

## **1. Salutation**

It hasn't all been useless. Unless the box is destroyed the words that had value will rise again. Mine, all that mattered much of me except my response to your love, mostly that given me by those whom I never met: so many letters unanswered because the letter to you all was still being written: if writing survives, in mine you'll find all my answers, signed with my love. All my writing has been a letter to you, 'you all' as we say in the South.

## **2. We Have Not Long To Love**

We have not long to love.  
Light does not stay.  
The tender things are those  
we fold away.

Coarse fabrics are the ones  
for common wear.  
In silence I have watched you  
comb your hair.

Intimate the silence,  
dim and warm.  
I could, but did not, reach  
to touch your arm.

I could, but do not, break  
that which is still.  
(Almost the faintest whisper  
would be shrill.)

So moments pass as though  
they wished to stay.  
We have not long to love.  
A night. A day . . . .

### **3. Youth Must Be Wanton**

Youth must be wanton, youth must be quick,  
Dance to the candle while lasteth the wick,

Youth must be foolish and mirthful and blind,  
Gaze not before and glance not behind,

Mark not the shadow that darkens the way –  
Regret not the glitter of any lost day,

But laugh with no reason except the red wine,  
For youth must be youthful and foolish and blind!

### **4. Cried the Fox**

I run, cried the fox, in circles  
narrower, narrower still,  
across the desperate hollow,  
skirting the frantic hill

and shall till my brush hangs burning  
flame at the hunter's door  
continue this fatal returning  
to places that failed me before!

Then, with his heart breaking nearly,  
the lonely, passionate bark  
of the fugitive fox rang out clearly  
as bells in the frosty dark,

across the desperate hollow,  
skirting the frantic hill,  
calling the pack to follow  
a prey that escaped them still.

### **5. Kitchen Door Blues**

My old lady died of a common cold.  
She smoked cigars and was ninety years old.  
She was thin as paper with the ribs of a kite,  
And she flew out the kitchen door one night.

Now I'm no younger'n the old lady was,  
When she lost gravitation, and I smoke cigars.  
I feel sort of peaked, an' I look kinda pore,  
So for God's sake, lock that kitchen door!

## **6. *The Ice-Blue Wind***

Being expert on the zither  
he gave concerts twice a winter

And to these occasions twain  
some would come unless it rained.

Swiftly did their number thin  
as he played *The Ice-Blue Wind*.

No cries of Bravo nor encore  
But, Oh, he dreamed, they long for more!

So he'd play it once again  
and again and still again.

His fingers knew *The Ice-Blue Wind*  
that single score and nothing more.

But what of that? It did suffice  
to close him in a wall of ice,

Tinged with distance, always blue,  
which somehow warmed him through and through.

Long, long after all had gone,  
and in the hall crept winter dawn,

He would strike a final string,  
take a bow and proudly shin

Up a column to the roof,  
in union with The Absolute.

## 7. Temples to the Red Earth Shook

The poets of less than twenty years ago,  
That bravely stood and fell against the sword,  
From underneath those fields where poppies blow  
With terrible voice oppose the rising horde:  
Listen again to the songs of Rupert Brooke  
And all the young that sang and singing died  
Beholding their temples to the red earth shook,  
And Beauty above the whole world crucified:  
Poets, of every campus, town, and field,  
This is the ultimate hour of your labor;  
Lift song, lift song, your weapon and your shield  
Against the threatening shadow of the sabre –  
For beauty's voice may still oppose the tide –  
Speak, fearless poets! Shall these horsemen ride?

## 8. Little Horse

*Mignon* he was or *mignonette*  
*avec les yeux plus grands que lui.*  
My name for him was Little Horse.  
I fear he had no name for me.

I came upon him more by plan  
than accidents appear to be.  
Something started or something stopped  
and there I was and there was he.

And then it rained but Little Horse  
had brought along his *parapluie*.  
*Petit cheval* it kept quite dry  
till he divided it with me.

For it was late and I was lost  
when Little Horse enquired of me,  
What has a bark but cannot bite?  
And I was right. It was a tree.

*Mignon* he is or *mignonette*  
*avec les yeux plus grands que lui.*  
My name for him is Little Horse.  
I wish he had a name for me.

## 9. They That Come Late to the Dance

They that come late to the dance  
more wildly must dance than the rest  
though the strings of the violins  
are a thousand knives in their breast.

They that come late to the dance  
must dance till their slippers are thin  
and the last white notes of the flute  
are lost in the dawn-blowing wind.

They that come late to the dance  
must dance till the lanterns expire  
and the hearts they uncovered too late  
are broken before they can tire.

## 10. Gold Tooth Blues

Now there's many fool things a woman will do  
To catch a man's eye, she'll wear a tight shoe,  
She'll wear a light dress and catch a bad cold  
And she'll have a tooth pulled for a tooth of gold.

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

Now gold in the bank is a wonderful thing,  
And a woman looks nice with a nice gold ring,  
But, honey, take a tip, and the tip ain't cold,  
Your mouth's no place to carry your gold!

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

Some late Sunday mawnin' when you're still in the hay  
And you want a little lovin', your sweet man'll say,  
With a look that'll turn your heart's blood cold,  
Woman, that gold tooth makes you look old!

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

When he don't have a dollar but he must have his drink,  
He'll sneak up behind you at the kitchen sink,  
And before you can holler, I'm telling the truth,  
He'll brain you with a blackjack and pull your gold tooth!

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

## **11. Why Do I Want To Go Away?**

Why do I want to go away?  
I don't have no reason to stay.  
Do this, do that, they name the hour.  
My heart is in a tall clock tower  
And keeps striking hours that say:  
"Time for you to slide away."  
What should I do? Of course, obey?  
And there's no profit in delay.  
Never mind Number 1202  
(I think the number is thirteen)  
Going, going, almost gone –  
Done my bit and travelled on.

## **12. Valediction**

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