

Grandma's Verses for Growing up

Elaine Jakobsson



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Grandma's Verses For Growing Up

To Asher and Haakan

Grandma's Verses For Growing Up

Elaine Jakobsson

TuiTwo New Zealand



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Other Published Poetry Collections
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This Cording, This Artery. BlackBerry Press, 1984.
Wind Quick. Hazard Press, 1994.
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Dried Figs 2nd Edition. TuiTwo publishing, available on Amazon
A Habit of Writing. The Cuba Press, 2020. thecubapress.co.nz

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Foreword

My grandsons were born in a country over the ocean and spent much of their early life travelling the world with their parents. Although they visited me and I visited them, we were often a long way apart. I began to write them poems and draw accompanying sketches as a way to share stories when we were apart and make memories of games and adventures we shared together when we visited.

In later years the boys helped in writing some of the poems, offered words and phrasing and made suggestions for ideas and themes for future verses.

Each year on their birthdays the *years* poems would be collected into a book, from the ages of 2 until 6. These have been compiled in chronological order for this collection. More poems were written after this, but not put together as a *year book*. These have been included after the 6 year poems.

Reading, hearing and helping write poems inspired others in the family to make poetic contributions too. My grandsons, their parents and two great, great nephews have made contributions to the collection, so the tradition of poetry as family communication continues.

Of course my grandsons are young men now. A paediatrician and an oncologist and they do use words and verse very well.

Elaine Jakobsson
Christchurch, NZ
February 2021

Haakan's and Asher's Two-Year Old
Poems 24th October 1992

Poetry is

Poetry is walking, walking,
poetry is talking, talking;
what you do and what you see
all is part of poetry.

Words that search
your inmost mind,
words of feeling
words that are kind,

words in colours
painting the page,
words in rhythm
dancing the stage;

stories, jokes and sadnesses,
poetry is all of these.

Grandma's Place

Grandma's place is open wide
to the paddocks and the sky.
Far beyond the fencelines show
the hills, and mountains topped by snow.

Grandma likes to stretch her eyes
over the trees, up to the skies,
watch the hawk wheel against the cloud,
watch the magpies chase it shrieking loud.

And then look down to the nearer slopes
where cows feed tamely, a hare lopes
into thistles, stills. On the distant road
the milk tanker rumbles with its load.

Grandma likes the open space
for her eyes to wander, a freedom place,
although close about her feet
she always has hundreds of flowers to greet.

Rabbit

Rabbit came and sat,
rabbit large and fat;
sat and sat in late day sun
on grandma's flowers,
thought it fun to squat
and SQUASH them flat!



Keith fell

Chip-chop loppity dee
Keith fell out of the willow tree.



Swish swash flippity-flop
Keith fell off the chimney pot.



Rain, rain

If you visit this year
bring your gumboots
and wet weather gear.

Don't leave behind
your mackintoshes –
the country's brimming
with splishes and splashes.
It's awash and a-woe
afloat and a-slop.
Will the rain never
STOP !



Sowing seed

Today we made a new path
under the trees,
sowed grass seed there,
tidied the weeds,
patted the tree trunks
and looked around
for the best and safest
branch to be found.

Have it in mind
that the next occasion
Haakan and Asher
come on vacation,
we'll have a swing there
and a ladder rope
at the end of the new path
down the slope.



Birthday cakes

I saw your chocolate birthday cakes
with 'Smarties' on the top.
Mama sent a photograph
of you blowing candles out.

I liked your little back packs
and I know you've got new shoes;
I wish I could have partied, too,
with my two year old BIG boys.



Baking

Grandma baked some bread today
and Keith made biscuits, too.
The rain was wetting everywhere,
there was nothing else to do.

Warm and crusty wholemeal bread
made the kitchen smell so good;
crispy biscuits crunchy and cream
crunched as best biscuits should.

So the rain didn't matter at all today.
Grandma and Keith had their kitchen play.

Making a list

I am making a list
of all the things
I would like to do
if I lived near you.

Button your hats
tie up your shoes
walk around the block
to the letter box.

Put on your gumboots
zip up your jackets,
hang out the clothes
while you hand me the pegs.

Sail your boats
in the bath at night.
Cuddle you tight
in the big black chair
reading stories in
picture books there.

Pack your sandwiches

wave goodbye
when you go to crèche
to play in the morning.

Push the carts
make mud pies
heap the leaves
in Daddy's garden.

Build block towers
zoom the aeroplanes,
bang the spoons
in the pudding basins.

Bake you biscuits
cut your apples,
the list is long.
I can't see the end
of all the things
I could share with you
if I lived close by.
But I don't, do I?

So I'll just have to think
of those things in my head,
and send you both
lots of kisses instead.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

More Train

Two little boys go
to ride on a steam train,
clickety-clack
on the railway track.

The station master rings the bell
cries “Hurry along. All aboard!”
the guard closes the doors
and climbs in the guard’s van.
Steam hisses out, the wheels turn.

Smoke from the engine stack
puffs out in balls.
Whooo-oo blows the whistle
the driver pulls.

Two little boys
swaying inside,
bump-a-ride
bump-a-ride.

The engine’s pulling – carriages rocking – pistons
are pushing – wheels are whirling.

Clickety-clack
on the railway track,
“More train!” cry the boys,
“can’t stop yet.”

They ride and they ride
and the houses rush by

and the trees slip past,
the express is a flyer.

Then the train slows
pulls into a station,
the doors are opened
time to climb down.

Two little boys look a bit sad
that the ride's at an end.
But they promise the train
as they wave it goodbye,
"Soon we'll come to see you again".

Asher's and Haakan's Three-Year Old
Poems 31st August 1993

The last time I came to see you

Last time I came
to stay with you
the street was strange
the house was new.
The walks we took
were different too.

There's a small brick wall
where you walk on top;
dry leaves to scuffle
yellow ones to pick up,
and a red letter box
half way round the block.

Then stones to sit on
along a garden edge,
the marker post with numbers
behind a bush on the verge,
and a high brick wall
with a low sitting ledge.

But best of all
the wrecked brown car
that sits on its stumps
- it won't go far -
on the lawn of the house
with its gate swung ajar.

And then to Rachel's gate
where the white roses bloom,
where we wait a little while
hoping Rachel will come out soon.
But I think she's having tea today
so we'd better race off home.
We're very hungry, too,
now the walk is done.

Making jam

Red crabapple
and japonica jelly,
boil the syrup
and fill the belly.
Kiwi fruit jam spread
thick on the bread;
Grandma's pantry
is stocked and ready.

The night

In the middle of the night
the wind got up,
rattled bedroom windows,
whirled round the chimney pot;

shook the red leaves down
into drifts on the ground,
scattered the ashes
from the bonfire all around.

"The bonfire!" shouted Keith
as he lept out of bed,
slid into his slippers,
grabbed the torch by his head.

"The wind'll whip the embers up,
blow them all about.
Must run out the water hose
and douse the fire out."

The wind slyly chuckled
as it rumbled round the house.
"That's a new game to play," it said,
"brightens up the hours
when I've no one else to talk to
except the trees and the owls."

Keith didn't feel so friendly,
"I've lost my sleep," he said.
"Bother that old tricky wind."
And he crawled, cold, back into bed.

Puddles

There's a particular puddle
that's good to splash in
on a rainy-day walk
down Grandma's road.
Jump in with our gumboots
stamp and slosh in,
spatter our raincoats
our red and blue raincoats
like ducks in a pond
in the hole in the road.



Cow paddocks

Stump over clumps
in the paddocks
in gumboots,
looking for cows
on the winter land.

Clump over bumps
in the paddocks
of grass humps
where the cows
have grazed and gone.

Bumble and tumble
in the paddocks
of hoof hollows
plodding the tracks
where the cows have trod.

Where are the cows
in the paddocks
of wet grass?
Away for the winter,
gone, gone.

Morning ride

The red and yellow box cart
goes rolling down the road;
Keith pulls the rope in front
and Asher and Haakan ride.

They're off to see the cows
in the paddock down the slope,
black and white and brown cows
chomping all the grass up.

Cows amble to the wire fence
where the boys are peering through.
"Moo," the cows rumble,
"hello and moo to you."

Climb back into the cart,
tack slowly up the hill,
stop to pick the pine cones up
and home in time for milk.



Bird pudding

When the rhus tree is bare
the leaves all fallen,
when winter is coldest
and the winds are raw,
that is the time
to make bird pudding,
an extra treat
in the birds' winter fare.

Ball up the lard
with raisins and seed,
hang it in a plastic net
bright red
on the rhus tree bare,
with an apple beside it
tied on a string;
and watch for the tiny birds
to fly in.

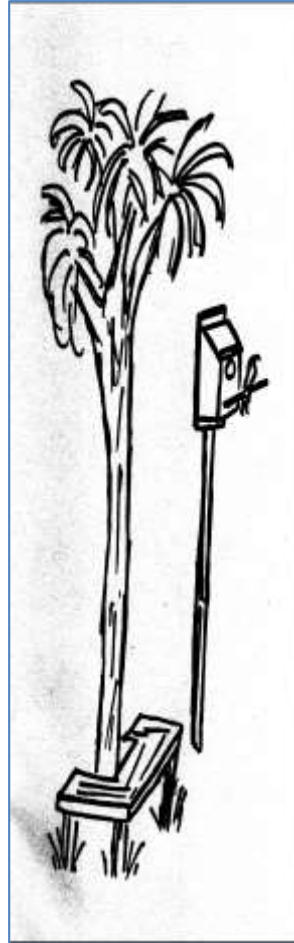
Whiteyes and sparrows
and chaffinches
fluttering and feasting there.

The nest

Through the hole
in the box
at the top
of the pole
with straw
in their beaks
the starlings go.

They're padding
the box nest
to make sure
it is warm
ready for eggs
when the springtime
comes.

At the top
of the pole
on the edge
of the lawn
the starlings
are busy
preparing their home.



Frosty

The winter frost came crackling
onto the roof in the night;
the winter frost crept quietly
across the grass and made it white.

The morning came still and crisp
and cold and sparkling new;
we'd better put our warm hats on
and woolly mittens, too.

The steps are very slippery
with ice and frost on top,
the fence posts are all wearing
a glittery snow white cap.

It's fun to stamp in road ruts
to break the sheets of ice;
it's fun to leave your footprints
on the clean and white washed grass.

But the sun is growing warmer
and the frost is melting fast;
all is green and brown again,
the magic time has passed.

Birthday wishes

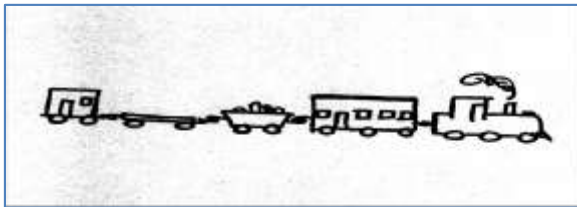
I'm wishing
I'm wishing
a birthday wish
for you.

I'm dreaming
I'm dreaming
of a present
that will do.

I can't be there
to give it,
I can't be there
to share it,

but I'm thinking
what I'm dreaming,
I'm hoping
what I'm wishing
will be right
for you two.

A train.



Haakan's and Asher's Four Year Old
Poems 31st August 1994

Cooking

Today we are cooking,
stirring a pot
full of mucky dirt
from the garden plot.

It could be a sauce
for spaghetti or rice,
or a chocolate topping
for strawberry ice.

It could be thick soup
or a mutton ragout,
or just a plain old
everyday jellyfish stew.

We've made some flat cakes
out of wet sand and grass;
they're in the sun baking
on the hot paved path.

If you want a bread pudding
we can do that, too,
with gravel sultanas
and a chopped leaf or two.

The backyard bakehouse
is flat out today;
we are much too busy
to come and play.



Monsters

Monsters with horns
monsters with thorns
monsters all prickly and
stickly and scaly and
green gristly taily.

Don't turn your back,
don't shut your eyes;
monsters can hide
in a box or a crack.

Monsters all purply
monsters all slurply
monsters all spotty and
frothy and growly and
claw-footed prowly.

Don't turn your back,
don't shut your eyes;
monsters can hide
in a box or a crack.

Make the monsters
a home with a bed,
TV and shower
and keep them well fed;
and perhaps they'll grow friendly
and less frightening horrendly
and Asher and Haakan
can play safely instead.

Monster friends

Asher's monsters
have no teeth;
they never bite
or tear things.

Asher's monsters
have no claws
to grip or scratch
or shred things.

Asher's monsters
have soft voices
floppy ears
and smiling eyes,

friendly feet
and pudding tummies,
and always want
to share things.

Haakan sits his monster
in the branches
of the apple tree;
wags his finger sternly
and orders him quite firmly
to be as good as good can be.

Paws tucked in,
head tucked down,
tail around his perch,
monster sits there motionless
becomes a ball of fur.

When Haakan creeps back later
to take another peep,
monster looks for all the world
like possum fast asleep.

Messages

What is it today
that speeds your mind away,
that occupies your hands and eyes
that makes you run -
what you call fun
or busy-ness
or play?

Grandma longs to know
what it is you do.
Grandma sits in autumn sun
remembering things that we have done
together times before -
the train rides and the play park
and cooking with real dough.

Mother says you've made some books
to give me when I come.
I wonder how the pictures look
and what the stories are?
Even though we're far apart
we know that words are tiny hooks
that hold us very near.

Jerseys

A kingfisher flashed,
dashed past the window
streamlined, sleek and blue.

The jersey I'm knitting
and slipping and purling
for Haakan is kingfisher blue.

In the winter and spring
he'll be bright in all weathers,
and as warm as in feathers
blue as the kingfisher's wing.

Raspberry red
is the colour I've chosen
for Asher to wear -
warm as a bear
all chunky and huggy.
He'll never be frozen
whatever the weather,
frosty or fuggy
or rainy or blowy,
icy or snowy.

He'll be snug as a bear
in his winter lair
in his jersey of raspberry red.

The night storm

The night was dark
and the wind was high,
the thunder rumbled
through the sky.

The lightning flashed
in sheets of white
across the clouds
across the heights,
across the rivers
across the plain,
wherever Grandma drove
it flashed again.

A wild and squally
rain was falling
and through the trees
the wind was wailing.

Brave in her car
Grandma drove alone,
speeding as fast
as she could to get home,
hoping to dodge
the lightning flashes,
trying to miss
the puddles and splashes.

And at last inside
saved from the storm
she curled up in bed
sheltered and warm.

She didn't mind
one little bit
the wind's roaring
the thunder's booming
the lightning playing
the rainbursts falling.

Let the storm rage
however it would,
in her strong-built house
she slept as snugly
as anyone could.



Mid winter

The morning world
has a white sugar dusting
like a winter cake
all icing and frosting.

Ice on the swimming pool,
(polar bear stuff),
ice on the bird baths
thick and tough,
ice on the brick paths
ice on the pond,
ice covers everywhere -
more than enough.

Snow on the low hills,
snow on the high,
winter has been dumped in
from the Antarctic sky.

Moonplace

You can whizz there by rocket
or a spaceship with speed,
or beam yourself up
by a thought in your head,
and come to the round moon
in the sky, pale by day
but bright in the night
when the clouds move away.

And there are your friends -
Okorr, the moonly child,
with star-shining eyes
and hair silvery wild,
(although for a change
she'll sometimes appear
like a little, shiny,
brown plastic bear);

and Walter, too,
with a kitten and puppy
and a long-haired rabbit
with a warm, white tummy.

They love to share
their moonly toys,
all the things wished for
by two small boys;
moonly buses

and moonly planes,
a Porsche you can drive
over moonly ways.

Anything that you think
you would like
Okorr and Walter
conjure it up in a trice.

Sometimes the toys look
like sticks or bottles,
or boxes or leaves
or paper or pottles,
but Walter and Okorr
and you know very well
they're the best moonly toys
that anyone sells.

So whenever you are wondering
what to do with the day
zoom to your moon house,
ask Okorr and Walter to play.

Lost socks

Socks
lost!
One yellow
one blue.
Never two
of a colour,
where do they go?

We've looked
everywhere -
in drawers
under chairs,
in the toy box,
the sandpit,
can't find
where they hide.

At last
a blue sock
tucked in
the spin dryer,
but never
a yellow one
nigh
or nigher.

Next time
we shop
for socks,
any colour,
we'll buy
THREE of a pair
and save
all this bother.



Asher's and Haakan's Five Year Old
Poems 31st August 1995

Photographs

Hello boys! is what I say
to your photographs every morning.

Did you see that the moon was full
and round last night?
You smile back sunlight.

Boys, what about visiting the moon
today. Join Okorr and Walter
for a picnic and play.

We can take a basket
of glitter biscuits,
Milky Way shakes, mooncakes,
constellation cookies
a Pleiads pot of plums.

O, hurry boys, space suits on,
press the button, count to ten.
We're going into orbit.

Tractor Song

The tractor is driving
around and around,
backwards and forwards
along and up;
it's making a parking lot
for all the trucks
that move our furniture
to other towns.

Morning Tea Song

Crunchy crunchy cucumber
chew it all up
with strong white teeth
chomp, chomp, chomp.

Crunchy crunchy water biscuit
chew it all up
with strong white teeth
chomp, chomp, chomp.

Crunchy crunchy apple slice
chew it all up
with strong white teeth
chomp, chomp, chomp.

Drink a glass of orange juice,
brush the crumbs away
put the dishes on the bench
and back to play.

Yellow Bus

Two boys, two bears
wait for a yellow bus.
Then up the steps
without any fuss.

Sit still
on the seat,
the bears
held tight
as the bus swings
through the streets
and stops
at the lights.
Two bears, two boys,
that's us, that's us
riding to playschool
on the yellow bus.

Wind through
the suburbs
draw up
at the gate.
Thank you,
driver,
we won't be late

for the picnic for bears
at playschool today,
where our friends are waiting
with their bears to play.



Swinging

Cruising on the swing
in the playground in the park
is a dreamy sort of thing to do,
like riding in a glider plane
idling up and down between
the high sky and the ground.

In the cockpit of the swing
in the playground in the park
it's a humming sort of thing to do
to coast and dip and lift,
as if you're in a glider
gently flying on a drift.



Pepparkakshus

The gingerbread house
is white with frosting
on the chimney, the door,
on the windows the snow clinging.

It is spicy and brown
with a gingerbread woman
outside with a pig
and a rabbit in her garden.

We cut out the biscuits—
the animals and the stars,
the leaves and the moons,
the teddy bears and the hearts.

Then grandma baked them
crisp and crunchy
and put up the house
all magical, munchy.

Our friends are coming
to see it today.
We'll share it together.
We'll eat it away.



Filling Up The Dump Truck

They are making a drive
to the house down the way,
filling up the dump truck
with dirt and clay.

The excavator tractor
scoops out the bank,
drops it in the dump truck
boom, bang, clank.

Oops!

The rain is falling down
the leaves are falling, too,
the snow is falling on the hills,
the darkening evening falls on you
as winter slips to ground
with falling temperatures due.

Grandma's Attic

Who knows what might come
into the corners of an attic,
or tuck behind the beams.
Take a torch to shine there
in the spaces for your dreams.

Imagine cutlass pirates
or tigers with cat-like eyes;
imagine lion kings, dinosaurs -
or warm and crusty pies
for midnight feasts
with padding beasts,
or brightly painted gnomes
that roam.

It might just be the place
to cradle dolls, or bears,
to pour out cups of tea.
It might be where you write
your poems for special friends
to see.

Or dress in silver, gold and velvet,
courtier or queen,
or in reflecting metal suiting
shoot to stars unseen.

An attic empty, dark and secret
is a place to dream.

The Moving Truck

Here we go in the moving truck,
sitting up front in the moving truck,
all the cartons piled high up
in the back of the removal truck.

The beds are packed
and the chairs are stacked,
the duvets are folded
and the mirrors are wrapped.

Here we go in the moving truck,
sitting up front in the moving truck,
all the cartons piled high up
in the back of the removal truck.

The cups are in boxes
with the knives and forks.
We've still to find room
for the hundreds of books.

Here we go in the moving truck,
shifting out with our things packed up,
we're going to a new place far away
off in the moving truck.

all-alone

Grandma-all-alone
takes a ribbon river
winds it round her love,
puts it in a box cloud
drifting high above,
asks the wind to carry it
half-way round the world;

sends her love to Sweden
on a river, in a cloud,
on a wind puff
by the moon path
to where Asher and Haakan live.

Haakan's and Asher's Six Year Old
Poems 31st August 1996

The telephone

How useful is the telephone
to ring tradesmen I am needing;
how essential is the telephone
to bring a taxi to me speeding.

In times of sickness, times of care,
the telephone is always there
to call a doctor, or police,
a neighbour or a kindly niece.

And if I've got a piece of news
with no one here to tell
I ring up any friend I choose
and hear their news as well.

But today, today in particular
the phone was most important.
I rang Uppsala just to say,
"Hello Asher, hello Haakan,

HAVE A HAPPY BIRTHDAY."

Bicycles

There's nothing like a bicycle
so superior to a tricycle.

For longer legs
and older heads
in every way it's more nicycle.



Winter in Sweden

I think of boys
who think of snow
and wait for winter
winds to blow up
fronts of chilly air;
who wait for frosts
and icicles,
for whiteness everywhere.

I think of boys
who have tobaggans,
hope for skates and skis;
can't wait to put
their snow suits on,
can't wait
for a big freeze;
can't wait to learn
to glide and slide
on snow and ice with ease.

And when at last
the snowfalls come
and the lakes
freeze thick and hard,
I'll just imagine all the fun
you'll have in winterland.



In December

In Sweden, in New Zealand,
in seasons very different
we're wrapping gifts, sending cards,
getting ready for Christmas.

You have frost and snow
and long, dark nights;
I have wind and sun
and endless hours of light.

You toboggan and hope to ski;
I go swimming in the sea.
You wear mittens and hats of wool;
I wear cotton to keep me cool.

When it comes to Christmas day
your dinner will be by candlelight;
we hope we'll have a barbecue
on the lawn in sunlight.

We're opposites this Christmas,
in time, in place, in weather.
We'll each enjoy our different day
though our thoughts will be together.

The enchanted forest

Walk into the winter trees
with a careful tread,
listen to the frost cracking
listen to the hare tracking
listen to the smallest sound
stare silently all around
and see the forest come alive
enchant with story book surprise.

There you'll see a castle
tower up above the snow,
where all the story people
sleep the winter through;
kings and horsemen, princesses,
dragons and princely toads,
wise old women, woodcutters,
a minstrel resting by the road.

And there's a glittering rocket
where the tale-teller wizard lives
with batman and star trekkers
and his computer programmed spells.

A humble little house
(is it made of gingerbread?)
is half-hidden in the boulders
guarded by shrub-like elves.
Gnomes don't sleep in winter;
they cloak themselves in snow
and humph about the forest
ever watchful, ponderous, slow.

One day when you're sliding
down a boulder slope
perhaps you'll feel the slightest stir
from the foot of a sleeping troll.
In the enchanted forest in winter time
whatever you imagine you're bound to find.

Puddles

And so
what was snow
now lies,
in puddles,

drops
sops
into trickles
and runnels;

seeps
and leaps,
flickers
and glitters,
gathers
and blathers,
rushes
and gushes
down rivers
and tunnels

to lakes
that make
the thought of spring
and then summer inviting,
and the idea of sailing
in boats exciting.

Visiting

The months put their skates on
linked their arms with time,
did arabesques past Christmas
a glide through New Year's line,
a leap and a one foot landing
and a spin as Easter came,
how deft and smooth the footwork
how swiftly the year has gone.

It's a whole year since I've seen you
(which sometimes seems so long)
while you both added hand spans
to your height mark on the wall.

But I've taken out a game sheet
and I'm plotting in my play,
my strategies and board moves
preparing for the great day,
the kick-off, the gun start,
the whistle blow, the dropping flag,
that moment when I board the plane
to cross the world,
to hug you all again.

The Steamer - King Carl Gustav

The steamer with the tall black funnel
goes down the River Fyris
following the route the Vikings took
to sail into the Baltic.

Asher and Haakan and Grandma
sit in the bow of the boat
on their way to Skokloster Castle
across the Malar Lake.

The reeds bow at the water's edge
as the steamer goes slowly past;
two white swans quietly circle
and ducks dip to the bottom grass.

Three bridges that cross the river
open a path for the steamer -
one tips up, one slides back in
and one swings to the bank like a lever.

The battleground meadow is purple and white
with flowers where the Swedes fought the Danes;
and we see the point where fires were lit
to warn of foes when they came.

On to the lake and past the marina
where Lars' red yacht is tied.
The crossing is smooth, the wind is light
and we're soon at the jetty side.

There's a castle to see
with its armoury
of hundreds of guns and small canon,
and a car museum
with an old fire engine
that children are invited to play on.

A picnic lunch under old apple trees
and stories read in the churchyard,
and then the steamer whistle blows -
it's time for the return trip homeward.

Song in the bushes

On a high note
sings the lady of the bushes
where the wind thrums back
long and low;
and the rushes by the rocks
at the lakeside make a chorus,
and the moon sails past
like an O - O - O!

Higher and higher
sings the lady in the bushes
lifting her arms to the air,
till she floats away
on her song by the water,
rises up on notes sweet and clear.

She sings to the moon
as she passes by,
the stars twinkle time
to her tune.
At night if you listen
silently and long,
you'll hear the lady of the bushes
sing her song.

Travels

We drove in the car.
We flew in the 'plane.
We sailed in the boat
and rode in the train.

We drove to the airport.
We flew down to Lisbon.
We sailed around Greece,
and in the train
we rode down to Stockholm
and back home again.



Asher's and Haakan's over seven poems

Dinner

They told grandma
they liked frogs legs
fried and crunchy;
they told her they
liked snails in shells
juicy and munchy.

They told her they
liked food from
Italy and Spain
and Sweden and France,
and what they got on aircraft
and what they got on trains.

Grandma sighed a little,
and Grandma creased her brow,
exotic foreign food
was NOT what she cooked now.

She reached for this
and reached for that
quickly chopped and browned,
and soon the kitchen
smelt of smells
that took away her frown.

When Grandma served
the hotpot
full of fresh New Zealand food
the boys soon
ate the lot up.
“Grandma, that was good.”

Tramping song

With packs on our backs
we're walking the track
high on the hillside winding.
We're walking the track
in our boots and our hats
one foot then the other pounding.

The trees reach up high
grow straight to the sky
give shade from the sun that's shining.
We have water and lunch
and our feet go crunch
on the track up the hillside climbing.

There are loud bird calls
and a tick that falls
but the snakes are still winter hiding.
We swing down the track
with our packs on our backs
singing in time to our striding.

(Grandma wrote the above for the boys after that
walk we did through the bush and Asher got a tick.)

Grandma's house

The pantry is a lift
to go up to the attic
or to all the floors
in an office block
or a large department store.

The pantry is a mine
deep in the ground
where we dig for coal
or diamonds,
where we burrow like a mole.

We have torches for the attic,
we have torches for the mines,
but the lift
has electric light
and off and on we switch.

Gnomes

There are nine gnomes
In the vegetable bed,
some with blue caps.
Some with red.

They are vegetable gnomes
in the garden plot
guarding the cabbages,
carrots and shallots.

In the forest of celery stalks
they are quietly biding
to rout snails and slugs
and caterpillars in hiding.

Although they never seem
to be moving about,
they do their work well
keeping predators out.

The vegetables grow green,
the vegetables grow fat
where nine bright gnomes
live in the vegetable plot.

Matey --- (Fred's dog)

Matey, the dog,
is brown and white,
big paws, big ears.

At night
he never barks,
and always hears
at once when you call.
He likes to jump
and run with the ball,
and he never chases
the cats at all.

Boxer dogs

I have two dogs of pedigree
Pitty-Pit and Tippy,
biddable and very clean
they keep me company.

They are cardboard robot dogs
given by Asher and Haakan,
box bodies filled with love
to warm me when I hold them.

Their heads are made of tissues,
they have paper tails and legs,
I walk them in the living room
on their yellow ribbon leads.
I am taking care of them
as they take care of me,
Pitty-Pit and Tippy
and grandma, we three.

Attics

Who knows what might come
into the corners of an attic,
or tuck behind the beams.
Take a torch to shine there
in the spaces for your dreams.

Imagine cutlass pirates
or tigers with cat-like eyes;
imagine lion kings, dinosaurs –
or warm and crusty pies
for midnight feasts
with padding beasts,
or brightly painted gnomes
that roam.

It might be just the place
to cradle dolls, or bears,
to pour out cups of tea.
It might be where you write
your poems for special friends
to see.

Or dress in silver, gold and velvet,
be courtier or queen,
or in reflective metal suiting
shoot to stars unseen.

An attic empty, dark and secret
is a place to dream.

The star who twinkles the moon – (By Grandma
& Asher)

The star who twinkles the moon at night
is far away from the moon's white light,
is far away in a galaxy stream
too far to catch a pale moonbeam,
too far, too far for a pale moonbeam.

It winks and twinkles bright and fast
hoping the moon will see it at last,
hoping the moon will look and know
that the star is twinkling "I love you so.
Though far apart I love you so."

Moon so white,
star so bright
reaching across
the dark of the night.

The Green lady (by Grandma and Haakan)

All in green from top to toe,
green skirt, green shirt, green hat,
she hides amongst the bushes
in the daytime when it's hot.

But when the moon casts moonlight
on the shadowed world below
the green lady of the bushes
starts singing soft and low.

Sweetly she sings and dances
on the thick brown fallen leaves,
louder she sings and foots it faster
up to the top of the trees.

Spinning and twirling and singing
higher and higher she flies,
up to the moon on a moonbeam
where she sings until sunrise.

(Two songs the boys asked Grandma to write after
they had given me the titles.)

Family Poems

Poems by Asher

Colour

Colour is important
Colour brightens up your day
Red puts life into fire
Green puts life into trees
Blue puts life into the sky
Yellow puts life into the sun
Orange puts life into the sunset
Purple puts life into flowers
Colour puts life into life.

Blue

Blue is calming
Like the blue sky
Under the sea
Everywhere

Pearso

Pearso
Friendly red head
Bumping into the walls
He is the best friend you could want
Pearso

Colourful

Blue
in the loo
Pink
in the sink
Black
out the back
Green
often seen
Red

in the shed
The colours of the rainbow
Just outside my window

Haiku on green

Green is from nature
Green is the colour of plants
Green one with the trees

Green colour of life
Green rolling in the valleys
Green lurks in the woods

Raining

It is stormy
It is wet
It is raining very hard.
It is raining down the doorstep
It is raining down the yard.

Stingray

Hey there porcupine
I don't have a furry spine .
I live in the sea
I sting the dead bees
I live with a bee.

Croc

A crocodile said to me
“I went to bed in a bucket of red”
And this is what he said -
“I went to bed in a bucket of red
and didn't come back for tea!”

Haakan's Poems

Mind Storms

Wheels turning
Tyres burning

Joints creaking
Lego squeaking

Computers humming
Motors running

Digital manipulation
Matter transformation

Diodes flashing
Sensors synapsing

Mathematical projection
Information rejection

Binary transfusions
Multiple contusions

Apoplectic convulsive cacophony

Mind storming
Brains bursting

Cerebral confusion
Optical illusion

Whoops, must turn on the power

Cinquain

Machine
Buzzing gently
Overheating circuits
Fuses blown, systems shutting down
Silence

Haiku

Chrome decoration
Amazing wheelies and stunts
Reving engine hard

Acrostic

Lasers cutting
Amphibious limousines
Shared metal
Everywhere
Running motors

The MG

Our mechanic did grease the gears
And made the cogs revolve.

Once it was new, but now it is old,
and now the car needs to be fixed.

'Twas Morris that taught me to build
and I built the first MG.

(Sung to the tune of Amazing Grace)

I Like The Wind

May 1998

The wind is my friend.
He can play the didgeridoo.
He likes me.

Flowers

Flowers are beautiful,
beautiful, beautiful in the sun.

Then it is time to have a
hot crossed bun.

Then it is time
to have some fun.

on Halloween

A white sock, a ghost maybe,
a flock of geese, a crocodile,
a brass lock, a rusty gate.
I will be late, tick tock,
hissing, hissing, I can't wait,
an old clock, pause a while.
Jack-O-Lantern, something missing,
faster, faster, cutting, burning,
a face, a ghost,
a sock, transformed, scary, scary,
witches britches, ghost busters,
vampires, monsters, wizards
BOOOO - Halloween is too scary
for me, what about for you?

By Haakan and Asher with Dad (November
1996)

Poems by Haakan's and Asher's
Parents

Rhymes for little boys

A fox in a box
A bat wearing socks
A rat in a hat
A cat on the mat
A dog with a pog
A ghost eating toast
Two bananas in pyjamas
Three bears in big chairs
A weta that likes feta
A fish that grants a wish
Two men in a den
A hen with a pen
And that
is all of them.

By Mum (November 1996)

Excuse me

A bee, a flea went to see
To see what they could see.
A tree, a green pea,
A hairy knee - oh, excuse me!

By Dad (November 1996)

Poems by Lincoln and Dallas, Nephews
of Haakan and Asher

A ride in the park

By Lincoln, aged 5

I like the park
I like to swing like a monkey
Ducks go quack
 quack
I want to swim like a duck
Jumping off the bridge is good
Bungee jumping makes me feel happy
 like my mummy before
Birds and turkeys there are lots
 flying is fun

Saying “hello” in the park

By Lincoln, aged 5

A bird
A skatepark
 bikes
Ducks quack
Lots of plants
Grasshoppers jump and fly
Turkeys eat bread and run
Friends and brothers
 in the park
Climbing trees
 “hello”

Flying to the moon

By Dallas, aged 3

With wings Dallas hops on the moon
Looking for a cockatoo
 on the moon
With a shovel and wheelbarrow
Fireworks crack the moon
The clouds rain
Walking home
 from the moon

About the Author

Elaine was born into a working class family in a small town in Taranaki, New Zealand, the second youngest of six. She was the first in the family to go to university, graduating in 1951. When married with two young children she trained in pre-school teaching and later taught at primary and secondary schools. Her involvement in early environmental groups and local issues as well as women's rights led her to being elected as a mayor of Eastbourne, 1980-86, one of only six women mayors in NZ at that time. In 1986 she was appointed to the NZ Planning Tribunal where she served for 5 years before retiring and moving to Christchurch in 1994.

Elaine has been writing and publishing poetry under her pen name of Helen Jacobs since the mid 1970s and has published 8 collections, the latest in 2020 at the age of 91. Her work has also been published in many magazines and anthologies including Calyx (International Issue) Oct 1980, Yellow Pencils (Oxford University Press) 1988, Oxford Anthology of Love Poems 2000, Essential NZ Poems 2001, My Garden, My Paradise 2003, This Earth's Deep Breathing 2007, Our Own Kind 2009, A Treasury of NZ Poems for Children 2014 and in numerous Canterbury poetry anthologies.

She continues to write, play croquet, spend time with family and friends and enjoys gardening.

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