

Close Your Eyes & Listen

The Story of the Curlew

By Sarah Hancock

Close your eyes and listen
Soon they will be clear
The sounds which fly and glide on by
What is it you can hear?

A bubble and a whistle
It's clear, not soft or blurred
A lonely high pitched call above
From the largest wading bird.

Look, I spy it landing
Its beak is long in length
Downward curled as it sifts for food
To give it lots of strength.

Its legs are long in stature
They move along the shore
The mud and water squelch below
On the salty marshland floor.

What is this creature who makes the sound
That is often never heard
'A curlew' it cries as its salty feet dry
A rare and precious bird.

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A second babble and whistle call
Echoes through the air
Another curlew joins its side
To make a forever pair.

The pair take flight, their wings flap by
As they plan to lay down low
A place to nest is not too far
In the grassy, peaceful meadow.

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A tapping and a pressing
A squishing something flat
A turning and a twisting
A gentle, beak-like pat.

In the swards of grassy blades
A small and shallow nest
Three little eggs, olive in colour
Are tucked up, taking rest.

Peaceful is the meadow
The pair let out a call
The whistling, bubbling, high pitched sound
From the curlews standing tall.

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The stomping and the shuffles
Of cattle passing by
Their hooves are strong and hard and firm
The curlews quickly cry

“Be careful where you’re stepping
You nearly crushed our nest
Trampled by your large shaped hooves
Our eggs must grow and rest.”

“Sorry,” cried the cattle
“We didn’t see you there
This meadow is for all of us
We’ll learn to take more care.”

The stealthy beat of orange paws
The nose that stops and sniffs
The fox that hunts for midnight food
Makes the curlew scared and stiff.

“Go away, you hungry fox”
You won’t get near our nest
We’ll peck and swoop and dive at you
To protect our eggs that rest.

“Fine,” the fox of orange cried
As it sniffed, and whiffed and stared
I’ll find my dinner in other parts,
I don’t even care.”

A gulping engine loud and near
As the farmer drives around
The tractor churning, moaning and gurgling
As it chews up the meadow ground.

“Take care where your driving
You nearly hurt our nest
You already have a very large farm
Please don’t take the rest.”

“Sorry,” cried the farmer
“I didn’t see you all down there.
I’ll be sure to leave this land alone
To make sure we all can share.”

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A gentle tap, a tender crack
A wriggle and a roll
A tiny beak which peers and peeks
From a little pecked out hole.

The sudden chirps of curlew young
To the world, all fresh and new
Each growing the numbers, one chick at a time
On the grassy, meadow dew.

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