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opening extract from

Collected Poems for Children

written by

Ted Hughes

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please print off and read at your leisure.

Cat

You need your Cat.
When you slump down
All tired and flat
With too much town

With too many lifts
Too many floors
Too many neon-lit
Corridors

Too many people
Telling you what
You just must do
And what you must not

With too much headache
Video glow
Too many answers
You never will know

Then stroke the Cat
That warms your knee
You'll find her purr
Is a battery

For into your hands
Will flow the powers
Of the beasts who ignore
These ways of ours

And you'll be refreshed
Through the Cat on your lap
With a Leopard's yawn
And a Tiger's nap.



Toad

The Toad cries: 'First I was a thought.
Then that thought it grew a wart.
And the wart had thoughts
Which turned to warts.

'I tried to flee
This warty wart
With froggy jumps
But the wart got mumps.
Now this is me.
This lump of bumps
I have to be.

'My Consolation Prize
Is ten candlepower eyes.
But where are all the flies?
Eaten by those damned bats!'

His eyes pull down their hats.



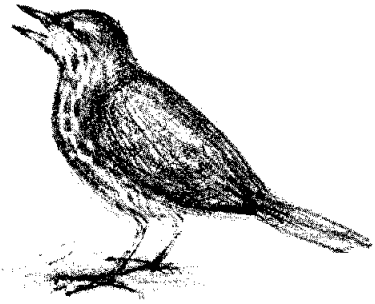
Thrush

The speckled Thrush
With a cheerful shout
Dips his beak in the dark
And lifts the sun out.

Then he calls to the Snails:
'God's here again!
Close your eyes for prayers
While I sing Amen.

'And after Amen
Rejoice! Rejoice!'

Then he scoops up some dew
And washes his voice.



Goat

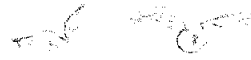


Bones. Belly. Bag.
All ridge, all sag.
Lumps of torn hair.
Glued here and there.

What else am I
With my wicked eye?

Though nobly born
With a lofty nose
I'm as happy with the Thorn
As I am with the Rose.

Fantails



Up on the roof the Fantail Pigeons dream
Of dollops of curled cream.



At every morning window their soft voices
Comfort all the bedrooms with caresses.

'Peace, peace, peace,' through the day
The Fantails hum and murmur and pray.

Like a dream, where resting angels crowded
The roof-slope, that has not quite faded.

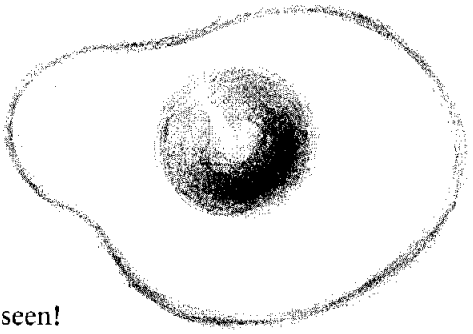
When they clatter up, and veer, and soar in a ring
It's as if the house suddenly sang something.



The cats of the house, purring on lap and knee,
Dig their claws and scowl with jealousy.



Pig



I am the Pig.

I saw in my sleep
A dreadful egg.

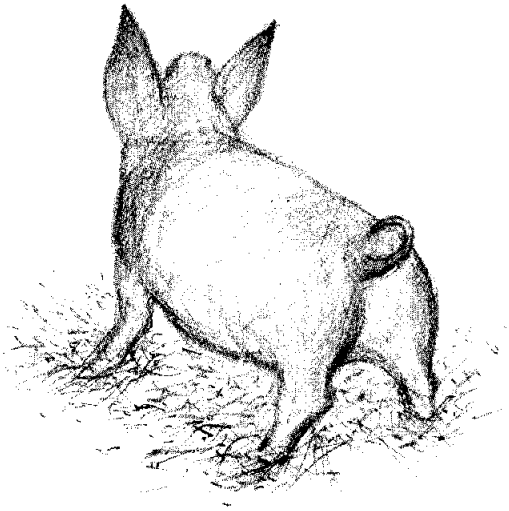
What a thing to have seen!
And what can it mean

That the Sun's red eye
Which seems to fry
In the dawn sky
So frightens me?

Why should that be?
The meaning is deep.

Upward at these
Hard mysteries

A humble hog
I gape agog.



Mole

I am the Mole.
Not easy to know.
Wherever I go
I travel by hole.

My hill-making hand
Is the best of me.
As a seal under sea
I swim under land.

My nose hunts bright
As a beam of light.
With the prick of a pin
My eyes were put in.

