



Edward Field

Edward Field was born on June 7, 1924, in Brooklyn, New York. His books of poetry include *Magic Words: Poems* (Harcourt, 1997); *Counting Myself Lucky: Selected Poems 1963-1992* (1992); *New and Selected Poems from the Book of My Life* (1987); *A Full Heart* (1977), nominated for the Lenore Marshall Prize; and *Stand Up, Friend, with Me* (1963), which was the 1962 Lamont Poetry Selection of The Academy of American Poets. Many regard Field's diction as straightforward and "unpoetic." He does not seem to force the language into producing special effects, nor does he require his readers to have arcane knowledge.

“Frankenstein” by Edward Field

The monster has escaped from the dungeon
where he was kept by the Baron,
who made him with knobs sticking out from each
side of his neck
where the head was attached to the body
and stitching all over
where parts of cadavers were sewed together.

He is pursued by the ignorant villagers,
who think he is evil and dangerous because he is ugly
and makes ugly noises.
They wave firebrands at him and cudgels and rakes,
but he escapes and comes to the thatched cottage
of an old blind man playing on the violin
Mendelssohn's "Spring Song."

Hearing him approach, the blind man welcomes him:
"Come in, my friend," and takes him by the arm.
"You must be weary," and sits him down inside the
house.
For the blind man has long dreamed of having a
friend
to share his lonely life.

The monster has never known kindness < the Baron
was cruel --
but somehow he is able to accept it now,
and he really has no instincts to harm the old man,
for in spite of his awful looks he has a tender heart:
Who knows what cadaver that part of him came
from?

The old man seats him at table, offers him bread,
and says, "Eat, my friend." The monster
rears back roaring in terror.
"No, my friend, it is good. Eat -- goood"
and the old man shows him how to eat,

and reassured, the monster eats
and says, "Eat -- goood,"
trying out the words and finding them good too.

The old man offers him a glass of wine,
"Drink, my friend. Drink -- goood."
The monster drinks, slurping horribly, and says,
"Drink -- goood," in his deep nutty voice
and smiles maybe for the first time in his life.

Then the blind man puts a cigar in the monster's
mouth
and lights a large wooden match that flares up in his
face.

The monster, remembering the torches of the
villagers,
recoils, grunting in terror.
"No, my friend, smoke -- goood,"
and the old man demonstrates with his own cigar.
The monster takes a tentative puff
and smiles hugely, saying, "Smoke -- goood,"
and sits back like a banker, grunting and puffing.

Now the old man plays Mendelssohn's "Spring Song"
on the violin
while tears come into our dear monster's eyes
as he thinks of the stones of the mob the pleasures of
meal-time,
the magic new words he has learned
and above all of the friend he has found.

It is just as well that he is unaware --
being simple enough to believe only in the present --
that the mob will find him and pursue him
for the rest of his short unnatural life,
until trapped at the whirlpool's edge
he plunges to his death.

“The Return of Frankenstein” by Edward Field

He didn't die in the whirlpool by the mill
where he had fallen in after a wild chase
by all the people of the town.

Somehow he clung to an overhanging rock
until the villagers went away.

And when he came out, he was changed forever,
that soft heart of his had hardened
and he really was a monster now.

He was out to pay them back,
to throw the lie of brotherly love
in their white Christian teeth.

Wasn't his flesh human flesh
even made from the bodies of criminals,
the worst the Baron could find?

But love is not necessarily implicit in human flesh:
Their hatred was now his hatred,

so he set out on his new career
his previous one being the victim,
the good man who suffers.

Now no longer the hunted but the hunter
he was in charge of his destiny
and knew how to be cold and clever,

preserving barely a spark of memory
for the old blind musician
who once took him in and offered brotherhood.

His idea -- if his career now had an idea --
was to kill them all,
keep them in terror anyway,
let them feel hunted.
Then perhaps they would look at others
with a little pity and love.

Only a suffering people have any virtue.