



Second Air Force

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One of Jarrell's war poems that slants the issue through the eyes of a woman, this poem tells the story of a woman come to visit her son one afternoon at a bomber training field. She sees the landscape, the hangars, and the men working on the planes as an alien world.

Jarrell comments that the woman

remembers what she has read on the front page of her newspaper the week before, a conversation between a bomber, in flames over Germany, and one of the fighters protecting it: "Then I heard the bomber call me in, 'Little Friend, Little Friend, I got two engines on fire' I said, 'I'm crossing right over you. Let's go home.'"

The woman feels the night coming on and she fears for the young soldiers, innocent and purposeful, so vulnerable next to the arms and equipment they have to trust. She is not able to buy into their purpose—but they are not able to look beyond it. "For them the bombers answer everything." The poem hovers near iambic pentameter, occasionally drawing in from it or opening out from it. The bleakness of the landscape and the presence of the death-machines are weighed against the love of the mother for her son and her fears for him.

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