

Stumbleine

[excerpt]

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Kamiel (1979) is writer, philosopher and poet.

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*Stumbleine is our second book after In our river.*

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Design Yeon Choi

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for those who are clumsy sometimes...



# STUMBLEINE

---



A ladybug with thirteen dots  
Was sitting in our room one day.  
It had been blown in by the wind.  
Outside it was hailing, and it was cold.

We picked it up carefully  
and put it in a little house,  
that we made from a matchbox.

We gave it leaves and drops of water  
and furniture made of shredded paper,  
but it kept falling off.  
So we called it Stumbleine  
because it was a little awkward.

Stumbleine often bumped against the window when it went for a walk.  
He (or she) got stuck in the honey that I had spilled  
and in other stuff like candle wax and jam.  
He (or she) was quite a klutz.

One day we couldn't find him (or her) anywhere.  
He (or she) had left a note.  
There was written on it:  
"I'm going on an adventure!"

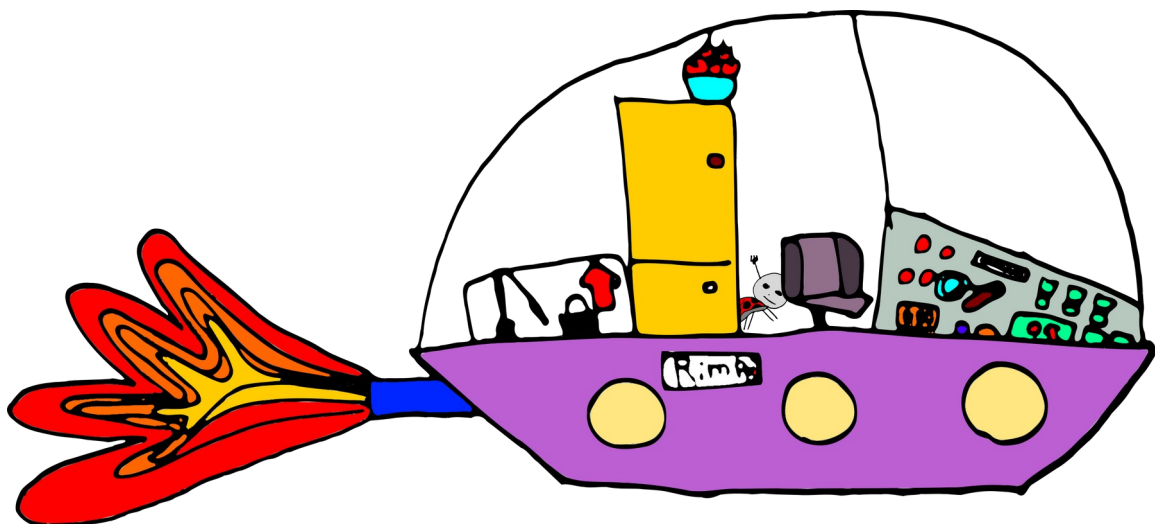
# MISTER WRINKLE

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Mr. Wrinkle walked through the dark night.  
Between the gray trees the chilly wind was silent.  
The silence froze his thoughts and Wrinkle  
lost himself in the thudding of his steps  
and the crunching of dry leaves.

Between the tall shapes of the trees  
the gaping blackness into which he stared:  
the heartless world in which Wrinkle  
buried his sad thoughts once,  
long ago, in a clearing in the forest  
which was now completely overgrown.

Then Mr. Wrinkle got into a super fast rocket boat  
and flew very far away.



# THE LITTLE CAT OPHELIA

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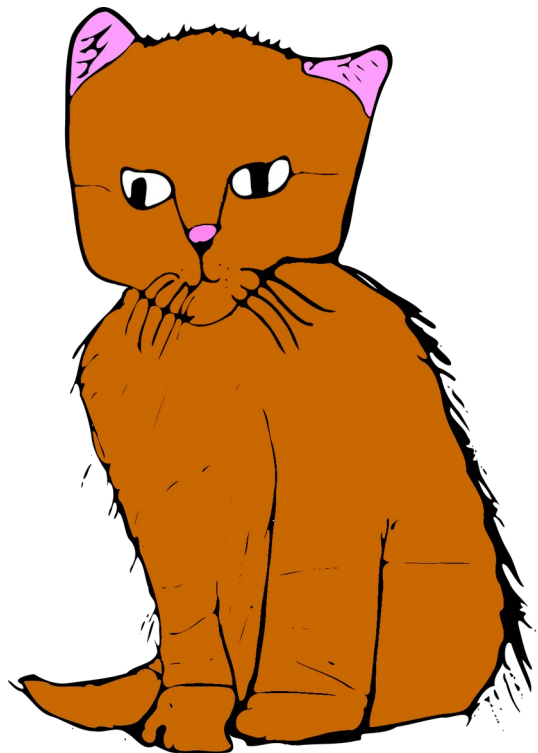
The little cat Ophelia  
was bored and lost her thrill  
on her pink window sill.

She didn't have mobile coverage  
and didn't want to be in this drama at all.

So she did what cats do:  
she dreamt. She purred.

If only there were some mice around  
a way out of this rut,  
an old willow near a pond,  
rue, or a coconut.

She wished she were two dogs  
so she could play and do mischief.  
Before a cat in earnest says these words  
she must be bored beyond belief.



# MR. LUCKY

---



Mr. Lucky can't believe his luck.  
When he crosses the highway  
he's not even lightly struck.

Mr. Lucky never gets upset  
When he takes a long walk.

It always stays dry when he forgets his umbrella  
and there is always food where he is hungry.

If he buys a lottery ticket,  
he easily wins three lotteries.

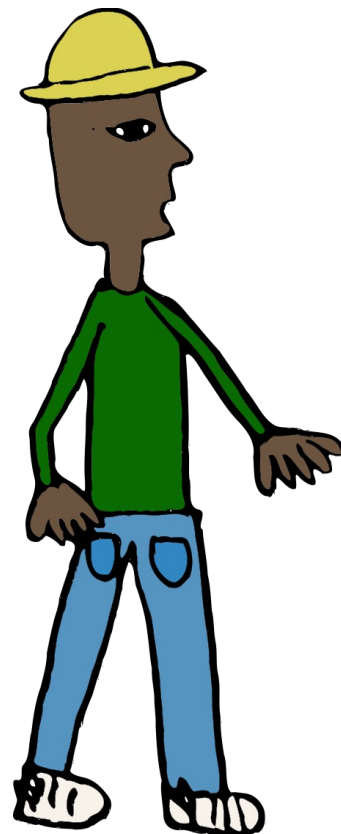
Nothing can break what he has made  
Even if you drove over it with a steamroller.

Mr. Lucky always wakes up just in time  
after falling off a high mountain in a dream.

Mr. Lucky's old socks bring good luck,  
people believe, but to be fair  
it only applies to him: they pay him a thousand bucks for a pair.

He was so lucky, there was nothing  
you could do for him.  
Never was there a pebble in his shoe.

Never a splash of water his nose.  
Never was there a swordfish in his throat  
Or a butterfly in his stomach.





# PEBBLES

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We throw pebbles at time  
that sounds very original  
some do softly chime  
but not that many after all



# CHICK HOP

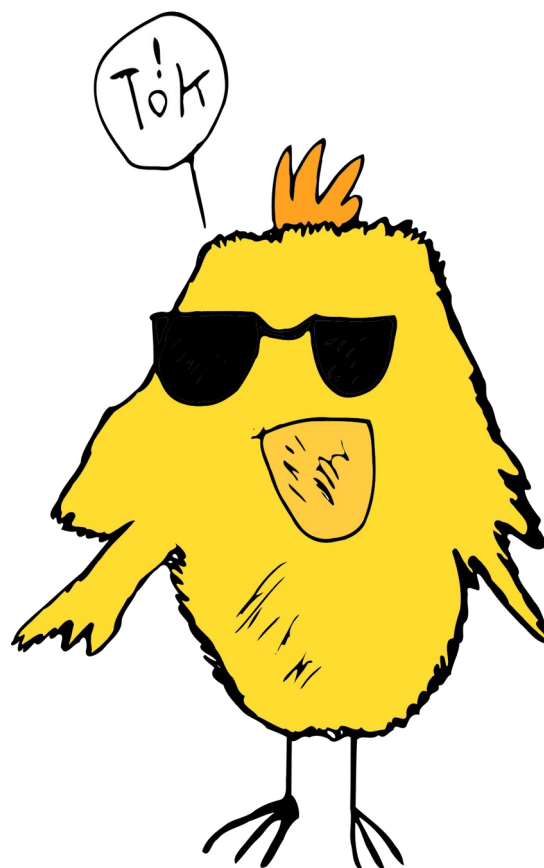
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This is chick hop  
you watch that perch I go chip-chop  
hundreds of fans are storming the coop, we play fat beats on a loop  
goitres swell if I drop the beat so well  
rock your chicken heads like the walking dead  
nobody can come up with a better thread.

Tok tok TOK tok tok tok tok tok TOK (3x)

This is chick hop  
who likes to make it go pop  
I am fabulous like aesop, remember the frog  
it may sound like a shock but there's our catch crop  
catch phrase, we never stop to amaze, remain unfazed  
when you drop verses like a dime a dozen, we keep tossin'  
coins in the pond of fondness, you get me? I see you smile like Jane Fonda  
or a Fish called Wanda, I know you love us,  
I eavesdrop, and when our beat drop  
your ears go plop

Tok tok TOK tok tok tok tok tok TOK (3x)



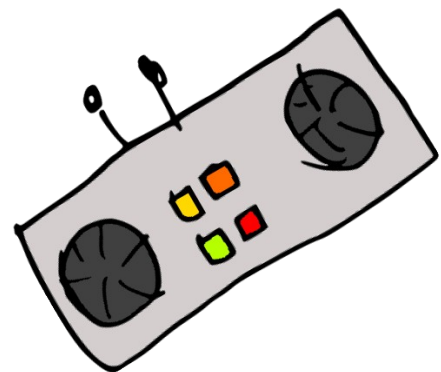
This is chick hop  
 check our video's on the back of your desktop  
 our beats are like top of the pops, numero uno  
 how do we do it I dunno, but I do know  
 we gonna blow you away like a soda pop  
 can y'all be ready cuz we gonna prop it up  
 getting the angle right check the arc of our lob  
 a chicken never gives up, our heart throb  
 we're the cream of the crop and loveable  
 that's what makes us unstoppable

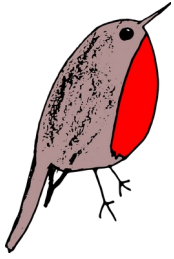
Tok tok TOK tok tok tok tok tok tok TOK (3x)

This is chick hop  
 our rhymes are wild like a galop on a hill top  
 cool wind in your ear you go like giddy-up  
 roaming free between delicacies like dandelion and buttercup  
 no old chestnuts, a chicken got guts, we never get busted  
 by the cops, if you as Gallup, chickens are a hellavu fine flock  
 we keep it real like bebop, a love supreme, this is the chick team  
 we spread our wings like y'all spread a meme

Tok tok TOK tok tok tok tok tok tok TOK  
 tok tok TOK tok tok tok tok tok tok TOK  
 tok... tok... tok...  
 TOK tok tok TOK tok tok...  
 TOK tok... KIP HOP  
 TOK tok tok...  
 tok... tok TOK! Tok tók tők tòk tôk  
 tok tok tok TOK  
 tok tok tok tok TOK  
 tok TOK tok tok tok tok...

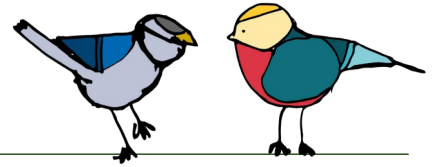
kippedi hip kippedi hop...KIP HOP!!!





# THE BIRD LINE

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Feathered friends in need, just call the bird line!  
Sometimes it's just a bird who is bored, calling for a tweet.

Or a blue tit around dawn, who likes a meet and greet.  
The old raven calls because he has a voice problem.  
A magpie about the street value of a magnificent emblem.

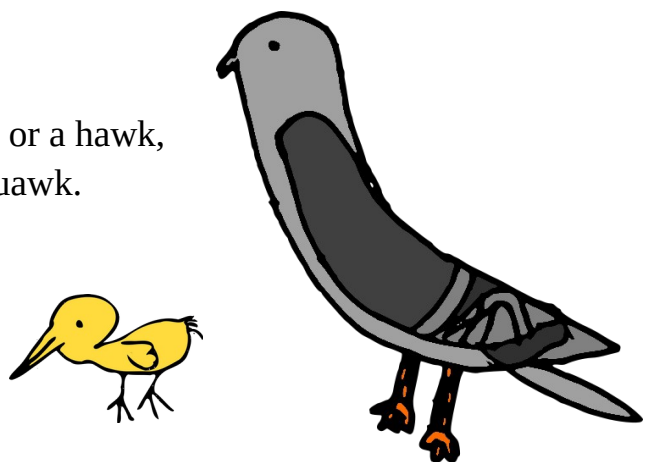
A great spotted woodpecker asks: how do you like my nest?  
A hawk calls to inquire about his diving flight test.

An old owl comes grumbling about a lost mouse or two,  
Robins, larks, chiffchaffs with nothing better to do.

A zebra finch with color on his cheek,  
a wood pigeon to cow cow cow cow cow,  
a jackdaw, all in a tizzy,  
A cuckoo, wanting to know what he's breeding next,  
A tern, who wants to know how to swim,  
A swallow, whether he can make summer alone,  
A stork, who wants to crochet baby socks,  
a lapwing, to ask if it's spring yet again.

There used to be a parrot here  
but he was fired on the spot.  
He never really found his place  
and he talked – a lot.

It doesn't matter if you are a hummingbird or a hawk,  
call us for free, even if you just want to squawk.  
Birds are like that, and it's fine  
But now if you'll excuse me,  
there's a heron on the line.



# THE WHALE

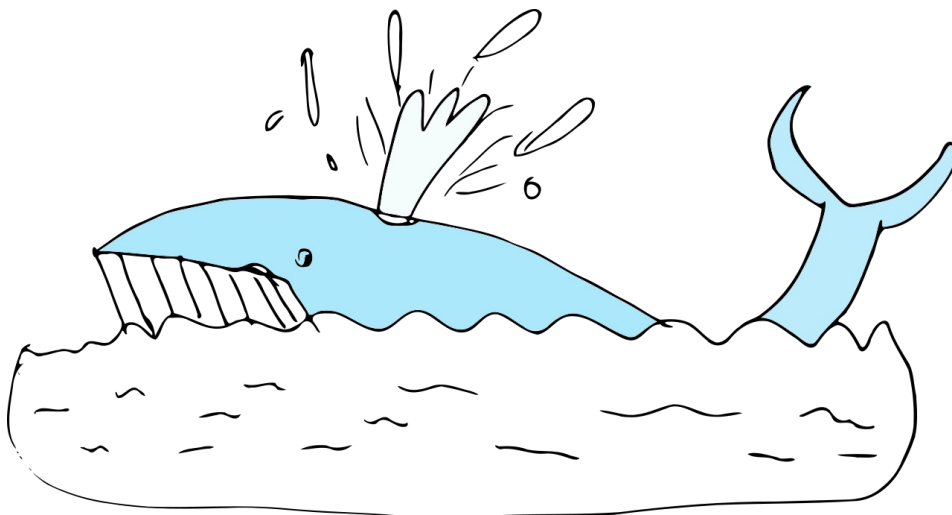


Under a giant wave, Anton the fisherman  
was washed overboard from his Cutter.  
He floated around for a few days and was  
finally swallowed by a whale  
with a stomach the size of a parking garage.  
For three weeks he lived there, on the seventh floor.

At a writing desk he worked on a book  
about being swallowed and life in a stomach.  
An eyewitness account, as people like to read,  
because Anton had been missing for a very long time.

After the whale spat Anton out  
his book became insanely popular.  
He made a fortune, it was spectacular  
and he married a handsome baroness.

This story has been greatly exaggerated by me:  
the wave was a ripple, the cutter a shrimp  
the days, minutes and the fortune turned out to be a dime.  
Anton's fiancée was soon nowhere to be seen.  
Anton was plankton, producing some slime  
and the whale, it was a sardine.



# THE BUNNY WITH THE LONG EARS

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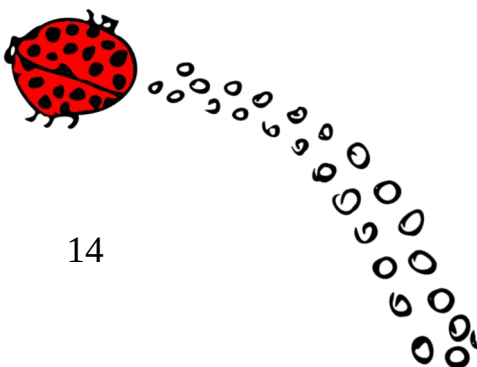
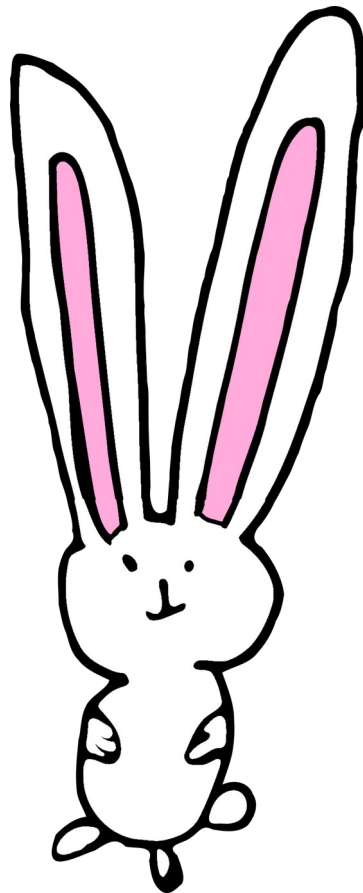
Once upon a time there was a bunny with two very long ears.  
They were not sewn on, she was born with them.

If two ants are playing on a leaf,  
Then she hears a herd of bulls.  
If a fly creeps cautiously  
A drum solo blares in front of her.  
If a leaf fleetingly whirls through the air  
To her it sounds like a hurricane.  
And a butterfly beating its wings at the double  
Is a Boeing 747 with engine trouble.

When a pin falls on the tiles  
a pile of pipes thunders.

The rabbit lay with his ears popped  
and asked his therapist, "Is there any hope?  
I want the silence back, the sound of grass  
when it wasn't an earthquake."

The therapist shook his head and tail  
with about ten on the Richter scale.



# THE HOUSESHOE DRAGON

---

A dragon walked into a store to buy new slippers.  
The man behind the counter stiffened with fright.  
"Good afternoon, it's not that I've been walking on them too long,  
but they keep catching on fire."

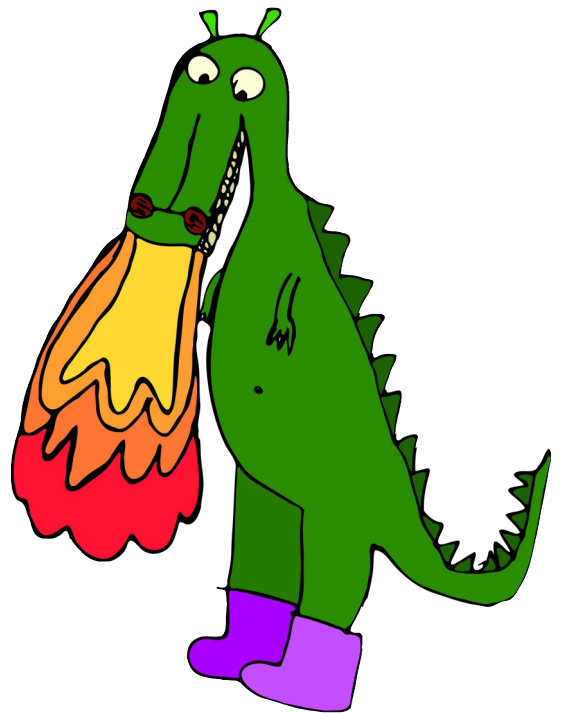
"Slippers are delicate footwear, dear dragon"  
said the shopkeeper, with a heart that pounded in his throat.  
"I'll go and see if we have your size left on the store."  
And he fled headlong into the warehouse.

There he prayed that the dragon would leave his store  
but the latter was patient and waited on a stool.  
"When I spit fire I don't notice it ,  
and then both my slippers break.

he spoke sadly to the horrified shopkeeper.  
"Then why do you wear them", "asked the good man.  
"Ah you know, I am a very domestic animal,  
and like you, I do what I can.

"Very well, then, take these, which are our sturdiest pair"  
said the salesman, who was a little disconcerted.  
The dragon nodded hopefully, he was eager for it  
because he had already burned three pairs.

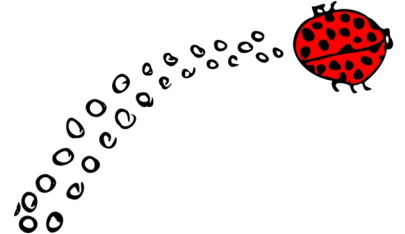
On his new houseshoes he walked out.  
In good spirits he began to whistle a tune,  
But out of his mouth came only consuming fire:  
Being a houseshoe dragon is fun,  
but the costs are dire.



# THE CREEPY TREE

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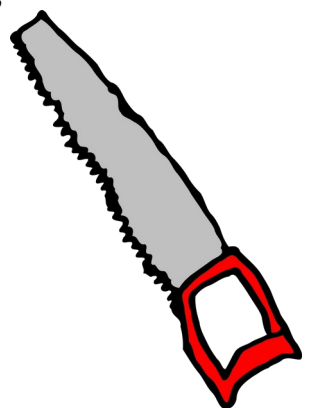
A vampire swings among the whiskered branches  
his teeth are fat from thymus, his eyes black as cabbage  
he grips the barren wood, while growling and chewing  
And takes no notice of the dusty skeleton  
that flaps its ribs next to him.



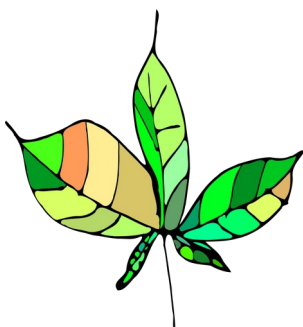
A sorceress curls softly in the storky crown  
Her carbuncles creak like morose lobsters.  
In her sallow oyster eyes the deep abyss beckons  
And around the trunk wriggles an old husky snake.  
Between the monsters she hisses: come in, come in!

Under the bark a thousand briny morels swarm  
And for their sake the tree makes a slow cry  
That penetrates to the marrow of his unsavory tenants.  
On a thick branch two trolls prance uneasily  
A belching ogre swallows three spiders in terror.

One day a group of people arrived with axes and saws.  
"Down! Down! The tree must come down!" so sounded their muscular language,  
But from the tree echoed a magic spell: "Qribnuschtzwomgryfdexpoljak"  
and then the whole tree remained eerily silent.

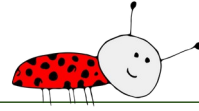


It was such a terrifying, such a deathly silence,  
so ominous that the people ran away  
and left the creepy tree.  
And there it still stands today,  
though no one dares to go near it.





# FEAR



Refrain:

Afraid of water  
afraid of flour  
afraid if the bell tolls  
every hour

afraid of money because it costs a lot  
afraid of a row boat and afraid of a yacht  
afraid of what is and afraid of what ought  
afraid of the character and afraid of the plot  
afraid of the flies and afraid of the swat  
afraid that they catch you right on the spot

*(Refrain)*

Afraid! Afraid! Afraid!  
Afraid of hemophilia and afraid of a clot  
afraid of too cold and afraid of too hot  
afraid of escaping, afraid of getting caught  
afraid of the tango and afraid of foxtrot  
afraid of necks and afraid of ascot  
afraid to learn how much you got

*(Refrain)*

Afraid! Afraid! Afraid!  
Afraid of the kettle afraid of the pot  
afraid to look smart and afraid to besot  
afraid of a mango and of an apricot  
afraid of inuit afraid of hottentot  
afraid of a mini and a juggernaut  
afraid that we ecologically overshot



*(Refrain)*

Afraid! Afraid! Afraid!

Afraid of the pope afraid of huguenots  
afraid of a foreword and an afterthought  
afraid of the Queen and afraid of Lancelot  
afraid of losing and afraid of the jackpot  
afraid of putting tea leaves in a coffeepot  
afraid of the now and of forget-me-not  
afraid of a mute and of a polyglot  
afraid of poetry and well whatnot  
Afraid! Afraid! Afraid!  
Afraid!



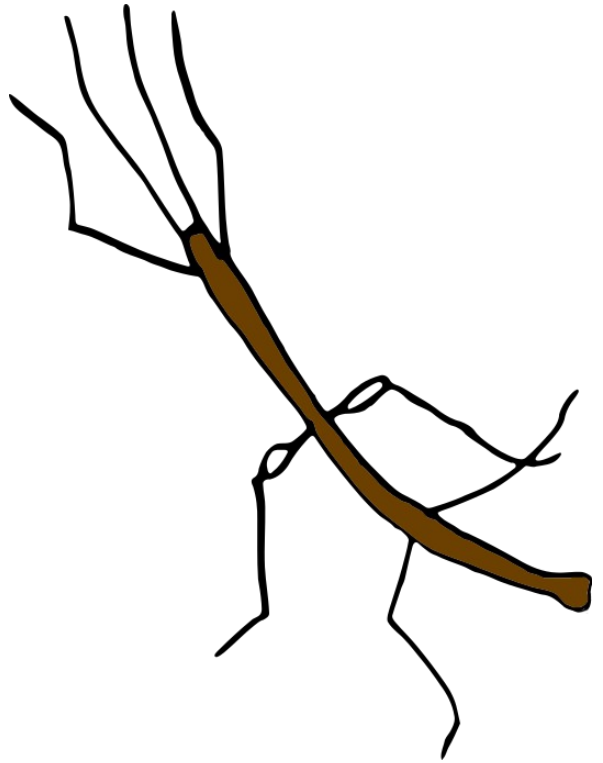
# WHAT TROLLS DREAM

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Don't be alarmed, we are not scary: Trolls are sick trees.  
Our voice is the crackling of branches  
When we dream

of strange creatures  
With bald faces, smooth  
like peeled birch bark  
arms and legs as thin as clubs  
A hairless tailless back  
a navel in the middle of their belly  
(usually a thin one)  
those flat teeth,  
elbows that only go one way  
and something they call a 'chin'.

They are truly bizarre:  
look at their ears, who saw such a fin,  
and how can they swim with that little cigar?



# CONSOLING THE BULLY

---

What did you used to want to be?  
The question is dead wrong.  
Pharaoh, Neanderthal, cyborg, mermaid  
are the made-up answers that you get.

All equally impossible.  
But also very briefly possible,  
if you don't look too critically.

Nobody wanted to be a bully,  
not even the child that was one.  
That child wanted to be a wizard.  
Then he could make sure  
everyone would listen to him.

On Tuesday, the bully had hurt his leg  
and the girl came to comfort him  
who wanted to become invisible.



# THE ECHOES OF PARIS

---

Once upon a time, there was an echo in a tunnel in Paris is is  
In love with an echo in a barrel  
They wanted very much to be together and kiss  
But he knew they would be in peril.

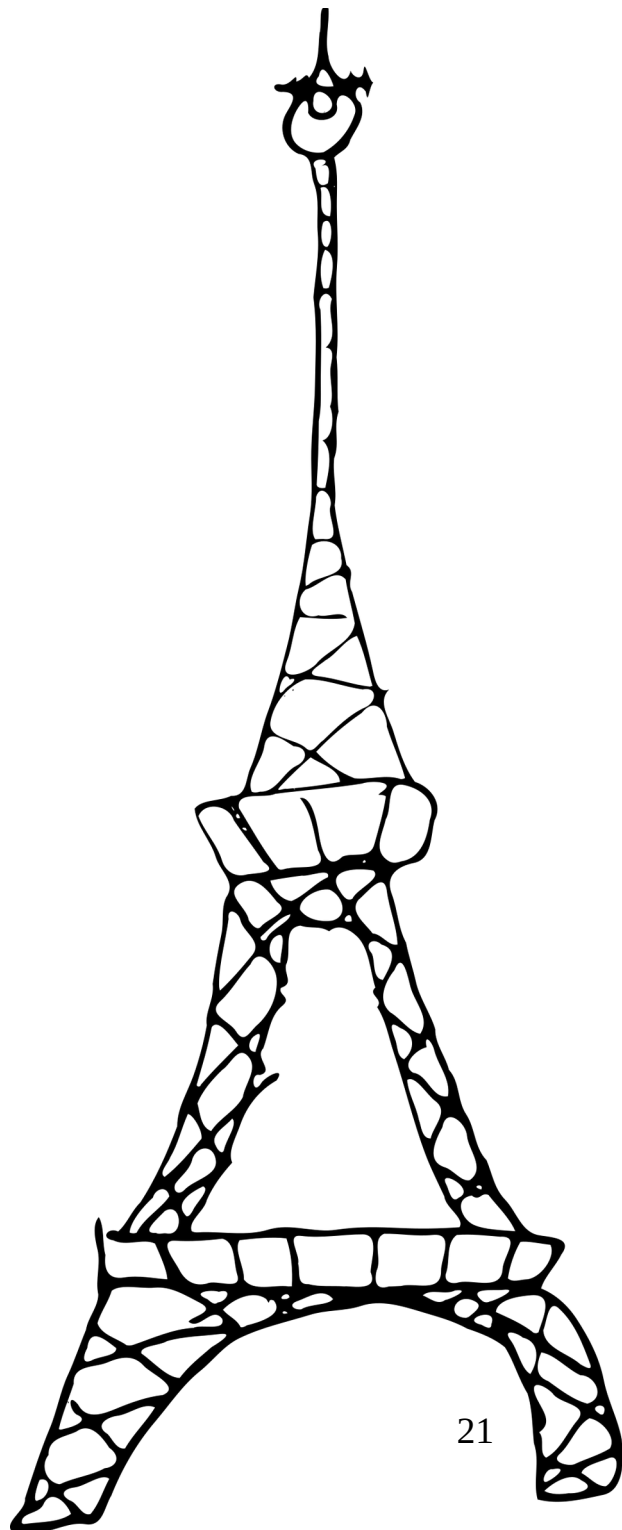
An echo in an old cathedral al al  
Fond of an echo in a well  
Listen to my wonderful cough  
Said he, for she had almost dozed off.

An echo in the heart of Pompidou ou ou  
In love with an echo in Orsay  
Called sadly One day I will come to you  
But now I must stay on my quai.

An echo at the old Gare du Nord ord ord  
Had gotten engaged to a blind echo at Versailles  
You don't hear that a lot anymore  
For echoes rarely read Braille.

An echo in the departure hall of de Gaulle aulle aulle  
In love with an echo in the catacombs  
He looked for him in every vault  
But found only empty tombs

The echo in the tunnel in Paris is is  
Took the metro to Montparnasse  
There he saw that big barrel opened  
A relic of what once was.



# SCISSOR LOVE

---

There were two pairs of scissors  
In love up to their eyes.  
They were always together  
And went to the scissors' sleep together.

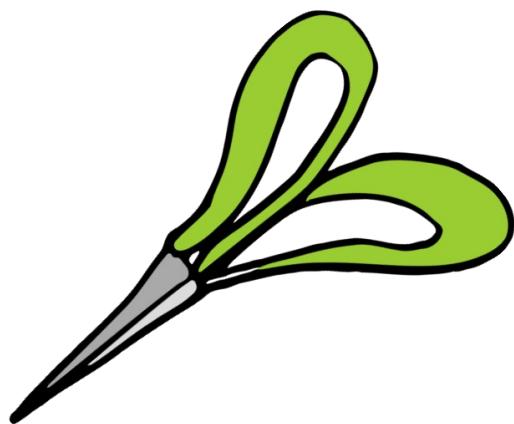
They cut each other, we call that kissing.  
One was a hedge trimmer, the other made for paper.  
Sparks had sprung between  
the shears, and they cut like an Andalusian barber.

One day they didn't mince words anymore  
For they had been sharpened for each other.  
One could not close without the other  
But at night they each disappeared into their own drawer.

There they lay sad in the dark  
Between the other ironware, the files, the saws  
and the hedge trimmer waited until the right moment  
To ask for her scissorhand.

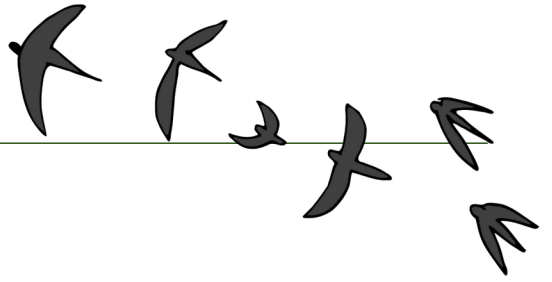
But with a face of steel, her father said bluntly:  
you are not allowed to come near her from now on.  
Later the hedge wilted, the scissors felled by rust  
and she sadly cut herself in Flaubert, Tolstoy, Proust.

Finally they were both sold  
to an old ironmonger.  
On the iron cart they found each other again,  
rust-stained and bent while they had waited  
now they finally felt sharp, and elated.



# THE HOT AIR BALLOON

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Once upon a time there was a hot air balloon  
with a bird in the basket,  
who was afraid he couldn't fly  
and he wanted to go to England.

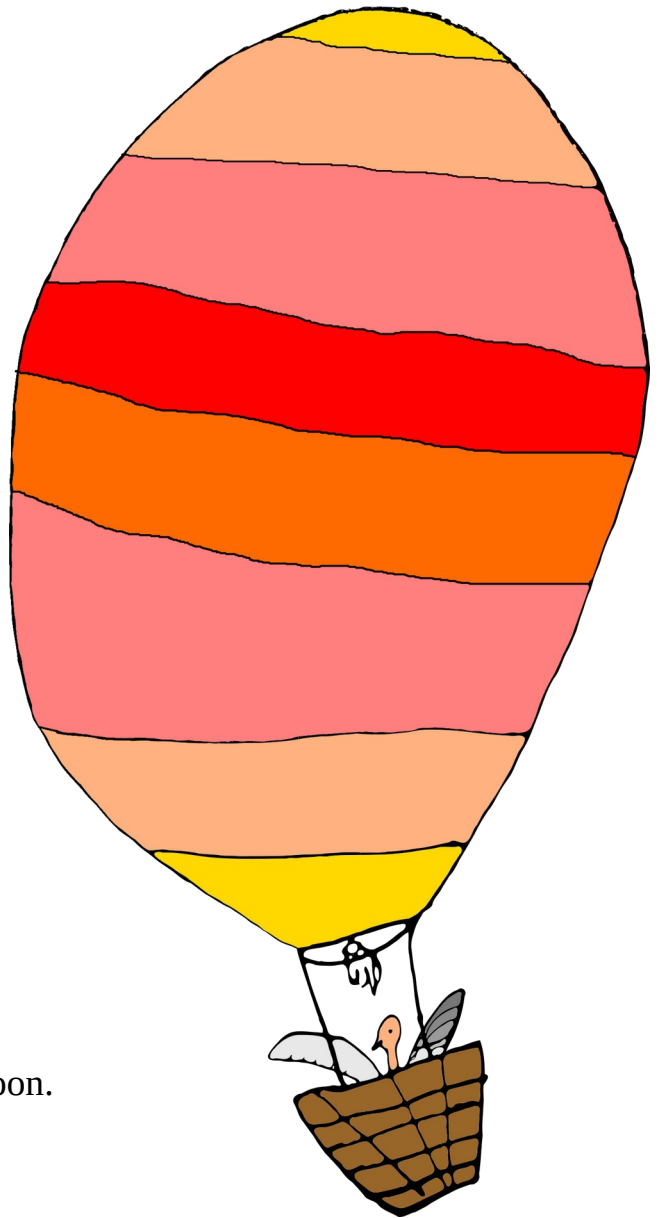
The balloon was flying high above the sea.  
He looked carefully over the edge.  
"I will go with the wind"  
he thought, all the way to the other side.

But there was only water in sight.  
He had gone way too far  
so he jettisoned some of his weight  
into the Atlantic Ocean.

Still, the balloon began to descend  
until it was floating on the waves.  
The bird had to paddle and fend  
for himself, there was no-one to help.

That's how he reached the Americas  
where he quickly sold the balloon  
for land, that's how he enriched himself  
that has been historically shown.

Yet, he wanted to make it to England still.  
Everyone said it is best to fly, you can be there soon.  
No thank you, said the bird: I know I will  
never make it without a hot air balloon.



# THE FLYING TEAPOT

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Maybe there's a teapot flying around  
somewhere between Earth and Mars.

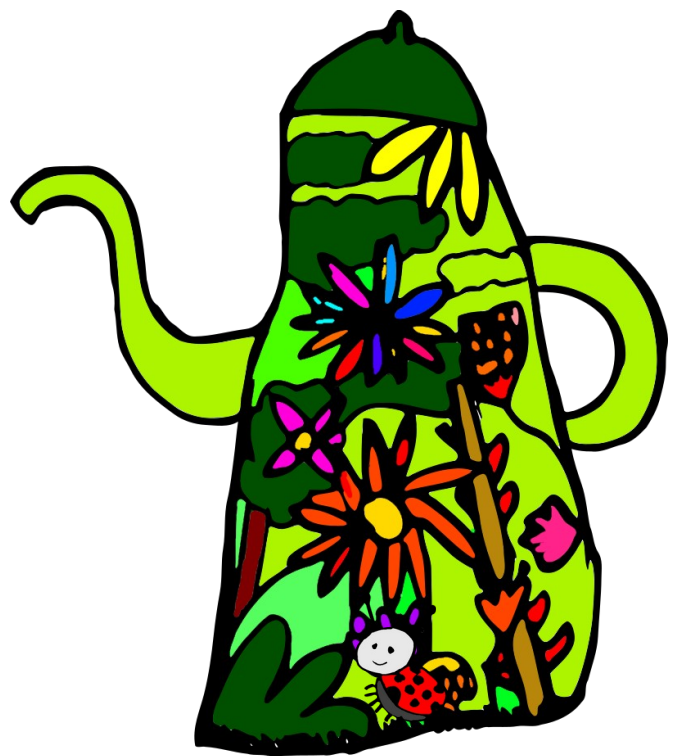
That seems like nonsense.

It does, but you can't prove  
that it isn't.

A teapot is not even a speck up there.  
You couldn't find it in centuries,  
even with the best telescope.

But why a teapot?  
Because Bertrand, the man who invented this, came from England  
and probably thought of it during a tea break.

It could also be something else  
that doesn't float in space:  
for an Italian, no pizza flies,  
for a Frenchman, no baguette.  
The German says: kein Volkswagen,  
for a Russian, there is no samovar in space,  
for a cobbler, there is no shoe,  
and what doesn't fly for you?



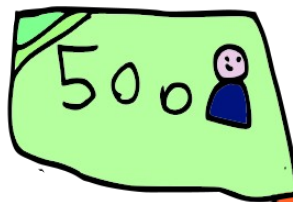
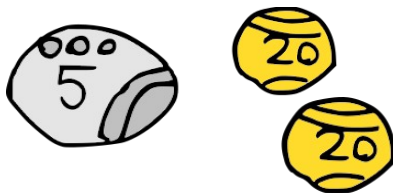
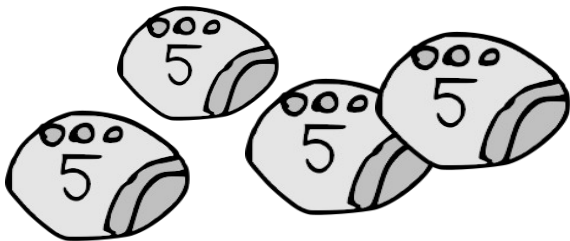
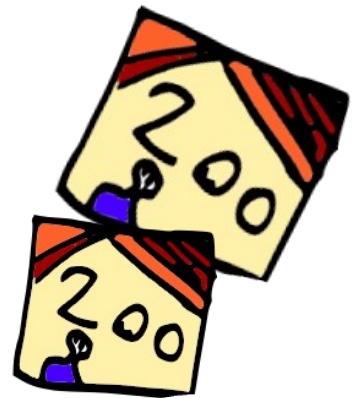


# RICH



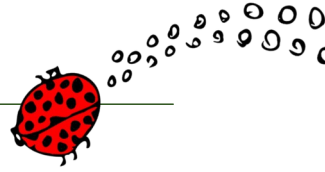
I am rich. I have a thousand dollar haircut.  
Betty did it yesterday here in my street:  
she cut my hairdo perfectly neat.

Betty herself is a wealthy lady too:  
her manicure costs a thousand dollars altogether,  
It is wonderful, and I love to do it for her.



# THE SMART-ALECK

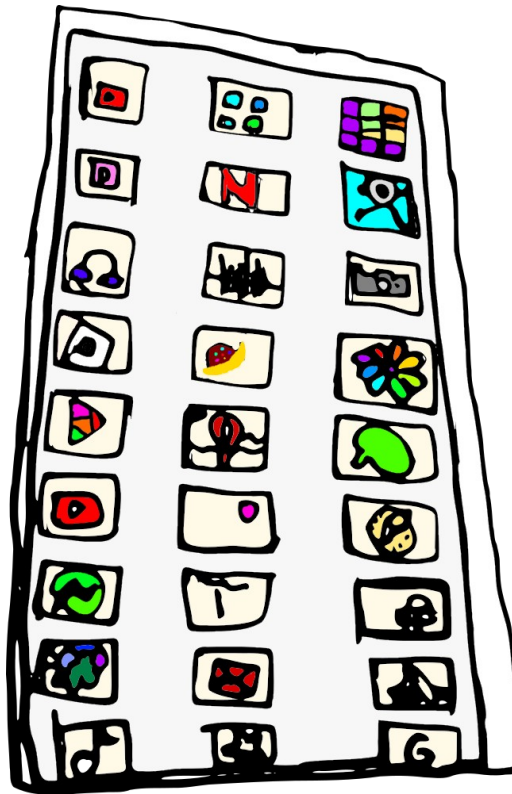
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How a zipper works or a black hole  
a sewing machine or gravity  
the electrical outlet or a lightning bolt  
a well or a particle accelerator.

A match or a radio telescope  
an iron plough or a satellite  
a broom or a meteorite  
putty or a microchip.

The smart-aleck tells you he knows it all.  
He has done so since he was three years old.  
But don't ask him if to remember your name  
when he has his smartphone turned off.



# THE GIGGLES

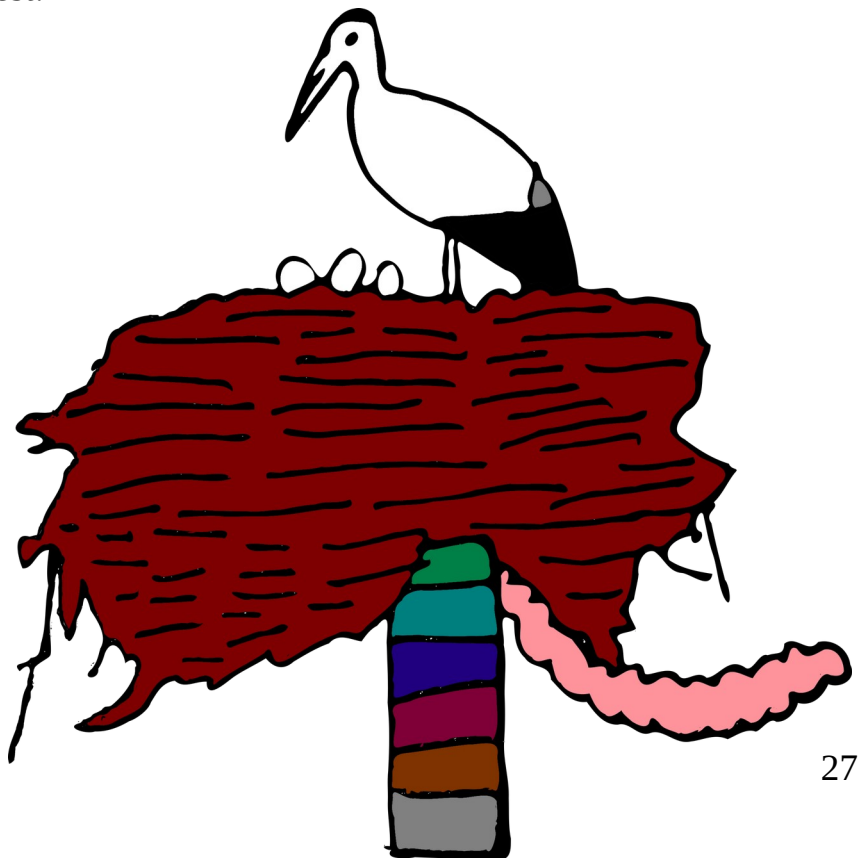
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Everything in the house had the giggles.  
The walls were coming to life.  
The lamps swung wildly like clappers in a bell.  
Chairs danced all day  
And the beams thundered under the ridge.

The walls roared loudly,  
the furniture, too, had an upswing.  
A side table was no longer coming to:  
it was a rather severe earthquake.

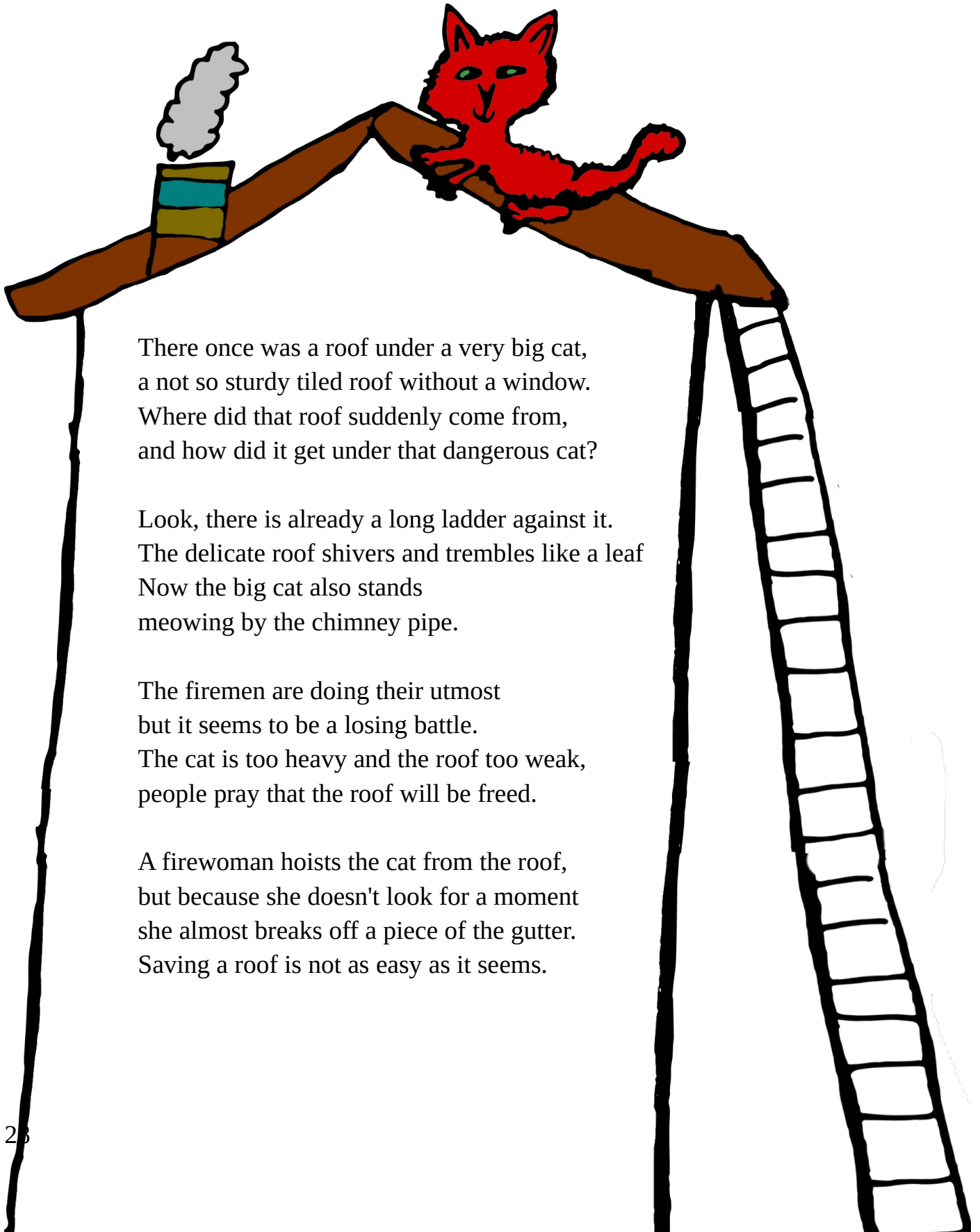
"I'm all broken"," said the old clock  
and he burst  
    into laughter.

Only the chimney remained standing  
And on it a pair of storks built a nest  
On which the sun now shines warmly:  
he who laughs last, laughs best.



# THE ROOF

---



There once was a roof under a very big cat,  
a not so sturdy tiled roof without a window.  
Where did that roof suddenly come from,  
and how did it get under that dangerous cat?

Look, there is already a long ladder against it.  
The delicate roof shivers and trembles like a leaf  
Now the big cat also stands  
meowing by the chimney pipe.

The firemen are doing their utmost  
but it seems to be a losing battle.  
The cat is too heavy and the roof too weak,  
people pray that the roof will be freed.

A firewoman hoists the cat from the roof,  
but because she doesn't look for a moment  
she almost breaks off a piece of the gutter.  
Saving a roof is not as easy as it seems.

# THE GIANT

---

Everything is slow about the giant, his big head  
hangs slightly forward.

His teeth are soft as clouds.  
He stands still and  
looks into an angelic distance.

What are you looking for, child?

What is it like to be able to see so much?

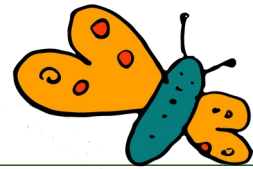
It is like being blind, said the giant  
With a voice like wind.

Being blind in your own palace.



# THE PIRATE

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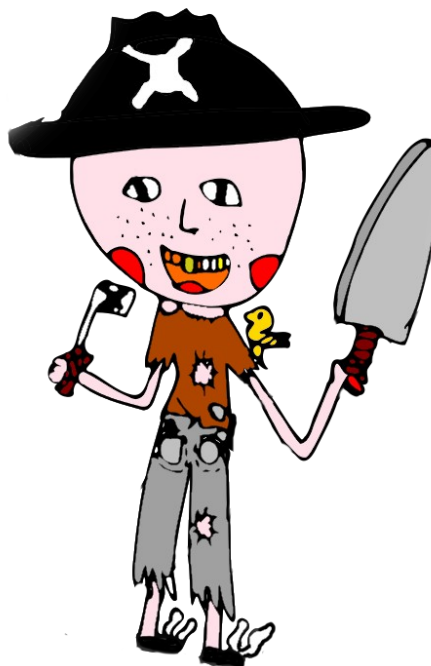


His right leg was of ebony  
and his left of chestnut.  
He took piracy with a grain of salt  
and his beard was orange.

One arm was a big hook  
the other arm was all normal and pink.  
You often see that with story pirates:  
they're even wackier without all the ink.

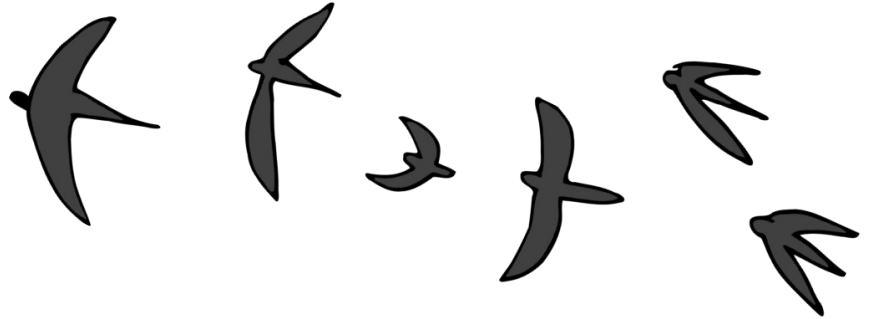
He hops on the plank and enters your ship like that.  
Wielding his saber, he rushes at you...  
And standing almost next to you on your deck  
he suddenly slows his pace to a crawl.

With slurred speech he challenges you to a duel.  
Jolly Roger, I'll get you, I think.  
With his pirate pistol he aims...  
and misses, because he likes to have a drink



# WONDER

---



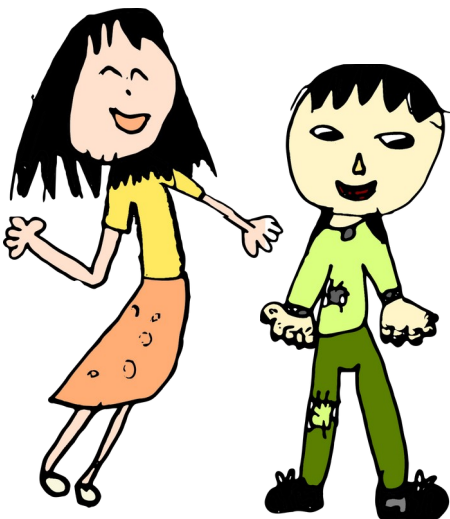
Raindrops are the eyes  
of invisible fish in a pool

stars are explosions far away  
of gas clouds

pebbles are polished by millions of years  
all vertebrates have tears

planets seem to be able to sing  
the aurora borealis is the glow of colliding atoms

A butterfly is a caterpillar who dares to dream  
glass is enchanted sand  
everything is vibration, isn't that grand?



# QUIET

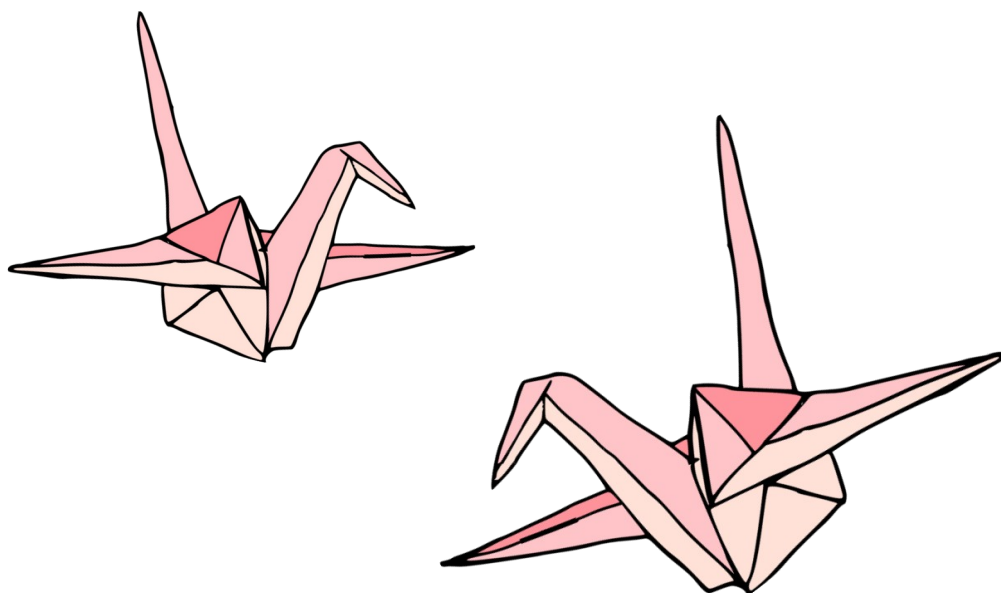
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Today I'm folding an origami crane  
and then another one.  
On the highway I draw a hopscotch diagram with chalk  
and hop only on my left leg.  
I fish with a blade of grass, walk with the bike  
by the hand, even without a flat tire.

I watch the air slowly expel my breath  
The night is cold when I stand by a lake  
to listen to a long story  
of a lonely man.

When the sun rises soon, I think,  
we'll see the clouds reflected in the water  
We will see birds and morning people  
looking at our smiles  
and prick up our ears.

It is so quiet inside the dog's bark.





# THE MEMORYNG (BY MIRU)

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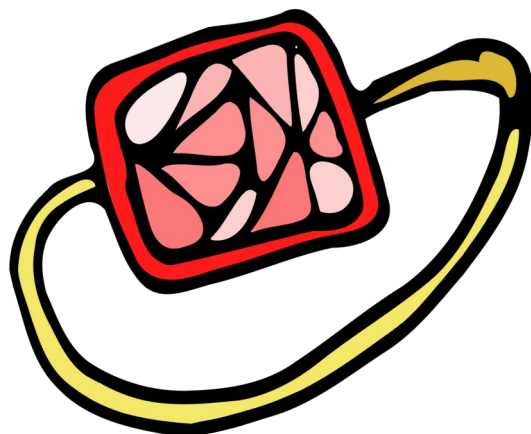


One day I'll get married  
A few years later I'm still wearing the ring  
that glistens  
I've got all the memories back  
I think about it all night long: the wedding day.

My ring glitters so much  
that it seems I go back in time  
a long time until I came to the best memories.

When I was a baby and when I was only five  
When I went off to play with my family  
and that me and daddy ate a very nice ice cream  
and many more fun memories

Then I went back to my own time  
and I could always go back in time with that special ring.



# WHEN YOU ARE NO LONGER HERE

---

Does water taste just as thirsty?

Do faces smile just as much in the clouds?

Does the light shine just as beautifully in Cordoba?

Is the sound of a starting engine in France just as promising then?

Will there be just as much distance behind the mountains?

Does the earth smell as sweet as when you planted trees?

Will there still be blackberries at the edge of the world

When you are no longer here?



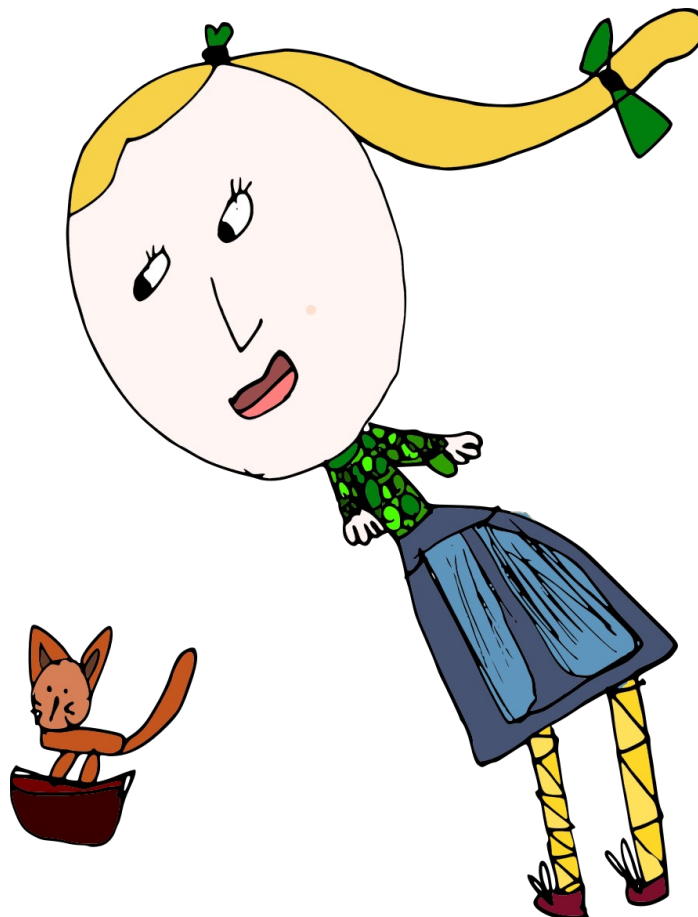
# DIFFERENT



I am different from  
the people in my town.  
On the street they often call me  
hey freckle nose, lighthouse, bivouac tent  
spectacle, braceface, milk chocolate.

All those nasty words? Oh well, you get used to them.

But sometimes I feel horrible  
and lonely like the rain,  
like the hoarfrost on a fallen leaf,  
because I'm different  
from the people in my town.



# THE PITTANCE

---

I own the very last pittance.  
The other pittances have disappeared without a trace.  
People have offered me ten million for it,  
they also came begging.  
But I'm keeping it for myself, and I'll polish it up a bit.

I'll put it away somewhere in my room.  
They offered chests of gold, palaces, a country,  
until they realized I wasn't selling it.  
Then they started praying to me.

And I pretend to pray to my pittance.  
You see, it's him! That's what they say,  
and now they feed the hungry  
and they quench each other's thirst.

# A QUADRILLION YEARS

---

I am not going to die, said Stumbeline,  
I am only going to sleep

for a quadrillion years.



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