W. H. Auden (1907-73)

3 Miss Gee

| About Miss Edith Gee; She lived in Clevedon Terrace At Number 83. | |
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| She'd a slight squint in her left eye, Her lips they were thin and small, She had narrow sloping shoulders And she had no bust at all. | Ē |
| She'd a velvet hat with trimmings, And a dark grey serge costume; She lived in Clevedon Terrace In a small bed-sitting room. | 10 |
| She'd a purple mac for wet days, A green umbrella too to take, She'd a bicycle with shopping basket And a harsh back-pedal brake. | 15 |
| The Church of Saint Aloysius Was not so very far; She did a lot of knitting, Knitting for that Church Bazaar. | 20 |
| Miss Gee looked up at the starlight And said, 'Does anyone care That I live in Clevedon Terrace On one hundred pounds a year?' | |
| She dreamed a dream one evening That she was the Queen of France And the Vicar of Saint Aloysius Asked Her Majesty to dance. | 25 |
| But a storm blew down the palace, She was biking through a field of corn, And a bull with the face of the Vicar Was charging with lowered horn. | 30 |

| She could feel his hot breath behind her, He was going to overtake; And the bicycle went slower and slower Because of that back-pedal brake. | 35 |
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| Summer made the trees a picture, Winter made them a wreck; She bicycled to the evening service With her clothes buttoned up to her neck. | 40 |
| She passed by the loving couples, She turned her head away; She passed by the loving couples And they didn't ask her to stay. | |
| Miss Gee sat down in the side-aisle, She heard the organ play; And the choir it sang so sweetly At the ending of the day, | 45 |
| Miss Gee knelt down in the side-aisle, She knelt down on her knees; 'Lead me not into temptation But make me a good girl, please.' | 50 |
| The days and nights went by her Like waves round a Cornish wreck; She bicycled down to the doctor With her clothes buttoned up to her neck. | 55 |
| She bicycled down to the doctor, And rang the surgery bell; 'O, doctor, I've a pain inside me, And I don't feel very well.' | 60 |
| Doctor Thomas looked her over, And then he looked some more; Walked over to his wash-basin, Said: 'Why didn't you come before?' | |
| Doctor Thomas sat over his dinner, Though his wife was waiting to ring, Rolling his bread into pellets; Said, 'Cancer's a funny thing. | 65 |

| 'Nobody knows what the cause is, Though some pretend they do; It's like some hidden assassin Waiting to strike at you. | 70 |
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| 'Childless women get it, And men when they retire; It's as if there had to be some outlet For their foiled creative fire.' | 75 |
| His wife she rang for the servant, Said, 'Don't be so morbid, dear'; He said: 'I saw Miss Gee this evening And she's a goner, I fear.' | 80 |
| They took Miss Gee to the hospital, She lay there a total wreck, Lay in the ward for women With the bedclothes right up to her neck. | |
| They laid her on the table, The students began to laugh; And Mr. Rose the surgeon He cut Miss Gee in half. | 85 |
| Mr. Rose he turned to his students, Said, 'Gentlemen, if you please, We seldom see a sarcoma As far advanced as this.' | 90 |
| They took her off the table, They wheeled away Miss Gee Down to another department Where they study Anatomy. | 95 |
| They hung her from the ceiling, Yes, they hung up Miss Gee; And a couple of Oxford Groupers Carefully dissected her knee. | 100 |
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