



# A Prayer for My Daughter

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

SHARE

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid  
 Under this cradle-hood and coverlid  
 My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle  
 But Gregory's Wood and one bare hill  
 Whereby the haystack and roof-levelling wind,  
 Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;  
 And for an hour I have walked and prayed  
 Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour,  
 And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,  
 And under the arches of the bridge, and scream  
 In the elms above the flooded stream;  
 Imagining in excited reverie  
 That the future years had come  
 Dancing to a frenzied drum  
 Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty, and yet not  
 Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,  
 Or hers before a looking-glass; for such,  
 Being made beautiful overmuch,  
 Consider beauty a sufficient end,  
 Lose natural kindness, and maybe  
 The heart-revealing intimacy  
 That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen, being chosen, found life flat and dull,  
 And later had much trouble from a fool;  
 While that great Queen that rose out of the spray,  
 Being fatherless, could have her way,  
 Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.  
 It's certain that fine women eat  
 A crazy salad with their meat  
 Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;  
 Hearts are not had as a gift, but hearts are earned  
 By those that are not entirely beautiful.  
 Yet many, that have played the fool  
 For beauty's very self, has charm made wise;  
 And many a poor man that has roved,  
 Loved and thought himself beloved,  
 From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree,  
 That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,  
 And have no business but dispensing round  
 Their magnanimities of sound;  
 Nor but in merriment begin a chase,  
 Nor but in merriment a quarrel.  
 Oh, may she live like some green laurel  
 Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,  
 The sort of beauty that I have approved,  
 Prosper but little, has dried up of late,  
 Yet knows that to be choked with hate  
 May well be of all evil chances chief.  
 If there's no hatred in a mind  
 Assault and battery of the wind  
 Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,  
 So let her think opinions are accursed.  
 Have I not seen the loveliest woman born  
 Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,  
 Because of her opinionated mind  
 Barter that horn and every good  
 By quiet natures understood  
 For an old bellows full of angry wind?

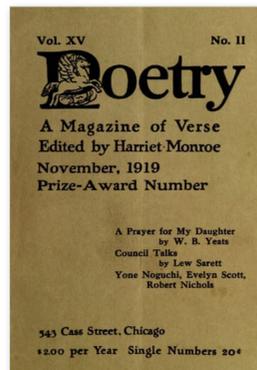
Considering that, all hatred driven hence,  
 The soul recovers radical innocence  
 And learns at last that it is self-delighting,  
 Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,  
 And that its own sweet will is heaven's will,  
 She can, though every face should scowl  
 And every windy quarter howl  
 Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house  
 Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;  
 For arrogance and hatred are the wares  
 Peddled in the thoroughfares.  
 How but in custom and in ceremony  
 Are innocence and beauty born?  
 Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,  
 And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

Copyright Credit: Originally published in *Poetry*, November 1919.

Source: *Poetry* (November 1919)

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