**COURAGE**

**By: Anne Sexton**

It is in the small things we see it.

The child's first step,

as awesome as an earthquake.

The first time you rode a bike,

wallowing up the sidewalk.

The first spanking when your heart

went on a journey all alone.

When they called you crybaby

or poor or fatty or crazy

and made you into an alien,

you drank their acid

and concealed it.

Later,

if you faced the death of bombs and bullets

you did not do it with a banner,

you did it with only a hat to

comver your heart.

You did not fondle the weakness inside you

though it was there.

Your courage was a small coal

that you kept swallowing.

If your buddy saved you

and died himself in so doing,

then his courage was not courage,

it was love; love as simple as shaving soap.

Later,

if you have endured a great despair,

then you did it alone,

getting a transfusion from the fire,

picking the scabs off your heart,

then wringing it out like a sock.

Next, my kinsman, you powdered your sorrow,

you gave it a back rub

and then you covered it with a blanket

and after it had slept a while

it woke to the wings of the roses

and was transformed.

Later,

when you face old age and its natural conclusion

your courage will still be shown in the little ways,

each spring will be a sword you'll sharpen,

those you love will live in a fever of love,

and you'll bargain with the calendar

and at the last moment

when death opens the back door

you'll put on your carpet slippers

and stride out.