

Victor, Victor

(W.H. Auden)

Victor was a little baby, into this world he came:

His father took him on his knee and said: 'Don't dishonour the family name.' Victor looked up at his father- looked up with big round eyes:

His father said: 'Victor, my only son, don't you ever tell lies.'

It was a frosty December, it wasn't the season for fruits;

His father fell dead of heart disease while lacing up his boots.

It was a frosty December when into his grave he sank;

His uncle found Victor a post as a cashier in the Midlands Counties bank.

It was a frosty December Victor was only eighteen.

But his figures were neat and his margins straight and his cuffs were always clean.

He took a room at the Peveril, a respectable boarding-house: And Time watched Victor day after day as a cat will watch a mouse.

Victor went up to his bedroom, set the alarm bell;

Climbed into his bed, took his bible and read of happenings to Jezebel.

It was the First of April, Anna to the Peveril came;

Her eyes, her lips, her breasts, her hips and her smile set men

aflame. It was the Second of April, she was wearing a coat of fur;

Victor met her upon the stairs and fell in love with her.

The first time he made his proposal, she laughed, said: 'I'll never wed':

The second time there was a pause, then she shook her head. Anna looked at the mirror, pouted and gave a frown; Said: 'Victor's as dull as a wet afternoon but I've got to settle down.'

The third time he made his proposal, as they walked by the Reservoir, She gave him a kiss like a blow on the head, said, 'You are my heart's desire.'

They married early in August, she said: 'Kiss me, you funny boy':

Victor took her in his arms and said: 'O my Helen of Troy.'

The clerks were talking of Anna, the door was just ajar:

One said: 'Poor old Victor, but where ignorance is bliss, etcetera.'

Victor looked up at the sunset as he stood there all alone; Cried: 'Are you in Heaven, Father?', but the sky said 'Address not known.'

Victor looked up at the mountains, the mountains all covered with snow;

Cried: 'Are you pleased with me, Father?' and the answer came back, No.

Victor came to the forest, cried: 'Father, will she ever be true?'

And the oaks and the beeches shook their heads and they answered: 'Not to you.'

Victor came to the meadow where the wind went sweeping by: Cried: 'O Father, I love her so,' but the wind said: 'She must die.'

Victor came to the river running so deep and so still;

Crying: 'O Father, what shall I do?' and the river answered: 'Kill.'

Anna was sitting at table, drawing cards from a pack;

Anna was sitting at table waiting for her husband to come back.

Victor stood in the doorway, he didn't utter a word;

She said: 'What's the matter, darling?' he behaved as if he hadn't heard.

There was a voice in his left ear, there was a voice in the right,

There was a voice at the base of his skull saying: 'She must die tonight.'

Victor picked up a carving knife, his features were set and drawn, Said: 'Anna, it would have been better for you if you had not been born.'

Anna jumped up from the table, Anna started to scream,

But Victor came slowly after her like a horror in a dream.

She dodged behind the sofa, she tore down a curtain rod,

But Victor came slowly after her, said 'Prepare to meet Thy God.'
He stood there above the body, he stood there holding the knife;
And the blood ran down the stairs and sang; 'I am the Resurrection
and the Life.'
They tapped Victor on the shoulder, they took him away
in a van;
He sat as quiet as a lump of moss saying; 'I am the Son of
Man.'
Victor sat in a corner
Making a woman of clay.
Saying: 'I am Alpha and Omega, I shall come
To judge the earth one day.'