

Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!

VOICES FROM A MEDIEVAL VILLAGE



LAURA AMY SCHLITZ

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT BYRD



HUGO

THE LORD'S NEPHEW

¹ *The Feast of All Souls, celebrated on November 2, is a holy day in honor of the dead.*

² *Friants are boar droppings.*

The Feast of All Souls,¹ I ran from my tutor—
Latin and grammar—no wonder!
I ran to the woods, where I saw his tracks—
this big—and the mud he scratched
bottom side the trees.

Followed his friants² straight to his bed
and found it warm.

There was a boar in the forest.

When I went back, there was my uncle,
rod in hand, but he didn't strike—
I told him,
“There's a boar in the forest.”

“Why, then, we'll go hunting! And as for you,
you'll hunt like a man, or be flogged like a boy.
Help kill the boar, and I'll give you the kidneys—
turn tail and I'll have the skin off your back.”

That night, I lay and dreamed of the hunt.
The underbrush stirring. The snort of the boar,
its foul mouth foaming,
its tusks like scimitars—
those tusks can slice a man, groin to gorge—
but that's not the worst:

the man that dies from the wound of a boar
loses his soul, and burns in hell.

Dawn came. We mounted. Long before noon
the dogs caught the scent, and the hunt was on.
Two relays of hounds, squealing most sore —
the third was faint with fatigue.

I could smell my sweat, rank with fear,
and then — it was like my dream —
the underbrush moved, and the sticks shattered.
I saw it — bristling, dark as the devil,
huge as a horse — and my bowels turned to water.

My uncle dismounted
and I did the same.
My legs were like straw,
but I walked.
Mouth dry, palms wet,
one hand forward on the spear
and one foot ahead
(to fall would be death).

It charged — my uncle lunged
and I behind him — thrust! —
felt the spear pierce.
Braced myself — end to armpit — shoved.
It took a long time,
the dogs keening and the boar struggling —
blood on the grass —
but I stood my ground.

At last it was over, and the brute lay still.
I almost wept:
the joy of it, and the terror.
I gasped like a fish, let my head fall back:
the green leaves swam in the sky.

He kept his word. Right there in the wood,
we kindled a fire and butchered the boar.
The kidneys were mine, gleaming with fat.³
He clapped my back, and called me a man.

But dark of the night, I hear that sound —
sweat in my sleep, and my spear
slips through my hand —

I dream that I'm back in the wood with that boar.

³ However the actor feels about kidneys and fat, this line should be spoken with enthusiasm. In the Middle Ages, it was difficult to get enough protein and fat in the diet. The kidneys of the boar would be a real treat.

WINNER OF THE 2008 NEWBERY MEDAL

- ★ “This unusually fine collection of related monologues and dialogues promises to be a rewarding choice for performance or for reading aloud.”
— *Booklist* (starred review)
- ★ “Bolstered by lively asides and unobtrusive notes, and illuminated by stunningly atmospheric watercolors, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!* brings to life a prototypical English village in 1255.”
— *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
- ★ “Schlitz helps students step directly into the shoes — and lives — of medieval children in this outstanding collection. . . . Browsers interested in medieval life will gravitate toward this title, while history buffs will be thrilled by the chance to make history come alive through their own voices.”
— *School Library Journal* (starred review)
- ★ “Schlitz takes the breath away with unabashed excellence in every direction. . . . The language is rich, sinewy, romantic, and plainspoken. . . . Brilliant in every way.”
— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)



An American Library Association Notable Children's Book

A National Council of Teachers of English Notable Children's Book in the Language Arts

A National Council for the Social Studies Notable Trade Book for Young People

A New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing Selection

A Chicago Public Library Best Book

A Bank Street College Best Children's Book of the Year