

# The Ocelot and Other Poems

For:

The Board of Judges  
Poetry Written for Children  
Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature  
**CARLOS PALANCA FOUNDATION, INC.**

## **The Ocelot**

*(In Memory of the Purple Cow)*

The ocelot is one kitty I've never laid eyes on,

Nor do I have any hope to come across one.

(Though I've been forewarned this cool Ecuadorian

Has charms quite beyond its fabulous spots.)

But if this be the claim for all sorts of ocelots,

I'd find no reason at all, being contrarian,

To see this great cat as I'd rather *be* than merely see one.

## **My Dearest Lizard**

Oh, my dearest sticker,  
My wall-, my ceiling-climber,  
With you I dare not bicker.  
Spare my faulty ticker,  
For now I'm but saying  
How dreadful my feeling

You'll certainly abuse,  
Always plotting up there  
For any chance to let loose --  
No warnings, no excuse.  
And it's just a tad unfair  
When you mess up my hair!

So don't you dare fall,  
Don't you even try, sir.  
I've faith in your glue-all --  
Keep your toes on the wall;  
Stop right there, dearest slinker,  
Please don't come any closer!

## **Just So**

Why is it we cherish nature so?

Is it because of birds and bees?

Is it because of grass and trees?

Or maybe just so because it's so.

Why is it we love our little earth?

Is it because all things seem well?

Or maybe it's because they tell

That what's so's just so by birth?

Why is it we adore God's things?

Is it because of grace they bring?

Or maybe just because we know

They bless our life just so and so.

## **Building a House**

It does not take a lot to build a house,  
Just wood and paper and some glue,  
But with the rain and rot and tiny mouse,  
You'll end up wall-less, roofless or just blue!

It does not take as much to make a home,  
Just fun and laughter and a goodly heart,  
But hurt and anger or a little gloom,  
You'll wake up mad with neither home nor hearth.

## **Tickle My Toes**

When baby looks lonely,  
And seems ready to cry,  
I hold up this finger only,  
And wave it up really high.

When baby starts gurgling,  
Then up quick goes the other,  
To make her smile and go burbling,  
As fingers begin to wander.

Then, when fingers soft soles seek,  
Baby's feet ruddy and bright,  
Come swift the happy shrieks  
Keeping us up all night.

Then baby rolls over and over,  
Rumpling the bed covers,  
Her screams, peals of laughter,  
Sure to wake up sleepy neighbors.

Though after this it seems,  
Sleep we'll have to make do with less,  
What matters most will be our dreams  
Of baby tired, tickled and blessed.

## **The Old Quarrel**

One who elects to dump his cash,  
And his titles and stocks in his vault,  
Should lock it up with his old bones,  
Because the poor dead are not above  
Quarrelling over the enviable stash  
After their very last breathe is gone;  
With who gets to dwell in a green mansion,  
Or who gets to suffer in a burning hovel,  
With who gets which suburb of heaven,  
And who gets which tenement in hell.

## **An Encounter with Bees**

Why is it we call them bumblebees?  
I never see them bumbling around,  
But stuck in ether with an even drone,  
And as steady as air can manage them.

From out of the faces that I try on  
When I hear them nearby, I put up one  
With knots on my forehead – they warn  
Do not get too pleasant with me.

Even if I want to befriend these bees,  
I could never bring myself to trust  
The way they seem so self-assured (if flit  
Or fly I could, things might be different).

But wishing does not make them  
Go away, and so I tell them, like  
The naturalist who named them thus,  
Please bumble elsewhere in the bush,

And let me off more kindly today,  
So I unstuck will this double frown,  
And while with pleasure they hover,  
Leave me drowsing by the clover.

## **The Ocean in the Well**

Before I dip my feet over the edge,

I peer down into the green.

Then I look up and see the skies

And think I would like to slip into the well.

I close my eyes. Then I put one foot in

And hear the sea roar. The other foot, and I smell salt.

In my mind, so many questions.

How deep is the ocean? Is it as deep as the well?

What is the difference, if there is any at all?

What does it matter to me, as I am writing,

That there is no ocean around, and there

Is only a green field? I will make do

With this well, the clear water gentle

Beneath my toes, this silence between

The words, and a long pause, and then ...

*The well and soon, the ocean in the well.*

## **Storm Warning**

No matter how long the skies stay dark,  
They do not move our hearts to breaking.  
No matter how long the clouds stay up,  
And wind rolling, they do not make us weep.

But when the full throat is cleared,  
And the air rasps as stones falling  
On a wooden floor, the ear is assailed  
By drumming, this must be the honest deal!

And so, flashes outside the window,  
Leaves slapping, branches of trees plundered,  
Black stones, bits of earth banging off the roof.

And where is the child who does not know  
This is the sign to slip back into bed and keep  
Under blanket at the first heard roll of thunder?

## **An Appetite for Fruit**

Who is it does not have  
An appetite for fruit,  
If crackling and crisp,  
Or one with sweetness  
Dribbling down one's chin?

Even the petty ones,  
With too much seed,  
Or the bitter tang,  
Or even with the fierce smell  
We remember for days  
After they are gone?

Who is it does not want  
To live with much of it,  
Or maybe a bit,  
Or even just one taste  
Enough to linger  
In the tongue, as in  
Smile of one well-amused?

### **A Love Poem from the Troubadour**

As she made her turns among the rose-hedges,  
My heart entangled in her tangle-bush hair.

While she was leaping among her maids,  
My soul caught fire from the ash-white air.

This singer should sing her just as pale, as fair,  
As slim as this song supposes her to be

But these lines have not grown eyes  
To bare the carelessness of her care.

Nor could words wear my reddening face,  
As I wound these strings for her silver-flowing hair.

## **A Wish**

For one,  
I would like  
to wish

there are  
enough  
of me

as just  
a single fly  
can see.