

The Grandfather Story

Nicholas Campbell

He is there
in the little room off the hall
where it is always summer,
where what is left of the corn
after it has been plowed under for winter,
burns in the small black stove between him and the door,
the cobs red as the flowers growing from the grate.

Every weekend we drive from town to visit.
Today he will go only as far as the kitchen; he cannot walk,
though he used to walk to town.

We gather around him
as we gather around the table, the stove,
laugh like excited birds
when he tells us he can ride a bicycle
and rollerskate at the same time.

He has a riddle:
Many lakes around the house!
And we shout, *Windows!*

Sunday afternoon we sit in the little room
and listen to him talk
while he rocks in his big chair,
his hair like pipesmoke, his voice dry as leaves.
Though when he asks us *What color is a bluejay?*
or *How many buffaloes do you get with a nickel?*
He seems as young as father who likes to sit and listen,
Where it is always summer,
Where flowers grow from the grate.