

A Scatological Tale & Breaking News

By James Gallant

WHY WE LIKE THEM: *Mother Goose does SNL! It's part of our mission to have read these submissions and liked them we diddly doo. So if you're not an old woman parked in a tree, you'll read them too, and see, with glee, that fallen apples you stoop to pick, will make you poop and likely sick. But muffins with honey (if not too runny) is money in the ole alimentary tank. When the poop comes out, jump and shout: good digestion is cash in the bank! 'SAD!' tweeted Trumpy Dumpty at 3 o'clock in the morn with scorn. Poop out of the rumpty is plain uncouth—it's not how it's meant to be. So be like me and bypass the ass and let it fly out of your mouth!*

QUALITY QUOTABLE *(for the love of language)...*

Your intestines are young and willing to work, regardless what you send 'em. But a day will come when they tire of the grind, and then you'll yourself saying: 'Once every muffin seemed appeared in celestial light. But it is not now as it was of yore, so I will eat the apples right down to the core.'

A Scatological Tale

James Gallant

A father and son with a dollar and a dime entered a bakery, pastries in mind.

The baker was gleeful, a sale was at hand—or so it seemed at the outset. But whipped cream or plain, goopy or bland, the pair couldn't make up their minds.

The baker grew fidgety, twiddled his thumbs. Finally, he spake: "Mothers and sons, uncles and cousins—everyone loves the hot-cross buns. So give me a buck, I'll give you a dozen, then get the f out of here."

"Stale's cheap," Father observed.

The baker gave him the finger.

Out in the street, the father declared, “If there’s one thing in this world I *cannot* abide, it’s a foul-mouthed dough-puncher who rhymes.”

“I’d have liked a muffin,” said the son.

They’d started for home, when they saw from afar the old woman who lived in a shoe. She was up in a tree, a tall apple tree. The crowd gathered round tried to coax her down.

“What’s up?” said Dad to a priest standing nigh.

“The old woman who lives in a shoe.”

“I can see that, yes—but through a glass darkly, as ‘twere.”

“She doesn’t know what to do with her kids who smell like sweaty feet. That’s why she’s up in the tree, in my view.”

“The air is fresher up there.”

“If this strikes you as kooky, you should have been here Tuesday. There were *two* old women up in the tree.”

“That would have been something to see.”

I expect you’re wondering, why a man of the cloth isn’t sharing the work of the coaxers.”

“I hadn’t, but why *are* you standing here watching?”

“Martin Luther put it nicely, ‘Here I stand, I can do no other.’”

“And why is that, may I ask?”

“You may, but you’ll not receive, for all I can tell you is that, given a choice—to act or stand pat—I invariably choose the latter.”

“They also serve who only stand and wait, ‘tis said, though I don’t really know what that means.”

“Nor I. Another thing that people say is that good things will come to those who wait.”

“But only what hustlers have left behind, said Abe.”

“Yes, good things come in *small* packages.”

“Like muffins,” said the boy, salivating at the thought of them slathered with honey.

“Is it necessary to *stand* while one waits?” asked the priest. “I mean, why not just lie waiting in bed?”

“You might be mistaken for dead.”

“That’s happened to me on my feet.”

The woman in the tree was munching on something.

“What does the old girl eat?” asked Dad.

“Green apples, one after the other. I’m told they are very sweet.”

“Not as sweet as muffins with honey.”

The priest beamed down at the sweet-toothed lad. “That’s true, young man. But never forget that a muffin may clog the intestines.”

“No muffin has ever clogged mine.”

“Your intestines are young and willing to work, regardless what you send ‘em. But a day will come when they tire of the grind, and then you’ll yourself saying: ‘Once every muffin seemed appared in celestial light. But it is not now as it was of yore, so I will eat the apples right down to the core.’”

“Apples make you poop, Mama says.”

“She’s mastered the digestive occult.”

“Dad says she’s an idiot.”

“Personally,” said Dad, “I weary of pooping. It’s a conspicuous waste of paper, I think, and a miserable waste of time.”

An admonitory forefinger rose from the priest. “Pooping is rather the *time of waste* than a *waste of time*. There’s a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to ingest and a time to poop. The sun riseth, the sun goes down.”

“I’ve been wondering about that,” said the boy.

A guitarist was strumming, a drummer was drumming. The coaxers who’d wearied of coaxing now cavorted about the tree in the nude—until a thunderous BOOM from a bough on high, and chocolate rain from the clear blue sky, put a sudden stop to frolics. The dancers raced screaming to the nearest baths, hosed themselves down, and jumped in the lake.

The priest at his distance raised eyes to the skies: “Lord, I’ve complained of my stasis and torpor, my reluctance to enter the fray, but I will never regret having stood my ground on this memorably execrable day.”

Breaking News

Humpty Dumpty, the health-care-for-peasants activist, suffered a fall from a wall near the palace where he was demonstrating this morning.

The King at his press conference today expressed regret for his longtime political opponent’s misfortune: “The Yolkel and I had our differences, but he was a good egg. I’ve ordered the King’s Men to get off their horses and try to put him back together again, but they’re all idiots. I wouldn’t expect a miracle.”

The King lauded today's successful throne-financed launch of the Old Broom Woman who's to sweep the sky of cobwebs, the project dubbed the Blue Sky Initiative by critics who see it as a misuse of public funds for political gain.

Humpty's fall, and the Broom Woman's launch, were nearly simultaneous. There's an unsubstantiated report that Little Jack Horner had just pulled a plum from his Christmas pie when he saw Dumpty swept from the wall.

"Fake news, fake news," the King said. "The Yolkel was a drinker, a boozier. He guzzled, everyone knows he guzzled."

In other news, lean Jack Spratt has taken up aerobics. "Like he needs it!" quipped Mrs. Spratt, who having sworn off fat believes she's found at last a purpose in life.

Finally this: that other Jack, the one who's nimble and quick—"Evil Knieval of the candlesticks"—is back leaping tall tallow after last year's mishap, the mother of all geoses.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *When at loose ends as a writer, to shake up my brain, I'll read things I wouldn't ordinarily--nursery rhyme nonsense in this case. The sing-songy voice comes from that. ("There was an old woman who lived in a shoe," etc.) As for the issue I was exploring: the importance of digestion cannot be underestimated. I'm sending a second little piece written out of the same influences that, with the elections over, will soon be dated. Maybe you can do something with it?*

AUTHOR'S BIO: For what it may or may not be worth, I am the winner of 2019 Schaffner Press Prize for music-in-literature for my story collection, *La Leona, and Other Guitar stories*, just published. My e-novel, *Whatever Happened to Ohio?* from Vagabondage Press, and a collection of essays and short fiction, *Verisimilitude: essays and approximations*, published by Fortnightly Review press (UK), appeared in 2018. (I have been an online columnist for FR since 2015 (<http://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/category/verisimilitudes/>)).

