

OPPOSITE
JAY

The Crow

“Beep *beep BEEP*” her clock said
‘*sleep is over now get up, get up, get out of bed!*’

. . . at least that’s what passed through her head.

“Hey clocks’re s’posed to tick, not talk!
And whose idea to beep so early, *seven thirty??*”

‘You *you YOU!*’ it shrieked,
while fingers tip-toed, nightstand-bound,
flushing out alarming sounds,
hunting down the button that when found
would quell them for a spell
(the sounds that is, in case you couldn’t tell).

“Well beep *indeed*, it just so happens
deep in sleep is where I was,
so snooze is what I choose, becuz ... becuz ...
my pillow’s lonely—”
WHAP!
(Snooze button found)

“Seven minutes only! Soon, Sun, you’ll have your way.
Until then it’s *buenas noches*, day!”

Seven snoozes later
she was crossing swamps
on backs of alligators
(in her sleep, that is)
when something loud went ‘beep *beep BEEP!*’

“Gee whiz!” she muttered (half asleep),
“Seven minutes should take longer!”
Then through yonder window shone a ray of light her way—
the kind that might mean . . . (groan) . . . *school day*.

“School day?” she bemoaned, “Hey sun, you’re taking all the fun away. But wait—could it be ... *Saturday*? I’m outta bed *good morning, day!*” She sprung up, pulled her window shade down to the floor and then let go—it made an awful roar and flapped and flapped summore. The girl said “Whoah.”

. . . gaze fixed on the moon outside her window.
“A moon glows? Out my window?
But it’s *morning*.
Where’d the sun go?”

Did the door know? ...
‘Knock *knock KNOCK*’ it said.
“Late for school, turn off that clock, get out of bed!”

The girl said “Mom, no school today!
It must be over, anyway—
did you see the moon, above the bay?
Think I sent the sun away.
Guess I should watch what I say!”

“You just woke, Mighty Sunchaser!
Otherwise I don’t know what you mean,
my dear,” replied her mom.
“In case you didn’t hear, school is soon,
dinner’s in the breakfast room,
wash your hands and get ‘em clean.
It’s your favorite—rice and beans!”

‘Beep *beep BEEP* . . . ’

“And *please* turn off that time machine!”

Mom gone, Anna Bean
considered what she’d heard and seen.
“Did she say dinner? Before school?
Before breakfast? *That is cool!*
But something’s up.”

“No down.”

“*Who said that?*” Anna looked around.

That’s when she eyed the crow,
perched outside her bedroom window,
pecking on the glass.
Anna went and raised the sash.

“Down,” it said, with nod of head. “Something’s *down*.”

“Well up, down, square, round, lost, found, who cares?”
she said (Did I forget to say her hair was red?).

“Now listen, crow, I’d like to know . . .”

(as if she spoke to crows on windows every day),

“why insist that up is down? It seems to go the other way.”

“Maybe not on opposite day.”

“Opposite day?”

“No.”

(with tilted head) “But you just said . . .”

“Crows don’t talk. And I most certainly did *not*,” it said.

‘Wait a second,’ spoke her look.

“If crows can’t talk I reckon *you’re* no rook.”

“In whose book? Who sez so?”

“This book. And *I do!*”

“Who are you and how do you know?”

“I am me and we know cuz you’re talking, crow.”

“Am not!”

“Iz so!”

“It’s true,” it said (*‘Aha! She knew!’*).

“True that you just called me *crow*.”

“Now see here mister crow,”

(she grasped at words)

“what’s today?”

(to trick the bird)

“Do you even know?”

“Any day but opposite day and by the way it’s *mizz*.”

“Alright *mizz* crow—”

“That’s *mister*.”

“Listen crow, we’re history with this mizzter biz!
We’ll play your way. Something’s up is nothing down.
Sun is moon and tick is tock. And now it seems my clock,
the door, and birds, can talk. And *you*.
You’re like no crow *I* ever knew!”

“*Izzat so?* How many crows you know?”

“Just you,” Anna said.

“Not even *two*?? A redhead girl who can’t tell night from day,
and only knows one crow,
on opposite day, knows no such things.
Next you’ll ask if I can sing!”

Replied the girl, “If you can sing, I’ve heard it all!”
“If I say you’re short you’re tall,
or window wall, or spring it’s fall,
or see it’s saw, or rush it’s stall,
or hee it’s haw. You say you sing?
Cuz crows should caw!
What I ask and what you say—oh wait!
I get it! *Opposite day!*”

“*No you don’t.*”

“Oh, go away!”

“Such a charming girl,” it said,
spread its wings and flew away,
breaking into (what I’d call) uncrow-like song.

‘*Singing crows?*’ she thought, ‘*What next? Silent gongs??*’

‘Knock *knock KNOCK!*’ the door said,
“Anna, dinner’s on!”

“I won’t be long!” She pulled her shirt
down to her knees, concealing dirt
on grass-stained mid-length dungarees.

The door behind said ‘*click*’
and Anna sidled down but quick,
toothpaste hiding under tongue,
toothbrush dry and hairbrush hung
from matted hair,
descending stairs with royal airs.

Flip flops sounding her arrival,
Mom said “Don’t you know it’s Friday?
School begins in fifteen minutes.”

“But you said *dinner*—remember, rice and beans?”

“For breakfast, Anna Bean?”
said Mom, “Hands and teeth all squeaky clean?”

“Smell my breath,” she dared, and sat.

“No thank you, Dear. Some milk with that?”

“But Mom,” objected Anna, brown things
rising in her bowl, “you said . . . “

“Oh, eat your frosted chocolate fingers.
Trying to get you out of bed’s like catching bees,
but by the stingers (*Now there’s a fair fight,*’ Anna thought).
We’ll have rice and beans for dinner.”

“Well have we got,” spoke her thought,
“at *least* some *juice*?”

“Tomato, ice or ginger root?” her mom said,
disentangling Anna’s reddish moptopped head.

“Tomato, ice or ginger root?? That’s not juice.
Juice is squeezed from juicy fruit!”

“Well, ginger is a root not fruit,”
said Mom, “and hard to squeeze, to boot.
Ice takes time to melt,
you’re late for school, from what I’ve smelt
your breath’s already fresh and cool,
ice juice won’t do and so . . .
until I make it to the store . . .
. . . that leaves to-may-toh!”

“Tomato’s not a fruit,” protested Anna,
“fruit is sweet and good to eat!”

(Mom) “Like a kiwi?”

(Anna) “Yes indeedee.”

(Mom) “Boysenberry?”

(Anna) “Oh yes, very!”

(Mom) “Or an apple?”

(Anna) “Yep, *exactle!*”

(Mom) “Round and red with lots of seeds?”

Anna, after blurting out “You bet!”
realized tomato juice is what she’d get.

Hmmmmmm, thought Anna,
*‘fruit is feckless, night is day,
dinner’s breakfast, some might say,
like singing crows who flew away,
it must be opposite day.’*

Dad came in with specks of toilet paper chin,
razor thin appeared his grin.
“Morning sunshine! Set for school?
Your bus just passed, the coffee’s cool,
I’m off to work. Eat enough?
I’ll drop you off go grab your stuff!”

“But first you’ll change that stretch-ed shirt!” said Mom.

“Oh *Mom . . .*”

“*And* soily shorts! They’re caked in dirt!” said Mom.

“But *Mom!* The clock! *I’m late!* It’s almost half past eight!
Can’t wait! And you heard Dad! Besides,
this juice and cereal taste . . .”

The sentence finished by her mom: “like toothpaste?”

“Wha?” she said with breathless stare,
while dry toothbrush caressed the sink upstairs,
flip-flopped briskly to her books, on chairs,
precisely where she dropped them there
the day before, all the while evading penetrating looks
from breakfast nooks.

Dad was in the car,
he left the ding-ding door ajar.
The school was not too far,
he backed onto the street
as something clanky rattled in the backseat.

Spying golf clubs, Anna asked
“On your way to *some important meeting, Dad?*”

Dad shot her a pleading, redirecting look.
“Listen Anna, sometimes work is, let’s just say
work is work, you’re on the phone
you’re on the green you’re at your desk *and* ...
it’s popular with presidents!”

“Nice try Dad, but I know singing crows
who’d say that golf is work but work is play,
at least on opposite day.”

Now curbside, Dad turned Anna’s way:
“Singing crows you know say work is play?
Earth to Anna! School bell’s ringing!
Do I hear tee time sirens singing?
Grab your books be on your way!
So long Anna, go on in!”

Her dad drove off to golf as Anna grinned.
No toilet paper sticking to *her* chin.

The Classroom

Anna slipped into her school and then her class
and then her chair,
but had to pass her teacher's glare.
Was it her hair? A warning flare?
That reddish, matted mop?
The last bus driver called her carrot top,
'til Anna told the school and made him stop.

Ms. Snackdoggie opened up her book,
"Let's have a look," she said, "at page eight-*teen*,
and that includes you, Anna Bean.
Take out Wednesday's homework one is A,
two is C, three is D
and four is thirty-three,
five is nine and six is B,
seven's twenty-two, and eight's a kangaroo.
How'd we do?"

"Mizz Snackdoggie," said Anna (not wanting to fail),
"eight's a kangaroo, that's true.
It hops, has a pouch and giant tail.
But wallabies do, too!"

"The book," the teacher pursed her lips "is never wrong
and if it were—and wallabys belonged—
they'd call me on the telephone
and say '*we wish to co-rrrect one unfortunate mistake,
on question eight, page twenty-two,
accept both wallaby **and** kangaroo.*'"

Anna knew the book was wrong.
She also knew Ms. Snackdoggie was in no mood
to listen to a red-haired student late for school.

Her wide-eyed classmates, noses buried in their books,
awaited further words,
snuck Anna frantic furtive looks as if
she'd tried to stop stampeding herds
of lemmings dashing madly for the cliff.

. . . Ms. Snackdoggie carried on, it wasn't long
before she said "Let's sing a song."
And Anna thought '*Now there's a plan!*'

The song began, the teacher sang
(accompanied by her two-hand ukulele band)
about a girl who's comin' 'round the mountain
(when she comes).

'*Something's funny,*' Anna thought,
she'd heard the song, it's very long, in fact
it never seems to end.

What's more—that girl? Anna had her doubts
she ever makes it 'round the bend.

Anna bravely raised her hand.

"Yes Anna??" snapped Ms. Snackdogle,
.... "can't wait for the song to end?"

"Well I was wondering, when does she arrive?"

Not looking up, the teacher hummed
in perfect time. "Verse *sixty-five.*"

She strummed,

"We'll be juggling sixteen beehives . . ."

Joylessly, the class all sang along,
but Anna's verse came out all wrong.

In hers the jugglers all get stung.

'*But only when that girl arrives,*' she thought,
'*in which case bees will have their say.*

Who juggles beehives anyway?'

'*But something's wrong all right,*' her thought went on,
'*when dusk is dawn and night is day,*

golf is work so work is play,

hafta learn the teacher's way,

sun is moon and down is up,

tomato in your fruit juice cup,

breakfast bait of rice and beans,

offices are golf course greens,

wait for girls who never come,

mistakes in books are never wrong,

breakfast's dinner, what is next?

Summer turned to winter?

Fat to thinner? East to west?

Maybe cawing crows to singers?'

Suddenly the teacher's ukulele popped a string.
"At the window! What's that thing??"
A crow or *something* black, with wings!
First it pecked the glass.
Then it sang a song. With words!
But crass! *Such sass!*" Looking unsure,
. . . "You all heard it, *didn't you*, class??"

Try as she may not to say
(not too hard for Anna, by the way),
Anna asked, "Did it mention *opposite day?*"

"Girls should learn to hold their tongues
and not speak out of turn," said Teach.

"And boys?" spoke Anna out of turn.

Ms. Snack-D bristled.
"Boys are boys, that's clear as mud.
My word Miss Bean,
I don't know what's got in your blood
or on my nerves, but sometimes redhead girls
are better off when seen and not when heard."

Anna turned the words around.
"Well heard not seen's
a little bit like clear as mud, drought and flood,
up or down, lost not found, nice and mean, fat and lean,
girls not boys, noiseless sound, or sunken mound ..."

"Or straight and round!" said Sammy Brown.
"Or crying clowns!" said Mattie Drake.
"Or happy frown!" said Ellie Blake,
and suddenly the fourth grade class
was sitting straight and wide awake.

"*And pie is cake! And real is fake!*
And give is take!" steadfasted the class.
Then Billy Ray, who never talked, said "Earth is quake!"

"*No, quake is calm, like short is long,*
or ding is dong," the class went on.

And Billy said "Or right is wrong?"

"*You're catching on!*" the class hurrayed.

“Now stop this game, this *opposite day!*
We come to school to learn, not play.
I’m still the Teacher, so ...
we’ll do it . . . *my way.*”

“Whatever you say,”
the class pretended to obey.

That was when the principal
poked his head into the room.
Mister Cyrus Sensible
could sniff a rat in Timbuktu,
but miss a rose, beneath his nose, in full bloom.

“What’s all this then?
I heard you from the other end
of hallway two, who’s making all this noise?
We have a school to run here, girls and boys.”

“Some children speaking out of turn, Mister Sensible.”

“As long as I’m the principal,
the teachers teach, the students learn,
I’ll have no speaking out of turn.
I run this school.
Now who’s the student breaking rules?”

“Excuse me sir” (he glanced her way),
said Anna Bean, “it’s *opposite day.*”

“Aha, I see, okay . . . what does that mean?”

"That happy's mad, or maybe sad, dirty's clean,
work is play an' play is bad
and our teacher's the nicest teacher
all of us have ever had."

The principal (not noticing
Ms. Snack-D’s bulging eyes) replied “That’s nice.
Now back to work, don’t make me come here twice.”

Anna Bean could not contain
the next unfortunate refrain:
“Three cheers for our principal!
We love Mister Sensible!
He’s nice, he’s fair, he really cares,
hurrah! *Hurrah! HOO-RAY!*”

Ellie followed straight away with
"We love Mister Sensible, our very favorite principle!
He never smells, he rarely yells and rings the bells pyoo-ray!"

"For opposite day!" said Billy Ray,
who right away realized he shouldn't say.

Mr. Sensible turned his way.
"What did you say, Mister Ray?"

Billy froze, cuz everybody knows that if you say
a bad word or a curse
that you can get expelled *or worse*—
he just might take recess away!

Billy bravely cleared his throat
to say something when
Desireé cut quickly in ...

" He said you deserve more pay!"

"Sally Snackdoggie, say what you may,"
said Cyrus P.T. Sensible,
"these students seem to be okay,
delightful, charming, full of *onshontay*"
(that's French), "in fact I'm granting double-recess day!"

To whench the class responded "Yaaaayyy!!!"

The Cafeteria

Double recess goes to show
a bad idea, but who could know?
The fourth grade class meandered
far and wide, from side to side
around the playground whisspering “*Haven’t heard?*”
It’s opposite day. *Help spread the word!*”

In the cafeteria, hysteria was spreading fast.
“Whoozup for a healthy lunch”
(the spooning dietician asked)
“of pizza pucks and chicken flaps?
Soda’s yonder, grab a glass!”

“What’s our vechtible today?”
asked a boy from 2nd grade
(coming from nutrition class).

“Why we have two, they’re on the tray,
Carrots, ketchup, eat away!”

Anna said “But ketchup’s not a vechtible!
Tomato is a fruit!”

“Hey carrot top, my budget’s shot,
and don’t get cute—
it’s mostly sugar. Just the same
I dish the slop, the hair net’s mine to boot,
healthy food’s my middle name.
The only fruit we have’s
inside those plastic bags.
Have two, they’re free!”

“I see,” said Anna’s guarded voice
(unguarded eyes said ‘*Fruit in bags?*
Seems odd to me’),
“You mean those FrootSnax over there?”
(she squinted, pointing in the air) “They’re free?”

“Worth every penny!
Green or blue? And anyhoo
(probing Anna’s eyes while squeezing runny cheeze),
something wrong with fruit in bags?
Did you think it grew on trees?”

“Fruit? On trees?” asked Anna.
“Not in cans or plastic bags? Puh-leeze!
That’s like saying supper’s dinner!”

Sue Lynne Spooner flashed a smile,
“nuther shot of veggie
on those fishy fingers?”

“Sure,” flinched Anna, holding out her dish,
ketchup splatting off her fish.

Café pandemonium had reached a fever pitch.

“An’ here’s an extra slice of rubber cheezy if you wish.
Have a jumbo shrimp!”

“If it’s *shrimp* . . . how’s it jumbo?”

“If it’s shrimp—and I doubt it—how should I know?”
quizzed Sue Lynne. “Have more jello!”

“Mmmmm! My favorite flavor, yellow!”
Anna shouted back, above the din.

Meanwhile back in hallway two,
soda-guzzled students in Ms. Rhyme’s class
took to hooting like the zoo at feeding time.

“Since today is opposite day,
we’d like to say Mizz Rhyme’s
the worstest teacher in Parched Bay!
Hip *hop* *HOO-RAY!*”

Ms. Rhyme smiled and said
“Alright, okay, Class,
but try to keep your voices low,
the principal just passed.”

“Wha’d he pass?” asked Tina Vasquez.

“Gas!” cried Shaye, to laughs,
then eyeing hallway figures added fast,
“Principal’s got class!”

Ms. Rhyme looked back,
the classroom door was cracked,
too late! Though it was opposite day,
that was probbly *not* the thing to say.

They hooted more than ever
and the principal would likely double back
and say '*I never EVER*
witnessed such behavior!
We have to be good neighbors
for these classroom walls are just like paper!'

Instead he popped his head into the room
and said "How charming!
How delightful! How disarming!
Do I smell a flower in bloom? Carry on, Mizz Rhyme,
it seems to me you're doing mighty fine."

"Why thank you, Mister Sensible,
that's very kind of you," she said.
But when he left the room, Ms. Rhyme,
looking like she'd seen a ghost,
said "That was close.
Next time be more careful, Class,
or opposite day could land us in molasses.
Looking up at you-know-who."

"We know who's you-know-who," said Matt,
"but what's molasses?"

As if on cue, a voice spoke on the intercom.
"Sticky goo," said Spooner Sue.

The Conversation

Lunch undone in Ms. V's room,
the TV turned to Channel Two,
Junetta Bloom said "I'm confused.
It's true that Channel Two is news,
the news said to recycle, reduce, reuse.
But—the ads make buying *more* look cool.
So, less or more? Which to choose?
And what if you're poor?"

"When they go to the store," said McShay,
"they don't have to pay, says my dad."

"Who, the poor?" asked Zed.

"So they don't have to work?" Sunny said.

"Then it's fun to be poor?" wondered Curt.

"It sounds like a blast!" blurted Max.

"Yeah, it's poor billionaires have to pay all the taxes!"

"Poor billionaires??" spoke a voice near the door,
"That sounds backwards!"

"Remember, it's opposite day," said Reneé.

"Anyway," added Mitch, "I heard a preacher on TV say
God wants the poor to be rich."

"What's the hitch?" asked Reneé,
thinking camels and needles.

"Just send him your money," said Mitch,
"the whole wad."

"Wait," said Reneé, "do I have this straight?
Poor folks should give all their money to God??"

"No no! To the preacher!"

They looked to the teacher,
Ms. V turned to Katt,
who'd sat up, adjusted her hat
(a most elegant feature),
and said "Fancy that!
A millionaire preacher!
What would Jesus say
to a man of the cloth
playing opposite day?
And they say that twine doesn't fray!"

"You mean crime doesn't pay?" asked Reneé.

"Unless it's on Wall Street!" said Trey,
the class turning his way,
awaiting what else he might say (turns out),
suddenly sweaty and hot (not a lot).
"Well . . . that's what they say!"

"Where is Wall Street?" someone asked.
"And who are *they*?"

"Near Broadway. An' *they*'re the ones who say,"
said a Dave, "that the more you spend
the more you save."

"Who are you?" asked a puzzled Ms. V,
but nobody knew.

"This opposite day is tricky, Mizz V," said Sri.
"I had a question from back at the start.
If we do buy more stuff,
when we throw it away,
won't it end up in dumps that get
covered with grass and turned into parks?"

"Don't think too much,"
winked Ms. V, "drink more soda
and less bottled water from glaciers,
they're melting cuz it's getting colder."

"But I thought the planet was warming," said Flo,
"the weather's more stormy."

"The oceans are rising."

"The heat is much hotter!"

“The caps are capsizing!

“That’s not too surprising, we do so much driving,” went Ivy.

“And flying!” Brie added, “those gases trap heat!
We should walk, take the bus, ride our bikes in the street!”

“But to stop the heat,” wondered Gus,
“will that be enough?”

“Why don’t we,” asked Jodie,
“name cars for outdoor stuff? Like Yukon. Or Gobi!”

“Would that make them burn less gas?” mused Stu.

The class, now looking confused (just a tad),
hoping Ms. V might have something to add.

“Reneé?” Ms. V nodded her way.

. . . “*Opposite day?*”

Then Sri (whose mom dropped him off in her Everest) said
“Well, more is less? I guess? But to digress,
will all this stuff be on the test?”

“*WHAT TEST?*” asked the class, somewhat distressed.

“But wait! There’s *less!*” said Lenore.
“Why just the other day,
I heard the president say
that if we want peace, we have to fight wars,
or . . . if everyone carried guns . . . we’d be safer!”

Then Sloan (gnawing a wafer from home) said “Don’t forget free-er!”

“Free-er from what?” asked Ruth. “The truth?”

Nate said “Oh, I’ve got another! Last night, channel eight,
this woman was shouting
‘eat all the food you want and lose weight!’”

“That sounds great!” said Li,
“What’s the catch?”

“Funny you’d ask, my mom tried it,
that diet,” said Sri, “they send you *their* food.
You buy it. It comes in the mail.”

“But Dude,” countered Gayle, “food? Through the mail?
Not to seem rude, but what if it’s stale?”

“Or from our café! Hey, maybe
that’s how they lose weight!” added Sri.

(Ms. V) “Gayle, you were going to say?”

“I was? Okay ... Won’t *any* food do?”

“Apparently no,” spoke Anna Lue, “just seems like some folks
don’t mean what they say, in a contrary way,”
she frowned. “Isn’t it lying,
if inside’s out and upside’s down,
less is more and rich is poor,
crooked’s straight and lost is found . . . “

Attention rapt, the class had more.

“ . . . *Peace is war, silent sound, whisper roar . . .*”

“ . . . *dull is sheen, verb’s a noun, noiseless snore!*“

“ . . . fat is lean, ceiling floor, pollution green,”
continued Anna Lue. “Who says those things?”

Jane the Janitor passed by the door, “And coal is clean!”

Said Anna Lue: “*See what I mean?!*”

Added Lenore, “And lunch is nutritious!”

“Don’t forget delicious!” said Matt.

“And the fake news is never fictitious!”

“What’s *that?*” asked Zach, the brave boy
from lunch who had eaten the fishes.

“Well, it’s news that might reflect badly on you,”
said Ms. V, “or news that isn’t all true.”

“So if you don’t like it you just say it’s fake?” wondered Nate.

“Okay Class, it’s getting late,” said Ms. V.

“It’s seventy-five past two,
meaning finish that sheet or it’s homework for you.”

“Mizz V!”

Answering back, “Yes Zach?”

“If it’s *homework*, why do we do it in class?”

“Good question,” replied Ms. Vrraughkhten,

“No—I mean *bad!* We should have
these opposite days less often!

Oh, by the way—time out on opposite day—
I canceled the test.”

The kids all screamed “*YESSSS!!*” corrected to “*NOOO!!!*”

Then counted down (in reverse) the last seconds,

by bell time forgetting their lessons,

made beelines for exits, abandoned their books,

while teachers in hallways exchanged puzzled looks.

The Commercial

It just so happened Mayor Moral showed up
as the last bell was ringing, out on the lawn,
grinning and singing his one-noted song,
'*re-elect me*' and he brought two people along
with cameras, his pointy teeth were too bright
they adjusted the light
and he smiled when the red one came on
and he beckoned the students "Come be on TV!
You'll see yourself later and say '*hey that's me!*'"

Thing was, Mayor Moral? He didn't like children,
and they liked him less,
so no one approached and (by now you might guess)
the only one close within reach was poor Anna,
if only she just could have fled,
on a plane, in a car, on a boat or a sled
but too late! Cuz the light on the camera went red
and he said "Don't you wanna be on TV?"
His pointy teeth sparkling, he patted her head,
"A vote for me is a vote for the children, isn't that so, Red?"

It was then that he caught Anna's gaze
and his eyes filled with dread:
The school carnival and the pie-throwing maze
it was *her!* And the last thing she'd said,
before she coconut-creamed his head,
was '*Don't call me Red!*'

"My parents both swear
you're the greatest mayor
that Parched Bay's ever seen," she said.
"The streets are always clean,
and the city dump smells like lilacs in May."

The Mayor, relieved, checked his toupee
(an odd shade of red),
"What a charming display,
little girl," he said, he was talking her way
but watching the camera instead. "So what do you say?
Would you like a new playground? A fancy café?
Lunch with extra baloney? More minnees in your stronee?
Buses replaced by ponies?
Any more words, little girl, for the
wonderful voters out there in Parched Bay?"

“Oh just one thing, Mister Mayor,” she said: “*It’s opposite day!*”

All the students were there, they encircled the Mayor
they were chanting and hooting and silence-polluting
“Mayor Moral loves children, and children love him!”

Mayor Moral was mad!
Like a bull in a pen at the rodeo mad!
The camera was rolling the TV commercial gone bad!

“You sniveling kids, you ruined my ad!
Go ahead, keep gloating!
But if I were your parents—til you have their good sense—
I’d stop you from voting!”

The mayor’s precious kids serenaded with whistles
as Anna was pondering good sense, dodging spittle:

“New playground indeed! Why when I’m re-elected
I’ll cover the ball field in thistles!
I’ll sow it with weeds! I’ll take out the swings!
The slides! The poles!
There’ll be nothing left but dirt and some holes!”
As he scanned in vain for his nephew, Cyrus
(now peering through blinds from the principal’s office),
a bespectacled face in the crowd caught his eye.
“Sally Snackdogle! These children all lie!
Have you nothing to say??”

Ms. Snackdogle, camera pointing her way,
winked at Anna, breathed deep, and said ... “*Opposite day?*”

At once all the children screamed “shrimp dip too-pay!”
The Mayor’s face (red as his hairpiece),
curled his thin lips to say “Out of my way!”
And yes it was Friday but students decided
to stay and delay, have a say
in front of the cameras,
between the mayor and his van,
which probbly seemed further (to him)
than a row boat to Afghanistan.

The Kitchen

. . . Anna skipped home and strode into the kitchen,
where it was cool.

“Have a snack,” said her mom,
“have a seat on that stool,
and let’s hear what happened at school.”

“Oh nothing,” she started to say,
mind on the full tray
of food, left in the lunchroom café
(her stomach still grumbling away).
“Well okay, this crow said today was opposite day,”
she said between grapes.

“Opposite day? A crow? You don’t say!”

“I just said it!”

“Alright, okay. Wha’d you learn?” asked her mom.

“I learned quite a lot, just not in the way
that a teacher would say,” she said. “Where’s Dad?”

“We’re meeting him at some industrial park.”

“*Industrial* park?”

“Strange, I know. Stranger still, he claims he saw crows
(her eyes met Anna’s . . .).
Chirping . . . like larks. Hard day at work I suppose.”

‘*Oh yeah,*’ thought Anna, ‘*all 18 holes . . .*’

”So finish those grapes and we’ll get a head start!

But on this day, the children would say,
the crows serenaded the folk of Parched Bay,
nobody ate in Sue Lynne's café (well, Zach),
yet in fact students learned,
though teachers (including hers!) look back on that day,
christened by crows, and say
they stopped teaching and listened,
and learned, in low voices turned
to each other, said '*Let's do another real soon.*'

As for the moon it was not to be found (in the sky),
everything all turned around (like a pie?),
inside out and upside down (or beneath),
the only sound except Mayor Moral('s grinding teeth)
was Nigel the Thief, sprinting ringing ding dong doors,
sweeping floors, returning toys and jewels
and brooms and power tools
to living rooms and hardware stores.

Pillow under head, Anna, as the day began, in bed.
'Maybe it was all a dream.
Well, most—but not the rice n' beans.
Or is this what we get when we let
other people tell us what things mean?
On opposite day not everyone means what they say.
Some of it is done for fun, but just the same,
some grown-ups seem unaware it's just a game!'

Anna Bean closed her eyes,
floating on a lazy tide
where day's remains invade sleep's dreams—
dreams that seep back into day,
where some folks don't say what they mean
(some believe it anyway).
Her brain, quite full, on pillow, strayed,
before it had a chance to say

. *Bad Day!*

ISBN-13: 978-0-9973537-3-0
Library of Congress Control Number: 2017914246
© Bill Grigsby