

# The Four Seasons

by Carol Shields

Before the War  
was a simple place  
that we couldn't get back  
to somehow

The War  
was right now  
the newsreels\* kept our terror  
fresh  
our cousin Arnold with  
the Purple Heart\*\*  
was in the loony bin  
*Some hero*, Uncle Freddy said

The Duration  
was holding your breath  
or treading water for America  
or buying bonds  
if you had the cash  
or just doing your part

After the War  
came peace  
*kind of like heaven*  
Aunt Violet said  
only with regular-type deaths  
like pneumonia  
or cancer or heart attacks  
or something simple and old-fashioned  
and blameless like falling downstairs.

*Carol Shields (1935–2003) is best known for her novel The Stone Diaries which won the Governor General Award in Canada in 1993. Shields was a professor of English at the University of Manitoba and chancellor of the University of Winnipeg.*

---

\* documentary films containing news stories. Newsreels were shown up until the 1960s at movie theatres preceding the feature film.

\*\* a medal of honour awarded to United States military