

If I could tell you

by W. H. Auden

Time will say nothing but I told you so,
Time only knows the price we have to pay;
If I could tell you I would let you know.

If we should weep when clowns put on their show,
If we should stumble when musicians play,
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

There are no fortunes to be told, although,
Because I love you more than I can say,
If I could tell you I would let you know.

The winds must come from somewhere when they blow,
There must be reasons why the leaves decay;
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

Perhaps the roses really want to grow,
The vision seriously intends to stay;
If I could tell you I would let you know.

Suppose the lions all get up
And all the brooks and soldiers run away;
Will Time say nothing but I told you so?
If I could tell you I would let you know.

DRA Comment: Auden was one of the great poets of the 20th century, born in the U.K. but lived in New York, often spending months each year abroad. This poem was, I believe, one of his finest.