

Classic Poetry Series

Eugene O'Neill

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

A Regular Sort of a Guy

He fights where the fighting is thickest
And keeps his high honor clean;
From finish to start, he is sturdy of heart,
Shunning the petty and mean;
With his friends in their travail and sorrow,
He is ever there to stand by,
And hark to their plea, for they all know that he
Is a regular sort of a guy.

He cheers up the sinner repentant
And sets him again on his feet;
He is there with a slap, and a pat on the back,
For the lowliest bum on the street;
He smiles when the going is hardest,
With a spirit no money can buy;
And take it from me, we all love him 'cause he
Is a regular sort of a guy.

I don't care for the praise of the nations,
Or a niche in the great hall of fame,
Or that posterity should remember me
When my dust and the dust are the same;
But my soul will be glad if my friends say
As they turn from my bier with a sigh
"Though he left no great name, yet he played out the game
Like a regular sort of a guy."

Eugene O'Neill

Even as a child

Even as a child
my face was "gloomy." I found
few reasons to smile, none to laugh:
father gutting his great gifts
for the cheers of clowns.
For us. For money. My mother
dazed by drugs. My brother
charming, selfless. But also
smirking, corrupt. All lying,
and loving each other. Comedy?
From the fool's angle, the coward's angle. Laughter
means turning your back on suffering.
And on the hard truth that tragedy
writes the last act—always. I loved
the sea because it said that.
With infinite dignity and calm
and terrible firmness.

Knowing too well
the struggle and sorrow of life I tried hard
to believe, to help. In plays I wanted
to bring our past alive—the brave dreams.
But probing deep I saw cruelty, decay.
In my last year I could only rage
that our country too had cast away
the best chance ever—like my father!
For greed, blind greed, we grew deaf
to the one question that matters, "What
does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but..."
Damn! Damn our dumb callousness.

Eugene O'Neill

It's Great When You Get In

They told me the water was lovely,
That I ought to go for a swim,
The air was maybe a trifle cool,
"You won't mind it when you get in"
So I journeyed cheerfully beach-ward,
And nobody put me wise,
But everyone boosted my courage
With an earful of jovial lies.

The Sound looked cold and clammy,
The water seemed chilly and gray,
But I hastened into my bathing suit
And floundered into the spray.
Believe me, the moment I touched it
I realized then and there,
That the fretful sea was not meant for me
But fixed for a polar bear.

I didn't swim for distance
I didn't do the crawl,
(They asked why I failed to reach the raft,
And I told them to hire a hall.)
But I girded my icy garments
Round my quaking limbs so blue,
And I beat it back to the bath house
To warm up for an age or two.

I felt like a frozen mummy
In an icy winding sheet.
It took me over an hour
To calm my chattering teeth.
And I sympathized with Peary,
I wept for Amundsen's woes,
As I tried to awaken some life in
My still unconscious toes.

So be warned by my example
And shun the flowing sea,
When the chill winds of September
Blow sad and drearily.
Heed not the tempters' chatter
Pass them the skeptics' grin
For the greatest bull that a boob can pull
Is "It's great when you get in."

Eugene O'Neill

To Winter

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind."
Away from here,
And I shall greet thy passing breath
Without a tear.

I do not love thy snow and sleet
Or icy flows;
When I must jump or stamp to warm
My freezing toes.

For why should I be happy or
E'en be merry,
In weather only fitted for
Cook or Peary.

My eyes are red, my lips are blue
My ears frost bitt'n;
Thy numbing kiss doth e'en extend
Thro' my mitten.

I am cold, no matter how I warm
Or clothe me;
O Winter, greater bards have sung
I loathe thee!

Eugene O'Neill

Villanelle of Ye Young Poet's First Villanelle to his Ladye and Ye Difficulties Thereof

To sing the charms of Rosabelle,
To pour my soul out at her feet,
I try to write this villanelle.

Now I am caught within her spell,
It seems to me most wondrous sweet
To sing the charms of Rosabelle.

I seek in vain for words to tell
My love -- Alas, my muse is weak!
I try to write this villanelle.

Would I had power to compel
The English language incomplete
To sing the charms of Rosabelle.

The ardent thoughts that in me dwell
On paper I would fair repeat
I try to write this villanelle.

My effort fruitless is. O H--!
I'll tell her all when next we meet.
To sing the charms of Rosabelle,
I tried to write this villanelle.

Eugene O'Neill