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THE VESSEL



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THE VESSEL WILL RESUME THIS FALL, PUBLISHING
ONE ISSUE PER SEMESTER.

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS TO:
THEVESSEL.PHC@GMAIL.COM

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

THE VESSEL CREW WISHES YOU ALL A
JOYOUS AND BLESSED SUMMER.

NON NOBIS, DOMINE, NON NOBIS,
SED NOMINI TUO DA GLORIAM.

The Unfaithful
Anna Grace Stroven

You plant for her a dozen red roses.
She lets the love garden wrinkle and weed.
Standing near you, she laughs and poses.
She lives by her stomach and her own creed.
Unopened are gifts of truth you give her;
Flashy gifts hold her stingy attention.
Wisdom to seek your love does not occur
To her, who has no gifting to mention.
If only she would find awe in your love
For her, though unfaithful she ever be.
If she would take effort to look above,
And revel in his tender love give' free.
If only true love's treasure she could see!
This cold and heartless woman, I am she.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome!

Thank you for joining us in a long overdue continuation of The Vessel, Patrick Henry College's Literary Journal.

We know that each semester is filled with many difficult times. Our desire, as Editors, is that the artistic pieces we present here will encourage your mind and your spirit, reminding your snow-frosted souls that beauty is both present and relevant, even during these busy days. Amidst PHC's political, philosophical, and historical journals, The Vessel aims to carry some poetic peace into your life.

In composing this issue of The Vessel, we did not seek out a particular theme. Yet one emerged regardless of our intentions. The theme is that of truth. Whether shared through satire or sought through a scheme of delicate rhymes, a number of this Issue's pieces concern themselves with truth. I find this beyond fitting, for great literature is defined by earnestly seeking truth.

Now, I will leave you to our little Vessel of truth. We hope that you enjoy, and find herein some encouragement of the soul.

—Shellby Jo Thomas, Editor-in-Chief

“Go then, my little Book, and show to all
That entertain and bid thee welcome shall,
What thou dost keep close shut up in thy breast;
And wish what thou dost show them may be blest
To them for good, may make them choose to be
Pilgrims better, by far, than thee or me.”

-Louisa May Alcott, Epigraph from Little Women

Manna
Abigail Brooks

I went out this morning in my pajamas
With a burning cup of tea
To wander a cul-de-sac wilderness
Of cold dew and changed leaves.
A desert place, though it's been raining
A dry and weary land I've run all out of courage, Lord,
I'm here to gather manna.

A tabby came 'round asking a question
Which all my life I've been trying to answer:
How could this asphalt hold
As many sparkling stars as a new moon night
Or a late May pasture?
I think the secret
Somehow [I told her]
Is as simple as the sun:
That chariot's trajectory,
And also that not only the sun
But all stars would fall
Before being snuffed
By our laboratory approximation,
Of Ungoliant's sludge.

Manna is always
What is it?
Israel knew you couldn't name it without asking.
Lasting no longer than lightning's illumination
A snowflake's tongue-meeting
Or the awareness of joy.
The day old and put-by
Will only rot the Dreamer's heart.

Lost to Song
Florence Revenaugh

The wandering wind trailed round tall stones,
And withered heights, forsaken long.
She wailed for shore dyed red with blood,
The blood of sailors lost to song.

The Siren spun her song alone,
And cast it web-like on the winds.
"Draw near, O you who look for home;
Wanderer, you'll find rest," she spins.

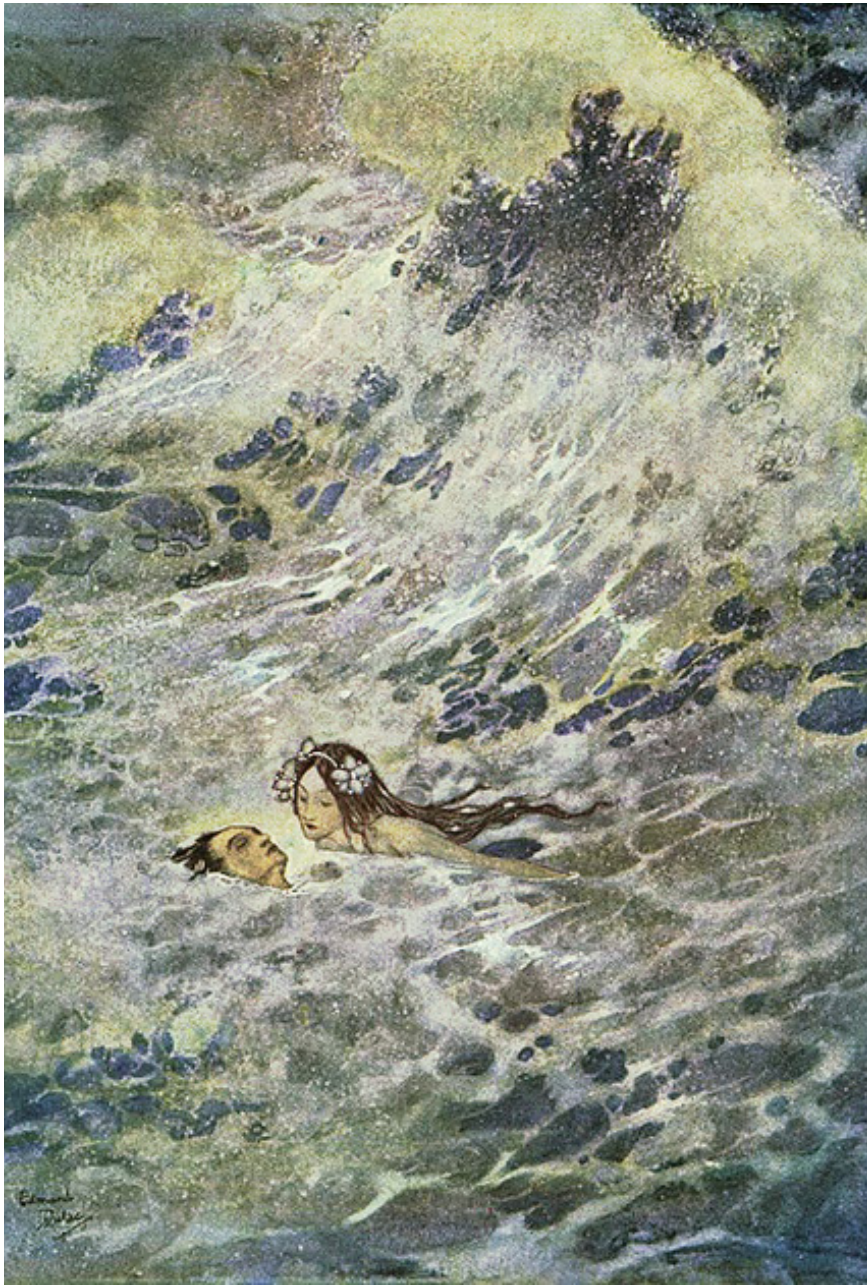
No answer from the sea returned,
Nor had one yet for many years,
Away from her the wise man steers.
Oh sailor, flee her two-faced tears.

The vault of heaven wavered on
The sea, as sighing, she pulled nigh
To rotting isle a seaman lost.
"Draw near. Our love will never die."

The wretched seaman, cast aside
From sunken ship with shredded sails
Knew whispered tales - the lovely voice
Fed guilt-red waves to the howling gales.

"Oh Siren, do not sing me lies;
The wise man puts no trust in you.
How could that voice like honeyed bells
Hide ruin-crumbled soul, untrue?"

Beside the barren, dark-stained shore,
The whispering wind shed tears of rain.
If she had left her loom that night,
Tears would not fall on sanguine stain.



The Little Mermaid Saved the Prince

Edmund Dulac, 1911

But He sends it new every morning,
Whatever it is,
A miracle that will not wait
For a woman to dress.
So I'm out in my pajamas,
Lord, I'm picking up Your manna.

The Wise Spider

Anna Grace Stroven

There is a little spider
With little black-brown feet
Who crawls from behind the cupboard
In the morning when we meet.

I say "Hello, good morning."
He says "How do you do?"
"As fine as an intricate web
Covered in bright morning dew."

He said "You will be right pleased.
I caught all of the flies
That buzzed over your bowl of fruit."
I said "You are truly wise."

He scurried back behind the
Cupboard to eat his meal.
I began to make my fried eggs
Resisting the urge to squeal.



La Belle Dame Sans Merci
John William Waterhouse, 1893

will travel to more of these Festivals on other Islands, and bring back more Spoil to add to the aforementioned Shrine.

Another Practice of their Religion involves staying awake for Obscenely long periods of Time. Indeed, the most Pious will often go Nights without Sleep at all. (This, I also discovered, is in part why the eight-ay-em Lot is so miserable.) I asked them if they derived this Practice of extreme Self-Denial from the desert Monks of Antiquity, to which they gravely replied that such Men were legalistic Ascetics laboring under the Delusion that they could earn some special Favor through Abstinence. I found no satisfactory Argument that distinguished their own Practice from that of such Ascetics, but the Custom seemed so deeply ingrained in their mode of Life that I could not persuade them of the merits of Rest.

I discovered later why they thought it Necessary to implement such a Practice. There is another Deity, what they call an A, who the Inhabitants seem to think has an insatiable Desire for Red Bull sacrifices. It is for this Reason that the most Pious among them keep all hours of the Night. The less Pious worship some inferior Deities, whom they call B's and C's. There is also a sect of Atheists, who the Inhabitants say unwittingly worship the Deity of D's. The F Worshippers are Anathema.

My time on this Island was not to last, as my evil Destiny would have its way once more. As I was discussing these Rites and Habits of the Island with one of its most learned Inhabitants, I suggested that they institute a Custom in which they take one Hour of Silence and Solitude everyday so as to preserve them from some of the adverse Effects of their other Customs. This, unbeknownst to me, was in fact a Heresy that warranted Death by fire. I was brought before the Senate (which I was surprised to find comprised Inhabitants nowhere near the Age of Wisdom) who decided my Fate. Having taken into consideration my Ignorance of the Island's doctrine upon such a short Acquaintance with the place, they determined to release me from the Death penalty as an Exile. They delivered this Sentence in the same Place where I had arrived on the Island, at the Monument on which the name of that place had been engraved: Patrick Henry College. Thus concludes another Part of my unfortunate Voyages.

sustained itself with no apparent natural Resources. They have but one body of Water, which makes the Streets of London smell like Ambrosia. Besides acting as a Trope in much of their Lore, this Pond (or Lake, as they flatter themselves to call it) is used only for one peculiar religious Exercise, in which one of their Males is ceremoniously plunged into the foul Reservoir by a host of his Fellows.

I made so bold as to enter one of their Buildings, and was received with a Variety of incredulous Looks and furtive Whispers. One Inhabitant arrayed in some kind of uniform awkwardly approached me as if I had committed some Offense that he would prefer not to name, and muttered some admonition about "Business Casual." I was led to understand that this referred their customary Attire, which I happily clothed Myself with to oblige the Traditions of their Culture. I discovered later that this Custom has been a Point of contention among the Inhabitants, especially in recent Years. My short Time on the Island did not allow me to divulge the Politicks of the Controversy, but I found Myself recalling the Lilliputians' War over the Eggs.

I found to my Astonishment that, besides the miserable eight-ay-em Lot, the majority of Inhabitants do not stir until nearly half the Morning is gone, at which Point they gather together for some communal Ceremony. Moreover, I was surprised to find that this Ceremony, though daily and required, is not even a Part of the Religion that most of the Inhabitants practice.

It was difficult to devise which Building served as their Temple, but I found one particularly Large space that I supposed to be their main Locus of Worship. I wondered if the Temple had once served another Purpose, or if the Architect commissioned to build it had his own Purposes in mind. For it seemed to be constructed for recreation or athletics, but the number of Tapestries devoted to the mysterious "Moot Court" Deity clearly indicated some sort of Consecration of that space unto that Being. Furthermore, I found a small Shrine—perhaps their Holy of Holies—in the Island's other great Hall, the contents of which projected the same Name on a variety of Treasures and precious Metals. I was told they host a Festival in the form of a grand Tournament for this Deity every Year during the third Week of October, in which both the Clergymen and the Laity must participate, though the Latter possess no substantial Knowledge of the Rites and Rituals the Celebration involves. The especially devout Inhabitants

Something Borrowed

Hallie Skansi

I woke up early, but not too early. The sun had already come up but no one else in the house was stirring. That was okay, though. It was a big day and I needed to get going. As I got dressed, the calendar caught my eye, the red circle around today's date bright against the white background. I smiled softly to myself. Today was the day.

My first stop was the flower shop. They were still dusting things off and getting everything set up when I walked in, but the lady behind the counter greeted me with a warm smile nonetheless. "How can I help you, dear?"

I couldn't help but smile back, standing there in a wash of sunlight, with the smells of flowers all around me. "I'm just here for a bouquet," I told her. I paused, looked at my feet. The lady didn't say anything, as if she knew I had more to say. So I looked up again, gave her another smile. "It's my wedding day."

This made her smile even wider, and she laughed and cooed and fawned over me, and then she and the other ladies in the shop led me to the bouquets. They asked me about my dress, about my hair, said how late it was to be getting a bouquet but that it was okay and they would take care of me. Then they picked out a perfect bouquet, and sent me on my way.

My next stop was the nail salon, but I was in no rush and decided to take the long way. With the flowers in the seat next to me, I wound through back alley roads and little neighborhoods, memories flooding through my mind. When I passed the old schoolyard, I thought of how he used to tease me every day at recess, pull my hair and then jump just out of reach, with a mocking smile. Then I saw the bleachers, and I remembered when the teasing stopped, when it turned to quick glances and shy smiles when I caught him looking. I couldn't help but laugh to myself when I remembered how he asked me to the sophomore dance, and how he had stumbled over every word until I had interrupted with a "yes!"

I was still lost in my thoughts when I got to the salon, and as I got my nails done, I spent the whole time deep in conversation with the older woman in the seat next to me. I probably told her way more

than she wanted to know, but just kept smiling and asking to hear more. I told her about our first date, when his tire blew out on the way home and we walked four miles to the nearest gas station in the pouring rain. As we both got up to leave, she patted my hand and said, "He sure sounds like a keeper." Oh, how right she was. I told her that I agreed, and then, with a little less of a pause this time, said, "Today is our wedding day."

The last place I had to go was the boutique. A girl can't get married without a perfect dress, after all. I decided to park a little ways away and walk down Main Street to get there, since it was such a beautiful day. As I walked, I passed the little coffee shop where he and I used to go study after school. The movie theatre on the corner was where we had our first kiss and also where, only minutes later, had our first fight. It had been a big one, with shouts that drew everyone's eyes, and horrible things said. But, I reminded myself, he had chased me after I stormed off, and sat next to me as I cried on the curb in the parking lot. He had kept saying sorry, even as I refused to forgive him, refused to let him touch me. He had always been persistent, I thought as I reached the boutique. I wiped away a little tear that had slipped down my cheek as I pulled open the door. A little bell jingled and a girl in a sundress welcomed me in.

She seemed more than a little shocked when I told her I was looking for a dress to wear on my wedding day, but she was good at her job and quickly recovered her composure. She directed me to a rack of white and pink dresses, all airy and flowing. As I browsed, the girl, who had introduced herself as Kate, gave me a look, and then asked, "Do you have something blue?" I looked up, slightly confused. "What?"

"You know," She said, "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue. For your wedding."

I laughed a little. Of course I knew. Mom had told me that rhyme when I was little and we were getting dressed up to go to a cousin's wedding.

"Well," I said, "The dress will be new. But this bracelet is old." I held up my wrist for her to see. "He gave it to me after he proposed, and it was his grandmother's before. I'm not sure what I'll do about the borrowed and blue though."

She looked thoughtful for a second, then started shuffling

A Lost Entry in Gulliver's Adventures

Elizabeth Shannon

I had been Home with my Wife and Children but two weeks before Fortune devised a meeting with Captain Lawrence Sillards, a Canadian man, Commander of the Herald, who invited me to be Surgeon of the Ship for its Voyage to the District of Columbia. Despite the entreaties of my Friends and Family, my evil Destiny so ordered me to accept the Offer and leave once more my native Country. The Particularities of this Voyage need not concern the Reader. It will Suffice to say that once more I embarked on an ill-advised Journey; that once more the Mercy of the Waves was not so Merciful; that once more I lighted upon some strange Shore as the sole Survivor of my Crew; and that once more I found Myself in the Company of a strange and remarkable People.

The Island, so far as I could devise, hosted approximately four hundred Inhabitants of moderate Mobility (though I later discovered that the Trek between one Edifice and the next is considered by many to be arduous and troublesome, though it takes but five Minutes). I surmised from the Landscape and the Architecture that Fortune had directed me to some civilized People.

From my Position, I could survey an elongated Circle of pavement, on three Sides of which was situated a building fashioned after the Greco-Roman style.

The position of the Sun suggested it was roughly eight o'clock in the Morning, at which point, as I discovered, some of the Inhabitants of this Island begin the Industry of their Day; for I began to see them file out of the Building to my right across the paved Circle to the Building on my left. Most of them wore Dejected faces, as if they had been condemned to some gloomy Execution. As I discovered later, these particular Inhabitants had been dealt the Lot of what they call "eight-ayems," a mysterious Drudgery whose Unpleasantness seems to hinge only on the Time of Day and the pervading Sentiment of the Island.

Seeing no other Inhabitants, I strode across the Grass (a sacrilegious offense against the Cult of the Grounds, as I was told later) in order to better survey the Island. I wondered at how this People

On Winter

Katie Segesdy

The wind whips through the trees and knots
Up my hair, making me shiver,
And from the cold my cheeks burn hot.
I need a mug of warm chocolate.

Mittens and gloves and scarves and hats
Are worn all around the campus
By those who would the cold combat.
Will winter ever reach its end?

Trees raise themselves before windows
Dressing in lights and ornaments
That shine, glitter, sparkle, and glow.
Perhaps the cold is not so bleak.

Nativities, stars, carols ring,
Advent candles, angels, and wreaths:
O glory to the Newborn King!
Praise God for such marvelous joy.

Earl Grey

Abigail Brooks

I put a slice of lemon with my cream
In Earl Grey,
Mostly because they told me not to.
Not to curdle the cream,
Mind you,
But only to walk that line.
I like the taste of recklessness in my tea.

through drawers. I kept looking at dresses and eventually picked a couple to try. As soon as I put on the first one, I knew it was the one. It was very light pink, with thin straps and a silk sash, simple and elegant. It was the kind of dress he always said he loved on me. I left the changing room, still wearing the dress, and found Kate waiting by the cash register with something cupped in her hand. I told her I had found my dress and she held out something to me. It was a little blue butterfly pin, delicate and ornate. I loved it. "There you go," she said, "Something borrowed and something blue." It was perfect, and, though I had never been very outgoing to strangers, I couldn't help but hug her.

I wore the dress out, and I loved how the skirt swirled around when the wind blew. It felt magical. Wedding days are supposed to be magical, right?

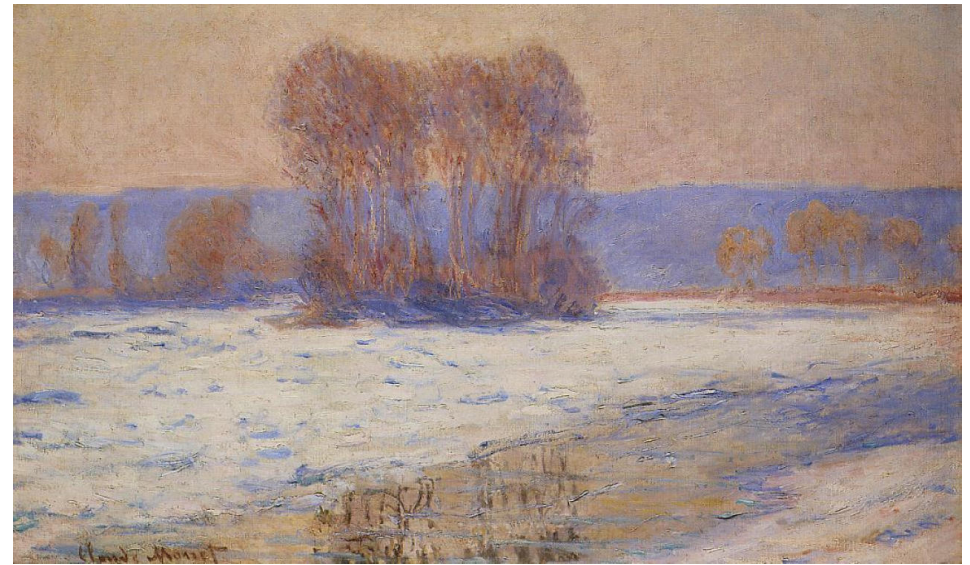
An elderly man asked me, just as I was reaching my car, "what are you all dressed up for, darlin'?" "Well," I said, and I made myself give him the sunniest smile I could, "Today is my wedding day." And finally it was time. I touched up my makeup in the car before I started the final drive. I know people are usually nervous, but I didn't feel that way. I just kept thinking back on times past, and I guess that kept my mind off the nerves. I drove past the high school on my way and thought back to graduation night, the night he chose to break up with me because we were going to separate schools. Later, when he had come to my door, begging me to talk to him, saying he had made a mistake, I had told him how stupid he was to ruin graduation night for me. But I had taken him back anyway. How could I say no to a guy like him?

The time in the car reminded me of all the drives we took together as we navigated a long distance relationship. I would drive to him one weekend; he would drive to me the next. A dozen different fights, make-ups, and almost breakups from the four years went through my head, and I shook my head as I thought of how young and immature we had been. We'd fought over such little things, when all we should have done was love each other. When I could tell I was getting close, I found myself remembering the day he had asked. The day I had driven down in the middle of finals so I could watch him graduate, and then commission into the Marine Corps. I was beaming the whole time, watching him walk the stage in his dress uniform.

That was one of the times that truly showed me what love was, as I felt my heart bursting with pride for this person standing before me. He got on his knee as I ran to hug him, and I had only paused for a brief second to shout, “Yes!” before I continued into his arms. What a feeling it had been, to hold him and know he was my future. He had gone to training and then deployed soon after, which hurt, but I turned to planning a perfect wedding to help the time pass.

And now today was our special day. I parked the car and turned it off, taking a deep breath before I stepped out, bouquet in hand. I admit, I almost burst into tears for a second, but I steadied myself and opened the door.

It was still a lovely day, and there were flowers all around. The few people I passed just smiled softly, as if they understood. Finally, I found him, and this time I couldn’t stop a few tears that slid down my cheeks. I brushed off the grass and tucked my skirt under me as I sat. “Hey, my love,” I whispered, feeling a wave of emotion I knew I couldn’t fight. I laid the bouquet carefully up against the smooth granite, and then let my fingers trace the words engraved in the rock. David Michael Barnes, it said. “Hey David.” I hadn’t said his name in a little while, but it still felt right on my lips. I wiped off my cheeks, leaned against the cool stone, and said once more, “Hey David...”
“.....It’s our wedding day.”



The Seine at Bennecourt - Winter
Claude Monet, 1893

rid illness is, humanity recalls how devoid of life Winter is. It is easy to scoff at the Israelites, wondering how they could ever forget the LORD's blessings after only one generation. But how many times have we ourselves forgotten to appreciate His blessings in those seasons of life, so that we must be reminded before a full year has passed? That is the true beauty of Winter. It comes every year. We are reminded every nine months that the pleasant air, the warmth, the plants, and the animals are not owed to us; that we are receivers of a gift, and that we do violence to the Giver when we forget to appreciate that gift.

The human race has a remarkable history of committing foolish actions. People like you and I cannot change that. We have not the power. But perhaps we may be able to try to keep our promises better, to remember to rejoice in life. But even if we fail, even if we forget to marvel at the wonders that surround us, have no fear. Winter will come again.

#blessed

Abigail Brooks

I like my sweater sleeves up around my knuckles,
My comforter, right beneath my nose,
Coffee for the heat
And the brownness,
But with lots of sugar to make me sleepy,
So I can be neither unconscious nor waking,
Just standing or sitting or lying,
A blueish haze behind my eyes
And nothing in particular to do.
Warmth isn't quite so lovely
When the tip of my nose isn't cold.
Comfort is a shiver on the edge of a warm place.

Winter

John Southards

The human race has a remarkable record of acting foolishly. To make matters worse, it is also quite the master at disagreeing. This tendency makes it all the more important that we pay close attention to what humanity does agree on—that is, that the human race has a remarkable record of acting foolishly.

I can perceive that many a reader may be acting on his propensity to disagree and has already denounced this claim to himself. By all means, I encourage those who have such doubts to test my claim. Spend a day talking to strangers and you may be surprised. The most optimistic among us, those progressive folks, could hardly agree more—for if humanity is improving, it must have been worse. The pessimists openly declare that this race of ours is in shambles. The realists hold much the same view, for they are only pessimists who have named themselves optimistically. Having no shortage in material, I could easily carry on in this manner until my readers cry out in frustration; but I shall exhibit some mercy and proceed as though my point has been well taken.

In the list of humankind's foolish actions, I want to focus on one in particular: Humanity is terribly (and I mean that in the true sense of the word) adept at breaking promises. To realize this truth, one has only to look at New Year's resolutions, when people conduct a brief moment of introspection and decide to fix themselves in an even briefer moment of "resolution." Such plans are ill-named, as the common "resolve" to lose weight is often softer than the cake that the "resolver" is speeding toward his mouth, only moments later.

The specific promise I wish to discuss is wisely considered, though perhaps rashly made. It is the promise we all make to ourselves as we lie in bed, incapacitated by some illness that reminds us with every breath we draw that we are in bitter agony. The promise goes something like this: "I never appreciated how wonderful it feels to be well. When I am well again, I will rejoice in how marvelous it feels not to be sick." But, of course, once our sickness has been expunged, we continue our lives with hardly a thought about how refreshing it is to be able to do so.



Vase with Cornflowers and Poppies
Vincent Van Gogh, 1887

If you have perused my previous essays on the seasons, then you are already aware that I believe God has spun our ball of earth so that it orbits a great fire in an elliptical pattern, letting us see His truth in different ways during different seasons. Every season suggests something. It is as if the mood of the earth changes every few months. It would be no difficult matter for the Creator to form an earth without a constant flux in seasons. But He chose not to. Let us not take such grand a gift as seasons for granted. And now, stretched before us, is the season of Winter, a concept that seems to bear no relevance to the preceding discussion. But the two subjects are all too similar.

If you are one of the few who favors Winter above all seasons, I congratulate you. I do remind you, however, that Winter is not Christmastime, for the vast majority of the Advent season is in Autumn, and by the time Christmas (and even New Year's) has ended, not even two weeks of Winter have passed.

Winter does possess a certain wonder about it, but as we can learn from Mr. Tumnus, a long Winter is a struggle. Winter, whether you like it or not, is the most dead of all the seasons. Winter is not a time for planting, nor for harvesting. During Winter, we see no buds, no blooms, no beautiful decay. The air outside is far from inviting. The howls of the wind are like the howls of a wild beast— intriguing, but only if one is snug inside one's home.

Oftentimes, enduring Winter can be like enduring an illness. We see little life around us; the frigid air has laid siege against us, keeping us locked up indoors; and all we can really do is wait for Spring. As Winter drags on, we may find ourselves beginning to make the same promise as when we are ill. We begin to realize that we have not taken enough time to appreciate the beauty that surrounded us. Like Aravis, we find that one fails to note the wonders around oneself when one is focused on an adventure. Then, when life begins to emerge after three months of death, we rejoice greatly. Our pleasure is far greater than it would be if we were never to have known Winter. For without death, we would forget to appreciate life; without darkness, we would not know to love light; without sickness, we should never rejoice in health.

But no matter how many times humanity goes through this process, it continues to act foolishly. It forgets its promise to marvel at the life all around it. It takes beauty for granted, and is stunned once more at the stillness of Winter. Like a sick man recalling how hor-