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Dedication: A Love Song for W. Rusty Rushton

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DEDICATION



A Love Song for W. Rusty Rushton

Let us go then, you and me,
Past shelves of modern poetry,
All dog-eared like a dachshund in a fable;
Let us go through certain crowded conference halls,
In this labyrinthine grand hotel
That's only Circle One of Dante's hell;
Halls where always constant talk of honors
Endlessly occurs
And leads one to an overwhelming presence . . .
Oh, do not ask "Who is he?"
Let us go and search for Rusty.

In the room the students come and go
Inquiring "Where is Rusty? Do you know?"

The conference program in the back will list his name—
The program this year is the same
As last year's and the year before, and so
We know at least three places we can go

DEDICATION

To find where Rusty is: the Pub Board stall or, better,
The room announcing winners of the Newsletter
Contest, or the workshop session planned for poetry.

Reading and writing poems are and always must be
The bread of life, the heart and soul of Rusty.
Find poetry, and that's where Rusty takes his stand;
He dares disturb the universe to seize a chance
For visions and revisions of his verse.
We wonder if his colleagues even knew
He'd published in the *Partisan Review*.

And still inquiring students come and go—
Ask “Did you find him?” and say “No.”

I heard him, though, said one adoring student,
Who claimed that, as they rode the elevator,
Rusty muttered for his own amusement
And mused thus on the meaning of his life:

“At Vanderbilt and UVA I've heard
Obscurest poets reading each to each.
I do not think that they will read to me,
Although I read them deeply, earned my degree,
And, when I got a job at UAB,
Charmed students with their ingenuity.
I squeezed the world of verse into a ball
And rolled it out to students at their desks.
Alas, I thought, while glancing at the exit,
‘That is not it at all,
That is not what those poems meant at all.’

I grow old, I grow old.
I know my ponytail was overbold,
But never will I wear my blue jeans rolled,
And always will I dare to eat a peach
Flambé, with just a splash of Grand Marnier.”

But student voices wake him from his musings
To bring him cakes and marmalade and praises.
They join his colleagues as each raises
A glass of schnapps in honor of their trusty
Mentor, friend, and favorite teacher, Rusty.

