

## Sunday: Outskirts of Knoxville, Tennessee

There, in the earliest and chary spring, the dogwood  
flowers.

Unharnessed in the friendly sunday air  
By the red brambles, on the river bluffs,  
Clerks and their choices pair.

Thrive by, not near, masked all away by shrub and  
juniper,  
The ford v eight, racing the chevrolet.

They can not trouble her:

Her breasts, helped open from the afforded lace,  
Lie like a peaceful lake;  
And on his mouth she breaks her gentleness:

Oh, wave them awake!

They are not of the birds. Such innocence  
Brings us whole to break us only.  
Theirs are not happy words.

We that are human cannot hope.  
Our tenderest joys oblige us most.  
No chain so cuts the bone; and sweetest silk most  
shrewdly strangles.

How this must end, that now please love were ended,  
In kitchens, bedfights, silences, women's-pages,

Sickness of heart before goldlettered doors,  
Stale flesh, hard collars, agony in antiseptic corridors,  
Spankings, remonstrances, fishing trips, orange juice,  
Policies, incapacities, a chevrolet,  
Scorn of their children, kind contempt exchanged,  
Recalls, tears, second honeymoons, pity,  
Shouted corrections of missed syllables,  
Hot water bags, gallstones, falls down stairs,  
Stammerings, soft foods, confusion of personalities,  
Oldfashioned christmases, suspicions of theft,  
Arrangements with morticians taken care of by sons in  
    law,  
Small rooms beneath the gables of brick bungalows,  
The tumbler smashed, the glance between daughter and  
    husband,  
The empty body in the lonely bed  
And, in the empty concrete porch, blown ash  
Grandchildren wandering the betraying sun

Now, on the winsome crumbling shelves of the horror  
God show, God blind these children!

*1937*