

1947

## Desolation

Ann Louise Hayes

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(The obituary sounded like a history of the world.)

Six young pall bearers with hope on their faces and a plan in their pocket carried the deceased down the aisle.

(Said the minister, Let us pray.)

Sometime during the ceremony, the man in business-blue had vanished from his pew, leaving only a thin outline and the valise of papers.

JOHN E. HART

## DESOLATION

We cross sulphurous land  
Where water turns its bed to orange and blue,  
Transforming salty sand,  
Although the water still is water's hue.

The air is cold but light  
And filled with sun. From earth the heats arise,  
Spreading to steamy height  
Where geysers jet or boiling water lies.

The boards we stand on now  
Protect us from the pool beneath our feet:  
Its deepnesses I know  
Cannot be measured, and I feel its heat.

Down in the darkest blue  
The heat of water almost at the boil  
Is concentrate. We view  
The tiny sudden bubbles as they coil

And quickly, coiling, rise.  
These do not break the surface they disturb;  
But grown to bursting size  
A mass of bubbles slowly lifts the curb

Of water's heaviness.  
Rushing against the top, they burst to air—  
They, hot and colorless,  
Are turned to foam and water as we stare.

ANN LOUISE HAYES