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# My Papa's Waltz

BY THEODORE ROETHKE

The whiskey on your breath  
Could make a small boy dizzy;  
But I hung on like death:  
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans  
Slid from the kitchen shelf;  
My mother's countenance  
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist  
Was battered on one knuckle;  
At every step you missed  
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head  
With a palm caked hard by dirt,  
Then waltzed me off to bed  
Still clinging to your shirt.

My Papa's Waltz  
Theodore Roethke  
1934  
Oil on canvas  
100 x 100 cm  
The Art Institute of Chicago



The theme is casual because the author is looking back on what his dad was like. The memories were good so he feels good about it.

We romped until the pans slid from the kitchen shelf; My mother's countenance could not unfrown itself.

You beat time on my head with a palm caked hard by dirt, then waltzed me off to bed still clinging to your shirt.

The hand that held my wrist was battered on one knuckle; At every step you missed my right ear scraped a buckle.



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