Another Autumn

Barbara Sgarlata*

*Iowa State College

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Abstract

SELDEN’S eyes were on the sky; her hands slipped dish after dish blindly through the suds. Wash the dishes while the water is heating; dry the dishes and put them neatly on the shelf; polish the little teakettle and put clean dish towels out...
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Selden’s eyes were on the sky; her hands slipped dish after dish blindly through the suds.

Wash the dishes while the water is heating; dry the dishes and put them neatly on the shelf; polish the little teakettle and put clean dish towels out. Always keep the kitchen shining—

“Selden . . . Selden . . . Selden.”

“I’m coming, Mom. I’ll be right up.”

Snatch a towel and dry your hands while you’re running up the stairs two at a time. Put on a smile and ask,

“What is it, honey? What can I do?”

“Selden, my legs, my legs!”

“Do they hurt much, Mom? Let’s change your position and turn you over so you can look out the window and see what a lovely day it is. Would you like that?”

“Yes, Selden, let’s do that, please.”

Pull back the covers gently and move those poor thin legs—slowly and carefully. Now slip a hand under the delicate shoulders; now move the shoulders; now roll the little body over into position and tuck the soft quilt up and around.

“Is that all right, honey? See, isn’t it a beautiful day outside? See how the leaves are turning and just smell how sweet the air is. Now, how about closing those blue eyes and catching a few winks of sleep while ole Selden buzzes down and looks the laundry situation over, huh?”

“All right, Selden. I’ll be just fine now. I’ll try not to call you until you’re through washing. Thank you, dear.”

Clomp cheerfully out of the pretty cream and yellow room and bounce down the stairs. Keep on going down stairs to the base-
ment, rush past the boiler, touching it to see if the water is hot enough. Clank the movable tubs into position about the machine and turn scalding water into the tubs. Whistle all the time—anything—and cut up the laundry soap . . .

The silver bell—drop the soap and knife and charge up the stairs once more—kitchen, living room, stairs, pretty cream and yellow room—

"Selden, there's something wrong here. I'm not lying comfortable."

"Well, honey, we'll fix it right away—let's see now."

Draw away the covers, pull the sheet tight, tighter until no wrinkle is possible. Tuck it in firmly, and once again the soft quilt falls lightly over the still little form lying there—unable to move except for you, Selden.

"How about the radio, Mom? It's time for 'Snow Village'."

"Yes, that would be nice, wouldn't it?" Real pleasure in the sweet face on the pillow. "If it isn't too much trouble."

Laugh heartily and say, "Anything for you, m'llove."

Well, back to the wash—soap, rinse, wring, and tug the basket up the stairs, bang loudly out the door and into the October sunshine. Oh, God, what a day! Think of walking in the leaves ankle deep and coming in to a supper of lovely buttered noodles, cool sweet milk, and juicy prunes that Mom used to make . . .

Never mind, keep going. There'll be another October. Back into the house with one last look at the flawless blue of the sky. Better run up and see if everything's okay and then start the lunch. Maybe after dinner tonight Daddy will want to take a walk.

"How's my favorite girl coming along up here? Such luxury! Could I interest you in a delicious bit of luncheon? We'll have a party. I'll bring my lunch up here and perch on the foot of your bed and we'll gossip."

"Of course, dear Selden. Do you suppose I could sit up?"

"Could you sit up? In a twinkle of an eye we'll have you just as comfy as anything. I'll get the pillows."

Go into your funny old room with the lumpy Raggedy Ann Doll you made sitting on the flat bed and collect a mountain of pillows. You want to let the tears come; you wish they would, but your throat is choked and your eyes dry. You look out the window and think,

"There'll be another October—there'll be another Autumn."
Because we feel that Keith Shillington is writing the most outstanding poetry on our campus, Sketch is pleased to devote the following four pages to his most recent work.

The Great Circle

I rise from my seat
And start pardoning my way to the aisle
For the cartoon is just past and the news is here again.
Looking up—suddenly I see among the rick-racked people
You and her—
She is caught in the quarter-crescent of your arm
Safe and wanted in the flash and roar of the bomb filled screen.
You are holding her as though the fact
Secures your future
Until this dream-shadowed time scuds away,
Leaving the bright new sky.

Yes, suck life to the cling-stone
As you suck the ripe red plums
And bury the pit,
For while the bombs come squealing
Through the star-stabbed night
And the machine gun spits its chattering teeth
Sowing death-fire in your flesh,
The rain falls unknowingly
And the sun begs life up again.
There on bomb-torn Malta the daisies burst, screen flowered—
Grass is already covering the scars—
Time travels her cycle—
This too is where I came in—