

EARLY FROST

He never met her in her blossoming springtime,
Saw only her late-ripening fall,
But he knew sound fruit when he saw it
And proposed before the month was out.
Her smile was like the bloom on a grape:
"We must wait until December comes,
But anticipation will be sweet.
We'll be like children counting days till Christmas."
"Winter apples are best," he said
And did not urge her.

He laid in his winter's wood,
Built roomy cupboards, and squandered pails of paint.
He pictured his little house,
Cosy with its cretonne and snapping stoves,
Settling slowly into winter's snowy feather bed
And quite forgot the killing frosts
That come on quiet autumn nights
And leave the mellow fruit
Like chunks of ice.

— *Cherra S. Ransom*