Frosty-Moon
and
Other Poems
By
MARGOT OSBORN
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Of this Edition of Frosty-Moon
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Margot Osborn was born and educated in England, and came to
Canada as a bride. Residing now in Regina, she is the mother of four
children. Her poetry has appeared in The Christian Science Monitor,
Canadian Forum, Canadian Poetry Magazine, Regina Leader Post,
National Home Monthly, and other periodicals. Mrs. Osborn is also
interested in playwriting, is a member of the Regina Little Theatre,
and has won recognition for her "Judas Incorporated" and "Thou
That Sleepest."
ALWAYS THE MELTING MOON COMES

The silent tepees stand like shocked corn
in dark triangles against the moonlight.
Charcoal shadows shift, leaning awry.
The moon climbs down the western slope;
an owl in hushed flight slips by
and softly calls.

The old one stirs.
Winter falls. Bleached grass
will be buried in snow, tepees banked.
Green banners will flash in the north,
the air will sparkle with ice fragments.
Wind, shouting down from the north,
will pack the light snow,
pack it hard,
carve it in lines and ridges,
sculpture it in great curves.
The old one does not fear.

There is food.
Pemmican packed with chokecherries,
saskatoons pounded and dried,
deer meat and buffalo stored in deerskin.
There is fuel for the fire, and
robes to be wrapped in.
Why should the old one fear?
Many times have the wild geese flown southward
Many times have leaves fallen.
Many times has the frosty moon
breathed her cold breath on the world,
stilling water, changing the world to white.
But always the melting moon comes,
cracking ice,
rippling streams, bringing rain.
The white blanket of snow is withdrawn.
Grass comes with green blades,
and the crocus.
Rabbits' coats patchy and brown.
Crows shout and jeer
and the meadowlark calls.
The robes are shaken out;
chinquook blows gently from the west.
The old one tells of it
"Always the melting moon comes."
Braves are dancing in the Hunting Ground,
see how their torches gleam,¹
Flaunting head-feathers!
Hear their feet stamping, stamping.
I must go.
Ho friends! these feet
have trod their last dance on the prairie grass,
Bull Moose, reach down a strong hand
to my tepee door. Light me a flare.
Tonight I join your pow wow:
light me a flare!

¹ It is a legend with the Indians that the Northern Lights indicate revels in the Happy Hunting Ground.
AUTUMN

Autumn is an old brave, loping along
in beaded moccasins.
The mischievous winds
are tearing down his painted tepee;
but he is headed South,
long braids flying,
and the sun glinting on his gaudy
head feathers.
Wind is blowing over the dry prairie.
Brown dust circles, choking the throat,
stinging the cheeks.
I blink through lowered lids
groping to the well.
Stock must be watered
though the world blows away
in infinitely small fragments.
This farm, my world, is blowing away,
all its good topsoil going
wind-driven westward;
choking dry ditches,
filling bare lake bottoms,
sifting into cities.
I plough in the silted powder
and scatter seed
but the rain does not come.
How can it grow?
God has forgotten the West!

Did I say God had forgotten?
Something is falling,
could it, remotely, be rain?
I stretch out my hand and moist, brown clots
settle on it.
Yes, rain, real rain
battering the dust.
My face is streaked with this brown composition
Rain, bringing my topsoil back to me,
running in swift torrents,
suckling the land!

I will seed again
now the dust has stopped blowing.
There will be wheat,
bread for the world and me.

Grasshoppers—mere rumour.
Rust—rank heresy.
There will be wheat, clothing the prairie green, lapping in waves under June winds; ocean of gold, flooding up to my doorstep in July. Marooned in a golden sea! Rain! I throw back my head and the coolness pours on my face, running into my eyes and out again in unsalt tears. It beats on my bared head, streams off my fingers, drips off the point of my chin. Rain, rain is falling on the thirsty prairie.
HUNGER IN SPAIN

(A poem for Choric Speech.)

Little Pepito is travelling northward,
Little Pepito with tear-rimmed eyes,
Stumbling northward to France and safety.

Pour the red wine!
See the dancers!
Scream louder, trombones,
Drown out my conscience.
Am I Pepito’s keeper?

Little Pepito stumbling northward
Over the dusty, white Catalon roads,
Hunger will vanish beyond the next horizon.

—NIGHT
Lie still, Pepito; cease fighting your hunger,
In time it will put you to sleep.

Don’t bother me,
I have children of my own to feed and care for.
Nita must have her music lessons,
Billie is worrying me for a crackling machine gun,
And I must have my teeth fixed.
Don’t bother me now.

There isn’t enough food to go round, Pepito.
The beggar woman shares her crust with you,
But you are both still hungry.

Huge surplus of wheat depresses the market!
Limit your crops. Plow under.
Let the fruit rot!
We have too much of everything,
That is why we are poor.

Lie still, Pepito. Now rain is falling
On your scant clothing in the shallow ditch.
Pepito is sleeping soundly at last.
The droning plane, bomb-freighted, does not wake him.
The soaking rain, cold as night, does not wake him.
The beggar woman, leaning over him,
Takes the crust from his little, blue fingers.
Pepito does not need it now.

Scream shells, roar guns,
Rocking this crazy planet!
Why should we care? Why should we care?
Am I my brother’s keeper?
Cain first asked that question.

BEAUTY IS OLD

Beauty is old. The moon has hung
The way it hangs tonight, a million years;
And Menelaus’ face may have been wet,
As mine, with the June rain’s cold tears.

Beauty is old; and summer nights,
Moon-filled, like this, are often sung.
Yes, these are old—as old as time itself,
But O, my love and I are young.
# The Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books

*Lorne Pierce—Editor*

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