

1. THE GARDEN

*Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently,
Lest you forget the things which your eyes have
seen,
And lest they depart from your hearts all the days
of your life;
Make them known to your children and your
children's children.*

--Deuteronomy 4:9

A little garden,
Fragrant and full of roses.
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom,
The little boy will be no more.

--Franta Bass

2. AT TEREZIN

When a new child comes
Everything seems strange to him.
What, on the ground I have to lie?
Eat black potatoes? No! Not I!
I've got to stay? It's dirty here!
The floor- why, look, it's dirt, I fear!
And I'm supposed to sleep on it?
I'll get all dirty!

Here the sound of shouting, cries,
And oh, so many flies.
Everyone knows flies carry disease.
Oooh, something bit me! Wasn't that a bedbug?
Here in Terezin, life is hell
and when I'll go home again, I can't yet tell.

--"Teddy" 1943

3. ON A SUNNY EVENING

On a purple, sun-shot evening
Under wide-flowering chestnut trees
Upon the threshold full of dust
Yesterday, today, the days are all like these.

Trees flower forth in beauty,
Lovely too their very wood all gnarled and old
That I am half afraid to peer
Into their crowns of green and gold.

The sun has made a veil of gold
So lovely that my body aches.
Above, the heavens shriek with blue
Convinced I've smiled by some mistake.
The world's abloom and seems to smile.
I want to fly but where, how high?
If in barbed wire, things can bloom
Why couldn't I? I will not die!

--Michael Flack, 1944

4. THE LITTLE MOUSE

A mousie sat upon a shelf,
Catching fleas in his coat of fur.
But he couldn't catch her- what chagrin!-
She'd hidden 'way inside his skin.
He turned and wriggled, knew no rest,
That flea was such a nasty pest!

His daddy came
And searched his coat.
He caught the flea and off he ran
To cook her in the frying pan.
The little mouse cried, "Come and see!
For lunch we've got a nice, fat flea!"

--Koleba 1944

5. TEREZIN

The heaviest wheel rolls across our foreheads
To bury itself deep somewhere inside our
memories.

We've suffered here more than enough,
Here in this clot of grief and shame,
Wanting a badge of blindness
To be a proof for their own children.

A fourth year of waiting, like standing above a
swamp
From which any moment might gush forth a spring.

Meanwhile, the rivers flow another way,
Another way,
Not letting you die, not letting you live.

And the cannons don't scream and the guns don't
bark
And you don't see blood here.
Nothing, only silent hunger.
Children steal the bread here and ask and ask and
ask
And all would wish to sleep, keep silent and just to
go to sleep again...

The heaviest wheel rolls across our foreheads
To bury itself deep somewhere inside our
memories.

--Michael Flack, 1944

6. THE CLOSED TOWN

Everything leans, like tottering, hunched old
women.

Every eye shines with fixed waiting
and for the word, "when?"

Here there are few soldiers.
Only shot-down birds tell of war.

You believe every bit of news you hear.

The buildings now are fuller,
Body smelling close to body,
And the garrets scream with light for long, long
hours.

This evening I walked along the street of death.
On one wagon, they were taking the dead away.

Why have so many marches been drummed here?

Why so many soldiers?

Then
A week after the end,
Everything will be empty here.
A hungry dove will peck for bread.
In the middle of the street will stand
An empty, dirty
Hearse.

--Anonymous

7. TEREZIN

That bit of filth in dirty walls,
And all around barbed wire,
And thirty-thousand souls who sleep
Who once will wake
And once will see
Their own blood spilled.

I was once a little child,
Three years ago.
That child who longed for other worlds.
But now I am no more a child
For I have learned to hate.
I am a grown-up person now,
I have known fear.

Bloody words and a dead day then,
That's something different than boogie men!

But anyway, I still believe I only sleep today,
That I'll wake up, a child again,
and start to laugh and play.
I'll go back to childhood sweet like a briar rose,
Like a bell which wakes us from a dream,
Like a mother with an ailing child
Loves him with aching woman's love.
How tragic then, is youth which lives
With enemies, with gallows ropes,
How tragic, then, for children on your lap
To say: this for the good, that for the bad.

Somewhere, far away out there, childhood sweetly
sleeps,
Along that path among the trees,
There o'er that house
Which was once my pride and joy.
There my mother gave me birth into this world
So I could weep...

In the flame of candles by my bed, I sleep
And once perhaps I'll understand
That I was such a little thing,
As little as this song.

These thirty-thousand souls who sleep
Among the trees will wake,
Open an eye
And because they see
A lot

They'll fall asleep again...

--Michael Flack, 1944

8. BIRDSONG

He doesn't know the world at all
Who stays in his nest and doesn't go out.
He doesn't know what birds know best
Nor what I want to sing about,
That the world is full of loveliness.

When dewdrops sparkle in the grass
And earth's aflood with morning light,
A blackbird sings upon a bush
To greet the dawning after night.
Then I know how fine it is to live.

Hey, try to open up your heart
To beauty; go to the woods someday
And weave a wreath of memory there.
Then if the tears obscure your way
You'll know how wonderful it is
To be alive.

--Anonymous 1941

9. TO OLGA

Listen!
The boat whistle has sounded now
And we must sail
Out toward an unknown port.

We'll sail a long, long way
And dreams will turn to truth.
Oh, how sweet the name Morocco!
Listen!
Now it's time.

The wind sings songs of far away,
Just look up to heaven
And think about the violets.

Listen!
Now it's time.

--Alena Synkova