

# POEMS FOR CHILDREN

By Margaret Menamin



*The Mermaid* by Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones

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## **JORDAN ALMONDS**

### **For Carol Carey**

In New York City I have a friend  
who each November pulls a red cap  
over her yellow hair  
and walks the length of the city  
looking for Jordan almonds.

She buys them wholesale from the shops  
and pours them into a bag  
as big as a pregnant cloud,  
stuffs it so full it bursts in the box  
and pale pastel almonds rattle like hailstones  
all the way here from New York City.

On Christmas Day when I open The Box  
a shower of hard sweet almonds  
rains around my feet  
burying me to my knees.  
I fall into them like a madwoman,  
cram them in my mouth with both fists  
until I am deliciously sick.  
Then I call my friend and moan  
Oh I am sick and I love you.

Some things I will do for love,  
some things I will do for money,  
but I will do everything for my friend  
who each November in a red cap  
walks the length of New York City  
looking for Jordan almonds.

## **RABBITS UNDER THE MOON**

Under the moon, across the snow  
the little rabbits come and go.

Out of the forest, deep and white,  
Their shadows follow them at night

into the clearing. To and fro  
under the moon the rabbits go.

There in the silent silver light  
They hold their midnight rabbit rite

as one old rabbit leads the rest  
in secret, soundless rabbit fest

and, lifting ears to some high tune,  
they raise their tails to greet the moon.

They are not secretive as mice  
But dance all night upon the ice

Beneath the moon and leave at dawn.  
I find their footprints on the lawn.

Under the moon the rabbits go,  
Leaving stories in the snow.

## WITHOUT POCKETS

When I am President  
I will sit in a shiny chair  
at a humongous desk  
with a big bowl of puffed wheat  
and make a law:  
Nobody is allowed to wear clothes  
without pockets.

Without pockets  
where would you keep  
small round river rocks  
washed bright as jewels  
to feel with your thumb  
or throw at Gary Simoni  
if he throws one at you.

Without pockets  
where would long pink  
slippery worms  
sleep on Saturday night?

When I am President  
it will be against the law  
to go outside without pockets.  
Even if you are naked  
you have to have pockets  
in your skin.

If you are caught outdoors  
without a pocket  
you will be arrested  
and thrown in jail  
and a big mean guy  
with a wart on his eyebrow  
will come in  
and empty a black trash bag  
on the floor.

Out will roll  
10 acorns  
40 rubber bands  
1 tooth  
4 ladybugs  
5 crackers  
8 sticks  
1 mitten  
7 baseball cards  
3 dimes  
1 cough drop with lint on it  
23 sunflower seeds  
and a gazillion nails.

The big mean guy  
will grin a big mean grin  
and say  
“You can’t go home  
until you pick up all this stuff  
and put it away  
where I can’t see it.

Now, Mr. Nopockets,  
let’s see you do that.”

## WHY I WALK CAREFULLY

Fairies are timid, fairies are shy.  
You never know when there's one around  
unless you are wonderfully quick of eye  
when something scurries across the ground  
and into the hedge without a sound.

Fairies are sneaky, fairies are sly,  
the cleverest, trickiest little things,  
and sometimes on the Fourth of July  
they slip into town without their wings  
and play in the parks on the slides and swings.

There in the swings they wait and tease  
and beg for a push to send them high,  
and once they are started, they work their knees  
and point their toes at the summer sky  
and never let on that they can fly.

But every so often you or I  
will push too hard, and then—kerplop!—  
a fairy falls. And that is why  
I walk with care, and always stop  
where fairies have been known to drop.

## **ROCKS, DIRT AND MUD**

Nothing is as good as rocks,  
red rocks and gray rocks,  
fancy rocks, everyday rocks,  
round rocks and flat rocks,  
great big heavy fat rocks.  
Put the big ones in a box,  
put the small ones in your socks.  
When you find a rock it  
feels good in your pocket.  
Rub it with your thumb  
and make a genie come.  
Or take it home instead  
and keep it under your bed.  
Don't stop with one—  
rocks are lots of fun!  
NOTHING is as good as rocks!

Except

Dirt! Nothing is better than dirt.  
Dirt on your pants,  
dirt on your shirt.  
You don't get hurt  
playing in dirt.  
You can make roads  
and maybe find toads.  
You will get dirty  
about 12:30.  
When Mom calls you in  
and looks at your shirt  
and says, "Where have you BEEN?"  
you grin a big grin:  
"I've been in the dirt."  
NOTHING is better than dirt.

Wait!

I forgot mud!  
Mud is best of all.  
Oh, it's fun to crawl  
in mud!  
Mud is fun to squeeze.  
It feels good on our knees.  
It feels good on your toes.  
Here's how to make mud:  
Find some dirt  
and turn on the hose.  
Make a big puddle.  
Like magic mud'll  
be there in a minute.  
Go get a rock  
and throw it in it—  
Splash! Thud!  
The BEST THING in the world  
Is mud.

**RICK LICKS GRAMP'S STAMPS**  
**(In the Style of Dr. Seuss)**

Hello, Gramp.  
This is Rick.  
I need a stamp.  
I need it quick.

Sorry, Rick.  
My stamps won't stick.  
My stamps got damp.  
My stamps are stuck.  
You're out of luck.

Oh, Gramp!  
What will I do?  
I need a stamp  
that has some glue.  
I need to mail a letter.

I need to send a letter  
to the Band-Aid<sup>®</sup> getter.  
I've skinned my knees.  
Please, Gramp, please!  
I need a stamp,  
a stamp with glue.  
Won't you give me  
one or two?

But Gramp goes out  
and takes the keys.  
What will I do  
about my knees?  
I need a stamp,  
somebody, please!

Oh, wait! I know  
where I can look.  
Gramp has stamps  
in that big book.  
I've seen them there.  
He says they're rare.  
Get a chair.  
Climb up there.  
I guess I'll tear  
out this old pair.  
One's upside down  
but I don't care.  
I need a stamp  
that isn't damp.

These stamps won't stick.  
They need a lick.  
Oh, ick!  
This lick-and-stick  
makes me sick.  
Oh, phoo!  
What awful glue!

Here's what I'll do:  
Pour some water.  
There, that's better.  
Now they're wetter.

Oh-oh! Too much water!  
Use the blotter.  
Oh. Yuk!  
What rotten luck!  
These stamps are stuck.

Get the drier!  
Dry them out!  
Spread them out,  
All about!  
Where? Where?  
Here! There!  
Quick, quick,  
before they stick!

Oh, no!  
Oh, please!  
I have to sneeze!  
There they go!  
What a breeze!

Stamps, stamps  
everywhere!  
Here! There!  
On the chair!  
In my hair!  
It isn't fair!

Quick, quick!  
Pick, pick!  
Gramp is coming  
with a stick!

What to do? What to do?  
I will hide them,  
wouldn't you?  
In the salad, in the stew.  
Leave them there  
a day or two.

Well, at least  
my knees feel better.  
Maybe I won't need a letter.

(Written for a contest sponsored by the Milwaukee Philatelic  
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## THE PRINCESS OF SILLY

The Princess of Silly  
lives in Silly Castle  
on Silly Hill  
in Silly Town.

She wears her crown  
upside down.

She wears her gown  
outside in.

She sticks stickers on her chin.

She giggles a lot.  
She wiggles a lot.

The Princess of Silly  
eats pickles in bed.

She sleeps in the sand pile,  
standing on her head.

“These pickles are dilly,”  
says the Princess of Silly.

When she goes to town  
to see Silly Willy  
she falls up  
and stands down.

“This town is hilly,”  
says the Princess of Silly.

Here comes Silly Willy  
with lights on his ears  
so he can see what he hears.

Silly Willy wears gloves on his feet  
and tickles the street.

“I like tickles,”  
says Silly Willy.

“I like pickles,”  
says the Princess of Silly.

The Princess of Silly  
goes back home.  
She sits on the dog  
and walks her throne.

“It’s time for bed,”  
says the King of Silly.  
He is her father.

“What a bother!”  
says the Princess of Silly.

But she goes out  
and stands on her head  
upside down  
in her silly sand pile  
on Silly Hill  
in Silly Town  
and dreams silly dreams  
in her silly gown.

## WHEN GRAMPS WENT DOWN THE SLIDE

When Gramps went down the slide  
I laughed until I cried.  
His eyes got bit and wide.  
His necktie came untied  
and flew up like a kite  
till it was out of sight.  
My cousin yelled “ALL RIGHT!”  
It was an awesome ride  
when Gramps went down the slide.

I nearly split my side  
when Gramps went down the slide.  
His mouth dropped open wide  
and when he tried to shout  
his teeth went flying out.  
His hat fell off somewhere.  
The wind whooshed through his hair.  
His feet were in the air.

When Gramps went down the slide  
my Mom was terrified.  
My Dad yelled “there he goes!”  
His specs fell off his nose  
and when he hit the ground  
he landed upside down.  
I tried and tried and TRIED  
to keep my laugh inside  
but it was just too wide  
for both my hands to hide.

Gramps’ beard was full of sand.  
His teeth were in his hand.  
His specs were in the dirt.  
My Mom screamed “are you hurt?”  
and when my sister Jane  
who doesn’t have a brain  
said “want to go again?”

Gramps looked up at the slide  
and guess what he replied:  
“YOU BETCHA! What a ride!”

I giggled for a week  
when Jane fell in the creek,  
and when my Great Aunt Nellie  
found spiders in the jelly  
I thought it was a scream.  
When Mom used shaving cream  
instead of Tasty Whip  
I really thought I'd flip.  
But none of that was half  
as big a belly laugh  
as when my Grandpa tried  
to take a kiddy ride.

I mean, I like to DIED  
when Gramps went down the slide!

### **THREE LITTLE MICE**

Three little mice went out for a hike.  
Their names were Cyril and Cornbread and Mike.  
They stopped in a meadow beneath a large tree  
and spread out their apples and pickles and tea,  
and when they found they had no crackers to munch,  
Cyril and Mike had Cornbread for lunch.

## **EVENING**

Like little freckles on the night,  
The darkened windows on the hill  
Pop out their tiny specks of light,  
And light by light the town is still.

## **RAIN**

The clouds are knotted in a frown  
and fast their angry tears fall down,

but every little teardrop makes  
a dimple in the streams and lakes

which widens, in a little while,  
into a little silver smile.

## **PROTOCOL**

Yes, Ma'am is for ladies,  
Yes, Sir is for men,  
and Surely is for Aunt Elaine,  
so tall and prim and thin,  
and Uh-huh is for Cousin Jack  
who chucks me on the chin.  
But Aye, Aye, Sir is real-man talk  
for soldiers made of tin  
and pirates with enormous knives  
and sheathes to put them in.

## THE SNOB

The little girl who lives upstairs  
just *doesn't speak* to grizzly bears.  
She says her grandma'd really rather  
with grizzly bears she wouldn't bother.

Well:—yesterday this grizzly bear  
dropped in from—oh, I don't know where—  
and went upstairs and tried to tell her  
she'd locked her grandma in the cellar.

She wouldn't listen—stopped her ears!—  
and grandma may be there for years.  
She little knows and little cares:  
She *doesn't speak* to grizzly bears.

## WORDS WITH L'S

My favorite words are words with L's:  
cool, small words like rills and dells,  
merry words like lilting bells  
and woodland words like lochs and fells.

Watery words like shell and shallow,  
mystic words like grail and hallow,  
friendly words like fellow and jolly,  
and rich moist phrases like lob-lolly.

Brilliant words like glow and yellow,  
warm soft words like lax and mellow,  
beckoning words like hill and hollow  
and will-o'-the-wisp and will-you-follow.

Uneasy words like lurk and brittle,  
lovable words like laugh and little,  
syllables that roll along  
like lullaby and billabong,  
and words that slip and slither by  
like lollipop and lorelei.

## MONSTERS TO BEWARE OF

I'm the Grinch<sup>®</sup>  
and I pinch.  
I pinch and poke,  
jab and joke,  
until you flinch.  
Then inch by inch  
I crawl and creep  
and while you sleep  
I pinch!

I'm the Grouch  
and I ouch.  
You can't escape  
by changing shape.  
Don't try to crouch  
behind the couch.  
I'll creep and crawl  
and find you all.  
I'm the Grouch  
and I ouch!

Poison ivy,  
skritch, skritch!  
I'm the Itch Witch.  
Poison ivy, poison oak,  
you won't like my little joke.  
I'll rub your clothes  
with poison leaves,  
first the pockets,  
then the sleeves.  
I'll fix an itchy mix and then  
roll and rub it on your skin,  
on your fingers, on your toes,  
on your elbows, on your nose.

I'm the Grump  
and I thump.  
I'll raise a bump  
and make you jump.  
Don't try to dodge  
or hide in the garage.  
I'm the Grump  
and I thump!

Turn out the light!  
Stay out of sight!  
I'm the Midnight Sprite  
And I bite.  
I see in the dark  
and I leave my mark.  
You can yell and yelp.,  
you can call for help,  
but that's all right.  
I'm the Midnight Sprite  
and I bite.

You will howl and scream and scratch  
when my little itch-bugs hatch.  
You'll feel bumpy, you'll feel hivey  
when I give you poison ivy.  
Scratch, scratch,  
skritch, skritch,  
I'm the Itch Witch.