

The Mud Muffins

— Betsi McGuigan

One day Peter and Polly ran outside to play. The snow still made a patchy blanket across the ground, for Mrs. Thaw had been in the neighborhood and swept away whole patches of snow leaving the brown earth showing through. Father Sun shone down brightly and made the days long and warm.

But Peter and Polly were hoping to go sliding a few more times before Mrs. Thaw came and swept all of the snow away. They ran to their favorite hillside and flopped on their bellies. “Whee!” cried the children. “This is fun!”

Up the hill they ran and down again. “Whee!” cried Polly. “Oh, Peter!” Polly began to laugh. Mrs. Thaw had been to their favorite field already and Peter had discovered just where she had come and swept the snow away. Peter had landed in a big mud puddle. But both of the children were laughing. After the long, cold winter they were happy to see the brown earth again. But suddenly Peter cried, “Polly! Look!”

The children stared at the little brown creature standing near the edge of the puddle.

“What is it?” whispered Polly.

“I don’t know,” Peter replied.

The creature did not seem afraid, so Polly spoke up. “Excuse me, hello. . . but. . . who are you?”

“Oh!” said the little creature with a start.

He had been so busy that he had not noticed the children. “Oh my, hello, children! Who am I? Polly dear, can it be true that you are already six years old and have never before noticed me? Oh dear me. . . no. . . well. . . I suppose not. Every year, Polly, here I am, as busy as can be while you sled and play. Why, you’ve helped me before—don’t you know? You too, Peter. But, you ask—who am I? My dear Peter and Polly, I am a Mud Muffin. This is my busy time of year as you can see. I must stir up all of the mud in all of the mud puddles. I count on the children to help me. Come now, find a stick.

“We must stir and stir. Mrs. Thaw is busy too, sweeping and sweeping. . . she sweeps and sweeps all day long. She must sweep away all of this snow and then we Mud Muffins must stir up all of the mud—with the children’s help, of course. We depend on the children’s help. Yes, good Peter, you have found a stick. Yes, Polly, that is right. There is so much mud to stir. . .

*The sun has called to the frozen earth
Awake for Spring is near
And everywhere there was ice and snow
The squishy mud appears!
Yesterday it was white and slushy
Now my garden is brown and mushy
I feel the earth begin to sing
Thanks, Mr. Sun, for it’s almost Spring!*

“Oh, wonderful, children! You are doing a wonderful job! Do you hear? Tee hee! Tee hee! Our friends the chickadees are laughing! That means the sap in the maple trees is rising and tickling their toes! When we stir the mud it tickles the trees’ toes and makes the trees laugh. And when the trees laugh, that tickles the chickadees’ toes. Then they stop singing chickadee-dee-dee and they start to laugh—tee hee! Tee hee!”

“Well, Polly and Peter, I am very glad that you came by. For now the sap is rising. Soon Farmer Brown will come and tap the maple trees. The chickadees will laugh and you, my dear children, will have pancakes with syrup!” ♦

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