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# POEMS

*By Elizabeth Coatsworth*

Alice All-By-Herself  
The Boy with the Parrot  
The Captain's Daughter  
The Cat and the Captain  
The Cat Who Went to Heaven  
Dancing Tom  
Dollar for Luck  
The Golden Horseshoe  
The House of the Swan  
Houseboat Summer  
The Little Haymakers  
The Littlest House  
The Peddler's Cart  
Plum Daffy Adventure  
Summer Green (poems)  
Sword of the Wilderness  
Thief Island  
Trudy and the Tree House  
Twelve Months Make a Year

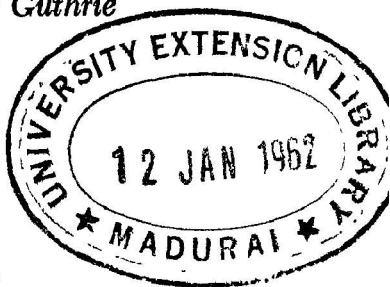
Away Goes Sally  
Five Bushel Farm  
The Fair American  
The White Horse  
The Wonderful Day

First Adventure  
The Wishing Pear  
Boston Bells  
Aunt Flora  
Old Whirlwind  
The Sod House  
Cherry Ann and  
the Dragon Horse

# POEMS

By ELIZABETH COATSWORTH

*Decorations by Vee Guthrie*



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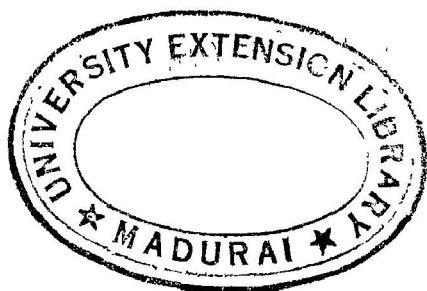
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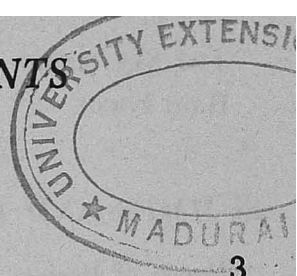
"Stay at Home Song" and "Ever Since" first appeared in Story Parade magazine.

17269

For  
Elizabeth and Clarissa  
with love



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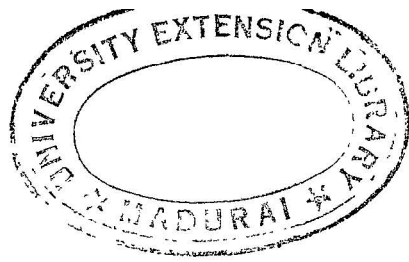
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*WINTER AND THE MOON*





## *The Moonlight*



The room was dark  
but through the open door  
warm yellow firelight  
glazed along the floor,

and wavering on the ceiling,  
touched the mind  
with images and thoughts  
mellow and kind.

But slanting through drawn shades  
beyond his chair  
the moonlight gave a fixed  
and feral stare

which said, "A house is small  
and mean, to hide  
the weight of cold fierce beauty  
here, outside."

## *Gray Is the Sky*

Gray is the sky and brown the earth,  
cold blows the wind across the hill,  
the ponds and streams have closed their doors,  
and under dull and marbled floors  
the waters now lie still.

Only where rapids, too alert  
to sleep, run on 'twixt stone and stone,  
water is seen and still is heard  
attempting an unfinished word  
in its uncertain tone.

## *Question on a Winter's Morning*

Who scattered emeralds on the snow,  
small emeralds, but so bright?

and little rubies, and a show  
of sapphires, flashing light?

and chips of diamonds, each a spark,  
a jet of fiery spray?

Who scattered treasure in the dark  
then, careless, turned away?

## *But What Was Beauty?*

Deep bowed the branches with the snow  
and deep the silence lay,  
the sun moved golden-sleeved and slow  
across the woods that day.

The only things that stirred at all  
were shadows, flower-blue,  
and chickadees sang from a wall  
where dark the pine trees grew.

But what was beauty, soft and strange,  
in which I had no part?  
the bright, the white, delightful change  
unmirrored in my heart?

## *January*

A snow may come as quietly  
as cats can walk across a floor.  
It hangs its curtains in the air,  
and piles its weight against the door.  
It fills old nests with whiter down  
than any swan has ever known,  
and then, as silent as it came,  
you find the pale snow bird has flown.

But snow can come quite otherwise,  
with windy uproar and commotion,  
with shaken trees and banging blinds,  
still salty from the touch of ocean.  
Such storms will wrestle with strong boys,  
and set the girls' skirts wildly blowing,  
until it throws its cap in air  
and shouts, "Well, goodbye now! I'm going!"

## *The Open Door*

Out of the dark  
to the sill of the door  
lay the snow in a long  
unruffled floor,  
and the lamplight fell  
narrow and thin  
a carpet unrolled  
for the cat to walk in.  
Slowly, smoothly,  
black as the night,  
with paws unseen  
(white upon white)  
like a queen who walks  
down a corridor  
the black cat paced  
that cold smooth floor,  
and left behind her,  
bead upon bead,  
the track of small feet  
like dark fern seed.

## *Footprints in the Night*

Who came to our door  
in the dead of the night  
while the foghorns groaned  
and the long eaves wept?

Whoever came  
neither rapped nor called,  
not the smallest sound  
reached where we slept.

Whoever came  
to the cold doorstone  
paused and listened  
and then went on.

Small steps in the snow  
show whence he came,  
and small steps point  
the way he has gone.

## *Now Fall Asleep*

No leaf is left  
to rustle faintly,  
no stream is left  
to sing and flow,  
in silence night  
darkens the woodlands,  
in silence Orion  
shines over the snow.  
The cock that crowed  
for dawn is voiceless,  
the drowsy cow  
stirs and breathes deep,  
and men that labored  
through all the daylight  
with idle hands  
now fall asleep.

## *I Saw the Sea*

I wandered far. I wandered wide,  
I did not know where I was going,  
I saw a desolate countryside,  
the air turned white, and it was snowing.

I wandered up a barren hill  
my footprints followed where I traveled,  
between that unknown hill and home  
my footprints were a path unraveled.

I saw so far I saw the sea,  
the sun came out; I was nigh blinded.  
If I had gone a hundred miles  
to see that sight, I'd not have minded.

## *Sleigh Bells*

There are no bells in all the world  
so sweet as sleigh bells over snow.  
The horses arch their necks to hear  
that pretty music as they go.

If it is dark, you cannot see  
the horses curvetting and prancing,  
but you would know to hear the bells  
that those who shook them must be dancing.

## *Out of the Barn's Close Shelter*

The stars shine large, the stars shine clear,  
The narrow moon is blinding;  
The trees make darkness where they stand,  
Bright earth to bright sky binding.

When the young laborer brings his pail  
Out of the barn's close shelter,  
He sees the constellations blaze  
In glorious helter-skelter.

The lantern in his other hand  
Seems to have lost its light,  
So many lanterns hang and shine  
And glitter in the night!

*SPRING WITH ITS BIRDS*





## *March*

A blue day,  
a blue jay,  
and a good beginning.

One crow,  
melting snow—  
spring's winning!

## *Now Is the Time*

Now is the time  
when robins call,  
the fretful horse  
stamps in the stall,  
the cock claps wings  
in orchards bare,  
under the hedge  
crouches the hare.

Now is the time  
spring fires burn,  
the air is sweet  
with smouldering fern,  
and through the quiet  
hours of night  
the gold-eyed frogs  
croak with delight.

## *Buds*

When all the other leaves are gone  
the brown oak leaves still linger on,  
their branches obstinately lifted  
to frozen wind and snow deep-drifted.

But when the winter is well passed  
the brown oak leaves drop down at last,  
to let the little buds appear  
no larger than a mouse's ear.

## *The Isle Should Have a Pine Tree*

It takes a little island  
to button down a pond  
within its frill of shores and woods  
and pleated hills beyond.

The isle should have a pine tree,  
the tree should have a bird,  
and the bird should sing the sweetest song  
that ear has ever heard.

## *Warning to a Country Cock*

Cock, be carefull  
Do not go  
where the pines  
so blackly grow,

where the sun  
shines bright and narrow  
falling  
in a shafted arrow.

Partridge berries  
scarlet, round,  
cluster  
near the needled ground,

while a pair  
of chickadees  
fly and call  
among the trees.

All is peaceful  
all is fair  
yet, bold-stepping cock,  
Beware!

## *Songs of the Engine Bells*

Not the bells  
of churches,  
housed  
in their towers,

nor civic  
belfries  
that count  
the hours,

do I love  
to hear  
through sun  
and rain

as much as  
the engine  
bell  
of a train.

The engine  
stamps  
and snorts  
like a horse,

it snuffs  
smoke and fire,  
it breathes  
out force.

And the  
engine bell  
calls, "Beware!  
Beware!

"We have far  
to go!  
Have a care,  
have a care!

"Nothing can stop us,  
night or day,  
we have urgent business  
far away.

"Far away  
where you  
have not  
been,

"under a sky  
you have  
not  
seen."

## *Mountain Brook*

Because of the steepness,  
the streamlet runs white,  
narrow and broken  
as lightning by night.

Because of the rocks,  
it leaps this way and that,  
fresh as a flower,  
quick as a cat.

## *No Shop Does the Bird Use*

No shop does the bird use,  
no counter nor baker,  
but the bush is his orchard,  
the grass is his acre,  
the ant is his quarry,  
the seed is his bread,  
and a star is his candle  
to light him to bed.

## *It's Raining Still*

It's raining still  
and no one will come  
up the rutted road,  
up the slippery lane.  
No one will come because of the rain.

No one will come  
through the heavy grass.  
If a bird fly forth,  
if it even call,  
the boughs will shake out a waterfall.

Through the falling rain  
not even the sun  
can approach, and the wind  
even that is still.  
The pond is lost and the pine-dark hill.

Hill, pond and sky  
are lost from sight  
and the only sound  
is the tap and drum  
of the endless rain. No one will come.

## *Spring*

It would be a fine thing  
to be flying, to be flying under a cool moon,  
as a point of an arrow of wings loosed to the north,  
to be a great gray Canada goose flying under the moon  
honking high among the winds.

It would be a fine thing  
to be a sailor, measuring a ship with his eye,  
carrying his suitcase down to a fo'castle locker,  
hearing the water slap slap slapping at the sides of a vessel,  
shaping a yarn in his mind.

## *Green Rain*

The barns are sleek with rain,  
among the steam of blossoming apple trees,  
the robins wade in wet grass to their knees,  
the maple woods again  
turn the black asphalt green,  
and from a sky of dripping leaves there falls  
green rain at slow monotonous intervals  
with a sea-wind between.

## *Holiday*

Down pours the rain,  
horses and cattle stand  
dejected, backed up to the streaming wind,  
and people hurry with their heads bent down,  
and far away the alligators roar,  
and Indian peacocks dance, while from their throats  
harsh and exultant, spring discordant cries  
making the lover long for his lost love.  
The rain falls on the earth,  
it veins the soil,  
it tears at mountains with insistent drops,  
and swells the angry rivers with stained floods.  
But on the wide seas, like a prodigal,  
it hurries, rushing to the parent waters  
and is confounded in a vast embrace,  
whereat the fishes, suddenly gone mad,  
rejoice and dart and play in wheeling schools  
and all the denizens of the watery mansions  
in their dim world make silent holiday.

## *The Sky Again*

Never, never does the bird sing  
never so sweetly, never so loud,  
as when the shadow of the hawk's wing  
has merged again with the passing cloud.

Death was above him, death hovered over,  
death has gone by, he is safe once more,  
his is the sky again, field and clover,  
the jeweled tree and the shadowy shore.

## *Rain Poem*

The rain was like a little mouse,  
quiet, small and gray.  
It pattered all around the house  
and then it went away.

It did not come, I understand,  
indoors at all, until  
it found an open window and  
left tracks across the sill.

# SUMMER AND THE SEA





## *Poem of Praise*

Swift things are beautiful:  
swallows and deer,  
and lightning that falls  
bright-veined and clear,  
rivers and meteors,  
wind in the wheat,  
the strong-withered horse,  
the runner's sure feet.

And slow things are beautiful:  
the closing of day,  
the pause of the wave  
that curves downward to spray,  
the ember that crumbles,  
the opening flower,  
and the ox that moves on  
in the quiet of power.

## *Pretty Futility*

Pretty Futility  
always declares

there's nothing so good  
as a basket of pears,

nothing so tranquil  
nothing so sweet

as eating ripe pears  
in the quiet of heat.

She straightens her ruffles,  
she smiles as she swings,

and when she has eaten  
Futility sings.

## *Song of the Wild Red Strawberries*

To the wild strawberries  
growing on the hillslope  
scenting with their sweetness all the summer day,  
it can mean nothing  
who will taste that sweetness,  
nothing to the strawberries who will come that way.

The birds come peering,  
hopping and preening,  
the birds come bending their pretty round heads,  
and snakes come gliding  
with a dry rustling  
to eat of their fill at the wild berry beds.

Beautiful are birds,  
beautiful snakes gliding,  
and beautiful are children, stooping in the hay,  
mouths stained with berry juice  
and bright eyes searching  
for the hidden treasure, small, precise and gay.

## *This Air that Blows*

This air that blows in from the sea  
no one has breathed before  
save only porpoises as they play  
in waves far out from shore,  
or whales whose tranquil breathings rise  
in fountains of white spray,  
or sailors leaning on the rails  
of ships from far away.

Seagulls with nostrils of strong bone  
have tasted this keen breeze,  
and gannets in their billowing flight,  
but nothing less than these—  
nothing save creatures strong and wild,  
as vigorous and free,  
themselves, as is the wind that blows  
so coldly from the sea.

## *Seagull*

A brightening of the mist,  
a ghostly cry,  
two white wide arching wings  
float veering by,

a shining glance is given  
in passing—then—  
mist is but mist and wind  
but wind again.

## *My Soul Remembers*

Days when the loons fly  
and the farm hands hasten  
at their haying, watching the sky,  
and the fields sway and blanch  
to the currents of the wind,  
and the cowbells sound and die  
in the juniper pasture, and the water  
is fanned into darkness,  
and the women hurry to dry  
bright clothes on the lines, their skirts whipping,  
days when the swallows fly  
and the grapevines are ruffled to white,  
my soul remembers  
it is Maine  
and July.

## *Whale at Twilight*

The sea is enormous, but calm with evening and sunset,  
rearranging its islands for the night, changing its own  
blues,

smoothing itself against the rocks, without playfulness,  
without thought.

No stars are out, only sea birds flying to distant reefs.

No vessels intrude, no lobstermen haul their pots.

Only somewhere out toward the horizon a thin column of  
water appears

and disappears again, and then rises once more,  
tranquil as a fountain in a garden where no wind blows.

## *Morning and Afternoon*

The morning runs on nimble feet,  
it's gone before you see  
more than a ripple in the grass,  
a flutter in the tree.

The afternoon is more inclined  
to drowse along the wall;  
some days it seems to close its eyes  
and scarcely move at all.

## *The Salt Hay*

This is the hay that no man planted,  
this is the ground that was never plowed,  
watered by tides, cold and brackish,  
shadowed by fog and the sea-born cloud.

This is the crop above which sounded  
no bobolink's song, but the gull's long cry,  
that men now reap as they reap their meadows  
and mound in the great gold stacks to dry.

In the long winter months when deep pile the snowdrifts  
and the cattle stand in the dusk all day  
many a cow shall taste pale seaweed  
twined in the stalks of the wild salt hay.

## *Summer Rain*

What could be lovelier than to hear  
the summer rain  
cutting across the heat, as scythes  
cut across grain?  
falling upon the steaming roof  
with sweet uproar,  
tapping and rapping wildly  
at the door?

No, do not lift the latch,  
but through the pane  
we'll watch the circus pageant  
of the rain,  
and see the tiger lightning,  
striped and dread,  
and hear the thunder shake the sky  
with elephant tread.

## *Heavy Is the Heat*

Heavy is the heat, heavy and solid  
as a cloak of gold, as a hood of gold,  
as shoes of gold, as bracelets of gold,  
weighing down the shoulders, weighing down the head,  
the feet are weary and the hands move slowly  
and the heart remembers the cold.

In their hot caverns among the leaves  
the birds are silent or utter faint rasping cries.  
The flowers droop on their stems,  
the dust falls back to the road when a car passes,  
cows seek the shadows.

The dogs lie panting on the steps,  
the cats have vanished,  
and even green oppresses the heavy slow-moving eyes.

## *Content*

Down the rain falls,  
up crackles the fire,  
tick-tock goes the clock  
neither lower nor higher—

such soft little sounds  
as sleepy hens make  
when they talk to themselves  
for company's sake.

## *The Storm*

In fury and terror  
the tempest broke,  
it tore up the pine  
and shattered the oak,  
yet the hummingbird hovered  
within the hour  
sipping clear rain  
from a trumpet flower.

# *GREEN MAGIC*





## *Nine Finches*

Nine finches to my window came  
and walked upon the grass so green,  
a gayer little company  
I think before was never seen.

They ate the dandelion seeds,  
they were like dandelions bright,  
they sang no note—it was their look  
filled me with such delight.

## *Green and Green*

Green and green and darkly green  
the trees cast down their shadows.  
There Joan and Jean may softly dream  
above the sunbright meadows,

where slow streams wind among their reeds  
and clouds go slowly over,  
and dappled cows wander and browse  
amid the heavy clover.

Young Joan and Jean, half-smiling, lean  
with roots to form their pillows,  
while green and green and softly green  
above them stir the willows.

## *The Young Stranger*

From far away I come  
where in a valley lies  
a palace below white peaks  
which flame in the first sunrise.

There men are grave and kind,  
and the maidens smile at their looms  
and the children laugh and play  
among ancestral tombs.

In that valley naught is afraid,  
neither deer nor ape nor hare,  
and the tiger lies in the shade  
and brings no bloodshed there.

The bells at the horses' bits  
ring as their bridles sway  
and the sword rusts red in its sheath  
in that valley far away.

## *You Have Not Heard*

You have not heard  
with what sweet calls  
the untamed river  
runs and falls.

Between black rocks,  
beneath black trees,  
it races  
in wild harmonies.

It leaps the cliff,  
the forest shakes  
with the deep music  
that it makes.

The forest shakes,  
the black cliff rings  
where the lost river  
leaps and sings.

## *The Traveler*

“Have you come from far?”  
the young girl asked him.  
“Your horse seems weary  
and droops where he stands.  
Your saddle and reins  
are stained with travel.  
You seem like one  
returned from far lands.”

She stood in the road  
with a hand on the shoulder  
of the dust-gray horse  
and looked up at his face.  
Yet he did not speak  
if he heard her question  
but stared like a ghost  
into empty space.

## *And Your Fairy-Tale Face*

Nonsensical nothings is all that you're  
good for  
and singing small songs that  
nobody hears,  
and staring at flowers when  
others are busy,  
and talking to cats and rubbing  
their ears.

It's a workaday world with  
alackaday leanings,  
and how are you fitted for  
taking your place  
with your moon-gazing eyes and  
your wool-gathering fancies  
and your white-pigeon hands  
and your fairy-tale face?

## *To a Child Singing*

“Sing, Alice, sing,”  
and so Alice sang  
with her two hands linked  
    behind her back.  
Her hair was brushed,  
and her dress was starched,  
her face was clean,  
    and her shoes were black.

How should a child  
so neat and tidy  
know the secrets  
    of clouds and the dew?  
Of dawn in Eden?  
and the hills of heaven?  
Or hear those voices  
    heard by few?

## *Green Magic*

There's magic in green,  
( green magic, green magic )  
there's mystery  
    when the sky is green,  
the moon is young then,  
the dew is cool then,  
strange things may be heard then  
    and lovely things seen.

Go out in the evening,  
( green magic, green magic )  
stand on the doorstep  
    ( the sky shines so green )  
listen and wonder  
standing alone there,  
but never tell  
    what you've heard,  
    what you've seen.

## *War Path*

In the forest it is cool,  
In the forest it is dim,  
Deep and green and beautiful  
From its curtain-festooned rim  
Where the trees are laced with vines  
To the colonnades of pines  
And the leaf-reflecting pool.

There go by in single file  
Painted Indians, swift and shy,  
Tall men with a serious smile  
And a deep and brooding eye,  
Like the forest, dark of limb,  
Moving shadowy and dim—  
Like the forest, full of guile.

## *Nosegay*

Violets, daffodils,  
    roses and thorn  
were all in the garden  
    before you were born.

Daffodils, violets,  
    red and white roses  
your grandchildren's children  
    will hold to their noses.

## WINDY FALL





## *Strong Is the Wind*

Strong is the wind,  
loud in the pinetops,  
the boughs strike one another,  
the forest resounds like the sea.

Strong is the wind,  
it strikes the pond to darkness,  
it lifts the waves by the hair,  
they run before him.

Strong is the wind,  
it screams in the chimney,  
it flings itself downward,  
the fire flattens  
and smoke fills the room.

Strong is the wind,  
it wrestles with the dwelling,  
it pushes and pants  
but the house stands,  
the house still stands.

## *Nonsense Rhyme for Late Fall*

At this moment chanticleer  
crows loud and fierce at the staring deer.  
The weathervanes have left their spires  
to warm their toes at the kitchen fires.  
The leaves are trying to follow the birds,  
there is lots of gossip among the herds  
winterbound in their hay-filled stalls.  
Cats leave their kittens to make long calls  
on their neighbors a mile or two up the road.  
The horses steam as they pull their load.  
They're darker, too, in their winter coats  
with shaggy chins like the chins of goats.

    And the chickadee  
    in the leafless tree  
twitters and flutters merrily,  
merrily twitters, cheerily flitters,  
flutterers all, and none of them sitters,  
while the bluejays scold at the sun and mock  
because he gets sleepy by four o'clock!

## *Winter Soon Is Coming*

When the pumpkin yellows  
and the standing corn  
is pale with frost, and cobwebs  
hang silver in the morn,

when Orion rises  
over fields cut bare,  
and the fallen apples  
smell cidery on the air,

then comes the witches' Sabbath  
of the flocking crows,  
standing by the barn door,  
every farmer knows

when he hears that clangor,  
sees that windy flight,  
winter soon is coming,  
cold, and early night.

## *Pity an Old Campaigner*

This warm and weary wind  
is an old hurricane  
turned feeble on the long, long road  
that leads to Maine.

Some hours ago like a young lion  
he clawed the coast  
of Florida; off the Carolinas  
like a ghost

seeking a vengeance, he appeared  
and then shrieked on;  
a surly guest at Cape Cod he arrived  
and soon was gone.

The fishing fleet furled sails for him  
(though tiring fast);  
at Boston he made little stir  
as he went past.

Portland was busy, scarcely noticed him;  
and now this fellow  
comes sighing round the farmhouse door,  
he's lost his bellow,

he's frail and patched with fog  
and tries to rouse  
our interest with his stormy tales;  
only the cows

pretend to listen, as they half recline  
with pensive eye,  
yet their expressions do not change at all  
when he limps by.

### *I Heard the Wind*

As I sat there in the empty sunlight,  
not a paw was lifted, not a wing stirred;  
on earth no creature stole from its covert,  
in the air there moved not a single bird.

As I sat there in the empty sunlight,  
my back to the wall of the empty house,  
I heard the wind like a far-off breaker,  
I heard it nearby, in dry leaves, like a mouse.

## *O Clouds*

O clouds, so white against the sky,  
O seeds of milkweed drifting by,  
where is the place to which you go?

“The wind has orders.  
He will know.”

## *Hurry Their Steps*

Now comes the moment of the year,  
strengthened by this gray gloaming,  
when something neither hope nor fear  
sets transient life to homing.

The troubled birds fly further south,  
the heifers seek the bars,  
yearning for barns to hide their eyes  
from the cold searching stars.

And human beings caught abroad  
by autumn dusk benighted  
hurry their steps and thank the Lord  
for home and lamps just lighted.

## *The Wanderer*

A tireless traveler you will find the wind.  
He sends for no horse to carry him down the road,  
but on he goes, whistling, leaving the horses behind.

He takes the steepest ranges in his stride;  
he carries no stick; he never slackens his pace,  
but swings his cap as he climbs the mountainside.

When he comes to the sea, he does not wait on the shore;  
he does not ask for a passage on any swift-moving ship,  
but walks the tumultuous waves as a man may walk a floor.

Yet the wanderer longs for a home. Else tell me why  
does he knock at the door of the lamplighted house by  
night?

I have heard him tap at the window. I have heard him sigh.

### *And Stands There Sighing*

Down from the north on the north wind flying  
the wild geese come: I hear their crying.  
Run to the door, and do not mind  
that when they are gone, you'll be left behind.  
For whoever hears the great flocks crying  
longs to be off, and stands there, sighing.

## *Under the Moon*

There must be frost  
on the little fiddles,  
on the little fiddles  
under the moon.

Winter is coming,  
snow is coming,  
silence is coming  
all too soon.

But now for a while,  
the last of the crickets  
push back the dry leaf  
of each shelter door,

seeing the moonlight  
over the hayfields,  
they tune their fiddles  
and play once more.

Merrily, drily,  
over and over,  
like an eighteenth century  
minuet,

the orchestra  
of the field still praises  
the night from moonrise  
to slow moonset.

## *Do They Remember?*

A hundred birds  
that knew our trees,  
are flying now  
in a southern wood.

Do they remember  
the hay-sweet breeze  
and where the house  
and the big barn stood?

Over Virginia  
and Mexico,  
Texas, Florida,  
Yucatan,

by Ixtaccihuatl  
robed in snow  
and tropic rivers  
unknown to man,

do they remember:  
“The place was good,  
the fields sloped down  
to a blue, blue pond,

“and there was safety  
and there was food,  
a chokecherry thicket  
and hills beyond”?

## *Windy Day*

In such a flurry  
and flow of wind  
all things hurry,  
the clouds are thinned,  
the lake is ruffled  
like any bird,  
and bustling and rustling  
is everywhere heard.

If a child be wise  
he will run somewhere  
with the wind at his back,  
and the wind in his hair,  
uphill or downhill  
off he goes,  
and what he'll discover  
the wind alone knows!

## *Autumn Dirge*

Forget the fox,  
forget the shaken deer,  
now is the dreadful hour  
of the hounds' delight.  
They run the paths  
of the leaf-fallen year,  
their voices fill with music  
the bright night.

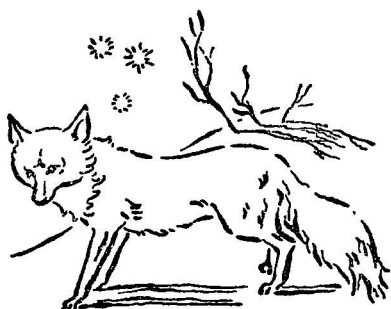
Through the still air  
their chanting breaks again,  
mournful and musical,  
pausing like death.  
Forget the fear,  
forget the flurried pain,  
Beauty's unleashed and cries  
with the hounds' breath.

## *Forest Fire*

The leaves were yellow, the leaves were red,  
and bright and dry as the sun overhead,  
the springs of the earth grew faint and slow,  
and buckets came empty from wells below,  
the wind went prying, now here, now there,  
it tossed the dust and the leaves in the air,  
it dried up the dew, the mists were driven  
far away, and the clouds were riven  
and scattered afar, the wind went whining,  
it cleared the sky where the sun was shining.

Then the fire rose like an asp from the dust  
and the colored leaves, and it ran like rust  
along the ground till it took on power  
and it rose in the trees in tendril and flower,  
with the wind behind it, and ruin began,  
and the fire roared and the fire hissed,  
and smoke whirled up instead of the mist,  
and the sun went down and the moon arose  
with its light as chill and pale as the snows,  
and the fire glowed against that light,  
a moving red against tranquil white,  
and the wind went on and the fire strengthened,  
and the stain of its blackened shadow lengthened,  
and very low and weak and small  
the farm crouched there in the path of it all.

## *WILD ANIMALS*





## *Song of the Rabbits Outside the Tavern*

We who play under the pines,  
we who dance in the snow  
that shines blue in the light of the moon  
sometimes halt as we go,  
stand with our ears erect,  
our noses testing the air,  
to gaze at the golden world  
behind the windows there.

Suns they have in a cave  
and stars each on a tall white stem,  
and the thought of fox or night owl  
seems never to trouble them.  
They laugh and eat and are warm,  
their food seems ready at hand,  
while hungry out in the cold  
we little rabbits stand.

But they never dance as we dance,  
they have not the speed nor the grace.  
We scorn both the cat and the dog  
who lie by their fireplace.  
We scorn them licking their paws,  
their eyes on an upraised spoon,  
we who dance hungry and wild  
under a winter's moon.

## *Shadowy Refrain*

Oh, merry is the robin  
in the early dawn,  
and merrily the chipmunk  
runs across the lawn,  
the bobolinks are flying  
with gay and throbbing throats,  
but in the forest gravely  
the thrush sings three notes.

Oh, merry is the butterfly  
drifting along the air,  
the goldfinch is a vagabond,  
the wren admits no care,  
but lingeringly and questioningly  
in the dark woods again  
silence and thrush together sing  
their shadowy refrain.

## *Concrete Trap*

The fox at midnight in the city square  
knows there's a way, but knows not which it is,  
a path that leads to fields and woods and lair,  
leaves underfoot, earth and the stirring air.  
Bewildered stands the fox, too many streets  
lead off too many ways, yet there is one  
leads to the woods and to tomorrow's sun.  
Under street lamps, between the straight house walls,  
hard, geometric, baffling nose and eyes,  
escape is there for him to recognize.  
Bewildered stands the fox, questing the way,  
and in the yards the dogs begin to bay.

## *Trespassers*

“They are gone,” said the deer to the doe.

“At the edge of the wood the farm is deserted again.  
The horses are gone; and the hound is gone, and the  
loud activity of men.

“They are gone,” said the deer to the doe.

“No more is the wind thick with the smoke of their  
fires,  
and the doors are closed and bolted at last, and even the  
cows are gone from their byres.

“They are gone,” said the deer to the doe,

“But the orchard is there, and the corn  
by the edge of the wood. No one will know  
when we come with the morn.”

## *Homebodies*

The big rats pack their ditty bags  
and sail for Shanghai or Rome,  
but the little mice play on the  
    pantry shelves  
and they are happy at home.

The big rats visit the pyramids  
and stare at St. Peter's dome,  
but the little mice know every  
    step of the stair  
and they are busy at home.

The big rats bluster and brag and fight  
from Santo Domingo to Nome,  
but the little mice run on the  
    moonlit floor  
and they are content to stay home!

## *Dark Kingdom*

Mice are the citizens of a dark kingdom,  
they live between the walls,  
they know where misers hide their bags of gold  
blocking their secret halls.

Their children lie in nests soft with the ribbons  
of shredded love letters and parchment deeds,  
and play with old lost rings and dusty jewels  
and scattered beads.

## *Advice*

The seagull curves his wings,  
the seagull turns his eyes.  
Get down into the water, fish!  
(if you are wise.)

The seagull slants his wings,  
the seagull turns his head.  
Get deep into the water, fish!  
(or you'll be dead.)

## *Winter Is in the Wood*

Cold winter now is in the wood,  
the moon wades deep in snow.  
Pile balsam boughs about the sills,  
and let the fires glow!

The cows must stand in the dark barn,  
the horses stamp all day.  
Now shall the housewife bake her pies  
and keep her kitchen gay.

The cat sleeps warm beneath the stove,  
the dog on paws outspread;  
but the brown deer with flinching hide  
seeks for a sheltered bed.

The fox steps hungry through the brush,  
the lean hawk coasts the sky.  
“Winter is in the wood!” the winds  
in the warm chimney cry.

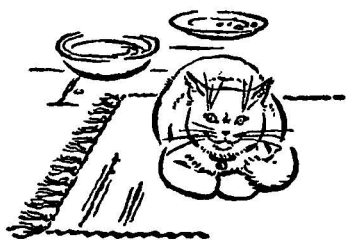
## *Who Is Sad?*

Who is sad and who is sorry?  
Not the seagull flying high,  
not the wren, brown as earth is,  
not the bumblebee buzzing by,  
not the cat upon the doorstep,  
not the dog beside the gate—  
they are neither sad nor sorry,  
proud, ashamed, on time, nor late.

## *Marble Stream*

The stream is paved with ice and snow,  
it makes a corridor  
through darkest woods where never yet  
saw I a road before.  
Rabbits have traveled its smooth course,  
a fox's rambling track  
explores the bushes by the bank  
then tiptoes darkly back.

*AND TAME*





## *All Goats*

All goats have a wild brier  
    grace;  
they are as elegant as  
    thorns,  
with little bells beneath  
    their chins  
and pointed horns.

So quick are they upon their  
    feet,  
so light and gaily do they  
    prance,  
their hoofs seem sportive  
    castanets  
to which they dance.

And as they raise sagacious  
    heads,  
disturbed by some crude  
    passer-by,  
they gaze upon him with a  
    most  
satiric eye.

## *Calling in the Cat*

Now from the dark, a deeper dark,  
the cat slides,  
furtive and aware,  
his eyes still shine with meteor spark,  
the cold dew weights his hair.

Suspicious,  
hesitant, he comes  
stepping morosely from the night,  
held but repelled,  
repelled but held,  
by lamp and firelight.

Now call your blandest,  
offer up  
the sacrifice of meat,  
and snare the wandering soul with greeds,  
give him to drink and eat,  
and he shall walk fastidiously  
into the trap of old  
on feet that still smell delicately  
of withered ferns and mold.

## *Sunday*

This is the day when all through the town  
the cats are keeping store,  
the clerks are gone from counter and desk,  
the key has turned in the door.

But the cats move about with an owner's airs  
over the oranges, apples, and pears,

or among the tins in their rows on the shelves,  
proud as merchants and nimble as elves.

Then at last they each lie down to rest  
where the big show window is sunniest,

or turn to stare at the passer-by  
with a calculating but sleepy eye.

In every one of the forty-eight states,  
in a thousand cities or more,  
from Saturday night to Monday at seven  
the cats are keeping store!

## *Wild Pastures*

The pretty heifers wander in the woodlands,  
walking so sure and light  
among the rocks and over roots and brambles,  
sleeping at night  
under the pines, the cold starshine above them,  
the soft occasional sound  
of a stirred bell to mark where they are resting  
on needled ground.

Sometimes at dawn, or sometimes in the twilight,  
they may graze near  
the beauty, so precise and delicate,  
of lonely deer,  
or, as they cool their muzzles in the water  
at the pondside,  
hear a moose crashing toward them through the bushes  
with careless pride.

## *Spiders*

The spiders are good housekeepers,  
with little agile noiseless hands  
they work with dust to make all soft,  
their music is Time's flowing sands.

They love things gray, and light that's veiled,  
they love a room where naught is stirred,  
where no wind comes, no footstep falls,  
and where no voice is ever heard.

All change they like to make themselves  
dimly industrious and precise,  
their world secure in flaking walls  
upon whose stairways run the mice.

## *Circus-Postered Barn*

When Dobbin and Robin, unharnessed from the plow,  
stamp smoking to their stalls,  
they pass beneath white horses with long manes  
shining upon the walls,  
white horses airily leaping through great hoops  
along applauding tracks,  
or carrying princesses in rosy tights  
upon their backs.

And Daisy, Madge and Buttercup  
raise their soft eyes  
where through the darkness of the web-hung stable  
hippopotami arise,  
shaking the water from their enormous shoulders,  
floundering in savage mud,  
showing those muzzles huge enough to ponder  
an epic cud.

And Tom beside a rathole in the boarding  
meets the still stare  
of eyes fiercer than his eyes and a large lithe body  
above him there.  
Despondent grow the inmates of the barnyard,  
not one achieves  
the super-powers of these super-mammals  
beneath the eaves!

## *Old-Fashioned Hen*

Now and again I like to see  
a hen who still runs wide and free,

who crosses roads and flies o'er ditches  
and cackles till she gets the stitches,

who hunts for grasshoppers in the stubble  
and scratches merrily in old rubble,

who cocks her head when roosters crow,  
who knows all things a hen should know:

when to obey the housewife's call  
and when to pay no heed at all,

where grubs grow best and how to roost  
on some low branch without a boost,

and last of all, to prove her worth  
(her nearness to the rights of earth)

let her become an agitator,  
fixed enemy of the incubator,

and obstinately steal her nest  
and shelter chicks beneath her breast!

## *Roosters*

“Get out of my way!”

says Rooster One.

“I won’t!”

says Rooster Two.

“You won’t?”

“I won’t!”

“You shall!”

“I shan’t!”

Cock cock a

doodle doo!

They pecked.

They kicked.

They fought for hours.

There was a great

to-do!

“You’re a very fine fighter,”

says Rooster One.

“You’re right!”

says Rooster Two.

## *The Storm*

What a horrible day  
for the little red hen  
all alone in the garden  
hunting seeds and ants when

a wind suddenly stirred,  
the trees gave a shout,  
the clouds came in swarms,  
and the sun was blown out!

The little hen's heart  
must have battered with fear  
as the thunder crashed loud  
and the lightning struck near,

and she crouched in the hedge  
all alone, all alone,  
while the leaves overhead  
were scattered and blown.

One little red hen  
with the tempest about—  
Lightning, wind, rain, and thunder  
all searching her out!

## *The Swan*

Hawks stir the blood like fiercely ringing bells  
or far-off bugles;  
even on their perches  
they are all latent fury and sheathed power;  
and peacocks trail the glory of the world.  
But calm, white calm, was born into a swan  
to float forever upon moon-smoothed waters  
cool placid breast against cool mirrored breast,  
and wings curved like great petals  
and long throat  
bent dreamingly  
to listen to the ripple  
that widens slowly in a tranquil arrow  
reaching the shores, and lipping on the sands.

## *Pastoral*

Before the lamps are lighted,  
before the west is dark,  
when song awakes the wood thrush  
and silences the lark,

when even meadow daisies  
grow dim beside the lane  
and the small wind of evening  
moves with a sound like rain,

the horses in the pasture  
drift slowly to the bars  
advancing on the wondering child  
their foreheads, blazed with stars.

## *The Barn*

“I am tired of this barn!” said the colt  
“And every day it snows.  
Outside there’s no grass any more  
and icicles grow on my nose.  
I am tired of hearing the cows  
breathing and talking together.  
I am sick of these clucking hens.  
I HATE stables and winter weather!”

“Hush, little colt,” said the mare,  
“And a story I will tell  
of a barn like this one of ours  
and the wonders that there befell.  
It was weather much like this  
and the beasts stood as we stand now  
in the warm good dark of the barn,  
a horse and an ass and a cow.”

“And sheep?” asked the colt. “Yes, sheep  
and a pig and a goat and a hen.  
All of the beasts of the barnyard  
the usual servants of men.  
And into their midst came a lady  
and she was as cold as death,  
but the animals leaned above her  
and made her warm with their breath.

“There was her baby born  
and laid to sleep in the hay  
while music flooded the rafters  
and the barn was as light as day,  
and angels and kings and shepherds  
came to worship the babe from afar,  
but we looked at Him first of all creatures  
by the bright strange light of a star!

## *The Cats of Monhegan*

They have never seen a meat cart,  
they have seldom tasted meat,  
but fish is what they dream of  
when they dream of things to eat,  
and when their master's dory  
comes rasping up the shore  
the cats and kits run thronging  
to share the fish once more.

They have seldom seen a robin  
nor a sparrow flying by,  
but before their eyes were opened  
they knew well the seagull's cry,  
they knew well the seagull's mewing  
and the sea's unending beat  
and their master's step, home coming  
with sea boots upon his feet.

They have never heard of cat shows,  
but their hair is long and soft,  
and their tails are plumed and shining  
and they carry them aloft  
as they hurry down politely  
(but not greedily at all)  
to congratulate their master  
on the flavor of his haul.

*HERE AT HOME*





## *Footnote to History*

Washington led armies,  
Washington was wise,  
he dared to look at ruin  
with unflinching eyes.

But who among you ever heard  
of how he bought a shell  
a sailor brought from overseas  
because he liked it well?

Washington beat the British,  
he drove them from our land,  
he steered the yawing ship of state  
with an undaunted hand.

But I prefer to think of him  
with the sailor at his side,  
handling that shell, admiring  
the color of its pride.

He had it used for buttons,  
which he wore many a year.  
I like to think that Washington  
should hold a shell so dear.

Oh, Washington led armies,  
and Washington saved our land,  
and turned a seashell to the light  
with a slow judicious hand!

## *Ever Since*

The first mules in America  
were brought, they say, from Spain,  
a royal gift to Washington,  
sprung from a noble strain.

I like to think he eyed them  
with a farmer's thoughtful eye,—  
a little strange, outlandish, perhaps,  
but interesting to try.

“They’ll have to get their landlegs first.  
Give them a week or two,  
then let them plow the river field  
and show what they can do.”

The mules looked obstinate and sleek,  
they pricked their heavy ears.  
And they’ve been plowing ever since,  
for more than seven score years!

## *Marie Antoinette in America*

Suppose Marie Antoinette *had* come to Wiscasset,  
escaped from Paris, escaped from violence,  
    escaped from fear,  
would she have lived, soberly and quietly,  
talking to the women in the square white houses  
    here?

Where they saw gray water, she would have seen  
    steel flashing,  
where they saw autumn leaves, blood she would  
    have seen,  
the shivering white birches would have seemed like  
    frightened ladies  
where the Wiscasset eyes found only moving green.

And when she saw the women go out into the  
    barnyard  
then she would have felt her tired heart fail  
remembering the Trianon and a dress of flowered  
    satin  
and herself going milking with a silver milking  
    pail.

## *Conquest*

The axe has cut the forest down,  
the laboring ox has smoothed all clear,  
apples now grow where pine trees stood,  
and slow cows graze instead of deer.

Where Indian fires once raised their smoke  
the chimneys of a farmhouse stand,  
and cocks crow barnyard challenges  
to dawns that once saw savage land.

The axe, the plow, the binding wall,  
by these the wilderness is tamed,  
by these the white man's will is wrought,  
the rivers bridged, the new towns named.

## *The Navajo*

Lean and tall and stringy are the Navajo,  
workers in silver and turquoise, herders of  
flocks,  
their sheep and goats cover the hills like  
smooth rocks.

They wear velvet shirts, they are proud, they go  
through the sage, upright on thin bright horses,  
their speech is low.

At their necks they gather the black smooth  
cataract of their locks,  
quick are their eyes and bright as the eyes of a  
fox.

You may pass close by their encampments and  
never know.

## *New England*

Still it is wilderness, strung with roads and farmsteads  
like necklaces of wampum; lonely still  
comes the loon's call; the deer slip through the thicket,  
and the fox raises wild cubs on the hill.

Still grow the Indian crops, the corn and pumpkin,  
as when the squaws tilled them with clamshell spades,  
and still the Indian ghosts return with autumn  
to smoke their pipes among the forest glades.

### *This Green Field*

This green field is the masterpiece  
of many hands. Here you may know  
backs strained and thighs and wills were bent  
and sweat poured out to make it so.

Cut, cleaned, and tended, now it lies  
docile to man, while he stands near,  
but let him turn, and it will slip  
into the thicket, like a deer.

## *General Jackson and the Trees*

General Andrew Jackson  
fears not man nor devil,  
they say he had a merry look  
in the battle smoke.

But that was long ago  
ere gossip killed his Rachel,  
that was in the early years  
before his heart broke.

He wanders down the lawn,  
he does not heed the robins,  
nor know the bees are humming  
by the hedge where it is warm,  
only the trees he sees  
the trees that Rachel planted  
and that they watched together,  
her hand upon his arm.

The trees are doing well.  
How green the buds are showing!  
They are in leaf, and Rachel  
lies in her grave today.  
Quiet the old man broods  
then courteously he raises  
his hat to the young trees  
and slowly turns away.

## *Ceremonial Hunt*

As the racing circle closed in like a lasso  
of running dogs and horses, as the sage was swept,  
out of the turmoil suddenly upward leapt  
a jack rabbit's fawn and jet, with its great soft eye  
and fantastic ears outlined against the sky,  
hanging in life a strange moment, then falling back  
from that remote beautiful leap to the teeth of the pack  
and the trampling hoofs and the Indians' thin halloo.

## *The Desert Noon*

When the desert lies  
pulsating with heat  
and even the rattlesnakes  
coil among the roots of the mesquite  
and the coyotes pant by the water holes,

far above  
against the sky,  
shines the summit of San Jacinto,  
blue-white and cool as a hyacinth  
with snow.

**SONGS FOR ONESELF**





## *The Telephone Brought You Back*

This morning you were long in answering the telephone.  
Were you delayed, coming down the airy stairs from the  
towers of sleep?

Or did the subterranean cellars hold you in their darkness  
where potbellied tuns of wine crowd against one another  
and through a rotting partition, one hears the hoofs of  
the nightmares  
restless in their stalls?

Perhaps you were held in the arms of a dream,  
your head with its dark bands and coiling hair  
resting on an incorporeal shoulder;  
or you may have been wandering in visionary cities  
along nameless highways toward destinations  
which veered like weathervanes in every flaw of sleep.  
But wherever your spirit may have been,  
whatever it was doing or feeling  
the telephone brought you back  
jerking at you with its tether of sound,  
casting in your face the familiar walls, pictures, furniture,  
window frames,  
like a dash of cold water.

## *Baker's Dozen*

1.

When it is hot, I let it be;  
I think of apes in a palm tree,  
I act as lazy as I can,  
I don't despise a moon-shaped fan,  
I do things suitable to shade  
and leisure and iced lemonade.

2.

Most snakes are harmless, well I know.  
I like the sliding way they go  
with lithe scaled bodies slipping through  
the grass, not spilling the light dew.  
And yet this admiration makes  
me not the less afraid of snakes.

3.

Doubly through water and pale sky  
the cavalcade of clouds goes by  
on slow vague horses with vague manes,  
the wind's hand idle on the reins,  
riding for laziness and content  
through an unbannered firmament.

4.

When evening comes our neighbor's cows  
are quite content no more to browse,  
but choosing out a sunny knoll  
they linger to invite the soul,

lolling, so far as cows are able,  
like Romans at a banquet table.

5.

Here the blurred beauty of the dark  
knows only stars, or the quick spark  
of fireflies wandering through the grass,  
in deepest silence hours pass  
with but the occasional thudding sound  
of apples falling to the ground.

6.

And when you go to bed at night  
and lie in darkness without light,  
remember: eastward Europe lies  
and westward Asia, old and wise,  
palms to the south, and northward snow,  
the moon above, the sun below.

7.

There are things lovely and austere:  
bird-tracks and icicles, long and clear,  
the lines of hills without a tree,  
rock crystal, and geometry,  
and in the woods that elfin glow—  
witch hazel blossoming in the snow.

8.

Do you like cats? perhaps you can't say.  
Do you list rustlings, and late day,  
do you like marshes and their mire,

and the green light that burns in fire?  
Do you like fairy tales and bats?  
and a half moon?—then you like cats!

9.

There was a time I used to think  
a Persian sunset flushing pink  
was beautiful—now I prefer  
say an old marsh with ruffled fur  
and stranded branches, bleached and queer,  
like antlers of some mythic deer.

10.

It's not that I'm especially fond  
of going bathing in a pond,  
a current in a river scares me,  
and there's a cliff I know that tears me—  
but in a tub you cannot sink,  
and it's a splendid place to think!

11.

Horses (as I have heard it said)  
are swift of hoof and proud of head.  
I dearly love to stand beside them  
or watch another person ride them.  
But surely they would be more fun  
if they would promise not to run.

12.

I do not like to hark to lies,  
I love the look in honest eyes,

I love to know that I can trust  
somebody's honor to the dust—  
yet there are those, who wish to shout  
their truths, whom I could do without.

13.

When I feel low and don't know why  
it gives me pleasure just to buy.  
A little sad? Well, then, a dime  
will make things brighter for a time.  
But if I feel I'd like to holler  
It's time to go and spend a dollar.

## *Like Dew*

This burning joy  
was never known  
except in silence  
and alone.

It is the song  
withheld from sense,  
the hermit's gracious  
recompense,

the flower circled  
by the thorn,  
the mother's speech  
to her unborn,

like dew upon  
the bending grass  
it cannot shine  
where people pass.

## *Heart, Be Merry*

Heart, be merry!  
What is good?  
No man knows  
the soul's true food.

Rises the sun  
hot in the east  
and the blood leaps  
in the veins of the beast.

Out of the black  
the flower lifts,  
herded by winds  
the high cloud drifts.

What sun, what wind,  
what rain beget  
the noble soul  
no man knows yet.

## *Rejoice in Breath*

Pity enough  
it seems to me,  
the flower snapped,  
the uprooted tree,

the stranded fish,  
the mortal bone,  
the small ant crushed  
against the stone.

Have as little to do  
as ever you can  
with the sword of God  
and the fist of man,

for ghosts cry out  
and the wind is shrill  
with pitiful voices  
never still.

These ghostly voices  
half drown out  
the thrush's call,  
the young child's shout,

the stir of the leaf  
that answers the breeze,  
the splash of the porpoise  
in sun-washed seas.

Oh, rejoice in wings,  
hoofs on hard ground,  
and the heart that beats  
with an eager sound,

in the rooster crowing  
to call up the sun,  
the small streams crisping  
as they run—

Oh, in these rejoice,  
rejoice in breath,  
be slow to strengthen  
the hand of death!

## *Such Things I Praise*

Some sing of seas and some of skies,  
some sing eternity and death;  
I sing the dewdrop on the grass,  
    holding my breath.

The quiet and domestic hour,  
sun shining on a flower-filled vase,  
the household stir, the moving pen,  
    such things I praise.

I hear my daughters' running feet,  
my husband's fingers on the keys—  
hush, do not stir lest you should brush  
    such light as these!

## *What Matters All the Rest?*

If love stand at the door  
and knock and enter in,  
blessed is that home  
whatever else may come.

If love sit at the board  
why should we ask  
rich wine, heaped dish?  
what need for further wish?

If love will light the fire  
to warm his hands,  
what matters all the rest  
while he is guest?

## *Song to a Rainbow*

How gray the rain  
and gray the world  
and gray the rain clouds overhead,  
when suddenly  
some cloud is furled  
and there is gleaming sun instead!

The raindrops drip  
prismatic light,  
and trees and meadows burn in green,  
and arched in air  
serene and bright  
the rainbow all at once is seen.

Serene and bright  
the rainbow stands  
that was not anywhere before,  
and so may joy  
fill empty hands  
when someone enters through a door.

## *To the Evening Star*

O love that hangs as a star  
at dusk or at dawn  
in the hush when all things are  
most beautiful and withdrawn,

grant on the borders of sleep,  
grant on the fringes of night,  
that our hearts may be hushed and deep  
to mirror such light.

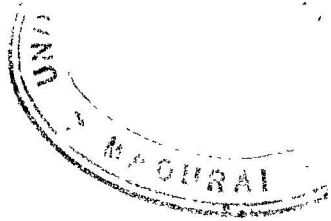
## *Lullaby*

Fear not waves nor winds that bring  
the unbridled hurricane,  
fear not cold nor the sleet's sting,  
flaming heat nor leveling rain,  
fear not even fear itself,  
fear not pain.

Only fear the eye grown dull,  
only fear the heart grown bland  
that applauds the beautiful  
with a condescending hand,  
only fear the green fields covered  
by the sand.



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