

The following poems by Edith Speers are from unpublished work

### **Black and White**

Everything on the page is black and white  
Which might be the only reason why I write.  
God knows, it's the only job you could ever pick  
That will not pay a wage. You have to be thick  
As two short planks to spend your thoughts and time  
On poetry. The reason for my rhyme  
Must be this beauty of the white and black.  
The words, once written, can't be taken back  
Or compromised, no matter how you try.  
Oh the freedom from niceness and little lies!  
Nothing in life is black or white, they say -  
But how I hate to see in shades of grey.

### **exorcism**

let go of me you fangs of hell you  
piercing pairs of teeth that puncture my  
skull front and back and  
drag me to your lair your  
haunts of hell deep  
deep in the dark jungle

drop me you hound of satan you  
hungering horror or i'll stick  
in your gorge like a  
tree that has long thorns very  
many of them all over every  
twig and branch of it

release me now you dog of damnation you  
drooling jaws and bloody  
breath or i will slide  
down your gullet like a razor blade very  
smoothly so you don't feel a  
thing until blood pours out of your eyeballs.

run run run while you can you  
cur of a conscience for i  
would love to jump down your  
throat and sit in your  
belly like a slow poison and eat my  
way out through the cage of your ribs and be free

## **the angels explain**

go to hell - and come back  
go to hell - and come back  
come back alive to tell the story  
bring us all the gory details  
of those sad and sorry people  
you can hear them wailing weeping  
you are near them - you're the one  
who can do it if it can be done  
to span the gap between us  
we and those who cannot see us

go to hell - and come back  
go to hell - and feel it for us  
how the flames of feeling scorch you  
how the tortures blind your mind  
till even you whose heart is open  
will close against us here in heaven  
here is light and here is laughter -  
when you're back among us after  
tell us - did the gifts of love  
make any difference whatsoever?

go to hell  
and come back  
go to hell although you're sent  
knowing you'll forget you went  
you'll cry real tears wet tears  
you'll bleed like sweat and sweat your fears  
but when you get that final gift -  
the traitor's kiss - your heart should lift  
so smile and take it  
and if you can't smile - fake it

go to hell where all the people weep and wail  
they will give you one nail, 2 nails, 3 nails  
one two three  
it's as simple as A B C  
take it all and let them nail you  
cry to heaven that we've failed you  
hear your best friend thrice deny you  
- they can sell you but they can't buy you -  
this is what your death can teach them  
this is how we'll try to reach them

go to hell where so many people dwell  
then come back to us and tell -  
when they finally took and broke you  
when you thought that god forsook you  
did the light still shine inside you?  
did the laughter still remind you  
somehow that you'd go on living?  
and was your final breath forgiving?  
it's what we ask of each woman and man  
go to hell - and learn what you can

## **Cowgirl's Lament**

I rode all the night 'neath the twinkling starlight  
Across the prairie so lonesome and black  
But 'twas only near dawn when my horse was half gone  
That I spied a fresh mark on the track

This dogie was white as the cold moonlight  
And his hooves never touched the ground  
I'd followed his trail 'cross the prairie so pale  
But all night I heard not a sound

Then just as the sun rose, my old pony froze  
And I made a grab for my rope  
That dogie stood still and was drinking his fill  
And my heart it was full of hope

He stood by the pool with its water so cool  
And I knew beyond any doubt  
That my rope it was new and my hand it was true  
And he had no way to get out

It was thanks to his thirst that I'd be the first  
To touch him with human hand  
Yes, I'd be the owner of that wily white loner  
The dogie who had no brand

The canyon wall was both steep and tall  
The sun burned gold and red  
But I cared only for the sight shining silvery white  
Of the dogie as he raised up his head

You may call me a liar but the threat of hellfire  
Won't change how my good pony shied  
And though the noose fell just right and I snugged it up tight  
There was nothing caught inside

Chorus:

Oh you cowgirls young and merry, you should always be wary  
Of the dogies you chase through the night  
For the one that you choose will be the one that you lose  
When you set your heart on moonlight

## Boys without Baseball Caps

Boys striding out instead of slouching, boys being brisk instead of mooching along, boys with hands empty but not crammed into pockets boys with hands loose or balled slightly into fists boys together but not talking boys in a loose group of pairs and singles but somehow marching boys sticking together but not being together a group but not a gang boys that are all different but somehow matching a team of boys but with no loud joking larking shoulder shoving boys that look like they have just been released from work from school from supervision and yet still prisoners walking purposefully heading for another destination another place that they have to be at by a certain time as a group not yet free to be loose and loud and playfight like puppies boys all under twenty boys in their teens but not like any teenagers ever before seen boys in black braces black braces like old men boys all with different shirts and tee-shirts but sort of similar trousers trousers not jeans boys in their teens with black suspenders clipped onto trousers not jeans bare-headed boys boys whose hair you can see blond brown and black short sides and back boys without baseball caps boys without billed caps worn backwards farm boys at an agricultural show with no gas or diesel driven anything at a show featuring steam tractors steam cars steam-driven machinery an old-fashioned farming methods show in hot summer blue sky Manitoba Mennonite boys

## Easy listening

schmoozy oozy schmaltzy waltzy easy listening moodless music someone's smooth and couth and neutred version of the songs that once were youthful raw and tuneful true and sexy rude and foolish how the young are hard and edgy zigzag angles are their jangling wrangling days while middle age wants undulations corners banked for easy gliding shock absorbers so the riding's smooth and bumpless not so frazzled and frenetic as young love's groin pain grind and panic middle age is never manic hurt or angry loud or eager every coffee creamed and sugared dishes cleaned and dried and stored and wrapped in plastic in the drawers and cupboards are the foods and drinks all saltless zingless bland and tasteless middle age is never restless though it might be always moving not like youth that's pushing shoving screaming at the bars that cage it craving life out-size outrageous that middle age keeps damped down tamped down stored sedated as though they've waited waited waited for the life to be created that they craved and raved and saved for till they cannot grab and claim it laugh and live it as they always swore they'd do when they were young and had no power money freedom just the appetites that need them now all gone now they can feed them now they keep them locked and stored the middle aged are never bored but always boring because they fill their time with hoarding cleaning sorting all the details of the life they could be living oh young and middle-aged and old forget the life that you can hold that's sorted cannistered contained and wrapped up safe from pain and breakage ask the almost dead the dying they will tell you what is truth choose music as you would your youth and live the way youth chooses music and you know you can't go wrong for no one likes a do nothing go nowhere anger nobody make no difference song

### when all's said and done

reason is a blowfly buzzing around a turd  
reason is why we can't understand  
the things we call absurd

answers are the maggots when meat goes bad  
answers are what you get instead  
of all you might have had

logic is a line of ants carrying crumbs to the nest  
logic can tell you what's right or wrong  
but never what is best

questions are wasps with jaws that are razor-honed  
they kill blowflies, eat maggots, ignore ants & bite  
right to the bone