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Opening extract from

The Penguin in Lost Property

Written by

Jan Dean and Roger Stevens

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The Penguin in Lost Property

No one will come to claim
the penguin in lost property
because she owns herself.
She is her own penguin
and no one's property.
But she is lost
and can't remember
how she got here.

Things were fine
before the incident
on the ice floe.
She has vague memories:
a killer whale circling,
waves rising, ice rocking, then . . . ?
She rubs the bump on her head
with her flipper.
It's no good, it's all a blank.

She looks around:
a rubber chicken, a blue backpack.
'Right,' she says, 'this won't do,
I've a life to live
and nothing's happening here.'
She waddles to the platform
and boards the Eurostar Express.

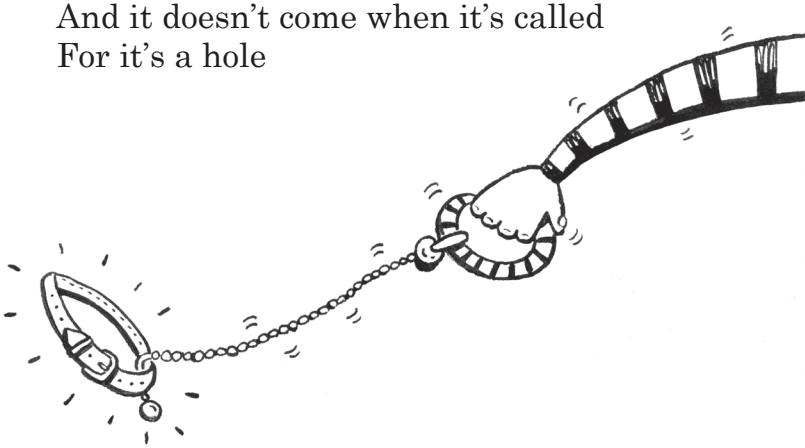
Meanwhile, in lost property
there's a row
about looking after *lost* lost property
properly.
And on aisle four,
a small,
significant
and penguin-scented
space.

Jan Dean



Hole

There is a hole
In the space around me
You can't see it
But it goes everywhere with me
It's Border-collie shaped
And it doesn't come when it's called
For it's a hole



It's empty
And it's not called Judy

Roger Stevens

The Perk of Being Mrs Wickins' Cat

There's milk and strokes
and somewhere warm
to sleep and scratch and think,
but the perk of being
Mrs Wickins' cat
is the spider in the sink

The spider's looking scary
and kicking up a stink
So Mrs Wickins calls me. Catch
the spider in the sink

Yes, I'm great at catching spiders,
my claw is lightning fast
I eat the legs one at a time
and save the head for last

There's milk and strokes
and somewhere warm
to sleep and scratch and think,
but the perk of being
Mrs Wickins' cat
is the spider in the sink

Roger Stevens

I Am a Dog

I am a dog
A barking dog
A leaping, growling, barking dog
A wake-in-the-dark, growl-at-an-owl dog
A scary, hairy, growling, yowling, you-can't-get-past-me dog

I am a dog
A loving dog
A loyal, licking, loving dog
A squeeze-me-and-cuddle-me, hug-me-and-snuggle-me dog

I am a dog
An outdoor sort of dog
A racing-you, chasing-you, outdoor sort of dog
A stick-chasing, stick-chewing, ball-catching, fun-loving
Rolling-in-dead-hedgehog-and-fox-poo sort of dog

And in case you're not sure
I'm a best-friend, waggy-tail sort of dog
I'm your sort of dog
In short, I'm your dog

Roger Stevens

I Am a Cat

I am a cat
A mewing cat
A howling, yowling, mad-moon cat
A wake-in-the-dark, prowl-on-the-wall cat
A green-eyed, black-furred witch's cat

I am a cat
A comfort cat
A fat-tailed, curve-curled, purring cat
A sit-on-your-lap cat, I'll allow
A long slow stroke along my back

I am a cat
A one-eye-on-the-fishpond cat
A cocked-ear-at-the-birdsong cat
A practise-hunting-with-a-wool-ball cat
A pat-paw-playing, mouse-dream cat
A leaving-a-mole-on-the-mat sort of cat

And in case you're not sure
I'm a don't-care cat
I'll let you look after me, but
I'm my sort of cat
Not an owned sort of cat
Nothing like that

Jan Dean

Oh, What a Din!

Oh, what a din
The *Felis domesticus* and the violin
The *Bos taurus* jumped over the Earth's satellite
The small *Canis lupus familiaris* expressed mirth to see such jollity
And the eating vessel eloped with the stirring implement

Roger Stevens

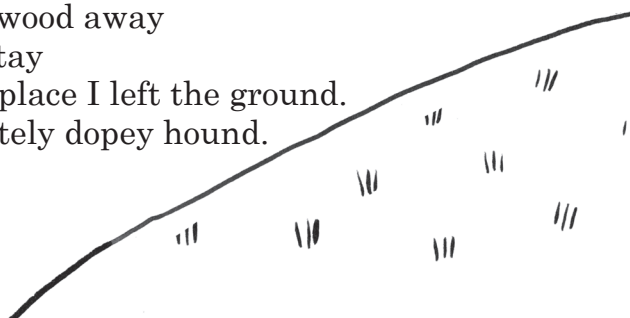


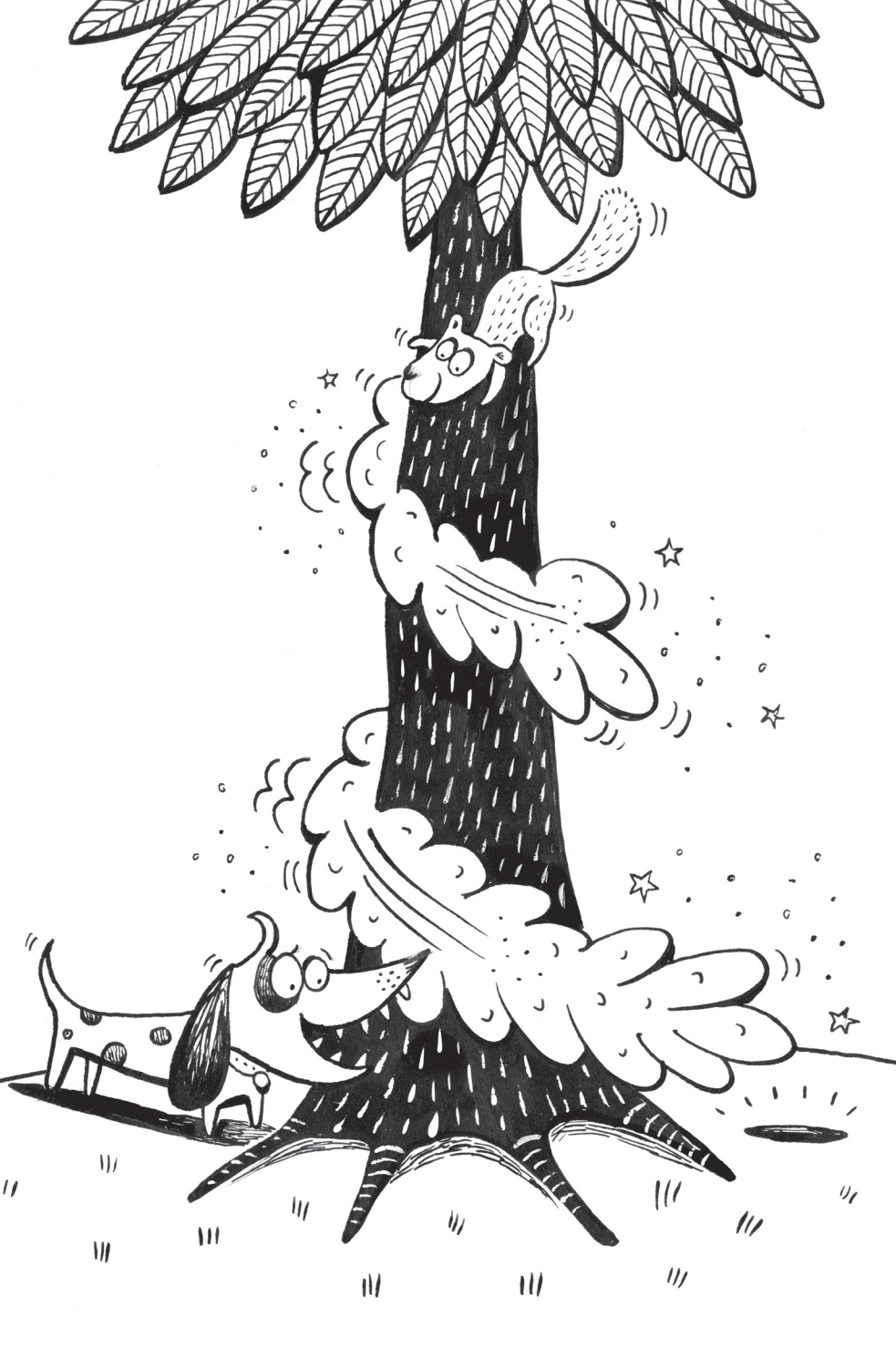
The Squirrel Speaks

See that dog over there –
white dog, black patch over one eye?
He's my dog
and every day we exercise.
We meet by this tree, him and me,
then it's
dart and scurry
swerve
carve a curve through
the long silk grass
pass that pup by a whisker
frisk then rocket on up
into the leafy layer
to leap from tree to tree.
I am a wriggle of fur
smoky squiggle of fur
swoosh of tail
fat as a grey cloud
fallen from the sky
I fly from branch
to bouncing branch
and every bone in me sings
who needs wings?

He doesn't ever see me make my move.
I can be half a wood away
and he'll still stay
barking at the place I left the ground.
What a completely dopey hound.

Jan Dean





Jenny

The blind dog on the pebble beach
snuffles the grey-green savoury air
cocks her head
to the salt splash of the sea.

The boy in the red jacket
chooses a stone
marks it with a cross
throws it in a high arc
black against the sky
hears it fall. Clatter.

The blind dog by the sea
runs, ungainly,
all lop-sided listening
left ear leaning
to that last limestone chatter.

The blind dog on the beach
finds the place –
hoovers her soft muzzle over the heap
sniffs and sifts the scents
searches
finds the one she knows.

Jan Dean

A New West Side Story

On Seaford beach
The crows are gathering
On the rising shingle
The gulls swoop across the sea
The wind plays the score uptempo
Through the rack and ruin
of the high-tide mark

For now the crows only watch
Hunched in their black overcoats
As the gulls swoop low,
Grey-suited, wheeling and wheedling
Screaming and swearing
And the crows and gulls tussle and tease
But one day
Things will get out of hand
Complicated by one gull's love
For a crow
Crowmeo
And guillemot

Roger Stevens

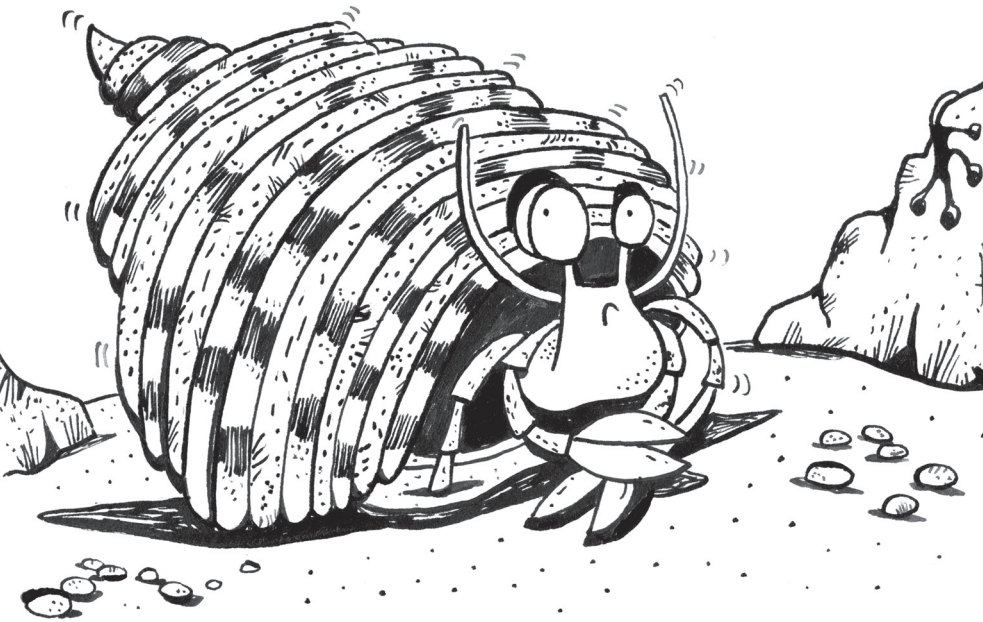
The Fox on the Beach

The fox ignored us
his muzzle to the salt wind
blowing in from the sea.
Then he upped
and stepped like a prancing horse
paws high and dancey
over sharp mussel shells
till a crab sidled across his path
and his nose dropped
as he eye-to-eyed it.
Then, oh, his jaw snapped
as he snatched that snack
of a shellfish
and hi-diddly high-tailed it
back to his brackeny den.

Jan Dean



Don't



You cannot grab a hermit crab
a waste of time to try –
you know full well he has a shell
he'll hide inside – that's why.

Jan Dean