

The Lotus Flower

ROBERT ROTH

The lotus flower,
Tossing in the flood of life,
Finds no distinction.

The foolish being,
Ponders his store of knowledge
And learns nothing more.

Work of the World

ROBERT ROTH

Work of the World,
Humming with the sounds of sweaty toil,
Moving toward the vast eternity
Which knows no labor,
Knows the soundless space,
Knows no joy nor sorrow when
Ageless effort crumbles at our feet.
Long, the feverish, fumbling work
And vast the effort till the skies
Rejoicing with the reapers and the harvest,
Turn once more to cloudless
Apathy;
And turn, once more, to indifferent infinity;
And feverish, fumbling work and vast effort
Are once again reborn.

Courage

ROBERT ROTH

He was doing his chores when the sound of horses and men laboring up the dusty hill reached his ears. Knowing they weren't far off, Courtney shuffled into the barn, closing the door behind him, and made his way to a patch of hay near a large window overlooking the shanty and adjacent field. Georgia was hot and dry in late summer. Those grey-clad soldiers were no doubt well aware of the heat; they often stopped here for water. In several minutes they'd be gone; he could resume his chores. In the meantime there was nothing to do but rest in the cool shade of the barn and remain silent. He mused:

July 1863: Gettysburg has passed and with it the Southern cause. It would not be long before Courtney could once again be seen without fear of suspicion or disgrace. So many were dead. Who could say that he had not fought with the rest, that he had hidden in a cool, shady barn at the sound of laboring horses.

In the many months of hiding, Courtney had given much thought to the situation. It was not his fight. He was the son of poor whites. They had hardly had enough money for the bare necessities of life, much less a slave. Besides, the few slaves that Courtney had ever known seemed to be nice enough fellows. Why shouldn't they be free?

Grandpa said it wasn't slavery. Grandpa had fought in 1812 and he said no Yankee could tell a Southerner what to do. It was the principle of the thing said Grandpa. In Grandpa's eyes Courtney was a disgrace to the family and a coward, but blood was thicker than water. Courtney's only defense was that he had no knowledge of the principle involved.

Ma and Pa were on his side, fortunately. Ma wouldn't let him go off to join up even if Courtney had wanted to. Evidently Ma knew that the principle wasn't worth his life. Pa didn't say much except that he knew he couldn't do without Courtney's help on the farm.

The soldiers were leaving. Thanking Courtney's mother for the water, they reined their horses back down the hill. They were out of sight by the time Courtney had left the barn.

Soon the war would be over. Courtney could hold his head up in town and curse the Yankees with the rest of his friends. In the meantime stay close to the barn and do your chores. They don't leave much time for thought. It wasn't his fight anyway; it wasn't his fight.