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PICTURE BOOK MANUSCRIPTS

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OAKEY DOKEY

A cheerful and obliging oak tree pleases everybody over the course of its difficult, thousand-year lifespan. Will hope ever spring anew?

Oakey Dokey

‘Ooh, an acorn,’ said a child. ‘I shall plant you into my garden. You shall be pleasant for shade and give food for our swine and cattle.’

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the acorn, and slid into the child’s pocket.

[wordless spread: country scene with a medieval farm dwelling, warm sunshine and a breeze blowing over the hay. Small child planting acorn]

‘Ahem. This is my bit of dirt,’ said a stone.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the sprout, and grew around.

‘Hey, I’m running from hunters here,’ snapped a fox.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the seedling, and leant aside.

‘Out of my way,’ creaked a carriage.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the sapling, and bowed down.

‘We’ve got to step on your toes,’ grunted a road.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the roots, and dug deeper.

‘I’m hu-u-ungry,’ bleated a billy goat.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the tree, and lowered a branch.

‘Behold, I approach,’ rustled Winter.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the veteran, and let his leaves fall.

‘This will do for my apex,’ muttered a cottage.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the great oak, and gave up a limb.

‘I need that big curve for my prow,’ groaned a ship.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the old man of the forest, and dropped a great sweeping bough.

‘All the rest for trusses and studs,’ barked a block of flats.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the ancient one, and bent his weary neck.

‘RIP IT OUT AND ONTO THE FIRE,’ shouted a highway.

‘Oakey dokey,’ said the stump, and let go, at last.

[wordless spread: busy cityscape, businesswoman

walking to bus stop, child trailing behind]

‘Ooh, an acorn,’ said a child. ‘I love oak trees, they’re my favourite! Look at your cute little hat! I’m gonna take you to school and show my teacher and plant you in the garden. There are loads of kids who love climbing trees and swinging from branches, and I know just the spot for you. And there’s sunshine and I’ll water you every day,

well every school day anyway, and you'll be so happy! If that's okay with you, I mean. Is that okay?'

'Oakey dokey,' said the acorn, and slid into the child's pocket.

PRANKENSTEIN

*A crazy scientist gets even crazier discussing the pranks he's
going to pull on the townsfolk with his monster's detachable body parts.*

What will the villagers make of the two friends' hijinks?

Prankenstein

Ha ha!

At long last, the monster lives!

You're alive!

Oh, we'll have such fun, you and me

Ha ha!

We'll go to the hatter and walk right in like nothing's the matter

And just at closing time

You'll leave your head behind

Wearing a fancy hat in the window display

And the next day

Everyone will say

'AAAAAA!'

Ha ha!

And then

Tee-hee!

We'll go to the glove shop and pretend that everything's fine and dandy

And just at closing time
You'll leave your hand behind
Waving the lovely gloves in the window display
And everyone will say
'EEEEEE!'
Tee-hee!

And then
Haw-haw!
We'll go to the theatre and act as if everything's normal
And when the lights go down
You'll leave your behind behind
Filling the theatre with a monstrous stink
Wink wink
And everyone will say
'PHWOAR!'
Haw-haw!

And then
Then!
Tee-hee!
We'll visit the King, we'll stroll right in like we own the place
And when no one's looking,
I'll squeeze you into a suit of armour, and you'll lurch around the courtyard
And when the guards try to stop you

You'll roll your head into the crowd!

Ha ha!

You'll throw your arms at the army!

Tee-hee!

And your legs will clank off in different directions

Ha ha, tee-hee, haw-haw!

Stop laughing — tee-hee!

Look at you!

You're in stitches!

Your sides have split!

And you've laughed your head off!

Not to worry — pull yourself together, my friend

And I'll think of some *more* tricks

Or my name isn't *Doctor Prankenstein*

MWAHAHAHAHAAA!

THE EAGLE & THE BEAR

*None of the forest animals can stop the eagle and the bear from their
constant fighting. What chance does a tiny mouse have?*

The Eagle & the Bear

The eagle and the bear were always fighting tooth and claw,
and the creatures of the forest couldn't take it any more.

Owl gathered them together at his tree of parliament
to discuss a plan of peace, and this is how it went:

'To whom among us can we look, to what, to who, to whom?'

And everybody shuffled as they looked around the room.

The wolf and fox barked some excuse and softly slunk away.

The stag just snuffled and the snake had not a word to say.

But just when owl was ready to give up and clear his house,
a tiny little paw shot up and it belonged to mouse.

She scurried up the podium and sat upon the leather,

she cleared her tiny throat and then she rubbed her paws together.

'Sometimes I get upset,' she squeaked. 'Sometimes I'm really mad.

One awful time I even stuck my tongue out at my dad!

But when I'm on the rampage and my mother, she agrees,

I'm normally just hungry, and feel better with some cheese.'

A murmur went around the room for what felt like a minute;

a spark of hope had filled the tree and everybody in it.

‘A feast!’ cried fox, who’d slunk back in, with wolf not far behind.
‘A feast!’ cried stag. ‘Yes, it’s been far too long since we have dined!
Why, let us hold the grandest feast the world has ever seen!
With sausages and sauerkraut and butter toast and beans!’
The snake, she hissed, ‘And carrot juice and pappadums and stew!’
‘And birthday cake,’ said owl, ‘because I’m turning fifty-two!’
Then over the kerfuffle, mouse called out, ‘Oh can we please,
‘if it isn’t too much trouble, have a little bit of cheese?’
Wolf howled with laughter, ‘Gorgonzola, Wensleydale and Brie!’
We’ll have so much lovely cheese you’ll end up quite as big as me!’
And everyone had so much fun in setting up the feast;
the pouring, stirring, mixing, making, measuring the yeast;
the cooking, baking, decorating — making it look regal —
that no one sent an invitation to the bear and eagle.

But the warm delicious smells and sounds of fun went through the air,
and they reached the field of battle of the eagle and the bear.
And when at last those enemies appeared at owl’s front door,
they were met with cheers and hoots and squeaks and one almighty roar!
They had hors d’oeuvres, they had champagne, they had a bit of salad.
Their anger went away and then the eagle sang a ballad:
‘I’m sorry bear,’ she sang, ‘I shouldn’t snap when I’ve not eaten,
(although I think you stopped the fight ’cause you were being beaten),
I love you really, even if you’re grumpy as can be!’
Then bear crooned back to eagle, ‘Oh my darling — forgive ME!

I could crush you in a second, but I want to hold you near.’

Then he leant right down to mouse and whispered in her tiny ear,

‘Oh I hope she doesn’t leave me — I quite *like* the way she teases.

(and when I’m mad I’ll visit you and snack upon these cheeses!)’

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

A softly-spoken young girl reflects on the peace and quiet of her grandparents' idyllic farm, when the busy sounds of the city intrude in a great cacophony.

Will she ever hear silence again?

The Sound of Silence

I heard the sound of silence as it whispered through the night.

It made a sort of sighing sound — it sounded very light.

It sounded like a murmur or the sound of nothing much.

Of snowflakes falling onto snow. Or of your gentle touch.

Like nights back on the farm when all the stars lit up the sky.

Like Grandpa dozing in the sun. A breeze across the rye.

It sounded just like this ...

like the dropping of a pin ...

Then suddenly the busy sounds of life came rushing in.
The shrieking of the vacuum and the clamour of the toys.
The TV turned up way too loud to drown the other noise.
The upstairs neighbours having their own private World War Three.
Outside a siren ... jackhammers ...

I make a cup of tea.

I slither back into my bed and think that it's a pity
We traded what we had — for this — when we moved to the city.
I know Mum's job pays better, and she's happy (so she claims),
And my brothers love the diggers and the scaffolds and the cranes.
And I *said* I didn't want to come or even want to try it,
But no one ever hears me 'cos they say that I'm too quiet.

Next time I hear the sound of silence whisper through the night,
(If it ever does again, that is — and gosh I hope it might.)
Next time I hear a silent moment softly passing through,
I'll close my eyes and think

just think

of Grandpa

and of you.