

## Folk Song

I know an old man on High Street, has a cluttered little friendly shop on the third floor. Worn, bare boards, but when you hit the first one, you're apt to hear a fiddle tune rising up the stairs, and you can't turn back until you've found it.

You might hear gentle, reminiscent plucking of deft, quick fingers on a five-string banjo, old Dan Tucker or Sourwood Mountain on a softly strummed guitar, and a clear humming along – oh, you can barely hear it, you must hear it! A faint, insistent memory taunts, slumbering so long and deep you thought it had been lost until now.

Lordy, those songs, those melodies, the words I hear along, my father in the cow barn, my mother by the stove, singing, humming, whistling, those songs, the same, Grandma's merry voice, a dozen more I know, and some, from where? From where?

There's a big new store down the street three doors no stairs to climb, no dusty, worn-out stairs, bright, wide windows gleaming grandiose, long glass-topped cases, courteous, cold, too high for leaning. They hang their fine guitars behind glass doors, don't touch; they don't deal in five-string banjos.

I pass on by and climb the stairs, and feel a joyous surge. Faster I go until at the very top I fairly run. The little door stands open, dusty sunlight falls across the wooden floor, a tiny, shrunken figure moves behind a finger-marked, glass-topped counter,

its wooden frame worn smooth from leaning,  
and frosty bright blue eyes peer twinkling over  
the gold-rimmed bifocals perched halfway up  
a high sharp nose. A tuft of white pokes out  
beside each ear. He grins at me although he knows  
I never buy a thing, and anticipated delight floods  
through and over me like the dusty rays that  
fill the little odd-shaped room.

If, when I am full of joyous things like this old friend --  
to be so full is by itself a pleasant enough thought,  
but if ever I am -- when I have seen as much,  
learned as much, felt the kinds of pleasures  
he must have known a thousand times to be so  
joyously full now -- if only I can overflow so merrily.

It's a dream to be savored.

