



Kitty Hawk



CHRISTMAS 1956

and this new poem

bring you the warmest

greetings for the holidays

and the new year from



ROBERT FROST

*Kitty Hawk*

1894

by Robert Frost



Kitty Hawk, O Kitty,  
There was once a song,  
A prophetic ditty,  
I might well have sung  
When I came here young  
Sixty years ago.  
It was then as though  
I could hardly wait  
To degravitate.  
Habit couldn't hold me.  
I was, to be sure,  
Out of sorts with fate,  
Wandering to and fro  
In the earth alone,  
You might say too poor  
Spirited to care

Who I was or where.  
Still I must have known,  
Something in me told me,  
Flight would first be flown,  
It is on my tongue  
To say first be sprung,  
Into the sublime  
Off these sands of time  
For his hour glass.  
I felt in me wing  
To have up and flung  
An immortal fling.  
I might well have soared,  
I might well have sung,  
Though my bent was toward  
Little more, alas,

Than Cape Hatteras;  
And I fell among  
Some kind of committee  
From Elizabeth City,  
Each and every one  
Loaded with a gun  
And a demi-john,  
Out to kill a duck,  
Or perhaps a swan  
Over Currituck.  
This was not their day  
Anything to slay  
Unless one another.  
Being out of luck  
Made them no less gay,  
No, nor less polite.

They included me  
Like a little brother  
In their revelry;  
Even at their height  
All concern to take  
Care my innocence  
Should at all events  
Tenderly be kept  
For good gracious' sake.  
And if they were gentle  
They were sentimental.  
One drank to his mother  
While another wept.  
All which made it sad  
For me to break loose  
From the need they had

To make someone glad  
They were of no use.  
Manners made it hard,  
But that night I stole  
Off on the unbounded  
Beaches where the whole  
Of the Atlantic pounded.  
There I next fell in  
With a lone coast guard  
On midnight patrol,  
Who as of a sect  
Asked about my soul  
And where-all I'd been.  
Apropos of sin,  
Did I recollect  
How the wreckers wrecked

Theodosia Burr

Off this very shore?

'Twas to punish her,

But her father more—

We don't know what for;

There was no confession.

Things they think she wore

Still sometimes occur

In someone's possession

Here at Kitty Hawk.

We can have no notion

Of the strange devotion

Burr had for his daughter.

He was too devoted.

So it was in talk

We prolonged our walk;

On one side the ocean,

And on one a water

(Of the inner sound).

And the moon was full,

As the poet said,

And right there I quoted,

That old laurel-crowned

Lord of a John Bull.

The moon's being full

And right overhead

Small, but strong and round,

By its tidal pull

Made all being full.

Here it was again

In the self-same day,

I at odds with men,

Came twice on their pity:  
For a daughter drowned,  
For a son astray.  
Kitty Hawk, O Kitty,  
Know you no dismay,  
But some time in some  
Mood akin to pity  
You would weep no less  
For mankind's success  
Than for their distress.  
You'd be overcome  
In the deathless scene  
When that common scoff,  
Poor Darius Green,  
And his fool machine  
Finally took off.

Woodcuts by Antonio Frasconi



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