

Reading sample

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Then

onto the scene

stepped the painter,

with pots and brushes galore

to paint all in sight and more.

He looked around at this odd sight

and then he asked:

“What colour of night

do you believe is right?”

They all cried out:

“Why there isn’t a soul

but knows that night is black as coal

if it’s worthy of its name at all!”

The painter started to fix this lack

by taking a pot that was full of black

and setting to work with a dash.

He painted the nights long and dark,

and crumbly clay

in freshly ploughed fields and parks,

and waters shedding their icy loads

and shiny wet springtime roads.

Next he painted bugs and beetles

water fleas

and flying creatures,

and a lazy boy with grubby hands

and a multitude of shameful plans.

He painted other things besides –

eyes, buttons, berries and birds

and lots of folk from far-off parts

and a number of things only in part

just for a bit of fun.

But the world

is far from black alone,

its array of colours

is well known

if you take the time to look.

The painter knew just what to do,

he took a pot that was full of blue,

and carried on with his work.

Blue, blue, what did he paint?

what did the painter paint blue?

Why, the sky above, as you well know

and ancient and far-off

forests below,

and seas, lakes, rivers and springs

and streams and puddles –

their splashy siblings.

starlings eggs and starlit dreams,
the early cuckoo so rarely seen,
glades of moss-embedded bluebells
schools of herring in the swell
where anglers trawl the deep.

But blue-toned alone
the world is not.
Its colours are a many and varied lot,
if you take
the time to look.

So the painter added to the scene
as he turned his hand to green.

He rustled it up
in a couple of pots,
conjuring up
the colour he sought

and lo and behold a brand new hue
for this and that and the other too,
and on he went with his work.

What were the things the painter thought
ought to be painted green?

He painted fresh young leaves on trees
and fields in the early morning breeze
and bristly haloes on budding hedgerows,
and the tender green of summer meadows

and peas and beans and cabbages
and leafy forest lavishness.

But he also painted
poisonous minds
and tell-tale tongues, so very unkind,
and nasty things aplenty
like rusty copper pennies
and many another menace.

He painted shoots sprouting from grain
and moss green mittens in the making,
and caterpillars with moths inside
and boys
from whom strong men will stride
through a mix of learning and labour.

But green alone
the world is not.
Its colours are a many and varied lot,
oh, how many and varied they are,
if you take
the time to look.

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