

Reluctance- Robert Frost

POEM

*Out through the fields and the woods
And over the walls I have wended;
I have climbed the hills of view
And looked at the world, and descended;
I have come by the highway home,
And lo, it is ended.*

*The leaves are all dead on the ground,
Save those that the oak is keeping
To ravel them one by one
And let them go scraping and creeping
Out over the crusted snow,
When others are sleeping.*

*And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,
No longer blown hither and thither;
The last lone aster is gone;
The flowers of the witch hazel wither;
The heart is still aching to seek,
But the feet question "Whither?"*

*Ah, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season?*

SUMMARY

In "Reluctance," the man's travels have led him back home; his journey has ended but he is dismayed because he has found only dead leaves of the winter season. He is unwilling to accept that ending to his adventures and refuses to "yield" or "go with the drift of things" simply because the season proclaims it to be so. He does not agree to such an ending and terminates the poem on a courageous, hopeful note.

ANALYSIS

Who is the speaker? The Lover, in this case is Frost, who felt rejected by Elinor. Frost compared himself with the "dead leaves" and the "last lone aster." Where is the speaker situated? The speaker is at home. What does the poem mean? The poem means life and love don't last. Reluctance ends a journey where the noble oak is abandoned by the leaves in winter like a solitary heart denies its losses of love. The world chosen by the author leads the reader to think that something is wrong and that everything hurts.

In the first stanza, the fourth line shows us love which like sunset descends and is ended. "And looked at the world, and descended; / I have come by the highway home, /And lo, it is ended".

In the second stanza and part of the third, the autumn presents the sad imagery that comes to reinforce the thoughts of

the author through very vivid images: "The leaves are all dead on the ground," "...over the crusted snow," "...scraping and creeping" "And the dead leaves lie huddled and still, /No longer blown hither and thither."

The snow suggests purity and maybe a new beginning. It means that everything is frozen, starting with nature and ending with the flame of love: "The last one aster is gone; / The flowers of the witch-hazel wither." In the third stanza, in the fifth line, the author speaks of pain of heart that has suffered due to this twilight: "the heart is still aching to seek," is emphasized by the fact that there is no purpose left, no tomorrow, no shores to be looking for. The poet's question is "Whither?" It seems that with this loss there comes lack of purpose and desire to find a meaningful answer to all this sorrow. The message is simple.

Frost creates a labyrinth within a few short verses which leaves the reader in a paradoxical reality. Neither the time nor the place will always stay the same. He will always look for an answer and fight against all probabilities in order to preserve this feeling of love that makes him happy. So seasons may come and go, and so may love, but the heart of man will always consider it a treason to "...bow and accept the end of a love or a season."

In the final verse he asks if we can ever be satisfied or happy by accepting the reason rather than the emotion for making a decision to end a relationship. There is a contrast between the end of summer with all its joys, replaced by the cold

desolation of winter, the emptiness of the landscape and the death of flowers. The poem ends with a rhetorical question which is a general truth not yet found because the heart of a person will see this acceptance of defeat as treason even though the facts cannot change.

In the last stanza, when the desperate feelings and the lost love fail to lead to anything good, the poet is proud to say that at least we will not “go with the drift of things.”