



What's Wrong with a Pet Dinosaur? Poems and Drawings

Tony Philips

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What's Wrong with a Pet Dinosaur? collects light, amusing children's poems alongside complementary drawings.

In his humorous children's poetry collection *What's Wrong with a Pet Dinosaur?*, Tony Philips takes bouncy flights of imagination.

Children narrate most of the poems. They direct adults in creating extravagant parties, complete with tubing, horses, sailing, and a zoo; they get in trouble for passing gas during a church choir's pause. Scatological humor is present, as are other forms: animals fight over who is the best among them, and a pickle gets in on the action; a girl argues that, with all the words in all of the books in the world, there must be more than twenty-six letters; a child crosses paths with another of their selves, who is scurrying from an unseen terror.

The book's smorgasbord of situations suggests a prodigious imagination that extends to sticks with serious motion sickness:

*"Can you please stop," it said,
"This spinning around?
I'm feeling quite squeamish.
Can you please put me down?"
But I didn't, and then
It just barfed in my face.
Broken leaves and stick sap
All over the place.*

While there are entries that are predictable in their conceits, more common are poems that celebrate pet dinosaurs, or new feet to replace those which have been worn through, or a boy who's hung by his nose, like art on the wall. These poems are propulsive, musical affairs, attentive to rhyme and meter at all times. However, the book's strict adherence to its rhyming forms leads to forced and awkward lines, as well as some stuttering scansion.

Funny pen and ink drawings enhance the entries; they highlight the poems' features, like dogs turning into ducks, and a boy who is made entirely of instruments (with an inevitable horn for a butt). A woman appears next to her stylish husband, a dressed-up fox; a boy's nose sprouts an enormous vine that's topped with a stubborn duck; and there's a fat Santa stuck fast in a chimney. These illustrations are straightforward in their composition: they have charming elements and are expressive, though they are also somewhat rough. Sans a table of contents, those searching for particular poems are left to rely on the book's alphabetical index.

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CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (October 15, 2021)

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