

Peter Meinke

Advice to My Son (1981)

—FOR TIM

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The trick is, to live your days
as if each one may be your last
(for they go fast, and young men lose their lives
in strange and unimaginable ways)
but at the same time, plan long range
(for they go slow: if you survive
the shattered windshield and the bursting shell
you will arrive
at our approximation here below
of heaven or hell).

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To be specific, between the peony and the rose
plant squash and spinach, turnips and tomatoes;
beauty is nectar
and nectar, in a desert, saves—
but the stomach craves stronger sustenance
than the honied vine.

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Therefore, marry a pretty girl
after seeing her mother;
speak truth to one man,
work with another;

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and always serve bread with your wine.
But, son,
always serve wine.

Sharon Olds

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