

HOW MUCH GROUND
WOULD A
GROUND HOG HOG
IF A GROUND HOG
COULD HOG GROUND?

by

Barbara Colman

“Up, up, UP, everybody. Get UP out of bed,”
Said Walter the woodchuck to each snoring head.
“It is feeling like spring and there’s wood there to chuck.
It is time to go traveling to check out our luck.”

“Do we *have* to get up?” from the mouth of young Woolly.
“It’s cozy in here and I’m not awake fully
And surely not ready to go on a hike.
I am *going* to stay here. You can do what you like!”

Then a stirring from Willie who opened one eye
And said, “What’s all the fuss here. I’m just a poor guy
Who is trying hard to catch the last good winks of winter
Without thought of working on trunk, limb and splinter.

“Let’s set the alarm for about six weeks more
And pack it back in for a really good snore.”
From Wanda and Winnie, the girls, not a peep.
They slumbered along in their deep-seated sleep.

Winifred thought as she took in her brood,
No amount of complaining would do any good.
It was out of their hands as to when they would go,
And it didn’t depend on the ice or the snow.

It didn’t depend on the warmth or the cold
Or if they felt timid or if they felt bold
Or if they had gumption or if they had none.
There was nothing by her or by them to be done.

The whole world was watching right with them that day,
For the true test of spring would now dictate their way.
It *was* after all February the second,
And *something* out there to their Walter* had beckoned.

He made himself tall without noise or commotion,
Approaching his task with a sense of devotion.
Will there be spring now or more winter woes?
He made himself ready: THE SHADOW KNOWS!”

*Descendant of *Punxsutawney Phil - Pennsylvania’s world
famous Woodchuck who put February 2nd on the calendar
(although *some* members of the family call him a Ground Hog).

He spoke to them all with a turn of his head.
 "The shadow's NOT there! You can't go back to bed!"
 Now Willie and Woolly and Wanda and Win
 Were weeping and wailing, creating such din,

You'd have thought that the end of the world was at hand,
 Not that spring would be bursting all over the land.
 "We'd like to know, will you please tell us how
 You can tell that no-shadow means we get up now?"

You say spring's upon us, but we could still sleep,"
 The unhappy chorus continued to weep.
 Willie was angry. "It *must* not be spring.
 It cannot be time for the 'larm clock to ring.

You can't *make* me get up. I am going back to sleep,
 And you won't hear from *me* now, not one little peep.
 While Willie was noisily stating his case,
 Wanda just sat there and scrunched up her face.

Woolly meanwhile was back deep into slumber.
 No worry for him about hitting the lumber.
 "This whole thing's absurd. It is out and out silly.
 Decisions are fashioned and made willy-nilly.

I'm OUT of this family." All this from young Winnie.
 "I *won't* be a "W"! Now I am Ginnie!"
 Walter said, "Children, it's time now to greet
 The new season with joy and with wings on our feet.

THE JOURNEY

It now became easy to make up a mind.
 The choice was to MOVE IT or be left behind.
 The snoozing was over. They slowly got cracking.
 They tidied their home and they started their packing.

A knapsack for each and a jacket and cap.
 No time now for loafing or lounging or nap.
 Walter then told them that plans must be made
 For the journey through fields to find their new glade.

"We're seeking a place where the woodchucking's great.
 Where IF we could chuck, we would chuck until late.
 But before we will get there we've demons to pass
 Who are mean to poor woodchucks and lurk in the grass.

"They're dogs and they're vicious. They're crafty and mean.
 They're hungry and angry. They're fast and they're lean.
 To woodchucks they're trouble, to groundhogs they're fuss.
 They're lying in the fields just waiting for us.

“They have an old instinct that says to attack
 And to grab by the neck and to never give back.
 One thing is apparent; it’s easy to see.
 We’ll have to get by them before we’ll be free.”

A silence descended while each of them thought.
 They needed a plan so they wouldn’t get caught.
 Something to help them so they could sneak by.
 Wanda came up with a plan they could try:

“I think our best bet in going on this excursion
 Is making a ruckus to act as diversion.
 We’ve pictures of Phil and I know he’d not mind
 If we used them to further a plan of this kind.

We’ll put them on top of our little toy boat
 That someone can guide with a trusty remote.
 When the dogs come to sniff at the hubbub at hand
 We can sneak past them all to cross over their land.”

“I like that,” said Winifred. “How ‘bout you boys?”
 “I like it,” said Willie. “I’ll fix up the noise.”
 Woolly was pouting, just shook his head NO.
 “Let’s do it,” said Walter. “I think it’s a go.”

They nestled back into their hole for the night
 Pretending contentment, pretending no fright,
 But for Ginnie: “Psst, Willie, I’m scared, are you, too?”
 “Who *me?*” answered he. “I’m no sissy like you!”

But he, like the rest of them, didn’t sleep well,
 And tempers were short when the morning light fell.
 But Walter and Winifred got out of bed
 So the children could learn of the jobs lying ahead.

“Willie, the sound effects. Please make them blare.
 Wanda, the picture, please fix it with care,
 Mounting it well on the battered boat
 That Woolly will guide with the trusty remote.”

The battery charging was left up to Winnie.
 (Walter’d forgotten that she was now Ginnie).
 They got in the spirit and all were excited.
 Minds were now busy, and they were delighted.

They finished by noon and decided to start,
 Each one of them ready for his or her part.
 They marched to the edge of the dangerous land
 And collapsed into sleep on the riverside sand.

In the morning, they quietly but quickly arose,
Alert from their heads to the tips of their toes.
They knew right away it was time to get going.
They started their trek. The excitement was growing.

They came to the place where the dogs lay in wait.
And they knew what they did now would settle their fate.
Willie was ready. He went into action.
The noise was STUPENDOUS! What a distraction!.

The dogs were all chasing the noise barking loudly,
Sure to retrieve the intruder most proudly.
Woolly kept Phil jumping out of their reach,
In and out, round about, from the river to beach.

Meanwhile the woodchucks were stealthily walking
Away to the right and with nobody talking.
They all held their breath until finally at last
They could breathe with the knowledge they'd all made it past.

The hounds were not pleased. They had lost a great prize.
Whatever it was, it had had a disguise.
The children, however, made up for the dogs.
You have never seen happier woodchucks or hogs!

A NEW HOME

"We MADE it! We MADE it!" they shrieked and they shouted.
"Of course," from their father. "Which one of you doubted?"
They sang and they laughed and they jumped and they danced.
They leapfrogged and skipped and they ran and they pranced.

"THIS is such fun and I'm SO glad," said Ginnie,
"That now I can say that I think I'll be Winnie!"
She staked out her turf and said, "THIS will be mine.
It's next to the water. The view is just fine."

"Ohhh, no," said Wanda. "MINE is right here.
Yours is right there, it is perfectly clear."
"Hey, just a minute, where's mine?" chimed in Willie.
"Yours doesn't matter," replied Wanda shrilly.

"Just WAIT now," said Woolly, "It's MY turn to say.
It's here that I am and it's here that I stay."
"My children," said Walter, addressing the crew,
"HOW MUCH GROUND YOU WOULD HOG were it left up to you!

“Enough of these arguments. Let us now cease.
There’s room here for all of us. Kindly make peace.
We’ve come to a place where the woodchucking’s great.
So let us get started before it’s too late.

A question remains we can no longer duck:
How much wood would we chuck were we able to chuck?
Let’s start with the work load and count as we go.
And when we are finished we’ll let the world know.”

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE

To the best of my knowledge, they’re at it right now
With mountains of wood (that is IF they know how).
I guess we shall wonder until they are done
If they really chuck wood or they only have fun.