

## Escape at Bedtime

by Robert Louis Stevenson

The lights from the parlour and kitchen shone out  
Through the blinds and the windows and bars;  
And high overhead and all moving about,  
There were thousands of millions of stars.  
There ne'er were such thousands of leaves on a tree,  
Nor of people in church or the Park,  
As the crowds of the stars that looked down upon me,  
And that glittered and winked in the dark.

The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter, and all,  
And the star of the sailor, and Mars,  
These shown in the sky, and the pail by the wall  
Would be half full of water and stars.  
They saw me at last, and they chased me with cries,  
And they soon had me packed into bed;  
But the glory kept shining and bright in my eyes,  
And the stars going round in my head.

## Playing with Stars

Young children know what it's like  
to play with stars.  
First of all it's a wink and a smile  
from some distant constellation,  
then it's hide and seek as they disappear  
in a cover of cloud.  
Sometimes children see how far  
they can travel to a star  
before familiar voices call them  
home to bed.  
Like all good games, of course,  
you need to use a little imagination  
when playing with stars.  
More experienced players  
can jump over stars  
or shake down a star.  
Some can trap them in butterfly nets,  
but you should always let them loose again.  
Stars grow pale and die if you cage them.  
Sometimes the stars tell stories  
of their journeys across the sky  
and sometimes they stay silent.  
At these times children may travel themselves,  
wandering a line that unravels  
through their dreams.  
At these times too the stars play their own games,  
falling from the sky when there's no one there  
to catch them.  
Sometimes you find these stars on the ground,  
dazed and confused. Be warned though,  
even fallen stars may be hot to touch.  
Young children know what it's like  
to rescue stars, to hold them gently  
in gloved hands and then,  
with one almighty fling,  
sling them back to the sky.  
Adults forget what it's like  
to play with stars,  
and when children offer to teach them  
they're far too busy.