

W. H. AUDEN

Collected
Poems

EDITED BY
EDWARD MENDELSON

EBP 3450 FA

John P. W.

VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL

VINTAGE BOOKS

A DIVISION OF RANDOM HOUSE, INC., NEW YORK

1991
90 10007 11-1512-11

VII

Underneath an abject willow,
 Lover, sulk no more:
Act from thought should quickly follow.
 What is thinking for?
Your unique and moping station
 Proves you cold;
 Stand up and fold
Your map of desolation.

Bells that toll across the meadows
 From the sombre spire
Toll for these unloving shadows
 Love does not require.
All that lives may love; why longer
 Bow to loss
 With arms across?
Strike and you shall conquer.

Geese in flocks above you flying,
 Their direction know,
Icy brooks beneath you flowing,
 To their ocean go.
Dark and dull is your distraction:
 Walk then, come,
 No longer numb
Into your satisfaction.

March 1936

VIII

At last the secret is out, as it always must come in the end,
The delicious story is ripe to tell to the intimate friend;
Over the tea-cups and in the square the tongue has its desire;
Still waters run deep, my dear, there's never smoke without fire.

Behind the corpse in the reservoir, behind the ghost on the links,
Behind the lady who dances and the man who madly drinks,
Under the look of fatigue, the attack of migraine and the sigh
There is always another story, there is more than meets the eye.

For the clear voice suddenly singing, high up in the convent wall,
The scent of the elder bushes, the sporting prints in the hall,
The croquet matches in summer, the handshake, the cough, the kiss,
There is always a wicked secret, a private reason for this.

April 1936

IX

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crêpe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

April 1936