

GAIL CARSON LEVINE

Forgive Me, I Meant to Do It



False Apology Poems

Illustrated by **MATTHEW CORDELL**

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Gail Carson Levine



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Forgive Me, I Meant to Do It: False Apology Poems

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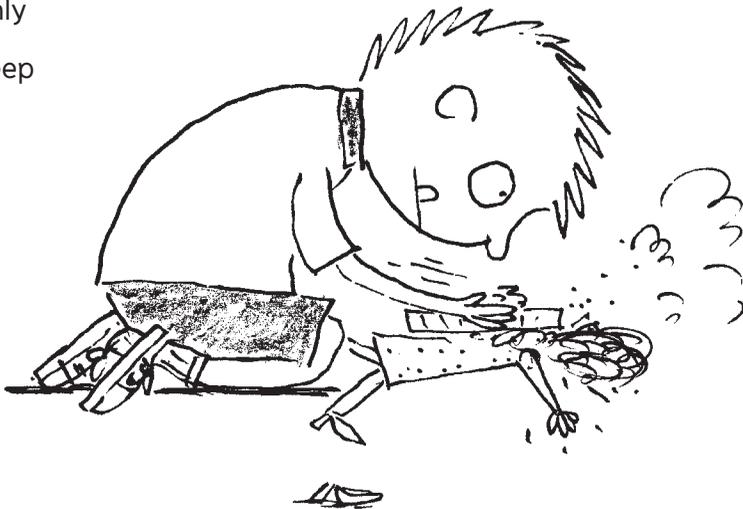
First Edition

This Is Just to Say

While you were buying
doll dresses
I sanded off
your Barbie's face

which
you constantly
patted
and praised

Forgive me
her beauty
was only
skin deep





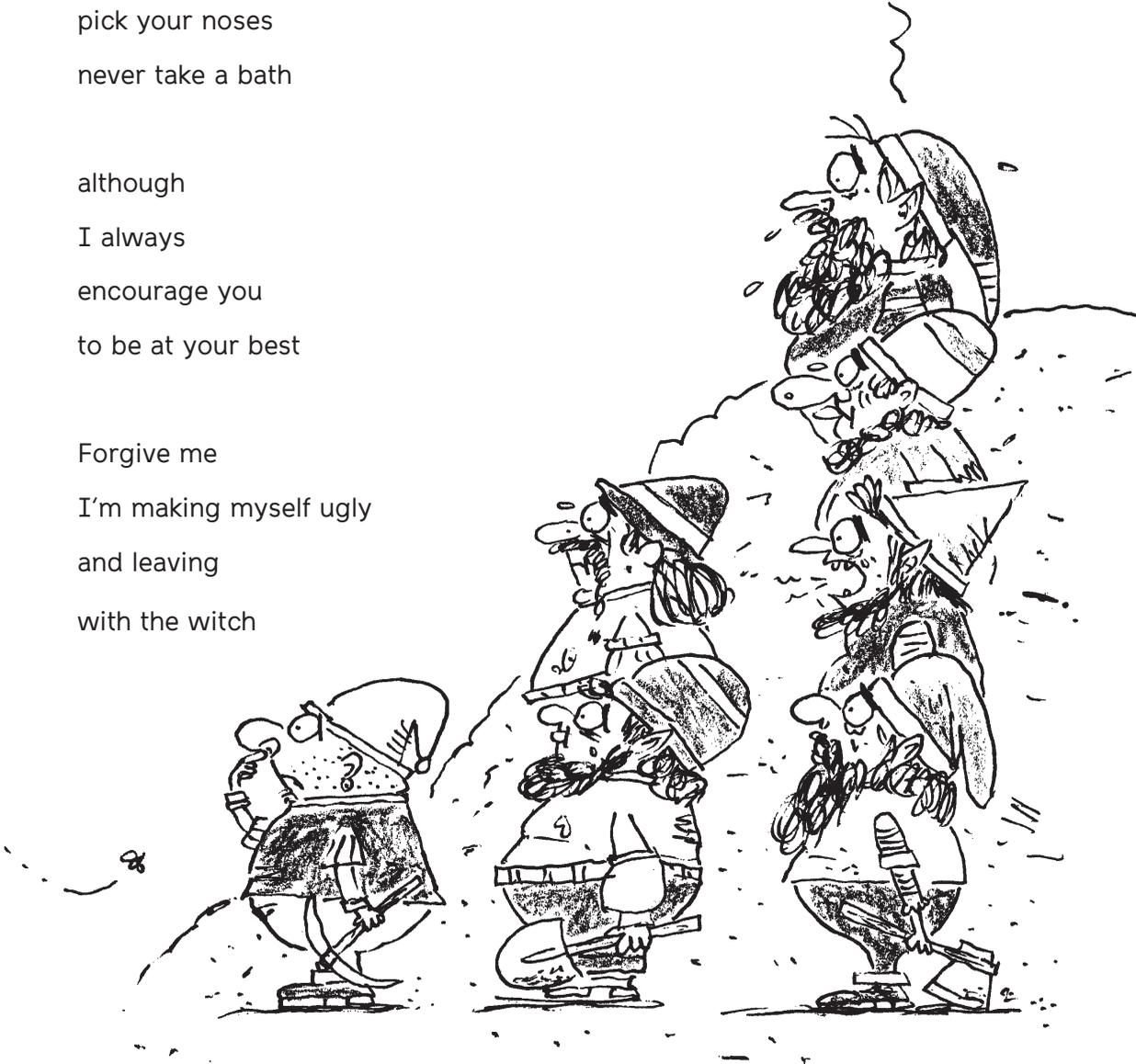


This Is Just to Say

Dwarves
you snore
pick your noses
never take a bath

although
I always
encourage you
to be at your best

Forgive me
I'm making myself ugly
and leaving
with the witch



Blame my poems on the American poet William Carlos Williams,
who lived from 1883 to 1963 and was a doctor as well as a poet.

Here's his false apology poem:



This Is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

—*William Carlos Williams*

Imagine **his** wife coming downstairs in the morning after dreaming about those plums all night and waking up tasting them. Possibly she opens the icebox door (no refrigerators then) and finds a poem in the neatly washed-and-dried plum bowl. Maybe she laughs or maybe she goes for a very long walk or maybe she eats *his* breakfast and then writes her own false apology poem—

Which you can do too. Many poets have written them, following the form invented by William Carlos Williams. But don't even consider writing this kind of poem unless you can get yourself into a grouchy mood. You will be wasting your time.

If you do decide to write, your poems should be mean, or what's the point? Mine are, and William Carlos Williams's is too, in its subtle way. He's glad he got to those plums first!

You don't need a title, because William Carlos Williams has given you one, which can be repeated endlessly until your reader is completely sick of it. You also don't need a new ninth line, because that's always the same too: *Forgive me*. Notice that there are three stanzas, which you may agree are quite enough, and each stanza is four lines long, which you may think are four too many. The first stanza states the horrible offense. The second stanza describes the effect of the offense. The last stanza begins with "Forgive me" and continues with the false apology, because the writer is not

sorry at all. There is no punctuation (how nice!), and the beginning words of only the first and ninth lines need to be capitalized. The line beginnings and endings substitute for capital letters and punctuation. Normally, capitals and punctuation help the reader understand, so be careful to end your lines in a way that is very clear, unless you want to confuse your reader, which might be the wisest course.

Also, think about the rhythm of the lines. After you've cleared everyone out of the house, read your stanzas aloud to help you decide where to end a line. Funny poems are still poems.

You don't have to follow William Carlos Williams's form exactly if you don't want to. I haven't. You can add or subtract lines and stanzas. Or you can abandon the form completely and write false apology poems in your own cruel way.

For those of you who lack an ounce of mean and are reading this book only for research into the psychology of unpleasant people, you can write a real apology poem. However, even this will not be possible if you are too angelic to have anything to apologize for.

Whatever way you do it, have fun and save your poems!

—Gail Carson Levine

