

## Chorus, Venable Elementary by Ann Hudson

Mrs. King would drag her pick across that autoharp  
like she was stripping paint, and work with us through our songs  
for the Christmas Concert, even though it was still a warm  
October afternoon, the huge casement windows opened a few inches  
for the breeze off the playground, where the older kids  
were out for recess already. By December, we'd beaten  
Those songs to death, but not learned them any better,  
and every year there'd be a day Mrs. King would weep  
by the piano. *The concert is in four days. Four days!*  
and then Mrs. Clements would come in and put her arm  
around Mrs. King's shoulders, and call her *Rosie*.  
Mrs. C would wink at us, and we'd do our best to sing.  
I liked Mrs. King just fine, but still felt loyal to the teacher  
I'd had in kindergarten. She bewitched us all, so tall  
and willowy. She'd sit, not cross-legged on the carpeted floor,  
but with her long, coltish legs tucked to one side, ankles crossed,  
Her hair so brown and shimmery, was long enough  
she could sit on it as she played the bells, the clear notes  
ringing out. No one was more beautiful. Apparently,  
the married principal agreed, because by June  
they'd run off together to Hawaii. I knew I'd hate his guts forever.

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