

**Jayber's Poem, Inspired by Wendell Berry's novel *Jayber Crow* (Poetry)**

To those about to deconstruct or analyze  
Their wisp of life on earth:  
Take heed,  
Lest ye interpret your self  
As something understandable.

To you I say:

What do you make  
Of love  
That floats, unspoken  
That settles between  
Old friends  
That stands at the threshold,  
But never takes a chair?

Have you met the irony  
Of a death bed  
In a living room?

See how souls are carried away,  
How the grain has turned silver,  
Heads speckled by the sun:  
Squeamish boys  
Now dignified men—  
Their laughing eyes  
Sober,  
Accepting,  
Resigned.  
They drop dollars on the tobacco box  
On their way  
To the grave:  
'A clean cut,' they say  
To the Death Barber.

Speak, if you have understanding:  
Is the river youthful,  
Or is it an 'other,'  
An old man like me?  
Is the water new,  
Or does it recall  
What was borrowed in the floods?  
If the water is old,  
Does it carry inside it

The memory of the ground it bore away  
To make room for its younger self?  
For I remember what *I* have borne away,  
And that makes me think  
That there can only be  
The one river.

Look into my face,  
At the husk  
That holds me together.  
Can you measure a life  
In lines and freckles?

Do my eyes still tell the  
Old  
Familiar  
Story  
Of a lamb without sight  
Who wandered in the valley  
Til he collapsed in the rain  
And had to be carried  
The rest of the way  
Home?

I've felt Love,  
And it's carried me to the  
Edge  
of  
the  
world.

I do dishonor to this Beauty,  
For I fail to love it as I would  
And it breaks me.  
And yet I'd not abandon this post  
For anything,  
For the brokenness of my own heart  
Is a small price to pay  
That Love might go on in this world.

Analyze my life, if you can—  
Take my years in your hands  
And clench;  
But know that I've already  
Sought understanding  
Of myself,

And that I know this man less  
Now  
At the end of the road.

My life has been Love.

And Loneliness.

I hope to be around  
When I die.  
To lie still,  
To become one more piece of furniture  
That folk can say,  
'Oh, that was lost in the flood.'

But I won't be lost,  
Just buried  
'Neath the ripples of time;  
And when the waters still, maybe you'll see me,  
Drifting by in the new old river  
Which will carry me  
To the edge of the world,  
Where Love lives.

What do you make of my life?

What do you make  
Of yours?