



The following poems are samples from

## **‘Four Quarters’ by Edith Speers**

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*The first poem in 4Q,  
and the title poem of  
the section called  
‘Free’...*

*(‘Free’ is a  
found poem-  
from the Oxford  
Illustrated  
Dictionary,  
OUP 1962)*

### **Free**

1. not in bondage to another,  
having personal rights and social and political liberty;  
subject neither to foreign dominion  
nor to despotic government,  
having national and civil liberty.
2. at liberty, not in custody or confinement;  
without ties, obligations, or constraint upon one’s action;  
released or exempt from work or duty;  
unimpeded, unrestricted, unhampered;  
not constrained or timid;  
not fettered in judgement;  
not observing strict laws of form;  
not adhering strictly to original;  
allowable or allowed;  
open, open to all competitors;  
open, unobstructed  
clear;  
not fixed or fastened;  
not in contact;  
uncombined;  
available for work.
3. spontaneous, unforced, unearned, gratuitous, willing;  
lavish, profuse, unstinted, copious;  
frank, unreserved;  
forward, impudent, familiar.
4. released or exempt;  
possessed of certain exclusive rights or privileges;  
freehold;  
admitted to privileges, invested with rights or immunities;  
allowed use or enjoyment of;  
not subject to tax, toll, duty, trade-restriction, fees  
etc.

*from the 2nd section of 4Q, titled  
'Rude Rhymes for Raving Ratbags'*

### **Bless Them All**

Bless them all, bless them all,  
The pimps and the wimps and the molls.  
Give them big houses  
And millionaire spouses,  
Oh yes, please God, bless them all!

Give every windbag some real leather lungs,  
Give every gossip a stainless steel tongue;  
As long as such neighbours we're forced to endure,  
Oh why don't you try out this radical cure,  
And for godsake, dear God, bless them all!

Bless them all, bless them all,  
The browbeaters and those who crawl;  
Give roses and lilies to those who throw shit,  
Give a smack on the lips to each hypocrite,  
For once in their lives, bless them all!

Give them what's good for them if they feel greed,  
Silence each whinger according to need;  
God knows, it will be an infinite task,  
That's why you're the one that we humbly do ask,  
So, for godsake, dear God, bless them all!

Bless them all, bless them all,  
All the climbers and all those who fall;  
Take care of the snob and the groveller, too,  
And yes, even give the old Devil his due;  
God knows, it might work - bless them all!

Give them the riches you've held in reserve;  
Whatever they want, perhaps they deserve;  
Give them whatever their little hearts crave -  
So they'll all die of joy and go straight to their graves!  
For godsake, dear God, bless them all!

*from the 3rd section of 4Q, titled  
'Love Sonnets'*

### **Sonnet 35**

Oh, my Tubby Wubbins! Beautiful cat!  
How did I get so lucky in this world  
That it's my humble home in which you're curled,  
Silvery tabby tom, so fine and fat.  
Your pale green eyes are rimmed with kohl, or so  
It seems. Your face is tigerish and square.  
A mink, or a movie star, would love to wear  
A coat like yours. You've blessed my life, you know.

Each night I hug you in my arms, and say  
Out loud exactly how superb you are,  
Before I put you out. Don't go too far!  
And come back right at dawn. I dread the day  
When we must part, love of my life, and yet  
How poor I'd be if we had never met.

### **Sonnet 68**

It seems that no one falls in love these days,  
Romance is dead and lust is out of fashion,  
There's no more dalliance, affairs or passion  
Nor any gentle intervening phase,  
Like being sweet on someone. We don't beguile  
Or flirt or court or spoon or bill and coo,  
There's no more making love or pitching woo,  
Seduction and elopement aren't in style.

The lover, mistress, sweetheart, all are dead,  
Extinct as dinosaurs, and life-long marriage  
Is seen as rarely as a horse and carriage.  
In place of all we've lost, we have instead  
Relationships. Like cars, they all need tuning -  
It's work and there's no time for love-sick mooning.

*from the 4th section of 4Q, titled  
'Soul of a Great Nation'*

*All the poems in this section were inspired by a  
trip across Canada, a family pilgrimage*

### **The Way the Horses Flow**

In Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba too when the horses stand still they continue to move for though they are dozing with necks crossed over a thing only horses do when they're snoozing together the breeze lifts a strand of blond or brown mane lets it float for a while then lays it gently down again and as another fringe is fingered and raised on a breath a ripple of wind makes the long tail flow while a nod of the beautiful weight of the head moves supple muscles all along the strong neck and a shift of weight to stand hipshot and casual turns into a twitch and the flick of an ear and the whole smooth momentum is passed to another while wind stirs the manes and tails of them all

In Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba too it hardly matters what the people do for the movement of beauty is held by the horses in the way they stand still and the way that they move for the prairie wind is part of them it plays them like a tune like an endless song we can see but not hear the lilt of the land alive and aware the breathing of life below and above as horses and wind make music as they move

In Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba too it's the way the horses flow that makes you feel like flesh and blood have a magic of their own that the motion of the horses as they eddy in a herd as they stream across the plains or round the boundaries of corrals with the lifting rippling manes and tails the supple coloured coats harmonising all of them as if they were the notes in a page of liquid music all glissando violins while the lifting legs and dropping hooves are drum beats heart beats the rhythm that will hold the whole thing together the percussion of the soul

In Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba too the people make a living from the things that people do and it all takes machinery engineering agriculture fertilizer irrigation sweat and toil but the prairie wind will turn the mills and make the green wheat ripple as though the pelt of the earth is as living and as supple as the coloured coats of horses brown and black and white and roan of horses dappled painted apaloosa palomino and every colour known of earth and cloud and stippled stone of horses that move to the wind's own tune and though the people always think that they own the whole show what makes a life worth living is the way the horses flow