the Trooping of the Colour,
Thank you for having me.

Yours sincerely,
FOG

P. S. Love to SMOKEY.

The Queen can't understand it. "How did the fog manage to see the Trooping of the Colour, Smokey?" she asks him, looking under her chair. But Smokey just purrs. That's his secret.

How Robin Hood Won the Golden Arrow

In the 11th century England was conquered by the Normans who had come from the north of France. They began to take away lands and homes from the Saxons, the native population of the British Isles. The Saxons suffered very much from the Normans, and hated their new masters. Many of them had to run away into the forests and become outlaws.

There are many legends and songs about one of these outlaws — Robin Hood. Robin Hood with his three hundred men, so the legends say, lived in Sherwood Forest, not far from the town of Nottingham. He often attacked and robbed the rich Normans, but he was a friend of the poor and helped them as much as he could. Here is one of the legends.

Stories of Robin Hood and his merry men began to reach the ears of the Sheriff of Nottingham. He heard how Robin Hood robbed the rich and helped the poor, and he decided to catch the bold outlaw.

As it was difficult to find Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest, the Sheriff thought of a plan. People were told that a shooting match would be held in Nottingham and that the best archer would get a prize — an arrow of gold. He was sure that Robin Hood, who was an excellent archer, would certainly wish to take part in such a match and would come to Nottingham.

Robin Hood and his men prepared to go to the archery contest. They knew they couldn't wear the green suits they wore to camouflage themselves in the forest. Instead, some dressed as monks, some as traders, and others as farmers. Robin Hood was the hardest to recognize, as he was disguised in the tattered clothes of a beggar. He darkened his hair with walnut stain.

At last the day of the shooting match came. The match was held in a large field. Crowds of people came to see it, and many archers took part in it. The Sheriff sat in an armchair and carefully watched the archers in order to find out whether Robin Hood was among them.

The match began. The targets had been set up eighty yards away from the place where the archers stood. Each of the archers had a bow and several arrows. In the first round the archers took turns shooting just one arrow, and many of them missed the target. Then those who had hit the target shot two more arrows each.

After some time three archers were chosen as the best. One of them was a beggar dressed in a ragged coat and with a patch over one eye.

"Can one of these men be Robin Hood?" the Sheriff asked one of his men.

"No," replied the man. "None of them looks like Robin Hood. The first one is too tall and the second one is too old to be Robin Hood. That leaves only the ragged beggar. But his hair is much too dark and he is blind on one eye. Robin Hood must have stayed away."

Meanwhile the match went on. One of the archers shot first, but his arrow hit the target a few inches from the centre. The second took careful aim and shot his arrow. It hit the target not more than a finger's width from the centre.

Then the beggar stepped up. He quickly took aim and the arrow whistled through the air. It sank right into the centre of the target.

A great shout went up from the crowd. That was really excellent shooting!

"What is your name?" the Sheriff asked as he handed the golden arrow to the beggar.

"Men call me Locksley," was the answer.

"Join my service, Locksley," said the Sheriff. "I shall give you a good coat, and you will eat at my table."

"That I cannot do," replied the beggar. "I am a free man and no one will be my master."

With these words he turned and was lost in the crowd.

That night the merry outlaws gathered under a large oak-tree in Sherwood Forest. They ate and drank and laughed heartily at the joke they had played on the Sheriff. At last Robin said: "It was a fine joke we have played on the Sheriff. But we can play still another joke. We shall let him know that it was Robin Hood who won the golden arrow ..."

The next evening, as the Sheriff was about to go to bed, an arrow suddenly whistled through the open window of his bedroom and sank into the door on the other side of the room. A note was tied to the arrow. The Sheriff was frightened to death. With trembling fingers he took the piece of paper and read the following:

"Thank you for the golden arrow. It was a good prize for my shooting. *Robin Hood.*"

The Adventure of My Aunt

(adapted from Washington Irving)

My aunt was a big woman, very tall, with a strong mind and will. She was what you may call a very manly woman. My uncle was a thin, small man, very weak, with no will at all. He was no match for my aunt. From the day of their marriage he began to grow smaller and weaker. His wife's powerful mind was too much for him; it undermined his health, and very soon he fell ill.

My aunt took all possible care of him; half the doctors in town visited him and prescribed medicine for him enough to cure a whole hospital. She made him take all the medicines prescribed by the doctors, but all was in vain. My uncle grew worse and worse and one day she found him dead.

My aunt was very much upset by the death of her poor dear husband. Perhaps now she was sorry that she had made him take so much medicine and felt, perhaps, that he was the victim of her

kindness. Anyhow, she did all that a widow could do to honour his memory. She spent very much money on her mourning dress, she wore a miniature of him about her neck as large as a small clock; and she had a full-length portrait of him always hanging in her bedroom. All the world praised her conduct. "A woman who did so much to honour the memory of one husband, deserves soon to get another," said my aunt's friends.

Some time passed, and my aunt decided to move to Derbyshire where she had a big country house. The house stood in a lonely, wild part of the country among the grey Derbyshire hills.

The servants, most of whom came with my aunt from town, did not like the sad-looking old place. They were afraid to walk alone about its half-empty black-looking rooms. My aunt herself seemed to be struck with the lonely appearance of her house. Before she went to bed, therefore, she herself examined the doors and the windows and locked them with her own hands. Then she carried the keys from the house together with a little box of money and jewels, to her own room. She always saw to all things herself.

One evening, after she had sent away her maid, she sat by her toilet-table, arranging her hair. For, in spite of her sorrow for my uncle, she still cared very much about her appearance. She sat for a little while looking at her face in the glass first on one side, then on the other. As she looked, she thought of her old friend, a rich gentleman of the neighbourhood, who had visited her that day, and whom she had known since her girlhood.

All of a sudden she thought she heard something move behind her. She looked round quickly, but there was nothing to be seen. Nothing but the painted portrait of her poor dear husband on the wall behind her. She gave a heavy sigh to his memory as she always did whenever she spoke of him in company and went on arranging her hair. Her sigh was re-echoed. She looked round again, but no one was to be seen.

"Oh, it is only the wind," she thought and went on putting her hair in papers, but her eyes were still fixed on her own reflection

and the reflection of her husband's portrait in the looking-glass. Suddenly it seemed to her that in the glass she saw one of the eyes of the portrait move. It gave her a shock.

"I must make sure," she thought and moved the candle so that the light fell on the eye in the glass. Now she was sure that it moved. But not only that, it seemed to give her a wink exactly as her husband used to do when he was living. Now my aunt got really frightened. Her heart began to beat fast. She suddenly remembered all the frightful stories about ghosts and criminals that she had heard.

But her fear soon was over. Next moment, my aunt who, as I have said, had a remarkably strong will, became calm. She went on arranging her hair. She even sang her favourite song in a low voice and did not make a single false note. She again moved the candle and while moving it she overturned her work-box. Then she took the candle and began without any hurry to pick up the articles one by one from the floor. She picked up something near the door, then opened the door, looked for a moment into the corridor as if in doubt whether to go and then walked quietly out.

She hurried down the stairs and ordered the servants to arm themselves with anything they could find. She herself caught up a red-hot poker and, followed by her frightened servants, returned almost at once. They entered the room. All was still and exactly in the same order as when she had left it. They approached the portrait of my uncle.

"Pull down that picture," ordered my aunt.

A heavy sigh was heard from the portrait. The servants stepped back in fear.

"Pull it down at once," cried my aunt impatiently.

The picture was pulled down and from a hiding-place behind it, they dragged out a big, black-bearded fellow with a knife as long as my arm, but trembling with fear from head to foot. He confessed that he had stolen into my aunt's room to get her box of money and jewels, when all the house was asleep. He had once been a servant

in the house and before my aunt's arrival had helped to put the house in order. He had noticed the hiding-place when the portrait had been put up. In order to see what was going on in the room he had made a hole in one of the eyes of the portrait.

My aunt did not send for the police. She could do very well without them: she liked to take the law into her own hands. She had her own ideas of cleanliness also. She ordered the servants to draw the man through the horsepond in order to wash away his crimes, and then to dry him well with a wooden "towel".

But though my aunt was a very brave woman, this adventure was too much even for her. She often used to say, "It is most unpleasant for a woman to live alone in the country." Soon after she gave her hand to the rich gentleman of the neighbourhood.

Jim's Tale of the Manx Cats

Jim is a great smoke-coloured cat with round green eyes and a beautiful long tail. He does not live with me now. I left him in the country with my friends; but I see him from time to time and we have a good talk. I saw him only two weeks ago.

"I thought a lot about you," he said.

"How very kind of you, Jim," I answered.

"Are you writing another book of tales?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, "I am."

"Well," said Jim, "I can tell you a tale."

"Oh, Jim," I said, "how very kind of you."

Jim purred a little.

"Of course, you may not like it," he said.

"I am sure I shall," I said. "You always tell me such interesting tales, Jimmy. I shall tell everyone that it is your tale, of course. But it will be so nice to have it in my book. It is really good of you."

"Oh, not at all," said Jim with a wave of his tail; and then he began to tell me his story which was called:

"WHY MANX CATS HAVE NO TAILS."

"Have you seen a Manx cat?" began Jim.

"Oh, yes," I said. "I always feel so sorry for them."

"You needn't," said Jim. "They are very proud that they have such short tails."

"I am very glad to hear it. But don't they really feel sad that they have such short tails?"

"Not at all," said Jim. "I'll tell you how it happened. And remember, this is a true tale; all quite true."

"Oh, that makes it very interesting," I said.

"Well," went on Jim, "this is how it happened. Once upon a time there lived in the Isle of Man (for you know that Manx cats come from this island), a bold, bad robber-chief.

And one day this bold, bad robber-chief stole away a princess who lived on the other side of the island and carried her off to his castle, which stood at the top of a big mountain, with a thick wood all round it. He shut her up in a high tower where nobody could get at her.

Now when the bold, bad robber-chief came to carry off the princess, she was playing in the garden with her favourite cat. So the cat clung to her dress with his claws and was carried off too: when they came to the chief's castle and his servants tried to take the cat away from the princess, he spat and scratched and struggled so fiercely, that they decided to leave him with her. So the princess and the cat were kept prisoners in the high, high tower.

Every morning the bold, bad robber-chief climbed up the stairs of the tower; he unlocked the door with a great key, put some bread and a jug of milk on the table and asked the princess: 'Will you be my wife?' Every day she said: 'No!'

You see, for one thing, she disliked him very much indeed, and for another there was a prince whom she loved; so, of course, she did not want to marry anyone else.

'I am sure,' she said, 'that the prince will come and take me away as soon as he can get to the castle.'

And indeed, the next day a pigeon flew up to the window of the tower with a note from the prince. The princess opened the note and read: 'As soon as I get to the castle, I shall set you free. I am coming on horseback.'

The young girl took a piece of paper and wrote quickly: 'Hurry up! I am in great danger!' She sent the note back by the pigeon and the prince sent another note to her, and this went on for some days.

The bold bad robber could not understand why the princess looked more cheerful when he asked her to marry him. You see, he knew nothing about the notes that the pigeon brought. But each time he came, he locked the door of the tower with great care.

The cat was always with the princess. He often sat by her side and purred dear little poems to her. When the pigeon flew up to the window, he always sat down near the door and listened. He warned the princess at once if he heard the steps of the robber-chief on the stairs.

Two days passed, and at sunset the pigeon brought another note. It read: 'I am near the castle in the woods and I shall come to take you away in the morning.'

She sent an answer at once and asked the prince not to come by day. 'The robber-chief has fifty men,' she wrote, 'each one as strong and as bad as he is. They will kill you if they see you. Come at night.'

So the prince came at night. He had a long rope with him. He could climb very well and pretty soon he jumped down from the window-sill into the room. The prince and the princess were so happy to see each other that they forgot about the danger. They talked and laughed and talked again.

'Hurry up! Hurry up!' said the cat. He was listening by the door. 'You can talk on the way home. It is dangerous to talk now. You must be off!'

'You must come too,' said the princess. 'I cannot leave you here.'

'Never mind about me,' cried the cat. 'Be off! Be off! Oh, dear! The robber-chief is coming up the stairs. Quick, quick! Don't wait for me. I shall do something and follow you. Only go, go!'

There was no time to think; the tower was about twenty meters high. The prince and the princess began to climb down.

'In a minute,' thought the cat, 'the robber-chief will open the door! He will come into the room and know what has happened. And then... then he will start off after them. What shall I do? How can I stop him? He must not open the door.' At that moment the cat heard that the robber-chief was taking keys out of his pocket. It was a terrible moment. Suddenly he had an idea.

Near the door there stood a chair. The cat jumped on the chair and pushed the end of his tail into the keyhole. Only just in time. The robber-chief was just about to push the key in. But you can't turn a key in a keyhole that is full of cat's tail. He tried and tried. He swore and shouted, but of course there was no answer.

You can imagine it wasn't very nice for the cat. The end of his tail was aching because the robber-chief pushed it again and again with his great key. But the cat stood quite still. He was listening to the angry words of the robber and also to the sound of the hoofs of the prince's horse. It was growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

Suddenly the robber-chief got hold of the cat's tail and pulled it through the keyhole.

Poor cat! He pulled and pulled his tail but the robber-chief held it fast at the other side of the door. He swore and shouted, but of course there was no answer.

'Now', thought the cat, 'the prince and the princess have had time to go very far away. I must follow them. I can't wait any more.' He pulled his tail with great force. Again! Again! Ah! — he was free at last. But alas! alas! — part of his poor tail was left behind."

Jim stopped for a moment.

"Oh, how terrible," I said. "But did the cat run away?"

"Yes," said Jim. "He ran away. And he caught up the prince and the princess and they took him up on their horse and he went home with them and lived happily ever after."

"But he had no tail," I said.

"No," said Jim. "And all his descendants had no tails and that's why so many Manx cats are like that. But they are very proud of it."

"They may be proud," I said.

Jim stretched and yawned. Then he got up and walked slowly away, with his own great tail in the air.

"Thank you so much," I said. "It was a very interesting story."

Jim did not answer. He just waved his tail again and disappeared.

The Purple Plug

(from *Stones of the Inner City* by Benjamin Ashcom)

When Mr. Snagg went into the paint store Saturday morning, he didn't have any idea how hard it was to buy a gallon of paint. In the old days you just went in and asked for a bucket of red paint or brown paint or green paint. Or maybe, if you liked it, you asked for a bucket of blue paint. No problem.

"I'd like two gallons of purple paint, please," he told the clerk.

"Yes sir," the clerk said politely. "What kind of purple did you have in mind?"

That stumped Mr. Snagg. Purple was purple. He was a bit uneasy about the clerk asking strange questions. Was there something funny about the man?

"Purple purple, I guess." Mr. Snagg was a plain man, but he knew what he liked.

The clerk smiled very pleasantly. "Come over and look at our color wheel. Show me exactly what you want."

They went over to a huge wheel that had about a million squares of different colors pasted on it. The wheel kept turning

dizzily, which confused Mr. Snagg. He pointed at a little square that was coming his way.

"Something like that," he told the clerk.

The clerk looked at the number on the square and looked it up in a chart.

"Yes sir, that's Hawaiian Orchid."

Mr. Snagg went home with two gallons of purple paint.

All day Sunday, Mr. Snagg painted the woodwork of his small row house. He started at the top and worked down, saving the easiest part for last. High up by the eaves on a swaying ladder he splashed purple over the dingy wood. The window frames came next. The front of his house began to look new. The houses on either side began to look old.

The lady next door came out to watch Mr. Snagg work.

"That's a funny color to paint a house, Mr. Snagg," she said. "Whoever heard of a purple house? And it doesn't go with the bricks. And it doesn't go with my house or Mrs. Penny's house on the other side."

Mr. Snagg kept painting. "I like it," he called down from the ladder. "It's a free country. You paint your house whatever you want. I'll paint mine. And it's not purple, anyway. It's Hawaiian Orchid."

She seemed to like the name. "Oh, that's different," she said and went back into her house.

Finally Mr. Snagg was down to the front door. He painted the door very carefully because everybody who came to the house would see it close up. By late afternoon he was done.

After dinner, Mr. Snagg came outdoors and walked across the street to get a good view of what he had worked so hard on all day. It certainly looked different. He had the newest-looking house on the street. And it was bright and cheerful. None of that drab brown or dark green! Hawaiian Orchid.

Something caught Mr. Snagg's eye. Something didn't fit the picture. No, it wasn't that the color didn't go with the bricks. It went

fine. He thought it even went fine with the houses on either side. Then he saw what was spoiling the picture. On the sidewalk in front of Mr. Snagg's front door was a fireplug. And it was orange.

"Orange sure doesn't go with Hawaiian Orchid," Mr. Snagg said to himself. "It spoils the whole picture."

So Mr. Snagg went back home. He got his paint and brush. And in the late-evening light he painted the fireplug Hawaiian Orchid.

"There! That's the prettiest fireplug in the city! And it goes with my front door. It's perfect."

The next morning when Mr. Snagg was on his way to work, the lady next door was standing in her doorway waiting for him.

"Hey, Mr. Snagg. I saw what you did. You're going to get into a lot of trouble. That fireplug's city property. You can't get away with that. You're asking for trouble."

Mr. Snagg hadn't thought of that. He stopped to think.

"Well now," he said to the lady next door. "If that's city property, it belongs to you and me as well as everybody else. Right?"

"I guess so."

"Well, I bet you like Hawaiian Orchid better than orange."

"I guess so."

"It sure goes better with my front door. So the city's a little prettier since I painted that fireplug. We'll call it 'urban renewal' and I won't even send them a bill."

The lady laughed. "I guess you're right, Mr. Snagg."

Mr. Snagg felt better now that he had thought it through.

Three days later Mr. Snagg came home from work and saw the fireplug. It was freshly painted shiny, violent orange. A sign hung on it saying "Fresh Paint." It was signed "Fire Department."

The lady next door came out.

"I tried to stop them, Mr. Snagg. But they said all fireplugs have to be orange so they'll be easy to see. It's against the law to

paint them yourself. You'd better not fool around with that plug. That's what they said. And I think you'd better do as they say."

"It sure doesn't go with my Hawaiian Orchid front door."

"Maybe not," she said. "But you won't even see your front door if they put you in jail."

Mr. Snagg went in to watch television. But he couldn't keep his mind on the program. He kept thinking of what the lady next door had said. Sure, there was a good reason for the city to paint fireplugs orange. Maybe it wasn't a good idea to let everybody in the city paint fireplugs any old color. But he still thought it was very important for things to go together, for things in the city to be pretty and match each other. Like his door and the fireplug.

He thought and thought. He worried and worried. He didn't want to break the law about fireplugs. But he knew there were other "laws." Laws about beauty and about things matching and colors going together. And finally, just before he went to bed, he figured out what he could do to obey both kinds of laws.

The next afternoon, Mr. Snagg hurried home from work carrying a package. He left it on the doorstep while he went in to change into his painting clothes. He came out with a big clean paint brush and took a fresh can of paint from the package he had left out front.

He painted all afternoon and far into the evening. And he hummed to himself as he painted. He had solved his problem and he was happy.

When the lady next door came out, she could see in the evening light that Mr. Snagg had repainted his front door and window frame. And there he was high up on a ladder putting fresh paint on the eaves. Bright orange paint. Paint that matched the fireplug.

"That's a mighty pretty front door, Mr. Snagg. That's the prettiest orange door I ever saw. And it goes just fine with the fireplug."

"I like it," he called down from the ladder. "Now I have the only house in the city with a matching fireplug!"

"You're right, Mr. Snagg. But I'm not sure orange goes with the color of my house."

"It's a free country. You paint your house whatever you want. I'll paint mine. And it's not orange anyway. It's Tropical Sunshine."

The Conceited Python

(from *Grandfather's Private Zoo* by Ruskin Bond)

There was one pet which Grandfather could not keep for very long. Grandmother was tolerant of some birds and animals, but she drew the line at reptiles. Even a chameleon as sweet-tempered as Henry (we will come to him later) made her blood run cold. Grandfather should have known that there was little chance of being allowed to keep a python.

He never could resist buying unusual pets, and while we still had Toto, he paid a snake-charmer in the bazaar only four rupees for the young four-foot python that was on display to a crowd of eager boys and girls. Grandfather impressed the gathering by slinging the python over his shoulders and walking home with it.

The first to see them arrive was Toto, swinging from a branch of the jack-fruit tree. One look at the python, ancient enemy of his race, and he fled into the house, squealing with fright. The noise brought Grandmother on to the verandah, where she nearly fainted at the sight of the python curled round Grandfather's throat.

"It will strangle you to death," she cried. "Get rid of it at once!"

"Nonsense!" said Grandfather. "He's only a young fellow—he'll soon get used to us."

"He might, indeed," said Grandmother, "but I have no intention of getting used to him. And you know your cousin Mabel

is coming to stay with us tomorrow. She'll leave the minute she knows there's a snake in the house."

"Well, perhaps we should show it to her as soon as she arrives," said Grandfather, who did not look forward to the visits of relatives any more than I did.

"You'll do no such thing," said Grandmother.

"Well, I can't let it loose in the garden. It might find its way into the poultry house, and then where would we be?"

"Oh, how irritating you are!" grumbled Grandmother. "Lock the thing in the bathroom, then go out and find the man you bought it from, and get him to come here and collect it."

And so, in my awestruck presence, Grandfather took the python into the bathroom and placed it in the tub. After closing the door on it, he gave me a sad look.

"Perhaps Grandmother is right this time," he said. "After all, we don't want the snake to get hold of Toto. And it's sure to be very hungry."

He hurried off to the bazaar to look for the snake-charmer, and was gone for about two hours, while Grandmother paced up and down the verandah. When Grandfather returned, looking crestfallen, we knew he had not been able to find the snake-charmer.

"Well, then, kindly take it away yourself," said Grandmother. "Leave it in the jungle across the river-bed."

"All right, but let me feed it first," said Grandfather. He produced a plucked chicken (in those days you could get a chicken for less than a rupee), and went into the bathroom, followed, in single file, by myself, Grandmother, and the cook and gardener.

Grandfather opened the door and stepped into the room. I peeped round his legs, while the others stayed well behind. We could not see the python anywhere.

"He's gone," announced Grandfather.

"He couldn't have gone far," said Grandmother. "Look *under* the tub."

We looked under the tub, but the python was not there. Then Grandfather went to the window. "We left it open," he said. "He must have gone this way."

A careful search was made of the house, the kitchen, the garden, the stable and the poultry shed; but the python could not be found anywhere.

"He must have gone over the garden wall," said Grandfather. "He'll be well away by now."

"I certainly hope so," said Grandmother, with a look of relief.

Aunt Mabel arrived the next day for a three-week visit, and for a couple of days Grandfather and I were a little worried in case the python made a sudden appearance; but on the third day, when he did not show up, we felt sure that he had gone for good.

And then, towards evening, we were startled by a scream from the garden. Seconds later Aunt Mabel came flying up the verandah steps, looking as though she had seen the devil himself.

"In the guava tree!" she gasped. "I was reaching for a guava when I saw it staring at me. The *look* in its eyes! As though it would eat me alive..."

"Calm down, my dear," urged Grandmother, sprinkling eau-de-cologne over my aunt. "Tell us, what *did* you see?"

"A snake!" sobbed Aunt Mabel. "A great boa-constrictor. It must have been twenty feet long! In the guava tree. Its eyes were terrible. And it looked at me in such a *queer* way..."

My grandparents exchanged glances, and Grandfather said: "I'll go out and kill it." Taking hold of an umbrella, he sallied forth into the garden. But when he got to the guava tree, the python had gone.

"Aunt Mabel must have frightened it away," I said.

"Hush," said Grandfather. "We mustn't speak of your aunt in that way." But his eyes were alive with laughter.

After this incident, the python began to make a number of appearances, always in the most unexpected places. Aunt Mabel

had another fit when she saw him emerge from beneath a cushion. She packed her bags and left.

The hunt continued.

One morning I saw the python curled up on the dressing-table, gazing at his own reflection in the mirror. I went for Grandfather, but by the time we returned to the room the python had moved on. He was seen in the garden, and once the cook saw him crawling up the iron ladder to the roof. Then we found him on the dressing-table a second time, admiring himself in the mirror. Evidently he was fascinated by his own reflection.

"All the attention he's getting has probably made him conceited," said Grandfather.

"He's trying to look better for Aunt Mabel," I said. (I regretted this remark because Grandmother overheard and held up my pocket money for the rest of the week.)

"Anyway, now we know his weakness," said Grandfather.

"Are *you* trying to be funny too?" said Grandmother.

"I didn't mean Aunt Mabel," explained Grandfather. "The python is becoming vain, so it should be easier to catch him."

Grandfather set about preparing a large cage, with a mirror at one end. In the cage he left a juicy chicken and several other tasty things. The opening was fitted up with a trapdoor.

Aunt Mabel had already left by the time we set up the trap, but we had to go on with the project because we could not have the python prowling about the house indefinitely. A python's bite is not poisonous, but it can swallow a live monkey, and it can be a risky playmate for a small boy.

For a few days nothing happened; and then, as I was leaving for school one morning, I saw the python in the cage. He had eaten everything left out for him, and was curled up in front of the mirror, with something that resembled a smile on his face—if you can imagine a python smiling.

I lowered the trap-door gently, but the python took no notice of me. Grandfather and the gardener put the cage in a tonga and

took it across the river-bed. Opening the trap-door, they left the cage in the jungle. When they went away, the python had made no attempt to get out.

"I didn't have the heart to take the mirror away from him," said Grandfather. "It's the first time I've seen a snake fall in love."

Dooly and the Snortsnoot

(by Jack Kent)

There was once a family of giants. The father giant was taller than a two-storey building. The mother giant was that tall too. And they had a son, named Dooly, who wasn't any bigger than you.

Now, while your size is just right for YOU, it's a bit small for a giant. Dooly's mother and father worried about him. Mother said, "Eat your vegetables, Dooly, so you'll grow big and strong like me and your father." But it was plain to see that it was going to take an awful lot of vegetables.

Dooly did as he was told, but nothing seemed to help. He never got any bigger. "I'll always be little!" said Dooly, and he started to cry.

"Little or big, you're still a giant," Father reminded him. "And giants don't cry. Giants are brave."

It's hard to be brave when you're not very big. But Father was right. Dooly was a giant, whatever his size.

One of the things that giants do is say, "FEE FI FO FUM!" at people and scare them half out of their wits. This makes the giant feel important. And when you feel important, you feel big.

So one day Dooly went into the village to scare somebody. The first person Dooly saw was a girl named Treena. Dooly stood on tiptoe to make himself as tall as he could, made a scowly face, and said, "FEE FI FO FUM!"

Treena giggled.

"I'm a GIANT!" Dooly declared.

"Not a very scary one," said Treena. Then, quite suddenly, she shouted, "FEE FI FO FUM!" Dooly was so startled he jumped a foot.

"THAT'S the way to do it!" said Treena.

Some other children came over to ask what was going on.

"We're being giants," Treena explained.

So all the children, who had been wondering what to play next anyway, went around on their tiptoes saying, "FEE FI FO FUM!" And Dooly had to admit that most of them did it better than he could.

After a while they got tired of being giants and began to play tag. Dooly was "it" most of the time.

Dooly went into the village and played with the other children quite often after that. He liked being with them, but he wasn't very good at their games. When they played baseball, he was the first one out. When they ran a race, he was the last one in. And when they played hide-and-go-seek, Dooly was always the first one found. He did the best he could, though. And it was fun, even if he didn't ever win.

But every once in a while Dooly would remember that he was a giant. And giants like to feel important. So he would say, "FEE FI FO FUM!" The children would look up from their games and say, "Not bad, Dooly. Keep trying. Who wants to play blindman's buff?"

But Dooly couldn't help being sad.

One day their play was interrupted by an awful snarling and snorting.

From around the corner came the Terrible Snarly Snortsnoot, who eats little children for lunch! He was gnashing his teeth and thrashing his tail and breathing fire! He was a terrible sight to see.

The children turned and ran, with the Snortsnoot snarling at their heels. But the Snortsnoot had decided he wanted to have Treena for lunch. And with two snorts and a snarl he leaped and caught her. He licked his lips and got ready to eat her.

"We've got to get Treena!" shouted Dooly.

"How CAN we?" asked the other children, quivering with fear.

Dooly didn't know. He was just as frightened as they were. But he ran toward the Snortsnoot, determined to do the best he could.

He looked at the Snortsnoot's fierce claws and shivered.

He looked at the Snortsnoot's wicked teeth and trembled.

And THEN he took a deep breath and stomped on the monster's tail.

The Snortsnoot gave a bellow and dropped Treena. He scowled a terrible scowl and he growled a terrible growl as he turned and went after Dooly. One lunch was as good as another. He'd eat Dooly instead of Treena.

Dooly started to run. But then he remembered that he was a giant. And giants are brave. Giants don't run from Snortsnoots, no matter how snarly.

So Dooly stopped running and stood still.

The Snortsnoot opened his mouth to gobble Dooly whole.

Then all of a sudden Dooly said, "FEE FI FO FUM!" right in the monster's face. He said it just the way Treena had taught him.

The Snortsnoot was so surprised he forgot to gobble.

Then he remembered and opened his mouth again to swallow Dooly.

But something strange had happened. Dooly had grown almost a foot taller.

"So much the better," thought the Snortsnoot. "He'll make a bigger lunch for me." And the Snortsnoot opened his mouth wider.

"FEE FI FO FUM!" said Dooly again. And he grew another foot.

The Snortsnoot opened his mouth as wide as he could. But Dooly was growing too fast.

"FEE!" said Dooly and grew three feet.

"FI!" said Dooly and grew four more.

"FO!" said Dooly, and there was no longer any question that Dooly was a giant.

By the time he reached "FUM!" Dooly was so big he could have swallowed the Snortsnoot.

The Snortsnoot, who wasn't feeling very snarly anymore or hungry either, turned and ran and was never heard of again.

Nobody knew for sure what made Dooly grow.

His father said it was because he ate his vegetables, and no doubt that helped.

"I think," said Dooly's mother, "it was because he did a very big thing."

"I think I just grew up because it was time to," said Dooly modestly.

Henry: a Chameleon

(from *Grandfather's Private Zoo* by Ruskin Bond)

This is the story of Henry, our pet chameleon. Chameleons are in a class by themselves, and are no ordinary reptiles. A chameleon's tongue is as long as its body. On its head is a rigid crest which looks like a fireman's helmet. His limbs are long and slender, and his fingers and toes are more developed than those of other reptiles.

Henry's most remarkable characteristics were his eyes. They were not beautiful. But his left eye was quite independent of his right. He could move one eye without disturbing the other. This gave him a horrible squint. Each eye-ball, raised out of his head, was wobbled up and down, backwards and forwards, quite independently of its partner. Reptiles are not gifted like us with binocular vision. They do not see an object with both eyes at once.

Whenever I visited Henry, he would treat me with great caution, sitting perfectly still on his perch with his back to me. But his nearest eye would move round like the beam of a searchlight until it had got me well in focus. Then it would stop, and the other

eye would proceed to carry out an independent survey of its own in some different direction. Henry took nobody on trust, and treated my friendliest gestures with grave suspicion.

Tiring of his attitude, I would tickle him gently in the ribs with my finger. This always threw him into a great rage. He would blow himself up to an enormous size, his lungs filling his body with air. He would sit up on his hind legs, swaying from side to side, hoping to frighten me. Opening his mouth very wide, he would let out an angry hiss. But his protests went no further. He did not bite. Non-violence was his creed.

Many people believe the chameleon is a dangerous and poisonous reptile. When Grandfather was visiting a friend in the country, he came upon a noisy scene at the garden gate. Men were shouting, throwing stones and brandishing sticks. The cause of all this was a chameleon who had been discovered sunning himself on a shrub. The gardener declared that it was a thing capable of poisoning people at a distance of twenty feet, and as a result the entire household had risen in arms. Grandfather was in time to save the chameleon from certain death, and brought the little reptile home.

That chameleon was Henry and that was how he came to live with us.

Henry was a harmless creature. If I put my finger in his mouth even in his wildest moments he would simply wait for me to take it out again. I suppose he could bite. His rigid jaws carried a number of fine pointed teeth. But Henry was rightly convinced that these were given to him solely for the purpose of chewing his food.

Provided I was patient, Henry was willing to take food from my hands. This he did very swiftly. His tongue was a sort of boomerang which came back to him with the food, an insect victim, attached to it. Before I could realise what had happened, the grasshopper held between my fingers would be lodged between Henry's jaws.

Henry did not cause any trouble in our house, but he did create something like a riot in the nursery school down the road. It happened like this. When the papayas in our garden were ripe, Grandmother usually sent a basket of them to her friend, Mrs. Ghosh, who was the principal of the nursery school. On this occasion, Henry managed to smuggle himself into the basket of papayas when no one was looking. (He did have a cage of his own, but was seldom in it.) The gardener carried the papayas across to the school and left them in Mrs. Ghosh's office. When Mrs. Ghosh came in after making her rounds, she began admiring and examining the papayas. Out popped Henry.

Mrs. Ghosh screamed. Henry would probably have liked to blush a deep red, but he turned a bright green instead, as that was the colour of the papayas. Mrs. Ghosh's assistant, Miss Daniels, rushed in, took one look at the chameleon, and joined in the screaming. Henry took fright and fled from the office, running down the corridor and into one of the classrooms. There he climbed on to a desk, while children ran in all directions, some to get away from Henry, some to catch him. But Henry made his exit from a window, and disappeared in the garden.

Grandmother heard all about the incident from Mrs. Ghosh, but did not tell her the chameleon was ours. I did not think Henry would find his way back to us, because the school was three houses away. But three days later, I found him sunning himself on the garden wall. He readily accepted some food from my hand, and allowed himself to be recaptured.

The Black Cat

(adapted from William Jacobs)

The whole story began when the captain brought a grey parrot on board the ship. The mate and all the sailors were against the new passenger. They were sure that sooner or later there would be trouble between the ship's cat Satan and the parrot.

The mate's wife had given the cat to the sailors when it was a kitten, and it had grown up on the ship. For two days the men, who loved the cat very much, kept it away from the parrot. On the third day, however, the cat got into the captain's cabin and nearly killed the bird. When the captain came down to his cabin, he immediately discovered what had happened. He grew terribly angry and ordered Sam to find the cat and kill it.

"No, sir," said Sam, "I shall not kill a black cat. Perhaps you can laugh at such things, but I knew a man who killed a black cat, and he went mad."

The captain stood silent for a moment, because, though he did not say so, he was, in fact, superstitious.

"That's all nonsense," he said at last. "Joe," he said turning to the cook, "tie something heavy to that cat and throw it overboard."

"No, I shan't," said the cook. "I don't want to see any ghosts."

The captain did not know what to do. At that moment a man came and said that the parrot felt better.

"Well," said the captain, "I shall wait and see. But don't forget, if the parrot dies, the cat goes overboard."

When the ship reached London, the bird was still alive. But everybody was sure that it would soon die. So, a few days later, when the ship was ready to leave, the men held a meeting to decide what to do. Suddenly the cook, who had gone ashore to buy bread, came in with a sack on his shoulder. He looked about him like a member of a secret society, and then sat down with the sack between his knees.

"The idea came to me suddenly," said the cook in a whisper. "I had just bought the bread and was leaving the shop when I saw a big black cat, sitting on the road. 'You look just like Satan,' I said to myself. 'And if the captain wants to kill a cat, let him kill you!' and I picked it up and threw it into this sack." He carefully opened the sack and took out his cat. Then Satan was brought, and the two cats were compared.

"They are exactly alike!" exclaimed Sam. "What a joke we shall play on the captain!... Cook, you have done something wonderful. I'll make a few holes in the boy's box, and put Satan in. You don't mind, Billy, do you?" he said to the boy. "Of course, he doesn't," said the other men. So Satan was put into the box, and Billy watched the cats until the ship started and was some distance from shore. Then the sack was opened, and the new cat was brought on deck.

After a short time the captain came on deck, carrying the dead parrot. He threw the bird overboard, and then seized the poor cat and threw it into the sea. After that he went to his cabin.

Luckily for the cat, it was picked up by some men in a boat and taken on shore.

When the captain came on deck the next morning, old Sam said to him: "You can't kill a black cat like that. Something bad will happen."

The captain paid no attention to those words then, but he remembered them when he came up on deck the next day. Suddenly Satan, who had escaped from the box, came on deck and walked slowly towards the captain. The men thought it was surely lost, but Sam seized it and pushed it under his coat. The captain who was talking to the mate, heard the noise and turned as if he had been shot.

"Dick," said he, "can you hear a cat?"

"A cat?" said the mate in a rather surprised tone.

"I thought I heard it," said the captain.

"What a strange thing!" said Dick, just as the cat mewed again.

"Did you hear it, Sam?" the captain asked.

"Hear what, sir?" asked Sam.

"Nothing," said the captain, "nothing. Never mind!"

"Did you think you heard a cat?" asked the mate.

"Well, between you and me, Dick," said the captain in a frightened voice. "It seemed to me that it was that cat."

"Well, I've heard of ghosts," said the other. "What a joke if the cat comes out of the sea tonight!"

The captain turned pale and looked at the mate in silence.

He heard nothing that day and told himself that it was all nonsense. But at night, as he was standing on deck, he felt worried and was glad that Bob, one of the sailors, was together with him.

And then the cat, who had again escaped from the box, came up to the captain and rubbed its head against his leg. The captain jumped up into the air and gave such a shout that Bob rushed to him.

"What's the matter?" cried Bob.

"Believe it or not, Bob," said the captain in a shaking voice, "but the ghost of that cat came and rubbed itself against my leg."

"Which leg?" asked Bob, who liked details.

"What difference which leg?" shouted the captain whose nerves were in a terrible state.

"Look! Look there! There it is, there's the cat!" shouted the captain.

Bob saw the cat quite clearly, but he said: "I can't see any cat."

"No, of course, you can't," said the captain in a sad voice. "I am the only one who can ... I am going down to my cabin ..."

In the cabin he woke up the mate and told him what he had seen. "I am sorry to have killed that cat," he said.

"What nonsense!" said the mate. "You can't run away from a ghost. It can come down here and get into your bed with you. Good night!"

The captain slept very little and at dawn he came on deck. A strong wind was blowing, and the ship rolled from side to side. And then the box where the cat was hidden turned over, and Satan jumped out and ran up on deck. Old Sam who was carrying a heavy box, tried to catch it but dropped the box, and it fell just on the poor cat's tail. Satan screamed, and the captain turned as if a bomb had exploded behind him.

"Sam!" he shouted. "Do you see what is under the box?"

"No, I don't see anything," said Sam.

Sam tried to show great surprise while Satan screamed and screamed and tried to pull its tail from under the box. But just then the mate came on deck, and, not seeing the captain, shouted:

"Why don't you take the box off that poor cat?"

"What, can you see it too, Dick?" asked the captain.

It was too late now.

"Yes," said the mate. "Do you think I am blind?" The captain lifted the box. He looked around at the men, and slowly his eyes opened wide. Then he stood with a face like stone while the cook explained. At last, when they showed him the boy's box with the holes in it, he took the unhappy Billy by the collar and gave him a good beating. But Satan's life was saved.

Harold and Burt and Sue and Amy, etc.

(by Casey West)

This girl, Jill, walked up to me in the hall and said, "Do you like plants?"

"No."

"Good," she said. "Take this one home."

I said, "I don't want it."

"Go on," she said, holding the pot out to me. "It's an *Aralia Spinosa*. That's Latin. Just keep it for me, for a science experiment."

Larry, beside me, laughed. "He wouldn't know what to do with a plant. Actually, that's rather a nice specimen of *Spinosa*. Why are you giving it to Mark?"

"It's a secret experiment."

"Mark'll fail, whatever it is."

I put out my hand. "I'll take it," I said.

"What are you going to do?" Larry asked. "Eat it for lunch?"

"Just water it twice a week and put it in an east window," she said.

"Yeah, yeah," I said. "OK." I took the damp-feeling clay pot. The few little leaves were shiny, and there were thorns on the stems.

So I took the *Aralia Spinosa* home with me, walking hunched

over so that every Tom, Dick, and George wouldn't see me with this plant and start asking funny questions.

I put it on my windowsill and started my records and put on my earphones. I like my sound loud, man, and my mother has other ideas. She got in such a habit of saying, "Turn that thing down, Mark," that pretty soon she was saying it before I even turned it on. So she gave me the 'phones. Now it's in one ear and *in* the other, too, and the guitars meet in the middle right over the percussion and that is where I *live*.

One day I found this article about plants and it had a picture of my own *Aralia Spinosa* in it, so I read on. It also said some plants like to be talked to, as long as you talk nicely.

This is when I decided to do my reading out loud. It wouldn't bother me—I would be inside the groovy sound from my 'phones and Old Spiny would be out there taking advantage of all this knowledge. If I came to any bad parts, like wars or famines, or—especially—forest fires, I wouldn't read them aloud.

So every night I plugged myself in and read to Old Spiny. And I watered him on Mondays and Thursdays. I noticed that he had grown a couple of new leaves and a third was ready to uncurl. And his stems were growing very, very tall.

Sometimes Jill asked me, "How's *the Aralia*? Still alive?"

"Sure."

"I bet," she said.

Well, he was not only alive, he was thriving, but I wasn't going to argue with her.

Old Spiny and I really communicated. Naturally he didn't talk back, or even groan and sigh like a dog, but it was nice to have company. Even when I didn't have anything to read I still talked out loud to him. He just sat there and grew.

Leaves, sprouts, stems seemed to pop out from him. He must love geometry was all I could say, and history and—very probably—science. I was also taking this poetry course. I needed something third period and it was that or dressmaking.

The first few days I sat in the class with my chin in my hands and stared out the window. I was not going to like poetry and no one could make me like it. But then some of the sounds started to creep into my ears and my brain opened up and let them in. And they were cool.

We had to memorize poems and dissect them like frogs in biology, and even write some of our own. So at home I had to read poetry out loud to hear the rhythms. Old Spiny loved it. He grew to Whitman and Poe all right, but I could almost see him expanding to the rhymes and rhythms of Longfellow.

"You're getting to be a long fellow yourself," I told him one Thursday when I was watering him.

His branches had shot upward and outward and so many new leaves had appeared that I could hardly keep up with the names. The first three he had come with were Harold, Nancy, and Stephanie. But then after Burt appeared and Louise and Sue and Amy and James and Virginia and Matthew, I couldn't keep track, so I talked to them collectively.

"Leaves," I said, and then I told them what the history assignment or poem was for that night, and they listened and they grew.

I had to move the pot to the bookcase—it was too tall for the windowsill. Then, finally, to the floor.

Near the end of the year Jill said to me, "Can you bring the plant to school tomorrow? First period."

My heart thumped. I hadn't thought about giving Old Spiny back. "I don't know," I said.

"Listen, I need it. It's mine, you know."

"OK," I said. "Don't get excited."

"Just wait in the hall until I call you," she said.

My mom and I wrapped a sheet of plastic around him and I sat with the pot between my knees and the long stems bent over at the top.

I waited with Old Spiny outside the science room and then the door whooshed open and Jill came out.

"OK," she said. "You can bring it in now." Then she stopped and threw up her hands. "Good grief!" she hollered. "What have you done?"

"Me?" I said. "What?" I looked around.

"Look at that plant!"

I did. There stood Old Spiny, tall as I was, leafy and green, holding out Nancy and James and Virginia, and the others, and just unrolling Albert and Frank. I didn't see anything wrong with it.

"You've ruined my experiment."

"Look, I don't understand your problem, but I'm going in there to find out." I picked up Old Spiny and carried him, swaying over my head, into the room.

The whole class started to laugh. Some even clapped. What was happening? So then they told me.

Jill had given Old Spiny to me to neglect. She had given another to Larry to care for. And she had taken one home to care for herself. Those were the two scrawny undersized plants on the table. She and Larry, since they were conscientious types, would take such good care of their plants that they would thrive. While I would ignore mine and the poor thing would wither.

So I told them about the reading, the earphones, and the poetry, and about how sometimes I had even put the 'phones on Old Spiny and let him listen directly to the sounds.

"Actually," I said, "I think I proved your experiment. You will probably get an A. If you talk to plants, play them some music, then they grow. Especially if you love them. I love this plant."

Jill did get an A and she told me I could keep Old Spiny.

I told him on the way home, "Not so much poetry next semester, Spiny, or you'll grow too much and I'll have to send you to a greenhouse." But then I told him I didn't mean it.

"In fact," I said, "I'll get you a nice fern to keep you company. That's a *Filicales*, you know."

He knew.

The Mousehole Cat

(by Antonia Barber)

At the far end of England, a land of rocks and moorland stretches itself out into a blue-green sea. Between its high headlands lie tiny sheltering harbours where the fishing boats hide when the winter storms are blowing.

One of these harbours is so small and the entrance between its great stone breakwaters is so narrow that fishermen called it "the Mousehole".

The people who lived in the cottages around the harbour grew fond of the name and they call their village Mousehole to this day. They say it in the Cornish way, "Mowzel", but you may say it as you choose.

Once there lived in the village a cat whose name was Mowzer. She had an old cottage with a window overlooking the harbour, an old rocking-chair with patchwork cushions and an old fisherman named Tom.

Mowzer had had many kittens in her time but they had all grown up and left home.

Her eldest son kept the inn on the quayside. It was noisy and smoky and his man had once spilled beer on Mowzer's head as he was drawing a pint.

So she did not go there very often.

One of her daughters kept the shop on the corner. It was busy and crowded and her lady had once stepped on Mowzer's tail as she was weighing out some vegetables.

So she did not go there very often either.

Sometimes Mowzer felt that her children had not trained their people properly.

Her own pet, old Tom, was very well behaved. He never spilled the cream when he was filling her saucer. He always stoked the range to a beautiful golden glow. He rocked the rocking-chair at just the right speed. He knew the exact spot

behind her left ear where Mowzer liked to be tickled. What was more, he never wasted his time drawing pints of beer or weighing out vegetables.

When he was not looking after Mowzer he passed the day in the most useful way possible. He took his little boat through the narrow opening between the great breakwaters, out into the blue-green sea, and caught fish for Mowzer's dinner.

Mowzer was very partial to a plate of fresh fish. In fact she never ate anything else. But she liked a little variety.

So, on Mondays they made morgy-broth,
Mowzer's favourite fish stew.

On Tuesdays they baked hake and topped it with
golden mashed potatoes.

On Wednesdays they cooked kedgeriee with
delicious smoked ling.

On Thursdays they grilled fairmaids,
a mouth-watering meal.

On Fridays they fried launces with
a knob of butter and a squeeze of lemon.

On Saturdays they soused scad with
vinegar and onions.

And on Sundays they made star-gazy pie
with prime pilchards in pastry.

All in all, Mowzer's days passed very pleasantly.

Then one year there came a terrible winter. At the far end of England the blue-green sea turned grey and black.

The Great Storm-Cat is stirring, thought Mowzer as she watched at her window. The wind whined like a wild thing about the high headlands. It came hunting the fishing boats in their hidden harbours. When the Great Storm-Cat is howling, thought Mowzer, it is best to stay snug indoors by a friendly fire.

The sea drew itself up into giant waves and flung itself against the great breakwaters. All along the coast of Cornwall, the stone walls stood the shock.

Then the sea sucked up its strength again and roared right over them, sinking the sailing boats in their home havens. But it could not get into the Mousehole.

Mowzer watched as the Great Storm-Cat clawed with his giant cat's paw through the gap in the harbour wall. But it was too small. He snarled and leaped up at the great breakwater under the lowering sky. But it was too high.

The fishing boats sat safe as mice in their own mousehole. But they could not get out. And because the fishermen could not fish, there was no more food.

They ate up the few vegetables that were left in their storm-wracked gardens. They ate up the salted pilchards that were left in the cellars.

Mowzer hated vegetables and the pilchards were too salty for her taste.

Soon there was nothing left. The cats and their people grew very hungry. Mowzer sat by her window, staring out at the storm, and thought longingly of morgy-broth and star-gazy pie.

Every day the fishermen gathered on the quayside and sometimes they would try to take a boat out through the Mousehole. But always the Great Storm-Cat lay in wait for them and they were lucky to escape with their lives.

Then at last one evening, as old Tom sat with Mowzer on his knee, she felt him take a deep sigh.

"Mowzer, my handsome," he said, for he was a courteous and well-spoken man, "Mowzer, my handsome, it will soon be Christmas, and no man can stand by at Christmas and see the children starve. Someone must go fishing come what may, and I think it must be me. It cannot be the young men, for they have wives and children and mothers to weep for them if they do not return. But my wife and parents are dead long since and my children are grown and gone." Mowzer purred to tell him that she understood, for it was the same with her.

"I shall go out tomorrow, Mowzer, my handsome," said the old man, "and I shall not come back without a catch." Mowzer purred louder to tell him that she would go with him. For he was only a man, she thought, and men were like mice in the paws of the Great Storm-Cat.

Besides, she knew that if he did not come back, she would not much care to live in her cottage without him. There would be no one to pour the cream or stoke up the range or rock the rocking-chair. There would be no one in all the world who knew just where she liked to be tickled behind her left ear.

"Tomorrow night, Mowzer, my handsome," he said, "we shall eat morgy-broth, baked hake, ling and launces, fairmaids, soused scad *and* star-gazy pie!"

Then Mowzer purred as if she would burst to tell him that she loved him more than any of these things.

The next morning they set out very early, before the others were waking. Before they went, Tom stoked up the old range and damped it down so that it would burn steadily until they returned. Then he hung a lamp in the window so that it would shine out across the harbour and light their way.

As they reached the quayside, Mowzer looked back through the wind and rain, and thought how warm and welcoming the window looked.

Soon their little boat was crossing the harbour towards the Mousehole gap and the voice of the Great Storm-Cat rose all around them like a giant caterwauling.

As she listened to his wailing, Mowzer felt a sudden strange sadness for him. How lonely he must be, she thought, endlessly hunting the men-mice in the deeps of darkness, and never returning to the rosy glow of a red-hot range.

And her kind heart was moved to comfort him.

Many a tom-cat had Mowzer tamed in her time with the sweetness of her singing. Now she lifted her head and sang like a siren, joining her call with the cry of the Great Storm-Cat.

And so it was that he was taken off guard as the little boat made its bid for freedom. Soothed by the sweetness of Mowzer's serenade, the Great Storm-Cat paused in his prowling and pulled back his giant cat's paw for a mere moment. Swiftly the little boat passed through the Mousehole and out into the open sea.

Then the Great Storm-Cat played with them as a cat plays with a mouse. He would let them loose for a little as they fought their way towards the fishing grounds. Then down would come his giant cat's paw in a flurry of foam and water. But he did not yet strike to sink them, for that would have spoiled his sport.

When they reached the fishing grounds the sea was so rough that it was hard to put out the nets.

"I fancy you must sing again, Mowzer, my handsome," said Tom, "for your voice seems to soothe the sea like the sirens of old."

So Mowzer sang again, longer and louder than she had ever sung before. Indeed, old Tom was forced to block up his ears so that her siren-song should not distract him from the business of fishing.

And again, the Great Storm-Cat paused in his play and sang with her until the nets were safely shot.

All day they fished in a seething sea. The waves were so high and the clouds so low that they soon lost sight of the shore.

And all the time the Great Storm-Cat played with the little boat, striking it and then loosing it, but never quite sinking it. And whenever his claws grew too sharp, Mowzer would sing to him to soften the edge of his anger.

As evening came down they hauled in the nets. Into the belly of the boat tumbled ling and launces, scad, hake and fairmaids; enough fish for a whole cauldron of morgy-broth; enough pilchards for half a hundred star-gazy pies.

"Mowzer, my handsome, we are all saved," said old Tom, "if we can but bring this haul home to harbour."

But Mowzer knew that the Great Storm-Cat would strike when he saw them run for the shelter of the Mousehole.

She knew that the game serves only to sharpen the appetite for the feast to follow. It is his meal or mine, thought Mowzer, as she looked at the floundering fish in the belly of the boat. Blue, green and silver, they glistened in the greyness. It made her mouth water to look at them.

As she thought of the morgy-broth murmuring on top of the range, the star-gazy pie growing golden in the oven, Mowzer began to purr.

And her purring rose like a hymn to home above the noise of the Great Storm-Cat's howling.

Such music had not reached the ears of the Great Storm-Cat since the dawn of Time, for when do cats purr out in the wind and the darkness?

Puzzled, he paused in his howling, bending his ear to catch the strange sound. It seemed to him that he had once heard such a song long before, when he was no more than a Storm-Kitten.

The Great Storm-Cat grew quiet: gone was his hunger for hunting, for making his meal of the mice-men.

Only the pleasure of the purring remained.

Then the Great Storm-Cat began to purr with Mowzer, and as the soft sound grew, the winds waned and the waves weakened.

Night fell, and the little boat sailed back across a slackening sea. As they came in sight of home, a strange sight met their eyes. The whole village of Mousehole was shining with light and lanterns gleamed along both arms of the harbour.

For when the people of Mousehole had woken to find old Tom's boat missing and a light left in his window, they knew that he had gone out to find fish for them, or to perish on the deep water.

All day they had watched and waited, staring out into the cloud-wracked sea, but they could see no sign of him. And when night fell, the women went home and set candles in all their

windows and every man lit his lantern and went down to the harbour walls. As they waited and watched, they saw that the wind was dying and that the sea was growing calm.

The dark clouds lifted and a thin moon shone out between them. And in the light of the thin moon, they saw a small boat coming and behind it came the smallest, tamest Storm-Kitten of a wind.

As old Tom and Mowzer came through the Mousehole gap, a sudden breeze caught them, a tiny, playful cat's paw, like a gesture of farewell.

There was a great deal of cooking in Mousehole that night.

The people made a whole cauldron
of morgy-broth.
They baked hake,
cooked kedgerree,
grilled fairmaids,
fried launces,
soused scad.

They baked half a hundred star-gazy pies.

Then, people and cats, they feasted together, until the hunger was no more than a memory.

And every year since that day, at the inn on the quayside, the people of Mousehole hold a fish-feast on the night before Christmas Eve and raise their glasses to the memory of old Tom.

And every year, in the yard at the back of the inn, the cats of Mousehole gather and raise a great howling to the memory of old Mowzer.

And every year, folk come from all over Cornwall at Christmas time, to see Mousehole lit up with a thousand lights, shining their message of hope and a safe haven to all those who pass in peril of the sea.

Dragon Stew

(by Tom McGowen)

Once upon a time there was a kingdom ruled by a king who was so fat that his people called him King Chubby. He was so fond of food that he couldn't bear to be without it for very long.

Eating was his hobby. He began with a big breakfast at eight o'clock, had a light snack at ten, and a large lunch at twelve. Then he exercised by watching two tennis players, and since exercise made him hungry, he ate a small snack at about two in the afternoon.

At four, he had sandwiches and at seven in the evening he happily sat down to a royal banquet. There was one of these every evening, even if the king was the only one at the table.

Eating was so important to him that it affected everything he did. When he fell in love with a duchess from another kingdom, he told her that he would almost rather look at her than eat a whole roast pig. Needless to say, the duchess never spoke to him again.

His love of eating also got him in trouble in other ways. He was always losing his royal cooks. He just couldn't keep from telling them how to improve their cooking. He insisted on making changes in every dish. Since royal cooks are very proud, they resented this. Six cooks had already left the job.

One evening when the king entered the banquet hall and saw a sandwich on his plate, he knew what had happened.

"Oh, my," he sighed, "I see number seven has left!"

"Yes, your Majesty," replied one of the servants, "he said he could no longer cook for a king who kept changing all his recipes. And now there are no more royal cooks left! None of those you've had will ever come back, and all the others are cooking for other kings. I don't know how to find another cook. There just aren't any!"

The king looked worried for a moment, then brightened. "I know! A royal cook *is* a royal cook because he can make up

unusual recipes. We'll have a contest, and the one who tells me the most unusual recipe can be the royal cook!"

The next day signs were put up throughout the kingdom inviting all cooks to enter the contest. There was great excitement. Every cook from every inn in the kingdom came rushing to the castle.

They formed a line which began at the back of the castle, wound around to the front, and crossed the bridge. They entered the gate, jammed the courtyard, went up the stairs, and flowed into the throne room where the king was interviewing them. In they came, bowing, smiling, and offering enough recipes to fill seven fat cookbooks or seventy fat kings.

But to each, King Chubby shook his head. "That's not unusual," he'd say, or "I've had that before."

While this was going on, a shabby young man came trudging up the road toward the castle. He had patched knees and elbows, and the feather in his worn hat was bent, but he had a merry grin, and he was whistling a cheerful tune. When he saw the long line of people, he asked a soldier, "What's going on?"

"The king's looking for a new royal cook," the soldier replied. "The cook with the most unusual recipe will get the job and will live in the palace off the best of the land!"

"Wouldn't that be wonderful!"

"Well, I don't know," said the soldier. "Cooks don't get along with the king. He tells them what to do, puts things in their pots – he all but does the cooking himself."

"You don't say?" said the young man, and he got into line.

"Oh, are you a cook?" asked the soldier.

"I'm just the sort of cook the king wants," he answered, "and I have the most unusual recipe he's ever heard of!"

It was late afternoon when he reached the throne room. The king was looking very glum. Not one cook had offered a recipe he thought was unusual. And now the last of them was this shabby

fellow who looked far too thin to be much of a cook. "Well, what's your name and recipe?" he asked.

"I'm Klaus Dinkelspiel, your Majesty. My recipe is so unusual, so rare, that I'll bet you've never heard of it. It's – dragon stew!"

The king gasped. "That sounds different. What's in it – besides dragon, of course?"

"Oh, I can't tell you!" said Klaus. "It has been a secret in my family for hundreds of years."

"I understand," nodded the king, "but if we can ever locate a dragon, you must make it for me. However, you can begin preparing a royal banquet for tonight. You are the new royal cook."

Klaus bowed deeply. "And what would you like for dinner?" he asked.

"How about roast pig with applesauce?"

"And would your Majesty care to show me exactly how you want it cooked?" Klaus asked innocently.

The king stared. "You mean you won't care if I offer advice? Why, you and I are going to get along just fine!"

So off they went to the kitchen and got together everything the king needed. Then Klaus said, "Now, how would you prepare this, your Majesty?"

King Chubby, very pleased, stuffed the pig, tied it up, and then peeled and sliced the apples.

"How would you cook this, your Majesty?"

So the king happily popped the pig into the oven. He took turns stirring the applesauce and turning the pig.

Klaus watched and kept saying, "Just how I'd have done it."

When the pig was brown and savoury and the sauce bubbling merrily, he said, "I thank you for all your help, sire. If you will go to the banquet hall, I'll serve you the banquet I have prepared."

When the king had gobbled up the last piece of pork and bit of sauce, he announced that it was the finest banquet he'd ever eaten

and Klaus was the finest cook he'd ever had. And from then on, the king and his new cook were both pleased – King Chubby because he now had all his favourite dishes cooked exactly as he liked them and Klaus because he was living off the best of the land.

One morning, a good many months after Klaus had become the royal cook, he was called to the throne room. When he entered, he was shocked to see the Captain of the guard and a dozen scratched and smoke-blackened soldiers surrounding a large cage inside of which was a small, fat dragon.

"Surprise!" beamed the king. "I sent them out to find a dragon months ago, and it's taken all this time to find one. Now you can cook your special dragon stew tonight. I promise I won't try to find out your secret – I won't even set foot in the kitchen today!"

The soldiers carried the cage to the kitchen, set it down, and trooped out. The captain said, "Careful of him, Cook – he bites, scratches, and can shoot fire six inches out of his nose."

Klaus stared at the small dragon. A tear rolled down its cheek. "Are you trying to think of the best way to kill me?" it asked. "It isn't fair! I was minding my own business, bothering no one, and suddenly your soldiers attacked me and carried me here to be made into – into stew." He sniffled.

"Believe me, dragon," said Klaus, "I don't want to make you into stew. I didn't think there were any dragons when I made up that silly recipe. I just wanted to trick the king into thinking I was a cook. I couldn't make any stew if my life depended on it – and it probably does. The king will have me beheaded when he finds out that I tricked him."

"Oh, making a stew is easy," said the dragon. "You soak the meat in oil and spices, brown it in butter and simmer it slowly in broth with onions and carrots. I always throw in a few mushrooms and some parsley, too. And then . . ."

"You can cook?" interrupted Klaus. "I thought dragons only ate raw princesses and things like that."

"Heavens, no!" the dragon shuddered. "Really, I'm a good cook. Living alone, I've had to do all my own cooking. I've become quite a chef, if I do say so myself." He blew a smoke ring from his left nostril.

Suddenly, Klaus began to grin and nod his head as though he had thought of something.

At seven o'clock, the king hurried into the banquet hall, tingling to taste Klaus' wonderful dragon stew. He watched closely as Klaus carried in a steaming bowl and ladled chunks of beautifully browned meat and vegetables swimming in rich gravy onto the king's plate. King Chubby began to gobble. After four helpings, he leaned back with a sigh.

"That certainly is one of the best stews I've ever eaten. What a shame we can never have it again. That was probably the world's last dragon."

"Oh, we can have it as often as you like, your Majesty," Klaus calmly announced. "You see, the thing that makes dragon stew such a rare recipe is that it can only be cooked by a dragon! Allow me to present my assistant."

Klaus whistled, and in came the dragon, wearing a tall, white cook's hat and a gravy-stained apron. He bowed deeply.

"Under my direction," said Klaus with a charming grin, "my assistant will be happy to make dragon stew whenever you want it."

So everything turned out very well. King Chubby was able to cook his own banquets just as he liked them. He could also have dragon stew (made from beef) as often as he wanted it. Klaus was happy to be living off the best of the land without having to work hard for it. The dragon was very pleased to be an assistant royal cook.

But the happiest of all was the kitchen helper. One of his jobs had been to light the fire in the big stove, and he had always burned his knuckles. But now he no longer had this task, for the assistant cook lit his own stove by shooting fire out of his nose!

The Strange Story of the Frog Who Became a Prince

(by Elinor Lander Horwitz)

Many years ago there was a handsome frog who lived by a rather nice pond.

He had fun all day and at night he had happy dreams. Every day was exactly the same as every other day.

He liked to swim in the pond and hop in the grass. He hopped high and he hopped low. When he was feeling silly he hopped from side to side.

In the grass and in the pond the handsome frog found caterpillars, grasshoppers, and many other good things to eat.

His skin was green like the grass and brown like the pond and gold like the sun. He had black eyes which poked out on either side of his head.

He was a very handsome frog indeed.

One day he was minding his own business, catching caterpillars and doing some rather fine hopping when a wicked witch came swimming across the pond. She had a wet black hat and a wet black dress and she had black eyes right on the front of her face. She looked like a bad dream.

But the handsome frog thought she looked rather interesting.

"Will you join me for a lunch of caterpillar?" he asked the wicked witch as he took a happy jump to one side. "I'd be happy to cut mine in half."

"ICK!" said the wicked witch, making a face.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"People don't eat caterpillars," she said, making a face. "ICK!"

The frog looked at the interesting witch who had a face like a bad dream. "What do people eat if they don't eat caterpillars?" he asked.

The witch put her hand into her big wet pocket and took out a very wet peanut butter sandwich.

"Have some of this," she said. "I'll share it with you. It's very good." She broke the sandwich in half and handed him a piece.

The frog bit into the sandwich. "ICK!" he said.

The wicked witch looked at the handsome frog. She smiled a wicked smile. Then she snapped her fingers and said:

ECNIRP!

which sounded like a hiccup but which is really PRINCE spelled backwards. Instantly the handsome frog turned into a prince.

"What have you done to me?" he asked.

"I've changed you into a prince," she said. "Aren't I smart?"

"But why?" he asked.

"Because I wanted to," she said.

He looked at his pink skin and felt his big ears and the hair on his round head. "My skin is as smooth as a worm, and my ears are like leaves, and my head has grass growing on it!" he cried. "Please change me back into the handsome frog I used to be."

The wicked witch smiled. "Oh, I can't do that," she said. "I don't remember how."

"Why, oh why did you do such a thing?" the prince asked, weeping. "I was such a handsome happy frog and then along you came and turned me into an ugly prince."

The wicked witch said, "I wanted to see if I could still do magic. Many years ago I changed a handsome prince into an ugly frog. What a good trick *that* was! But he was unhappy too. People just don't like anything new. Did you ever hear of him?"

"Indeed I did," said the prince. "They say he cried all day and frightened the baby frogs with all that talk about witches. They say he was a very low hopper and a slow swimmer as well. When he disappeared everyone said he had been changed back into a prince. Now, how did you do that?"

The witch shrugged. "Who can remember? It was years and years ago."

"Try to remember," said the prince.

"It was all part of a magic spell I've forgotten."

The prince said, "What was that magic word you said when you changed me into a prince?"

"I said PRINCE backwards," she said. "Some magic spells work that way. You have to keep trying new words because some work and some don't, although I've never known why."

"Well, try saying that one again," said the prince. "ECNIRP!" said the witch loudly.

Nothing happened.

"Try FROG backwards," said the prince.

"GORF!" said the witch.

"Try WATER."

"RETAW!"

"Try SUN."

"NUS!"

"Try GRASS."

"SSARG," she hissed.

The prince thought hard and then said softly, "Try MAGIC WORD."

"What a good idea," said the witch. "CIGAM DROW!!!"

Nothing happened.

The prince sat down in the tall grass and began to cry again, more loudly than before.

"Now stop that," said the witch. "I don't know if you know this, but ANYONE WOULD RATHER BE A PRINCE THAN A FROG."

"Really?" asked the prince. "Why?"

The witch thought hard for a moment and then she said, "Well, for one thing, you can have a name when you're a person. A name tells people who you are. Pick any name you like and it will be yours. How about a fine name like TOM?"

"TOM?" said the prince. "Is that a name? It sounds like something falling in the grass at night when it's dark."

"How about HARRY?" asked the witch.

"Is that a name?" asked the prince. "It sounds like a cricket calling."

"What about a princely French name like ALPHONSE?" asked the witch.

"It sounds like a beaver sneezing," said the prince.

"You really are hard to please," said the witch. "Look at your nice clothes. Clothes keep you warm and make you look nice."

"Warm!" said the prince. "My legs are strangling. I'm boiling. I can hardly jump."

"Only necks can strangle," said the witch. "Only water can boil. Only frogs and horses and grasshoppers jump around in that boring way. And," said the witch, "people can learn how to read." She took a wet newspaper out of her wet pocket.

"You see, these are words," she said. "Look, this word says 'pond'."

"Pond?" he said. "It doesn't look like a pond at all. It looks just like muddy hummingbird footprints."

"How old are you anyhow?" said the witch.

"I was born in the spring," said the frog.

"Well, no wonder," said the witch. "You can't learn to read until you're older. I'm very sorry, but I don't know how to break the spell," said the witch. "You'll just have to learn to like being a prince. Come now, I'll teach you how to whistle and snap your fingers. Now there are two things no frog can do."

The witch whistled "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" for the prince.

The prince tried and tried, but he could not whistle.

"Why would anyone want to whistle or snap his fingers anyhow?" asked the prince.

"Whistling is a very useful trick," said the witch. "You can call your dog when you whistle."

"I hate dogs," said the prince.

"Well, never mind," said the witch. "I'll teach you how to snap your fingers."

The witch snapped her fingers.

And suddenly she remembered.

She remembered that she had not snapped her fingers when she said her magic words backwards.

She leaned closer to the poor unhappy prince, looked into his sad eyes, snapped her fingers, and said:

CIGAM DROW!

"I feel different!" said the prince.

"Why, look what I've done!" said the witch. "I've changed you into a beautiful princess!! How charming!"

"HOW EMBARRASSING!!" said the princess who used to be a prince who used to be a frog. "Keep trying, please. I think you're on the right track."

SSARG!

said the witch, snapping her fingers.

And the princess who used to be a prince who used to be a frog changed again.

"You're getting warmer," said the centaur who used to be a princess who used to be a prince who used to be a frog.

The witch snapped her fingers again and said:

NUS! RETAW!

The merman who used to be a centaur who used to be a princess who used to be a prince who used to be a frog said, "Almost, but not quite. Try again."

The witch snapped her fingers very loudly twice and cried:

GORF, GORF!

And the spell was broken.

The handsome frog was very happy. He looked at himself in the pond, and he hopped high and he hopped low. Then he hopped from side to side. He swam across the pond and back. He ate a caterpillar.

"If you change your mind and want to be a prince again, just call me," said the witch, as she put on her swimming goggles.

"Oh, no!" said the frog. "But if I meet someone else who would like to be changed into a prince, how do I find you?"

"Just whistle or snap your fingers, and I'll be there," said the witch, as she jumped into the pond and swam away.

The handsome frog laughed. He laughed and laughed until he was very tired. Then he sat down on a warm rock and told the whole story to a tree toad, who didn't believe it.

POEMS

The Story-Teller

He talked, and as he talked
Wallpaper came alive;
Suddenly ghosts walked,
And four doors were five;

Calendars ran backward,
And maps had mouths;
Ships went tackward
In a great drowse;

Trains climbed trees,
And soon dripped down
Like honey of bees
On the cold brick town.

He had wakened a worm
In the world's brain,
And nothing stood firm
Until day again.

Mark Van Doren

Fog

The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then, moves on.

Carl Sandburg

The Yellow Fog

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

T.S. Eliot

The Arrow and the Song

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Check

The Night was creeping on the ground
She crept, and did not make a sound
Until she reached the tree: and then
She covered it, and stole again
Along the grass behind the wall!
—I heard the rustling of her shawl
As she threw blackness everywhere
Along the sky, the ground, the air,
And in the room where I was hid!
But, no matter what she did
To everything that was without,
She could not put my candle out!
So I stared at the Night! and she
Stared back solemnly at me!

James Stephens

What Makes a Poem?

What makes a poem?
Whatever you feel:
The secrets of rain
On a window pane,
The smell of a rose
Or of cowboy clothes,
The sound of a flute
Or a foghorn hoot,
The taste of cake
Or a fresh water lake,

The touch of grass
Or an icy glass,
The shout of noon
Or the silent moon,
A standstill leaf
Or a rolling wheel,
Laughter and grief:
Whatever you feel.

Eve Merriam

Colours

Who decided blue was blue?
I'd really like to know.
Who got to say that orange is orange?
Whose idea made it so?

Who got to name the colours?
'Cause they don't all make sense.
When blue means sad and an orange is orange
Is it just a coincidence?

Who put real names on colours?
Like my teacher, Mr. Brown?
Did Mr. Brown's name just come first
Or was it the other way around?

If Mother's purple dress is violet
Why are violet flowers blue?
When YOU think of all those colours
Does it make your head ache, too?

If they let us kids name colours
When you're blue you won't be sad.
Colours won't be for feelings
So red won't mean you're mad.

CJ Heck

If You Ever Meet a Whale

If you ever, ever, ever, ever,
 ever meet a whale,
You must never, never, never, never
 grab him by his tail.
If you ever, ever, ever, ever,
 grab him by his tail —
You will never, never, never, never
 meet another whale!

Traditional Rhyme

How Doth the Little Crocodile

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in
With gently smiling jaws!

Lewis Carroll

The Chameleon

The true Chameleon is small,
A lizard sort of thing;
He hasn't any ears at all,
And not a single wing.
If there is nothing on the tree,
'Tis the Chameleon you see.

Carolyn Wells

Don't Bring Camels in the Classroom

Don't bring camels in the classroom.

Don't bring scorpions to school.

Don't bring rhinos, rats, or reindeer.

Don't bring mice or moose or mule.

Pull your penguin off the playground.

Put your python in a tree.

Place your platypus wherever
you think platypi should be.

Lose your leopard and your lemur.

Leave your llama and your leech.

Take your tiger, toad, and toucan
anywhere but where they teach.

Send your wombat and your weasel
with your wasp and wolverine.

Hide your hedgehog and hyena
where you're sure they won't be seen.

Please get rid of your gorilla.

Please kick out your kangaroo.

No, the teacher didn't mean it
when she called the class a "zoo."

Kenn Nesbitt

The Hard Way

I've got a rabbit's foot
and a four leaf clover.
A lucky penny
and a troll named Dover.

I've crossed my fingers,
I've wished on stars.
And for extra
safe measures,
I've wished on Mars.

I've avoided all ladders
and black cats as well.
Even went to a witch
for a fifty cent spell.

Now I'm armed
and I'm ready
to do my best.
Next time I'll just study
for my history test.

Arden Davidson

A Particular Potted Plant

Trichocaulon cactiforme
Slow in growth but rather rare
Year on year it's never altered
Candle shaped and coloured grey,
What a boring plant it is!
Always measuring just two inches
Never mind my loving care
Watering, feeding, heat in winter,
Nothing ever makes it budge.
Other cacti burgeon, flourish
Trichocaulon stays the same—
Or it did, until today!

Scarcely could I credit it
First to see a little offset
Candle shaped and coloured grey
Then, by Jove, there was a flower
Quite two millimetres wide.
Quick! Indoors and get the camera,
Tell the neighbours, phone the press
Trichocaulon cactiforme
Has produced a miracle.
Never now shall I complain,
All my work was not in vain
Nor will you hear me any more
Calling Trichocaulon boring.

Peter A. Crowther

Wind Is a Cat

Wind is a cat
That prowls at night,
Now in a valley,
Now on a height,

Pouncing on houses
Till folks in their beds
Draw all the covers
Over their heads.

It sings to the moon,
It scratches at doors;
It lashes its tail
Around chimneys and roars.

It claws at the clouds
Till it fringes their silk,
It laps up the dawn
Like a saucer of milk;

Then, chasing the stars
To the tops of the firs,
Curls down for a nap
And purrs and purrs.

Ethel Romig Fuller

Song for a Surf-Rider

I ride the horse that is the sea.
His mane of foam flows wild and free.
His eyes flash with an emerald fire.
His mighty heart will never tire.
His hoofbeats echo on the sand.
He quivers as I raise my hand.
We race together, the sea and I,
Under the watching summer sky
To where the magic islands lie.

Sara Van Alstyne Allen

Do You Fear the Wind?

Do you fear the force of the wind,
The slash of the rain?
Go face them and fight them,
Be savage again.
Go hungry and cold like the wolf,
Go wade like the crane:
The palms of your hands will thicken,
The skin of your cheek will tan,
You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,
But you'll walk like a man!

Hamlin Garland

It Couldn't Be Done

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
At least no one ever has done it";
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point out to you, one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

Edgar Albert Guest