

This Is What I Know
Four Poems of
Dorothy Parker

1. The Red Dress
2. Fair Weather
3. Somebody's Song
4. Interior

for soprano voice,
alto saxophone,
and piano

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1. THE RED DRESS (1928)

I always saw, I always said
If I were grown and free,
I'd have a gown of reddest red
As fine as you could see,

To wear out walking, sleek and slow,
Upon a Summer day,
And there'd be one to see me so,
And flip the world a way.

And he would be a gallant one,
With stars behind his eyes,
And hair like metal in the sun,
And lips too warm for lies.

I always saw us, gay and good,
High honored in the town.
Now I am grown to womanhood....
I have the silly gown.

2. FAIR WEATHER (1928)

This level reach of blue is not my sea;
Here are sweet waters, pretty in the sun,
Whose quiet ripples meet obediently
A marked and measured line, one after one.
This is no sea of mine, that humbly laves
Untroubled sands, spread glittering and warm.
I have a need of wilder, crueller waves;
They sicken of the calm, who knew the storm.

So let a love beat over me again,
Loosing its million desperate breakers wide;
Sudden and terrible to rise and wane;
Roaring the heavens apart; a reckless tide
That casts upon the heart, as it recedes,
Splinters and spars and dripping, salty weeds.

3. SOMEBODY'S SONG (1926)

This is what I vow:
He shall have my heart to keep;
Sweetly will we stir and sleep,
All the years, as now.
Swift the measured sands may run;
Love like this is never done;
He and I are welded one: This is what I vow.

This is what I pray:
Keep him by me tenderly;
Keep him sweet in pride of me,
Ever and a day;
Keep me from the old distress;
Let me, for our happiness,
Be the one to love the less:
This is what I pray.

This is what I know:
Lover's oaths are thin as rain;
Love's a harbinger of pain,
Would it were not so!
Ever is my heart a-thirst,
Ever is my love accurst;
He is neither last nor first:
This is what I know.

4. INTERIOR (1928)

Her mind lives in a quiet room,
A narrow room, and tall,
With pretty lamps to quench the gloom
And mottoes on the wall.

There all the things are wax-en neat
And set in decorous lines;
And there are posies, round and sweet,
And little, straightened vines.

Her mind lives tidily, apart
From cold and noise and pain,
And bolts the door against her heart,
Out wailing in the rain.

The composer wishes to thank the
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People
for authorizing
this use of Dorothy Parker's work.

This Is What I Know

Four Poems of Dorothy Parker

Composed by
Bruce Babcock B.M.I.

1. The Red Dress

ca. 100 BPM

Musical score for the first system of "The Red Dress". It features four staves: Soprano, Alto Sax, Piano (treble and bass clefs), and Piano (bass clef). The tempo is marked "ca. 100 BPM". The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The Soprano part has rests. The Alto Sax part begins with a *mf* dynamic and includes a triplet of eighth notes. The Piano part features a *f* dynamic with a seven-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand and rests in the left hand, followed by a *mf* dynamic with a similar figure in the right hand and rests in the left hand.

Musical score for the second system of "The Red Dress". It features four staves: Soprano, Alto Sax, Piano (treble and bass clefs), and Piano (bass clef). The Soprano part has rests. The Alto Sax part continues with a *mf* dynamic and includes a seven-note arpeggiated figure. The Piano part features a *f* dynamic with a seven-note arpeggiated figure in the right hand and rests in the left hand, followed by a *mf* dynamic with a similar figure in the right hand and rests in the left hand.

Musical score for the third system of "The Red Dress". It features four staves: Soprano, Alto Sax, Piano (treble and bass clefs), and Piano (bass clef). The Soprano part has rests. The Alto Sax part features a *mp* dynamic with a long note and a *p* dynamic with a triplet of eighth notes. The Piano part features a *mp* dynamic with a triplet of eighth notes and a *p* dynamic with a triplet of eighth notes.

13 *mp*

I al - ways saw, I al - ways said

17 *mf*

if I were grown and free, I'd have a gown

21

of red - dest red as fine as

24

you could see, _____ To

mp *mf* *p*

subito piu mosso

29

wear out walk-ing, _____ sleek and slow, _____ Up -

mf

33

on a Sum-mer _____ day, and

37

there'd be one to see me so, _____ and flip the world a way. _____

40

mf

f

44

mf

And he would be a gal - lant one, _____ With

mp

mf

48

stars be-hind his eyes, And hair like met - al in the sun, and

poco rit.

51

lips too warm for lies, and lips too

A Little Slower

54

warm for lies.

mp

f

A Tempo

57

7 *mf* *mp*

61

mp I al-ways saw us, gay and good,

mp 3 *mf* *mp*

65

mf High hon - ored in the town.

mf *mf*

68

Now I am grown to wo-man-hood.... I

Slower

72

have the sil-ly gown.

mp *p*

2. Fair Weather

Calmly
ca. 72 BPM

mp

This lev - el reach of blue is not my

mp

5 *mf*

sea; Here are sweet wat - ers, pret - ty in the sun,

mf

9 *mp* 3

Whose qui - et rip - ples meet o - bed - i - ent - ly A

mp

12

marked and mea - sured line, one af - ter one.

mf

15

mf *p*

19

mp

This is no sea of mine, that hum - bly laves

mp

22 *mf*

Un - trou - bled sands, spread glit - ter - ing and warm.

mf *mp* *cresc.*

25 *p* *mf*

With increasing urgency

I have a need of wil - der, cru - el - er waves; They

mf

28

sick-en of the calm, who knew the storm.

mf

32

f *f*

35

f

So let a love beat

p

mf

38

o - ver me a - gain, Loo - sing its

3/4

3/4

3/4

3/4

41

mil - lion _____ des - per - ate break - ers

43

wide; _____ Sud - den _____ and

45

ter - ri - ble _____ to rise and

47 *mp*

wane;

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

49 *f* (ossia)

Roar - ing the hea - vens a -

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

51

part; a reck - less

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

poco rit.

53

tide

f

55

p

ped. sim.

58

mp

A Tempo

a reck - less tide That casts up -

p

61

on the heart, _____ as it re - cedes, Splin-ters - and

mf

6

3

65

spars _____ and drip - ping, sal - ty weeds. _____

f

mf

6

3

69

p

mf *f* *mp*

f *mf* *mp*

3

3. Somebody's Song

ca. 61 BPM

Musical score for the first system of '3. Somebody's Song'. It features a saxophone part with a 6-measure phrase starting on a whole note, followed by a 3-measure phrase. Dynamics range from *mp* to *mf*. The piano accompaniment is currently silent.

poco rit. *A Tempo-Rubato Espr.*

Musical score for the second system, starting at measure 5. It includes vocal lines with lyrics: "This is what I vow: He shall have my heart to". The piano accompaniment features triplet patterns. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*.

Musical score for the third system, starting at measure 8. It includes vocal lines with lyrics: "keep; Sweet - ly will we stir and". The piano accompaniment continues with triplet patterns. Time signatures change from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4.

11 *f*

sleep, All the years, as now.

mf

14 *mf*

Swift the mea-sured sands may run;

mp

17 *f* *mp*

Love like this is nev - er done;

20 *mf*

He and I are wel - ded one:

24 *f*

This is what I vow.

mf *f*

28 *mp*

molto rit. . . .

This is what I

A Tempo

31

pray: Keep him by me ten - der - ly;

Gently

p

ped. sim.

35

Keep him sweet in pride of me,

39

mf

Ev - er and a day; Keep me from the

mp *mf* *p*

43

old dis-tress; Let me, for our hap pi ness, Be the one to

47

love the less: This is what I pray.

poco rit.

A little slower (ca. 66 BPM)

51

mf *f* *mp*

A Tempo

55 *mp* *mf*

This is what I know:

Gently *p*

ped. sim.

59 *mp* *mf* >

Lov-er's oaths are thin as rain; Love's a har-bin-ger of

mp

63 *mf*

pain, - Would it were not so!

mf

66 *f*

Ev - er is my heart a - thirst,

f *p* *mf*

69 *f*

Ev - er is my love ac - curst;

p

72 *f*

He is nei - ther last nor first:

p *mf*

ped. sim.

75 Rubato Espr.

6 f

6 3

77 *mp* *p* A Tempo

This is what I know.

mp *p* *mf* *f* *mf*

82

mf *p* *mp*

4. Interior

Simply
ca. 72 BPM

The first system of the musical score is in 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a whole rest for four measures, followed by a half note 'Her' and a half note 'mind' with a long horizontal line underneath. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*.

The second system of the musical score starts at measure 6. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: 'lives in a quiet room, A narrow room, and'. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

The third system of the musical score starts at measure 11. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: 'tall, With pretty lamps to quench the'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines in both hands. Dynamics include *mp*.

14 *mf* *mp*

gloom And mot - toes on the wall.

18 *mp*

There all the things are wax - en neat And set in

21 *mf*

de - cor - ous lines; And there are po - sies, round and

24

sweet, And lit - tle, straight - tened vines.

p

mf

28

32

Her mind lives ti - di - ly, a - part

p

36

From cold and noise and pain,

mp

40

And bolts the door a - gainst her heart, out wail - ing

mp *mf*

43

in the rain. out wail - ing

p *mf* *mf*

47

out wail - ing out wail - ing

f *p* *mp* *f*

51

out wail - ing

f

54

mp *mf*

5 4 5 4 5 4

A little slower (ca. 66 BPM)

56 *mf*

in the rain.

mf

f

59 *mp*

in the

mp

6

62 *p*

rain.

mp

p