

Ghosts' Grace

by Paul Fleischman (1997)

1	Come to the window!		
2		She's bringing the platters	
3			The children are chattering
4			Scooting their chairs in
1	The evening meal is about to begin!		
2	The evening meal is about to begin!		
3	The evening meal is about to begin!		
4	The evening meal is about to begin!		
1			They're blind as the streams underground
2			They're blind as the streams underground
3		They're mortals, remember	
4	No blessing beforehand?		
1			They don't know what ghosts know.
2			They don't know what ghosts know.
3	Deaf as millstones		They don't know what ghosts know.
4		Unthinking as stumps	They don't know what ghosts know.

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1		What a grace I would speak,	acclaiming even the unnoticed napkins			
2		What a grace I would speak,				How quickly the lad snatches his off the table
3	What a grace I would speak,	what a hymn I would sing				
4	What a grace I would speak,	what a hymn I would sing				
1	To feel just once more					
2	To feel just once more					stiff as bark
3	To feel		starched			
4	To feel	the weight of proud linen				
1	white as sun upon snow	To savor	To search			To open it
2		To savor its smoothness between thumb and finger	To search			To open it
3		To savor	To search for my mother's invisible stitches			To open it
4		To savor	To search			To open it carefully as a love note
1	What a gift	beyond price	that would be.			
2	What a gift	beyond price	that would be.			
3		What a gift	that would be.			
4		What a gift	that would be.			See there--the girl has started her salad!
1	Do you remember?		A jungle explored by fork			
2	Do you remember?					Tints flashing

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3	Yes, I remember		
4	Yes, I remember		
1	Yes, I remember,	I'll always remember.	
2	Yes, I remember,	I'll always remember.	
3	Yes, I remember,	I'll always remember.	
			The wet crunch of cucumbers, each an oasis
4	Yes, I remember,	I'll always remember.	
1		Tomatoes sliced up into seed- bearing galleons	The unlikely marriage of oil
2			The unlikely marriage of oil
3	The sharpness of scallions		The unlikely marriage
4			The unlikely marriage
1	soother		How well I remember.
2	soother		How well I remember.
3	and vinegar	lip-scorcher	How well I remember.
4	and vinegar	lip-scorcher	How well I remember.
1	The father has picked up a roll!		To hold one,
2	Lucky man!		To hold one
3	Lucky man!		To hold one
4		To feel it warming your hand like a hearth	To hold one
1	a small treasure chest built of wheat		slowly

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2	To open it	slowly	
3		slowly	To lift back its lid
4		slowly	
1	start		
2	start		
3	start		
4	start	when the steam, like a spirit,	flies out
1	To feel the fit of a knife in your palm	brick-hard and defiant	
2	To feel the fit of a knife in your palm	brick-hard and defiant	
3	To feel the fit of a knife in your palm		in wintertime
4	To do battle with butter		in wintertime
1	soft and servile	I'm hungry for hunger!	What rapture, that tug in the stomach
2	soft and servile	I'm hungry for hunger!	
3		in July.	
4		in July.	
1	Corn on the cob!	Perfect bliss!	
2	when butter and rolls are close by.	Corn on the cob!	So strange how they hurry

3	when butter and rolls are close by.	Hot from the pot!	
4	when butter and rolls are close by.	Hot from the pot!	
1			To joy in
2			To joy in
3	They're mortals		To joy in
4		Remember	To joy in the river of steam
1			
2		heating your cheekbones	To march down the rows
3	misting your spectacles		
4			To march down the rows
1			
2	To bite into summer itself,	sweet as sugar	To leave the cob closely cropped
3	To bite into summer itself,	sweet as sugar	thin as a new-born sheep
4		sweet as sugar	
1			
2		The favorite course of the teeth!	
3	Fresh corn!	The favorite course of the teeth!	What is it he's carving?
4	Fresh corn!	The favorite course of the teeth!	The father is rising

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1	Baked chicken,	still sizzling!	Can you still remember?	To dine on the scent first
2	Baked chicken,	still sizzling!	Can you still remember?	
3		Baked chicken!	Can you still remember?	
4		Baked chicken!	Can you still remember?	
1			Yes, I remember	
2	The opera's overture		Yes, I remember	
3		Meal in miniature	Yes, I remember	
4			Yes, I remember	To choose from potatoes,
1			surrounding the fowl	like a vegetable court
2		potatoes		
3	potatoes,	white onions		
4	white onions,	bright carrots		
1		every separate seasoning	Pepper	
2		every separate seasoning	bold rosemary	
3	To detect with your tongue	every separate seasoning		soft-spoken parsley
4	To detect with your tongue	every separate seasoning		
1	To dip your spoon into the moat of meat juices		Baked chicken, so worthy	of praise
2		Baked chicken,	still sizzling, so worthy	of praise
3		Baked chicken,	still sizzling, so worthy	of praise
4	To dip your spoon into the moat of meat juices		Baked chicken, so worthy	of praise
1				Impossible!

2			He's standing	Impossible!
3		She's standing		
4	Look there!			
1		They're all leaving the room!		The fools!
2		They're all leaving the room!		The fools!
3	Finished so soon?	They're all leaving the room!	They're mortals	
4	Finished so soon?	They're all leaving the room!	They're mortals	
1	Each meal's a museum to stroll through			
2		not sprint		
3			meant for stopping	
4				and staring
1	To sit at the table,	my sisters,	my brothers,	my parents around me
2		my sisters,	my brothers,	my parents around me
3			my brothers,	my children around me
4			my brothers,	my children around me
1	For that	I'm so hungry!		the feasting
2		I'm so hungry!		the feasting, the stories
3		I'm so hungry!		the stories, the licking
4		I'm so hungry!	The feasting, the stories	the licking, the laughing
1	All gone!		Never again	to taste food,
2	All gone!			to taste food,

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3	All gone!	Leaving only remembrance of long ago	
4	All gone!	Leaving only remembrance of long ago	
1	to taste family!		But let's come watch tomorrow.
2	to taste family!		But let's come watch tomorrow.
3	to taste family!		But let's come watch tomorrow.
4	to taste family!	Let's leave this place...	But let's come watch tomorrow.