

The New Criterion

Poems

February 1997

Happiness

by [William Jay Smith](#)

Sorrow is human, what of happiness?
The monster that is carved on Ishtar Gate
with fish-scaled back, bright eye, and clawed hind feet
is not so strange. And strange but not so sweet
the scent of violets in early spring
when newly rich, low-reaching branches sway,
and clear cold water bubbles from the sand
to bathe a carefree schoolboy's naked feet.

Yes, happiness is human: touch of hair
and hand; now where we go a trumpet vine
announces us upon a gilded stair;
and joy is real, and happiness is rare;
and so we kiss, and kiss again, and twine,
while roosters toss gold coins into the night.

William Jay Smith

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This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 15 February 1997, on page 31

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