

An Extra Summer Day

“I think it’s going to snow soon” said Squeaky one January day. “The sky is getting very dark.”

“Well, it’s certainly cold enough” replied Hoppy. “Lucky you, Blume, with your cardigan on”. But then Hoppy noticed that Blume looked a bit sad. “What’s the matter, Blume?” he asked kindly, “Are you cold?”

“No, I’m not cold” said Blume. “But I wish they would sing my favourite hymn again, the one that goes – *a little sun, a little rain, a soft wind blowing from the west*. It reminds me of summer and of being in the garden with the minister. Why don’t they sing it anymore?”

“I suppose because it’s January and so dark and cold that it doesn’t seem the right time to be singing that hymn” replied Hoppy.

Then Squeaky said “But if Blume wants to hear it, couldn’t we manage to let the minister know somehow?”

The three of them talked and thought and thought and talked until finally Squeaky had an idea. “See that wooden board with all the hymn numbers on it. We could change one

of those numbers to the number of Blume’s favourite hymn and then everyone would sing it.”

“Of course” replied Hoppy excitedly. “I know where the numbers are kept – they’re in that wooden box over in the corner.”

Early next Sunday morning, Squeaky and Hoppy dragged number 9 from the box and changed the second hymn to the one they wanted. Morning service began but when it was time to sing the second hymn, people were puzzled to see hymn number 9 on the board and number 260 on their printed service sheets. “It’s a mistake”, said Reverend Andrews. “We’ll sing the hymn on your service sheets.” And they sang “Tis winter now, the fallen snow has left the heavens all coldly clear.”



The following Sunday it happened again. Number 9 was the second hymn on the board instead of number 262 as on the service sheets. Reverend Andrews wondered if perhaps someone was changing the hymn numbers around as a joke. “We’ll sing hymn 262 as on your service sheets” he announced to the congregation. And they sang about bells ringing over white hills. But the next Sunday the minister checked the board carefully before the service and sure enough, the second hymn had been changed to number 9 again. “Well”, he said to himself, “someone must really want us to sing that



hymn.” So during the service he announced that they would sing hymn number 9 this time.

“At last”, thought a delighted Blume, as he closed his eyes and let his thoughts drift back to summer time, bright garden flowers and warm sunshine; forgetting the cold, grey day outside.

Now the congregation all sang so loudly and with such joy that the Reverend Andrews realised they were all longing for summer. “I have an idea.” he said. “Next week I’m going to get the church and hall extra warm. I’ll turn the heating on Saturday night to make sure. And I want you all to come wearing summer clothes under your winter coats and bring a picnic lunch to eat in the hall afterwards. We’re going to have an extra summer day next week.”

On Sunday morning everyone bustled into church very gaily, unwrapped their scarves, took off their boots, heavy coats, mittens and gloves. Soon the chairs were filled with people in summer dresses, shorts, bright shirts and trousers; even some straw hats and sunglasses and little strappy sandals. Someone had tied a pink silk flower onto Blume’s arm and he sat on his own chair under a picture of a boat sailing under the shining sun.

Everyone was smiling; everyone felt happy and free in their light summer clothes as they sang jolly summery hymns. There were paintings of summer scenes that the

children had done taped to the walls and buckets and spades were arranged on the windows sills. No one noticed the snow quietly falling outside, not when the sun was shining so warmly in their thoughts.

After the service everyone dashed across to the hall, where they sat on cushions and rugs to eat their picnic lunches. The children sang “You are my Sunshine” and “Summer Holiday”. Then the choir sang madrigals about roses, twittering birds and buzzing bees. It was a wonderful picnic, a wonderful afternoon, ending with lively games that everyone played. As evening fell, it seemed very strange to put on heavy coats and go home in a white wintery world.

Blume kept his silk flower tied to his arm all winter long. Reverend Andrews reminded everyone that summer can be here in our hearts whenever we want it to be. “The good world we live in turns from season to season” he said. “But we can find the joy and beauty of summer deep inside us whenever we take time to look.”