



★ **Tales from Muggleswick Wood**

Vicky Cowie

Charlie Mackesy, Illustrator

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Vicky Cowie's sweet fairy tale book *Tales from Muggleswick Wood* ventures into a magical world of gnomes, pixies, and stink-resistant moles.

A grandmother tells a bedtime story, each dedicated to one of her five grandchildren during her five-night visit to their home. In the first, a girl gathers gargoyle and dragonfly friends on her way to a tea party in Muggleswick Wood. Second, a repugnant beetle can grant a boy a wish. Third, an arrogant businessman fails to heed warnings about a boggart that lives in his new home. Fourth, a grumpy major attempts to chase a mole out of his yard with strong smells, to his wife's dismay. And finally, fairies hope to ride a kelpie to a ball—but it may or may not dive to the bottom of a lake with them instead.

Rhyming, rhythmic, immersive, and lyrical, the fabulistic prose bounces from “a war zone of soil” that makes “the Major's blood boil” to “the crook of an oak” that houses “brave gnomely folk” with melodic ease. The cordial girl of the first story and the cheerful, twirling nymph of the last are endearing, while the fiendish boggart's surprise attachment to the businessman and the major's failed experiment with poop as mole deterrent add rollicking humor. Though the grandmother tells these stories at bedtime, the children often end up rolling with laughter.

The watercolor and ink illustrations are cheery and quiet, evoking wonder over nature and the magic of make-believe. Picturesque renditions of a leafy, mushroom-filled forest and a cozy fireplace are comforting, while the major's outstretched arms as he surveys his mole-hill-covered lawn mirrors the hilarity of its tale.

With unexpected humor, *Tales from Muggleswick Wood* is an enchanting collection of fairy stories for bedtime and beyond.

AIMEE JODOIN (November / December 2024)

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