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## This Side of Heaven

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## **Flame Azaleas**

You sit like some simpleminded acolyte  
of some dubious nature-worshipping sect—  
ored into reverence, drawn into love,  
before the fires of these flame azaleas.

There on the slope before you, clusters  
of shrubs, some of them twice headhigh,  
blazing with honeysucklelike blossoms,  
with flames of yellow, scarlet, orange..

Such plant a burning bush of brightness,  
with slender branches leaping to burst  
into glowing bouquets of living jewels.  
Gently, gently, you simply have to touch.

Then smiling, perhaps a bit foolishly,  
like a good simpleminded acolyte should,  
you bow to the designer of flame azaleas  
had sprinkle silver coins in his woods.

—Simons Roof

## **This Side of Heaven**

Old guitars,  
they lean against  
the parlor wall, gourds crawl  
the smokehouse and morning glories  
last 'till noon, all the comings  
all the goings, sending loved ones away  
with quartet music ("If We Never Meet Again")  
hiding flowers tossed upon the Rock of Ages  
behind Mount Vernon Baptist Church  
the silence is everlasting  
the memories bittersweet, and  
the crowd is waiting for the rapture.

—Errol Miller

## **An Order for Wildflowers**

In this possible air,  
waved  
with the pulses of two dogs  
snoring,  
an order form saved  
from three months gone  
hangs  
from my hand like your  
dappled cats from eighty-year  
oaks.  
Their bevelling of claws  
in bark  
could have shadowed down  
to where  
ground rises to meet road,  
to the hollow napped  
with colors  
from a shaker can of seed.  
It is the tenth of May and  
too late  
to seed soil, too late to  
offer  
any bloom but this one.  
Growing it  
absolved me some.

—Dana Wildsmith