

# MOORE OR LESS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

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In turning a poem on its opposite pole, the parodist must be wary of exact opposites to the author's words. They don't always reverse the sense, and they can land you back in the original meaning. Just as two negatives make a positive, "what should appear" = "it can't stay hidden." Keep a copy of Clement Moore's "A Visit From St. Nicholas" next to you to keep track and compare.

Comes morn after Good Friday anytime on these flats,  
 All of Chaos moves restless, especially the cats.  
 Some feet fall obliviously onto fire's grate,  
 Midst worries damned Hecate's somewhere out late.  
 No old folks are rising, some cold, from my throws,  
 Not when, blind to sour grapes, they lie on my toes.  
 Nor when sister unwigged, or Pa out of pajamas  
 Soon will be addled from short summer's insomnias.  
 Nor while here in our house silence falls ever slight,  
 And we crawl under chairs and ignore all that's right.  
 Here, behind doors we drop, and as dusk melts,  
 We stitch up our curtains, we let down our belts.  
 No sun above wings through old lofted pitchdrops  
 To take midnight's dreariness from subjects so tops.  
 Nor never from shut jaundiced lids can be hidden  
 These eight monster barges, one huge unleashed kitten.  
 Unguided and young, mammoth, slow, apathetic,  
 We'll wonder forever, is this cursed, Hecatetic?  
 As ponderous as hippos this aimless vag putters,  
 Though we lisplessly whisper a number of mutters:  
 "Soon, sluggard? Wallflower? Soon, Schlepper? Soon, Grizzly?  
 Off, Ajax! Narcissus! Off Rumless! Off Fizzly!  
 Off under a cellar, off under a ditch,  
 Then plod to me, plod to me, plod to me." (Which?)  
 Unlike the wet petals after zephyr's calm waft,  
 Spilled unhindered on land, all alone, unaloft,  
 Down in a hole this gallumph comes to rest.  
 Without barges yet emptied or tools, Satan-less.  
 We'll never til dark muffle under floor's planking  
 Such stomping and butt-dragging gigantic clanking.  
 We'll be poking our noses or fixed straight as studs,  
 Until up our rainspout go Hecate's thuds.  
 She'll be hairless and bare; cloven hooves, horns and tail  
 Will gleam soap-unsullied, skin watery pale.  
 Cinders, two hods full, wad her belly button;

Disguised as poor beggar she keeps her stuff shut in.  
 Her ears--dull, opaque!--and her sad warts upset us!  
 Her chins out-thorn briars, her head must be lettuce!  
 Her grimly humongous nose droops, limp, a-ravel  
 But her cheeks are well-bristled, more black than coal gravel.  
 A hemlock root loosely adrift on her tongue gusts  
 In flames she draws straight to her belly of fungus.  
 Her feet are spiked thin; pointed sharp, each big gam  
 Is steeled to our cup-drainless woe as they jam.  
 She'll be skinny, so gaunt, wrong, moody, young-croned,  
 Then we'll scream to be sightless, 'cause we're other-owned.  
 Two gapes from her nostrils or her fixated maw  
 Will take us from consciousness, all in numb awe.  
 She'll mumble her gibberish; circling at leisure,  
 She'll empty our pockets. Unbending and measured,  
 Removing her toenail from under her brows,  
 She'll shake her head "No!" Down the rainspout she bows.  
 She'll trudge by the barges, suck spit and untether  
 One. On! But it sinks. It's our pollen from heather!  
 Still we'll see her float by in the sound mutely warning,  
 "Woe for some on Good Friday, nor for fewer, bad morning!"

#### PUN AND GAMES

This is the title of the latest book by two Word Ways stalwarts,  
 author Richard Lederer and illustrator Dave Morice. (The editor  
 joined both in New Hampshire in June for part of their book tour  
 promoting this work.) This delightful \$9.95 paperback (ISBN 1-  
 55652-264-9) is aimed at an audience of pre-adolescent kids.

A sampler:

Punny signs: Guitars for sale cheap--no strings attached  
 Homophones: what do you call an odd marketplace?

a BIZARRE BAZAAR

Curious headlines: Squad Helps Dog Bite Victim

Inflationary language: go fifth three seek your fivetune

License plates: YRUFAT (aerobics instructor)

Daffynitions: hatchet--what a hen does with an egg

Spoonerisms: United Way--all the begs in one askit