

THE SMALL ONES (1963)

A horse-drawn junk cart creaked slowly down the street,
and something about it made it quite unique.

The wood from a distance looked rotted,
from afar, the articles inside appeared dotted.

As the cart slowly approached, I saw that
the little man wore a battered, beaten hat.

One shoe sole flapped with each step he took;
not once sideways did he look.

With a quick glance, one made hasty conclusion.

His hair had grown long and was snowy white;
his bones stuck out; he looked a deathly fright.

In walking, difficulty he seemed to find,
for his left knee would not unbind.

The skin on his bony hands and face
he tried to hide as if in disgrace.

Yet, to his burden no one would heed;
he led his horse performing his endless deed.

As he passed me on his drudging way,
he suddenly faltered on this hot summer day.

A sharp quick pain shot into his sunken eyes,
a pain and look as before one dies.

His horse stopped dead still
on the beginning of that hill.

We rushed quickly to see
just what help we could be.

But alas, it was too late;

God had sealed his fate.

I took the lead of the big bay
and slowly, gently led him away.

SURELY THEY WOULD COME TODAY (1983)

At the awakening of the dawn,
he sensed that nothing would go wrong.
Surely, they would come today;
Surely they wouldn't stay away.

He dressed and straightened his room, neat as a pin,
readying everything for his kin to come in.
Then rapidly told the people on his floor,
"Sometime today, they'll be at my door."

For today was a special day, his alone to savor,
a day that surely would yield him this favor.
It was his birthday; he would be ninety four!
Surely they'd not disappoint him once more.

He stood by the window so best to see.
"Surely, they'll come today to see me.
No, I'll wait for the celebration, 'til they come
I'll save them the fun--let them have some."

At noon, when all was quite still, no one else there,
he spoke to no one in particular, "I know they still care.
It won't be long, but what they'll be here.
It's my birthday; they'll want to be near."

He put off his afternoon rituals to sit by the windowpane

watching the late afternoon sunset slowly turn to rain.

He did not give up as supper was passed;

Surely the time for them had lapsed.

At lights-out time for him, he made ready for bed,

still holding that dream in his head.

Someone will wake me in the night to say,

“They’ve come! They’ve come to celebrate your day!”