

The Princes of Serendip

Seven baby sparrows

Seven baby sparrows were sitting in their nest and they said to one another
Let's fly, let's fly, let's fly
And they opened up their wings and they all began to flap and they all began to flutter
And they flew
Oh there's power in our wings and there's laughter in our songs and there's nothing in our bellies
Let's fly, let's fly, let's fly
So they flapped 'em and they sang 'em and they filled 'em up with bugs and they filled 'em up with berries
And they flew
All summer long we'll eat and sing and play
We'll be in love with what's around us
And when we feel the cool dry breath of fall we'll turn to the south
We'll put our shadows behind us
Ten thousand miles — we'll fly ten thousand miles
A little fluff of feathers and an ounce of flesh
A belly full of berries and an empty nest
We'll fly ten thousand miles
And we don't know where we're going, but we know the way
The stars by night, the sun by day
We'll fly ten thousand miles
And if you know how to listen, if you know where to look
With the spring's warm breath you'll know we're back
When we've flown ten thousand miles
And seven baby sparrows will be sitting in their nest and they'll say to one another
Let's fly, let's fly, let's fly
And they'll open up their wings and they'll all begin to flap and they'll all begin to flutter

The double rainbow

This is a door to go through
Oh where it leads I cannot say
And if you like I'll show you
Though you already know the way
You ought to try the one time
You only ever get the one
This is a door made of sunshine
Your journey has begun
But when you try to travel through
You find the doorway moves with you
Why is it so surprising?
You're never where you're going to
Somewhere on your horizon
There's always something calling you
The double rainbow fills the air
The door within the empty door
It's there and yet it isn't there
Welcome the double rainbow
Glowing bright and fine as lace
And though the one's a wonder
It's twice as good refracted twice
One at a time you fade now
Like a half-remembered face
And now you're gone . . .

42 years on

between the village and the stony beach there lived an old sailor
he'd spent his life on the boundless seas and had many times crossed the equator
he'd once had a lover he'd once had a friend these facts will be relevant later
he awoke in his chair to hear voices that mocked the waves' endless rushing
he raised the wick and stumbled outside unsettled by the commotion
a fresh snow had fallen and covered the earth with a soft white cushion
oh the ocean she flows like a river but deeper she crests in a flood and she's breathing
I sway as I stand on the too solid ground and I'd rather be climbing the rigging
but the sight of the snow on the moonlit trees is one worth seeing
he set down his lantern and danced in the snow kicking up sprays of moonbows
there was no-one to see him the village was sleeping there were no lights in the windows
then a cloud veiled the moon who diffused her light on a world without colours or shadows
but where are the voices who called me here and what are the hills that I'm seeing?
I don't know their rhythm I don't share their swell so how can I tell what they're saying?
when she told me my travelling days are gone was the white gull lying?
he searched in vain for a landmark or clue that could guide him home to his cottage
he climbed a tree and sat in a hole in his mind were the sounds of his village
the ferry's whistle the wheels the bells of the priests at their useless vigil
so he lived in a nest for a night in the morning he was damp and speckled with eggshell
he followed a thread of smoke to a farm once rich now lonely and wretched
the aged wife who looked like his mother gave him bread advice and directions
on the road the first persons he met were much younger suffice it to say they were babies
who flowed in crowds through the thickets and singly through the wooden chimneys and chambers
they told him their news they were growing by learning to want what was out of their reaches
in a town of a piece with his childhood they stood and delivered their speech to the grownups
the cake's missing there's only icing another of everyone's foulups
for that matter why should we help you to help us to cultivate hides like brazilnuts?
humble and mindful how soft were those voices he crossed the glass forest
whose beginning is marked with a sign enjoining all who pass to be silent
after a day and a half he caught them floating down from the branches
what if someone were being you at home while you're out here dreaming
we're your lover and we're your friend and we're always and always leaving
and you're always arriving and finding us gone one dead and one still living
he met with a snake who kissed with care one by one his fingers
they sprouted feathers and up he flew his whistles and swoops were infectious
he soon left behind intercepting clusters of children and swallows and insects
he alighted on one of those patches of ice that arise from the freezing of puddles
and as the ice melted he tramped through the puddles the marshes the mud and the middens
until he was back in the pocket of green that sequestered the beach from the village
he opened his door to himself one sleepy one limping and speckled and spattered
he could tell that he'd not been away from the stuffed owl and the humming kettle
he made him some tea and they sat down to talk as if nothing unusual had happened

Monkey on your shoulder

Though you might not see him now, there's a monkey on your shoulder
And he looks a bit like you, and he's happy as a pup
And the gift he brings to you is a fine imagination
And aren't you glad you have him? Say you'll never let him drop

Chorus

You know the one thing that's sure is to treat ourselves with kindness
And to treat each other well in the one world that we know
Now I can hear your voice — yes, you're telling me a story
And I love to hear your stories — tell me more before you go
Now the monkey on your shoulder has nothing more to live for
Than to look for some mischief or some story to make up
So he jumps inside your head, and he's pure imagination
And aren't you glad you have him? Say you'll never let him drop

Chorus

As you sleep, sure you dream — can you wake and still stay dreaming?
If you feed that monkey well, then you'll never need to stop
Though he isn't there at all — yes, it's your imagination
But aren't you glad you have one? Say you'll never dry it up

Chorus

Like an empty room

There are some things too sad to put in words
Like the sun's last goodbye to a sunny day
Like the woodpecker's cry across the world
As her lover's shot to earth by the laughing boy
Like the glimmer of hope in the scavenger's eye

Chorus

Oh where does love go?
Never ask a child to keep it warm
You were my lover
Now my heart resounds like an empty room
Like an empty room
This may seem too strange, but I'm missing you
Now I'm spending my days in another skin
If you don't find your way it doesn't matter now
This room has no door to let you in
And the warmth of the sun — well that's already gone

Chorus

Though I'm too shaken up for promises
There's a catch in my breath just for you
There's a sweet-smelling breeze — yes, it's summer-time
All the fruits of the day are on view
If I lie down on the earth, will it feed me now?

Chorus

Every moment is now

Struggling through the long dark hours of night
Wondering if the lowest point was past
Something made me stand as still as a star
Soft against my face I felt a breath
And found myself beside a sleeping child
Calm and pure and warm and safe as the Earth
Was it in a dream I thought that he
Turned to me and said these words
Every moment is there for your heart
And every moment is now
Take good care of all I bring to you
Let me know the things I mean to you
Nothing else is sure and nothing's as fine
You can help me shine my light for you I can see you through your night
Every moment is there for your heart
And every moment is now
We're riding on a storm cloud galaxy
Caught up in a deep blue hurricane
A hundred billion stars are lost in the fog
Don't wait around for fragile promises
Or faded tales of hope to come
Every moment is there for your heart
And every moment is now

Heaven

Once upon a time, something soft and warm
Kept me in heaven — I was part of harmony
Full of food and sleep, learning how to play
I was enchanted by the life I meant to live
That was all there was till you came along
You're smarter than I am, but I'm better than you
You've stolen my freedom and you've kept me from view
This cage is constricting for what I want to do
I want to go running and be able to move
I'm groggy with poison that you put in my food
But doesn't it strike you it'll end up in you?
You're planning to eat me, though I'd never eat you
So go on and kill me — I've got nothing to lose
Once upon a time, something soft and warm
Kept me in heaven — I was part of harmony
Every now and then I know in a dream
Somewhere out yonder there's a field of grass for me
If I really try, I can taste the breeze
I'm missing the twilight — it was cozy before
The walls of my prison, why they're rubbing me raw
I've started complaining, though it's breaking the law
My neighbours are sullen and they feel just as sore
The people who visit never open the door
They feed us with offal and then feed us some more
I wish they would sweep up all the shit off the floor
There's never a moment to think what it's all for
What in all the world did we use to share
Will you remember how I used to look at you?
Once upon a time, something soft and warm
Kept me in heaven — I was part of harmony

The bargain

I was going to the dance tonight, but never quite did make it,
for I found myself a bargain and I really had to take it.

I met a young man on the road who said, "Please understand me
if I say I like your suit of clothes — they look so fine and dandy!"

"Yes, you're right," says I, "they're the apple of my eye,
and they're new this year, and they cost me rather dear.

For I like to wear my fancy clothes when I dance."

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle doh

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle day

He said, "I'm off to market, where I hope to sell my pig, and
he's just gone out to take a stroll — he'll be back any second.

For it's past his usual supper-time, which means that he'll come presently,
for it's a damp and chilly night — he'll find it most unpleasant!"

"Take my coat," says I, with a tear in my eye,

for I hate to be told of someone feeling cold —

"and when your pig gets home it'll keep him nice and warm!"

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle doh

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle day

He thanked me very kindly, and he took my coat so gladly

I could tell that when his pig was cold it grieved him very badly.

He said, "I have the finest pig you ever laid your eyes on,
but if you once let go of him he's over the horizon."

"Here you are," says I, "won't you take my tie

and when your pig gets back you can tie it round his neck.

And with a leash so fine, why, he's sure to toe the line!"

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle doh

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle day

He took my tie and said, "Oh my, you're really very clever,

and I must be off to market soon, but I'm in your debt forever.

I hope that he'll be fit to sell — he's such a messy eater.

He looks a fright this time of night — how I wish that he was neater!"

"Take my shirt," I says — "when he tries to make a mess

then your fine and precious pig can use it as a bib,

and he'll be the cleanest pig you've ever seen!"

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle doh

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle day

He said, "There's something worries me — when I get my pig to market

he'll have nothing but a coat on and the people will remark it.

We'll be walking down the High Street and he'll only be half-dressed — did

you ever hear of such a thing? He's bound to get arrested!"

"Oh, won't you take my pants? Sure, they're much too tight to dance,

I'd have split them anyway — I'll be full of pride to say

that thanks to me he kept his modesty!"

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle doh

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle day

Just then he started, struck his brow, and cried out in a frenzy:

"I've just recalled it's Saturday night and the market's not till Wednesday!

Why don't you buy my pig right now? You'll save me so much trouble

that if you were to wait till market day I'd have to charge you double!"

"It's a deal," says I, "and I'll pay you by and by,

but my money for the dance is in the pocket of my pants."

"That's all right," says he, "you can pay me presently,

and if you wait right here then your pig will soon appear.

So long!" and off he goes, and in his arms he has my clothes.

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle doh

With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle day
Oh, I would have liked to dance tonight, but never quite did make it,
for I found myself a bargain and I really had to take it.
And though I'm cold without my clothes this damp and chilly evening,
just as soon as that fine pig gets back, it's then that I'll be leaving!
With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle doh
With my fiddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle diddle-de-idle day

October Butterfly

October butterfly playing with the breeze
Brush me with your golden wings to let me know you're real
Stardust you left behind filters through my mind
I want to be part of the joy you feel
October butterfly take me for a ride
I won't weigh you down I'm lighter than your friend the breeze
I'll be your passenger high above the world
We'll scatter the stardust from your golden wings
And the whole wide world will be watching watching as we fly
And the whole wide world will be catching all your precious gold

Tigerleaf and Lizard's Claw

Under the beating sun
Sweat mists up my eyes
Although there's work to be done
I must sit down
The air's too heavy
Let me breathe
Over the dusty ground
Through the thirsty corn
Walking without a sound
I knew you well
Before and before
Look at me
Oh mother, can you see it's me?
Oh mother, can you see it's me?
Oh mother, can you see it's me?
Oh mother
I'm the face behind the silent windowpane
I've come home — you'll never let me go again
I'm the hope against all hope that's due to you
No more nights of dread now I've come back to you
I'm your newborn child — my name is Tigerleaf
All our dreams will be entwined as memories
Long before the day that I'll be snatched away from you
I can see the lizard's claw that's never far from you
Lizard's Claw, carry me
High over the skin of Earth
Hunched around our smallest moments
Lizard's Claw
Tigerleaf, your steps are fainter
My memory is greyer
Tigerleaf — rescue me
We each hold in our hand Lizard's Claw
We each hold in our hand Lizard's Claw
We each hold in our hand Lizard's Claw
Down among your empty streets and appetites
There I've lingered all these endless troubled nights

I'm the lizard's claw you're holding in your hand
I'm the ocean reaching through the troubled land
I'm the darkness arching round the skin of Earth
All is different since you've loved me till it hurts
Lizard's Claw, carry me
High over the skin of Earth
Hunched around our smallest moments
Lizard's Claw
Tigerleaf, your steps are fainter
My memory is greyer
Tigerleaf, sleeping child
We each hold in our hand Lizard's Claw
We each hold in our hand Lizard's Claw
We each hold in our hand Lizard's Claw
Oh mother, can you see it's me?
Oh mother, can you see it's me?
Oh mother, can you see it's me?
Oh mother, can you see it's me?
Over the dusty ground
Through the thirsty corn
Walking without a sound
I knew you well
Before and before

The dinosaur's advice

This is the dinosaur's advice — it comes from the heart
Once I was all you claim to be
You had an ancestor who slipped from my grasp
And now you rule instead of me
Chorus
This is the dinosaur's advice
Like it or not you don't live all alone
And since you've nowhere else to go
Might as well take good care of your home
I left you my pawprints in the mud — the earth we all share
To give you my long term point of view
Not one of your holy men had told you I was there
Now look at all the things that I've taught you
Chorus
Of all the lords of all the earth, you won't be the last
Though you're the smartest of us all
You think that makes you so much better than the rest
So you invented your soul
Chorus
Once in a million years I awake and look at the Earth
Sometimes I laugh, sometimes I care
Once there was ice and now there's fire — it's moving too fast
And next time I look, you won't be there
Chorus

City of visitors

My family's hidden away from you who live well
We live in a city of visitors perched on a hill
It's here we pitched camp many years ago — here we are still
Not much of a life to live on
But at least we survive
And one thing I've learned — our story's a commonplace one

Chorus

I'm twenty years a visitor
For the children, being visitors is all they've known
Our every breath is out of place
The children never had a place that felt like home
A house made of iron and cardboard is all that we own
The house I grew up in had neat whitewashed walls made of stone
With three or four chickens, a goat, and an acre of corn
We made few demands on the world
Just tended our land

And one thing we knew — our poor piece of land was our own
The day came when all that was ours wasn't ours any more
That dawn as I opened my eyes the first things that I saw
Were machine guns and sneers, and the splinters of the front door
You're in the wrong place, a voice said
And you're the wrong race
And one thing I knew — we had to get out or be dead

Chorus

We saved what we could from the flames and we took to the road
Then came the long trail, on foot, by bus, and by boat
Odd jobs here and there got us something to eat — not a lot
Too tired to move on, we stayed here
Still struggle along
And one thing I know — there's no road that leads back home

Chorus

Chickadee

I'm the angel of your morning
When you're rising I'll be calling
Chickadee, chickadee, chickadeedeede
Are you open to the daylight?
When you hear me you'll be all right
Chickadee, chickadee, chickadeedeede
All the power at my command
Feeds a fire in your mind
Every flower has its day
So will you and so will I
Chickadee, chickadee, chickadeedeede
When you hear me you'll be all right
Are you open to the daylight?
Chickadee, chickadee, chickadeedeede
When you're rising I'll be calling
I'm the angel of your morning
Chickadee, chickadee, chickadeedeede

Hobbyhorse

I rode my red hobbyhorse down to your door
I wanted to show you how well I could ride
You stood with that smile of yours — never a word
I took it upon myself — I don't know why —
To reach out one finger and touch your smile
And that was the only time I can recall
Only one touch — soft on my mind
Stood by your door, smiling your smile for me
I rode so well — proud of myself
Light of your smile flooding my face
Here I am still, riding my hobbyhorse to you
I rode my red hobbyhorse down to your door
I wanted to show you how well I could ride
But no-one was there — I don't know why
Only one touch — soft on my mind
Stood by your door, smiling your smile for me
I rode so well — proud of myself
Light of your smile flooding my face
Here I am still, riding my hobbyhorse to you

Late in the afternoon

Late in the afternoon
Look at the sky
Isn't it wonderful?
Oh my!
If you want to see
What's important to me
How the world ought to be
But so rarely is
All that you have to do
Look at the sky
Motion is everywhere
Whirlwind of light
Brings us with every breath
Closer to night
It's a dark mystery
What the future will be
So we might as well see
To the here and now
While you still have the time
Look at the sky

Appleberries

Oh, underneath the appleberries eating our bananas
Appleberries, appleberries, that's what I said
Don't you know that royalty should never wear pajamas
All that you can hope to do is push me out of bed
Well, once upon a time there was a mother and a father
Running to the riverbank to wrestle in the mud
Three was me and four was you and five was Cousin Arthur
Four years old and going strong, and three to one the odds
Oh, underneath the appleberries eating our bananas
Appleberries, appleberries, that's what I said
Don't you know that royalty should never wear pajamas
All that you can hope to do is push me out of bed
Well, one was good and two were good and three I couldn't handle
For the five occasions when you made my face go red
Four if you and three of me — it's too much of a scandal
One night after dark I'll let you look inside my head
Oh, underneath the appleberries eating our bananas
Appleberries, appleberries, that's what I said

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The Princes of Serendip