

Frank Robinson

FAMILY POEMS



Family Poems

I. Sickness

Why should such power and beauty be put to rest?
Everything has been prepared for their fulfillment.
The walk of the long line is absolutely slow.
Nothing can be saved from this rotting, perfect mind.

Already, his uncovered bed looks like marble.
Each time we meet, we say goodbye. He's still alive.

Something must be done for his corrupted stomach,
Where living things are turning and spreading.
They weave immortal wreaths of themselves inside him.
Has he made nothing more than their perfect beauty?

I would have wished for him a forest death.
The earth is softer with the things it touches,
Indifferent, and does not weep for its dead.
Here, even his hiccups are terrifying.
Too many people are always watching.
This is a small stage for such a dying.

We hold each other's hands, man and man;
The touch of me makes him cry.
He closes his eyes as if he were closing doors,
He savors the strength of my handshake.

II. Going Home

Everyday talk is like delirium.
Our faces are unmade, unshaven.

Everywhere I walk I find
Your face, your hands, in the people that I meet.

The dead are walking in the street.
I try to say that you survive
In me, whom sometimes you despised.

There's not enough time to be anything but a son,
Sickness has swallowed you whole.

All that was man in me is dying.
Self-pity at my shock makes me weep.
My mother's hands welcome me home.

I stay up late trying not to sleep.
I try to survive by sheer will.
But in this house, no one's alive.
Their dying is in the trembling and the crying.

What have I to do with death?
My brother's smiles are scars on his face;
I must be from a different family.

I must remember not to smile.

III. Willsboro

The disaster was so quiet,
And keeps happening, in the smallest ways, every day.

Real people are buried here.
They died with everything ungiven,
Or gave until nothing was left.
She digs at his grave,
She covers the earth with love,
Giving flowers to the ground
That has so many.

Nothing can equal old age in love,
Which was you, in love with us.

How many times I made you happy.
No one else will ever take such delight in me.

I needed to be free of your strength, but not this way.
You were so thin, that last day,
I could have lifted you, just bones, in my arms.

You left no lines behind to show us.
It is all, all, in my mind.

IV. Leaving

The white dress walks around the room and everything is out.
For some reason, at the last second of staring,
I saw myself in the perfect circles of his eyes.

The last day we shouted at him

Things we could never say
When he was still awake.

I can hear his laughter.
These months,
I have been yearning to follow after.

She hung on, like a bitch at her master's bedside.

Sometimes I want her to be in mourning for a decade,
Never free, never forgetting him, or me.
What is it that she wants to save, for what?
She should lay her slaughtered life on our grave.

Both of us are afraid of the end of the emergency.

What help is there for those who are ready
For neither loneliness nor affection?

We should live in railway stations waiting to leave,
Where people never speak and never touch.
The trains give a sense of something happening
Too strong for anyone to stop.
There's nothing but the quiet,
The beauty of nobody being cruel,
Nobody needing anyone else.

Margaret

Like a widow without children, I'm always moving.
I travel, with the energy of escape.

The few I know, I despise.

I've named my fear of people strength.
Half my time is spent on mail,
Signing letters "Love" or "Yours."

Smiles and friends are on every side.
What keeps me back from all of them?

Waiting, afraid to take what is mine,
Walking all day, I wait for letters from you.
My thoughts become a sickness in my mind.
I have nothing else to do.

I count the women I can say hello to.
I pretend their eyes say more than they do.

I go empty for hours, for days,
And then suddenly rage.
All around me, people are off to work, people half my age.

The lines on my face are there to stay.
I hope you come before I go away.
I hope you come today.

It still isn't too late;
I still haven't committed the final crime of kissing her.
Our hands have touched, her cheek is soft,
But I haven't placed all the round and tender edges of my face
against hers.

There'll be no passion in my embrace;
When things that are fragile shatter, they become sins.

This woman without scars will never know
What you discovered decades ago;
Love is like gratitude, it denies itself as it grows.

For John

The angel opens and closes his wings,
He almost smothers the child,
He almost takes away what he brings.

The mother has new lines on her face,
The angel had us all in his embrace.

Going to Emmaus

As we walked, we began to lose our faith.
He had been gone so long, he had died,
And the sun was warm.

Why should we think and feel, why should we be unhappy,
In the midst of all this beauty?
As we talked, we remembered how heroic we were,
How young we had been.
But he had made us postpone our lives,
Now it was time to begin.

We talked until it was time to eat.
We sat down at a table in the garden,
And the owner came and served us,
And we talked of our memories,
And the sun went down,

And we knew it was him.