

Four Fables for Wise Children

For two-part treble chorus and piano

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A Buggy Riddle

"Free!" buzzed the bee filling combs full of honey,
Warming her hive with the buzz of her belly,
Teasing the pussy and scaring the pooch,
Drinking her fill of rose nectar and glad
To be winging unscheduled a summer's supply
Of beebread, consulting with hollyhock blooms
Or fencing with wasps in a round robin tourney.

"Hummph!!" growled the scaggily fuzzywuzzy,
Scooting in ripples across a hot sidewalk,
Munching on milkweed, grimacing sour,
Grousing at sun for the shadows, and always
Complaining his feet (all his scuriling feet)
Ache like the dickens, and his wooly bear coat is too long
For the weather, and griping 'bout any old thing
That he happens to scrunchily happen upon.

Here now's the riddle: which one will be the luckier bug,
the frolicking bee who's happy but knows
the winter will come and she'll freeze,
or the grumpy old fuzzy wuzz, sourer than soap,
just waiting to wake up with wings
and be happy tomorrow a moth?

Saturday's Sermon

Who did Cain marry? Who buried Abel?
Where was the moon when the sun danced for Josh?
What did fat Herod take for his stomach?
How much was Daniel paid for each stunt?
We'd ask if we could figure out what's the question.
A house is a house, and a man's not its broom.
Sweep the way clean screamed Saint John.

How do locusts, locusts taste buttered?
What better sight seen than the desert?
Who counted forty long nights of the tempting?
We'd live like they did if they'd give us a reason,
said Martha and Mary alone in the kitchen.

Who owned the donkey that carried the Lord?
Who ran off naked before the kiss fell?
Who saw it all and who didn't tell?
Who gave us puppies? Where are clouds running?
Who tickled you in the crib must be angels 'cause
Satan don't have any sense of this humor.
The heart is a house, the sea is a floor
And God's more than either, but cozy as home
hes like your best buddy, a good guy to know.
Here is a desert, it's called no place special,
here's no one else who just wants to be me.
Here's to the clue the detectives never guessed at:
A man is a house, here comes something knocking.
Quick! Clean up the room and say hi.

The Calico Cat

I was angry at everybody and no one understood anything about me.
"I'll leave this place for good!" I shouted down the hallway
but noone ever heard except a fat old calico cat who offered me these words:

"Look. We see. Listen. We can hear.
The window you touch is smooth and clear.
Quietly, in a corner of your mind that never learned to scream,
watch your thought come bubble up and disappear like dreams.
Feel yourself fill up with air. Feel the fullness of full lungs.
Slowly, like you were a stone, release your breath,
feel the warm air tickle your mouth and rush
through the world like a living prayer.
Now marvel that all our lives this miracle repeats,
and our life is the making of miracles as quiet
as one breath more permanent than stars."

Or maybe all the calico cat had done was sit and purr.
But this was what I heard:
Each morning is a prayer and every night a miracle of all that has occurred.

The Secret

The lake shuddered once in the autumn breeze
saying something secretly to the sandy shore,
to the glowing sky, to the racing clouds,
to the fish that swim near the bottom mud.
Then over all the earth there fell the silence of glaciers.
And none would tell the secret.

A stand of tamarack heard it all and
passed one word among themselves.
And I could tell in the rustle of those gossiping leaves
they spoke about me.
The sky smiled down, the shore beamed up,
my secret was safe with all of the lake
and even the chattering leaves agreed to leave me be.
Not even the wind would know when the leaves went repeating,
repeating the secret again and again.