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opening extract from

The Usborne Book of Poems for Young Children

chosen by

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Introduction

Choosing a collection of poems like this is a tricky job. Imagine throwing a party to which you can invite anyone at all, but only having room for a hundred guests. Like all the best parties, I wanted this book to be fun and surprising, so there's a good mix of old poems and new ones, long poems and short ones, and a whole variety of styles. There's also a huge range of subjects, from ketchup to kiwis.

I hope you enjoy reading the poems as much as I enjoyed choosing them.

Philip Hawthorn

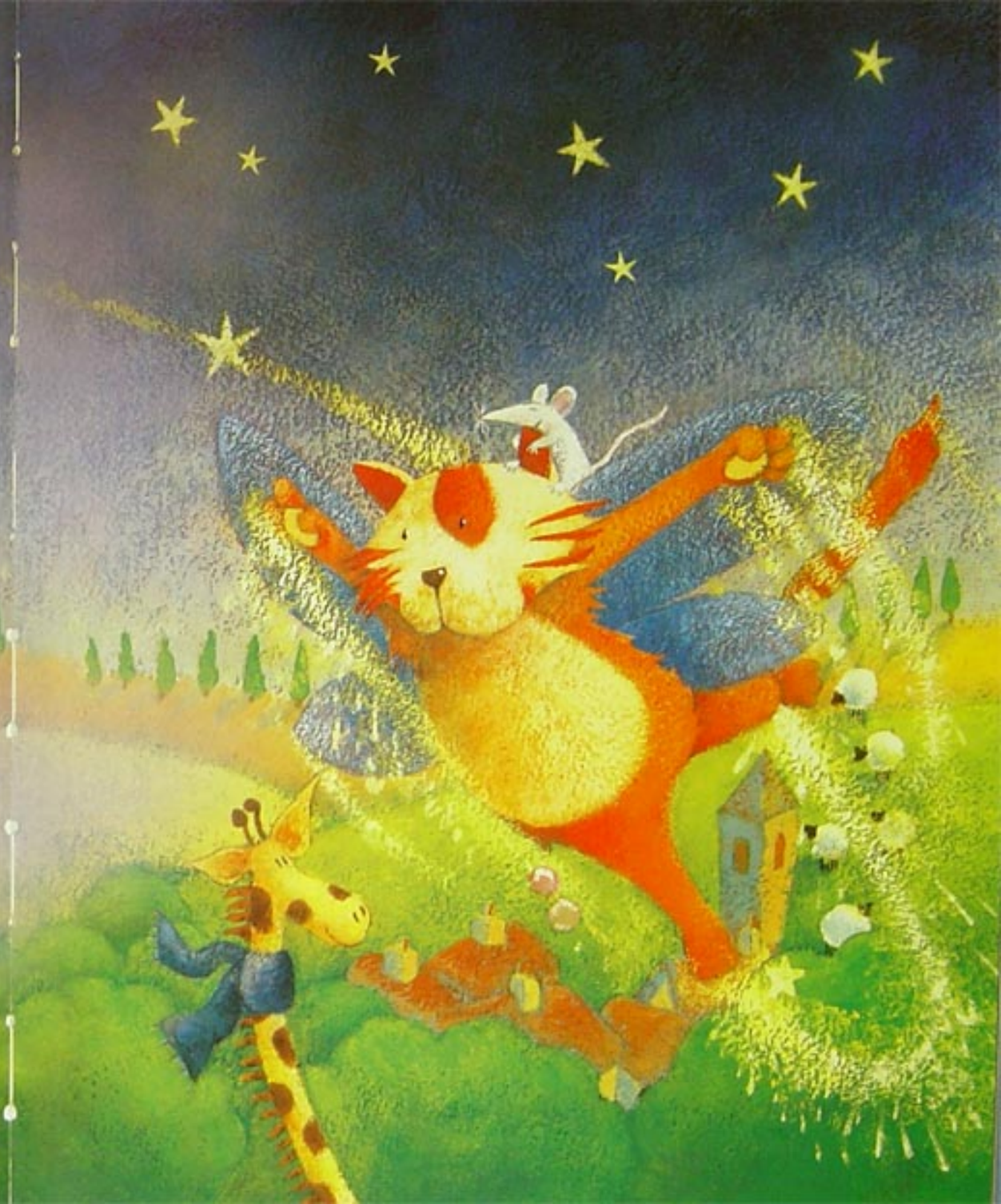
Magic Cat

My mum whilst walking through the door
Spilt some magic on the floor.
Blobs of this
and splots of that
but most of it upon the cat.

Our cat turned magic, straight away
and in the garden went to play
where it grew two massive wings
and flew around in fancy rings.
"Oh look!" cried Mother, pointing high,
"I didn't know our cat could fly."
Then with a dash of Tibby's tail
she turned my mum into a snail!

So now she lives beneath a stone
and dusts around a different home.
And I'm an ant
and Dad's a mouse
And Tibby's living in our house.

Peter Dixon



Rain

There are holes in the sky
Where the rain gets in,
But they're ever so small,
That's why rain is thin.

Spike Milligan

Weather

Whether the weather be fine
Or whether the weather be not,
Whether the weather be cold
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather
Whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not.

Anon

Pennies from Heaven

I put 10p in my Piggy Bank
To save for a rainy day.
It rained the *very next morning!*
Three Cheers, Hip Hip Hooray!

Spike Milligan

The Snowman

Once there was a snowman
Stood outside the door,
Thought he'd like to come inside
And run around the floor;
Thought he'd like to warm himself
By the firelight red;
Thought he'd like to clamber up
On that big white bed.
So he called the North Wind, "Help me now I pray.
I'm completely frozen, standing here all day."
So the North Wind came along and blew him in the door –
And now there's nothing left of him
But a puddle on the floor.

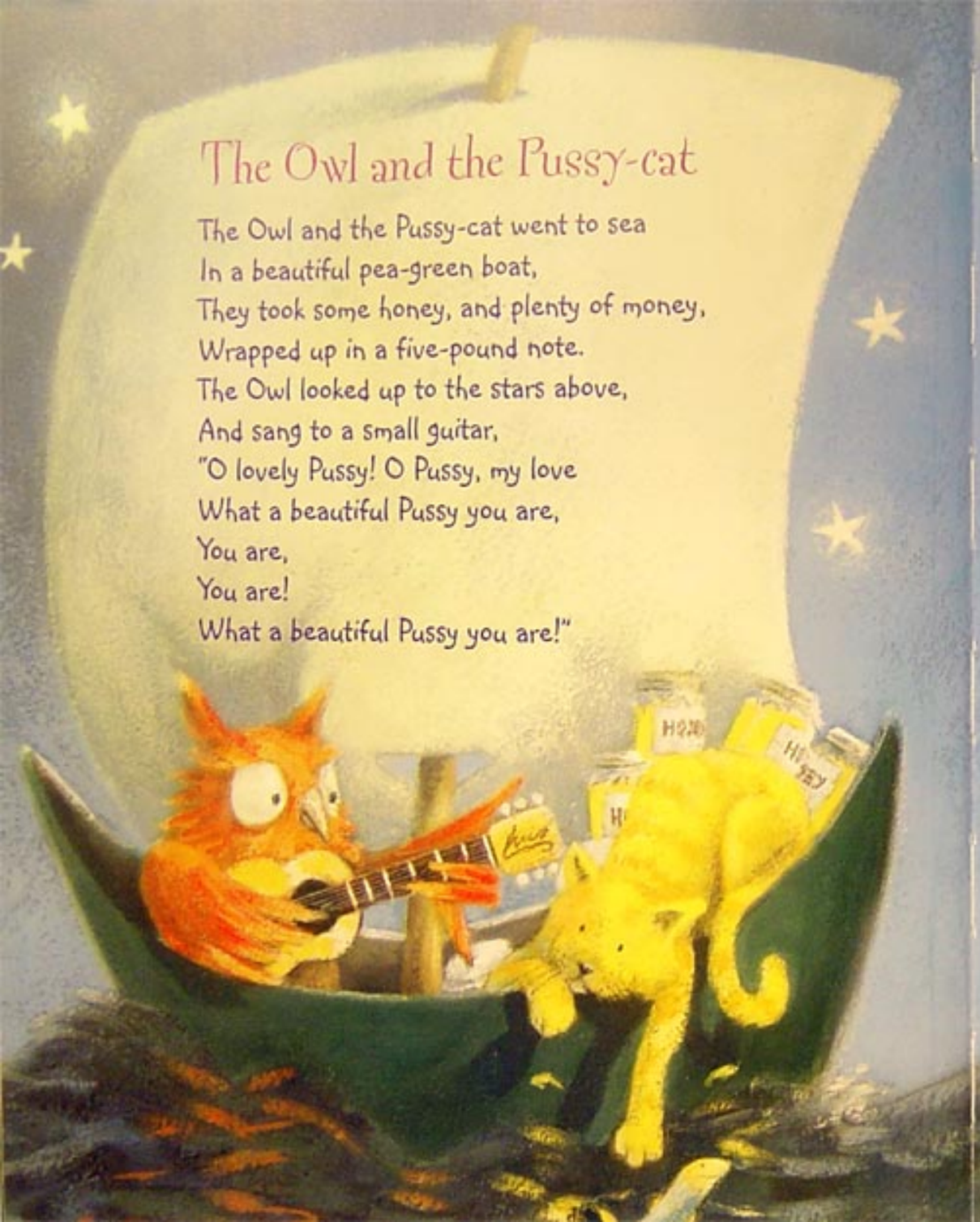
Anon

Haiku

Snowman in a field
listening to the raindrops
wishing him farewell

Roger McGough





The Owl and the Pussy-cat

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! Too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows,
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

Edward Lear



The Joy of Socks

Nice warm socks,
Nice warm socks –
We should celebrate them.
Ask a toe!
Toes all know
It's hard to overrate them.

Toes say, "Please
Don't let us freeze
Till we're numb and white.
Summer's gone
Put them on!
Wear them day and night!"

Nice warm socks,
Nice warm socks –
Who would dare to mock them?
Take good care
Of every pair
And never, ever knock them.

Wendy Cope

The Sorrow of Socks

Some socks are loners –
They can't live in pairs.
On washdays they've shown us
They want to be loners.
They puzzle their owners,
They hide in dark lairs.
Some socks are loners
They won't live in pairs.

Wendy Cope

Friends

Funky monkey in the tree
I like it when you talk to me
What I really like the best
Is when you bang upon my chest.

Slippery snake I am your mate
When all others hesitate
I'll be there right by your side
I am known to slip and slide.

Hop along, croak croak, how ya doing frog?
No one understands our deep dialogue
People may laugh when they see us on the road
We must stick together
Monkey, snake, me, you and toad.

Benjamin Zephaniah