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Dramatic Publishing

RAY BRADBURY'S

Dandelion Wine



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

“I took a look
at the green apple trees
and the old house I was born in
and the house next door
where lived my grandparents,
and all the lawns of summers
I grew up in.

Dandelion Wine is nothing
if it is not the boy-hid-in-the-man
playing in the fields of the Lord
on the green grass of other augusts
in the midst of starting to grow up,
grow old, and sense the darkness
waiting under the trees
to seed the blood.

What you have here then
is a gathering of dandelions
from all those years.”

Ray Bradbury

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Dandelion Wine

by

RAY BRADBURY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION

This book, like most of my books and stories, was a surprise. I began to learn the nature of such surprises, thank God, when I was fairly young as a writer. Before that, like every beginner, I thought you could beat, pummel, and thrash an idea into existence. Under such treatment, of course, any decent idea folds up its paws, turns on its back, fixes its eyes on eternity, and dies.

It was with great relief, then, that in my early twenties I floundered into a word-association process in which I simply got out of bed each morning, walked to my desk, and put down any word or series of words that happened along in my head. I would then take arms against the word, or for it, and bring on an assortment of characters to weigh the word and show me its meaning in my own life. An hour or two hours later, to my amazement, a new story would be finished and done. The surprise was total and lovely. I soon found that I would have to work this way for the rest of my life.

First I rummaged my mind for words that could describe my personal nightmares, fears of night and time from my childhood, and shaped stories from these. Then I took a long look at the green apple trees and the old house I was born in and the house next door where lived my grandparents, and all the lawns of the summers I grew up in, and I began to try words for all that.

What you have here in this book then is a gathering of dandelions from all those years. The wine metaphor which appears again and again in these pages is wonderfully apt. I was gathering images all of my life, storing them away, and forgetting them. Somehow I had to send myself back, with words as catalysts, to open the memories out and see what they had to offer.

From the age of twenty-four to thirty-six hardly a day passed when I didn't stroll myself across a recollection of my grandparent's northern Illinois grass, hoping to come across some old

half-burnt firecracker, a rusted toy, or a fragment of letter written to myself in some young year hoping to contact the older person I became to remind him of his past, his life, his people, his joys, and his drenching sorrows.

I learned to let my senses and my Past tell me all that was somehow true...

Once I learned to keep going back and back again to those times, I had plenty of memories and sense impressions to play with, not work with, no, play with. DANDELION WINE is nothing if it is not the boy-hid-in-the-man playing in the fields of the Lord on the green grass of other Augusts in the midst of starting to grow up, grow old, and sense darkness waiting under the trees to seed the blood...

Waukegan, was Green Town. The people there were gods and midgets and knew themselves mortal and so the midgets walked tall so as not to embarrass the gods and the gods crouched so as to make the small ones feel at home. And, after all, isn't that what life is all about, the ability to go around back and come up inside other people's heads to look out at the damned fool miracle and say: oh, so that's how you see it!?

Here is my celebration, then, of death as well as life, dark as well as light, old as well as young, smart and dumb combined, sheer joy as well as complete terror written by a boy who once hung upside down in trees, dressed in his bat costume with candy fangs in his mouth, who finally fell out of the trees when he was twelve and went and found a toy-dial typewriter and wrote his first "novel."

Ray Bradbury

Summer, 1974

DANDELION WINE

A Summer in Two Acts
For Ten Men, Five Women and Six to Fifteen Extras
(Less with doubling)

CHARACTERS

BILL FORRESTER 38-year-old writer
DOUGLAS SPAULDING 12-year-old boy
TOM SPAULDING Douglas's 9-year-old brother
MATT SPAULDING Douglas's and Tom's father
GRANDPA Douglas's grandfather
GRANDMA Douglas's grandmother
JOHN HUFF Douglas's best friend
ANN BARCLAY town librarian, in her 20's
COLONEL FREELEIGH very old gentleman
MISS FERN older maiden lady
MISS ROBERTA older maiden lady
LEO AUFFMANN inventor
LENA AUFFMANN Leo's wife
MR. TRIDDEN streetcar conductor
MR. SANDERSON shoe store owner

EXTRAS

TAROT WITCH	MILKMAN
GREAT-GRANDMA	THE BOARDERS
JODY MILLER	NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS
JUNKMAN	TENNIS SHOE BOYS
SODA FOUNTAIN CLERK	UNION SOLDIERS
ICE CREAM MAN	TOWN PEOPLE

PLACE: Greentown, Illinois
TIME: 1928

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A small, Midwestern American town circa 1928. Scrim facades of shops and houses wrap behind the main playing area. We hear crickets, sounds and tiny buglights in the tree branches blink randomly – suggesting fireflies. The town is asleep on the last night of Spring. TOWN PEOPLE and main characters are scattered on stage "asleep" – motionless. BILL FORRESTER enters with a single battered suitcase. He looks as if he has traveled a long way, either in time or space – no matter which, it shows in his face and stance. He looks around, puzzled.*

FORRESTER. What? Where? Where am I? Wait... yes. Yes! (Nods.) Greentown, Illinois! (Broods.) Greentown. But, why?

(Faint music begins to gather. The town begins to appear.)

FORRESTER *(stunned, searching, wondering)*. Quiet morning, town covered over with darkness and at ease in bed. Summer gathers in the weather. The wind has a proper touch. The breathing of the world is long and warm and slow.

(More music. The cricket sounds are erased and become the music. The frogs singing becomes a part of the music. A cock crows. A train passes, a long way off, dinging. FORRESTER listens, looks, still piecing it together.)

FORRESTER. Hold on. Wait. Look. Listen..

(Distantly, a JUNKMAN passes on the horizon line crying softly to the dawn.)

JUNKMAN. Junk, junk? No, sir, not junk. Bric-a-bracs, knick-knacks, camisoles, curios, but... junk? Not junk!

FORRESTER. Come on. You up there... whoever you are. Come to the window, stick your head out. A whole summer ahead to be climbed and jumped on, snuffed up your nose, sour apples to be eaten, rivers to swim. (*A beat.*) No? Well...

(FORRESTER bends for a small pebble, tosses it up. It strikes the side of the house. At that instant, the alarm clock goes off with a loud racket. DOUGLAS SPAULDING sits up in bed, startled. FORRESTER backs off to one side, watching. DOUGLAS grabs the alarm clock to shut it up by banging it on the floor.)

DOUGLAS. Hey, shh! You want to wake the dead? That's my job. (*As if summoned, he comes to the window, leans out.*) Hey, boy... The first day of summer!

FORRESTER. Yes!

DOUGLAS. I can see the whole world from here. Best darn big old castle tower bedroom in the world. I can see the whole summer ahead, I can see... But, shut up, Doug, take a deep breath! (*Inhales.*)

FORRESTER. Yes, that's it. Now... The stars!

DOUGLAS. I order the stars to dim and go out. (*Blows his breath out. The stars fade to a musical chime.*)

FORRESTER. Street lights!

DOUGLAS. I order the street lights to do the same. (*Exhales. The street lights go out as if he had blown them out.*)

FORRESTER. And the birds?

DOUGLAS. All you birds rise and fly! (*We hear the birds rising, their shadows all around.*)

FORRESTER. And now?

DOUGLAS. Ready, clouds? Ready, sky!? Now, quick, sun! Rise! Rise!! (*The lights come up, the town appears full, and with the day well-started, as if the light drove him temporarily away, FORRESTER, satisfied, pulls back, looking from side to side, having done the job of moving DOUGLAS to his tasks. As the*

music surges high and the light comes up full, FORRESTER backs off and is gone. Birds sing. Their shadows fly.) And who am I to order these things? I'm Douglas Spaulding, twelve years old; Wizard of Wizards. *(He points, he waves. People rouse to his orders, jump out of beds, wash, dress, eat, in a vast commotion.)* You – milkman! Jump! Alarm clocks – scream! Town people, get set to blink and yawn. Ladies, put on your dresses. Look in the mirror... Fix your hair! Grandma, fry the bacon! Set the table! And Grandpa, don't forget to put in your teeth!

(We see GRANDMA pantomiming breakfast. GRANDPA, instructed, remembers to put in his teeth! MATT SPAULDING comes out on the front porch. ANN BARCLAY walks across. DOUGLAS addresses the AUDIENCE.)

DOUGLAS. Of course, nobody knows I have this power. They all think the world would turn into summer whether I was here to get it going or not.

MATT. Morning, Doug.

DOUGLAS. Morning, Dad. Miss Barclay. *(Aside.)* Prettiest librarian in all the world!

ANN. Good morning, Douglas.

DOUGLAS. But I don't let on. So they run around thinking they own the place. Greentown. The greatest town in Illinois, with the greatest people!

(TOM runs out of the house.)

DOUGLAS. You there, Tom, red light – freeze! Wash behind your ears!

TOM. And who are you to tell me what's so?

DOUGLAS. Your brother, Doug. Now green light, go!

(COLONEL FREELEIGH enters in a wheelchair.)

DOUGLAS. Hey, Colonel Freeleigh!

COLONEL. Morning, Douglas!

DOUGLAS. He's famous for being... *old*. And here's... Miss Fern and Miss Roberta!

(MISS FERN and MISS ROBERTA glide swiftly through in their run-about electric-humming pram.)

MISS FERN *(waving)*. No! Barney Oldfield, Douglas!

MISS ROBERTA. Barney Oldfield!

DOUGLAS. But here comes the *real* Barney Oldfield!

(JOHN HUFF bounces, dashes, flips through, bang... GONE!!!)

JOHN *(on the fly)*. Hey, hey! Come on, Doug, let's swim!

DOUGLAS. John Huff, the best friend in the world! And... Leo Auffmann, inventor of the Penny Arcade! And the Electro-cute Yourself for a Penny Machine!

(In her glass case, the TAROT WITCH glides in, pushed by LEO AUFFMANN. She is fixed, waxen, staring.)

LEO. Morning, Douglas!

DOUGLAS. And *with* him... The Tarot Witch. She don't say nothing except you *pay*. *(He watches her glide out with LEO.)* Mr. Tridden, our street-car conductor!

(MR. TRIDDEN runs through, a great trolley shadow moving with him in thunder, huge electric sparks moving above him from trolley wires, the trolley bell dinging.)

MR. TRIDDEN. On time, Doug, on *time!*

(Other KIDS from the neighborhood pour onstage, including JODY MILLER, the town tomboy.)

DOUGLAS. And lots of other fellas, and, well, Jody Miller!

JODY. I'm just like one o' them, for bein' so bad...

DOUGLAS. God put her in the wrong kind o' body, and she's mad! *(By now the stage is filled with people. The music turns ominous, the stage darkens.)* And somewhere... The Lonely One. *(The lights dim. Shadows move.)* What does he do? He... *(Sotto voce.)* scares people! Just mention his name and... watch: The... Lonely... One. *(The lights dim again. Tremolo music. The lights come up. All the TOWN PEOPLE look up at Douglas's window!)* Well, that's not everyone, but... June, July, August dead ahead. Grass; growing! Lawnmowers, set!? Trees almost bursting with apples and cherries!? Fourth of July fireworks, on sale?! Lakes and rivers waiting for us to jump in? *(TOM steps forward to address the AUDIENCE.)*

TOM. Ladies and gentlemen, presenting Douglas the Magnificent, performing his most amazing illusion!

DOUGLAS *(points)*. Summer, 1928!!

ALL. Summer, 1928!

DOUGLAS *(waves)*. Green light!

ALL. Green light!

DOUGLAS *(a great gesture)*. Begin!

ALL. Begin!

(A thousand doors open, shut, slam. Auto horns. Bright sun. Much green. The summer arrives like a golden train in a huge surge of bright music. The TOWN PEOPLE rush through shouting hello's, waving, and are gone. Then:)

TOM. Hey, Doug. Everyone's up! You dressed?

DOUGLAS *(shedding his nightclothes)*. Holy Cow! Gangway!

(Blackout!!! The town, the house vanish. A harp plays in the dark, softly. As the light comes up on the scrim, which has descended, we watch a spider web being built by an invisible spider. It is sketched out and filled in for us as the green color of the land increases. The harp ceases. The music prepares us for an entrance of TOM, DOUGLAS, and MATT, carrying pails, out berry hunting. DOUGLAS comes first, turning in big circles,

alert. He stops suddenly. There is a faint tickle of harp music. His face twitches. He puts his hand up suddenly, and out. With a single sharp twinge, a plangent stroke of harp – the spider web vanishes. DOUGLAS stands frozen.)

TOM. Doug, what's wrong?

DOUGLAS. Something... touched... my face.

TOM. Aw... a spider web.

DOUGLAS (*feeling the air*). No... (*TOM and DOUGLAS kneel down and then lie on their backs in the grass.*)

MATT (*walking, meditative*). Grass so deep, you feel you could drown in it.

DOUGLAS and TOM. Yeah!

MATT (*squints up*). Sky so deep, you could just... let go... and fall up in it.

DOUGLAS and TOM (*in awe, luxuriating, on their backs, hands up, reaching for the wind*). Yeah...

MATT. Smell the rain? (*Sniffs.*) But not a cloud. (*A beat.*) You boys look for berries here. I'll head this way. (*Exits. DOUGLAS and TOM move through a kaleidoscope of colors, green and gold, shifting. A flight of golden light goes by.*)

TOM. Bees! Bees! (*A flight of birds goes by, all colors. TOM runs the other way now.*) Birds! (*Fantastic spirals of light fizz and hustle all about.*)

DOUGLAS and TOM. Mosquitoes! Damn and darn! (*Silence. They square off for a gunfight, ten paces from each other. A faint drum-roll underlines their motions.*)

DOUGLAS. Reach!

TOM. Bang! Gotcha! (*DOUGLAS clutches his stomach, falls, lies still.*)

DOUGLAS. Ugh... gah... (*TOM approaches, stands over him, nudges him.*)

TOM. Doug? (*DOUGLAS doesn't move, plays "dead." A touch of music. Alarmed.*) Doug!? (*Another chord of music. TOM bends to tickle him alive. DOUGLAS writhes, laughing.*)

DOUGLAS. Hey, come on, stop, stop... hey????!!! (*They stop suddenly at a rising hum, a faint pulse.*)

TOM. Listen! What's that!? *(The heartbeat again, soft, then a swift scutter like someone running on soft-tread shoes. TOM and DOUGLAS quiver. DOUGLAS jumps.)*

DOUGLAS. Something's coming! It's on its way! There. *(Sighs.)*
It's gone...

ECHO. ...gone... *(Another run, this time like a dozen rabbits scurrying. More clouds rush over the sun. Far away, a locomotive runs very fast, churning, whistling, faint. A man laughs.)*

DOUGLAS. Here it comes again!

TOM. Doug, don't scare me!

DOUGLAS. It's like a big wave taller than the forest... going to crash down...

ECHO. Down! *(TOM backs off, runs scared, exits. DOUGLAS stands alone in the midst of the wilderness, looking around.)*

DOUGLAS. Hey... boy... gosh. *(He looks up, studies the sun.)*

The sun... Clouds and wind... wind blowing the trees... and the grass... right on up to... my feet... *(He looks down at his feet.)*

And right on up my ankles, and my legs... and... heck... my wrists... my fingers. *(He holds his fingers out on the air, stretched as if he might fly.)* And the wind blowing my hair...

and feel it on my chin and... it's in my nose and going along my eyebrows and I can feel every hair on my arms and in my ears and... There's a rabbit running, running, running...

closer... nearer... closer... nearer. No! Here! No rabbit... but... closer... nearer... closer... nearer. No! Here! No rabbit... but...

MY HEART! *(We hear his heart beat and burst into sound.)*

And not just one heart, but another, in my throat, and here in my ears and my wrists! My gosh. I'm... ALIVE! *(He turns in a great circle, he runs, stops, eyes shut.)* Why'n't someone tell me before!

ALIVE! *(He opens his eyes to stare around as if he cannot stare enough, see enough, hear enough, touch enough.)*

Sky! Trees! Grass. *(Stomps grass.)* Clover, Dandelions!

Where'll I run? Here!?! No, there! What do I grab next? What do I listen for? and smell? or *hear what?* Taste. Sweat on my hand!

Salt! Feel. A billion goose bumps all over my skin! A billion hairs on my body, all tickling! Air steam-locomoting my lungs! What's going ON? *(Shakes hands with himself.)*

ALIVE!

(TOM enters.)

TOM. Dead! *(Knocks DOUGLAS flat!)*

DOUGLAS. Alive!

TOM. Dead as dingbats! *(Wrestling, DOUGLAS cries out.)*

DOUGLAS. Whyn't you *tell* me? Here, now, this noon, this minute... no, second, and the next and the next! Does everyone in the world *know* they're alive?

TOM *(snorts)*. Heck, everyone knows *that*! *(DOUGLAS rises, feeling himself; his face, his arms, his chest. We hear his heart-beat rabbit away, fading.)*

DOUGLAS. Oh, thank *gosh*...

TOM. Doug... you *okay*?

DOUGLAS. Better'n okay! *(He swings TOM around, laughing.)*
Gonna live forever!

TOM. Me, too!

(DOUGLAS and TOM stop, as MATT arrives.)

DOUGLAS. Dad! Great news!

TOM *(snorts, points)*. He's *alive*!

MATT *(holding up bucket)*. So? Double-time, boys. Charge! *(He exits. TOM socks DOUGLAS. DOUGLAS socks TOM. TOM runs out. DOUGLAS stands, eyes shut, a final moment, feeling his elbows.)*

DOUGLAS. Douglas Spaulding, *meet* Douglas Spaulding!!
(Shakes hands with himself.) Hi!

(DOUGLAS turns a cartwheel, dashes out! The green world tilts to slide after him. Dandelions grow up everywhere. The porch makes its entrance like the prow of a ship, where GRANDPA stands and peers at the land through his spyglass. Light begins to slowly fade to evening.)

GRANDPA. A mild, mild day, and now a mild-looking sky.

(GRANDMA enters sweeping.)

GRANDMA. What do you see, Pa?

GRANDPA. The far side of summer, yes... The far side. Hold 'er, Newt. Handle the broom, Grandma!

GRANDMA (*sweeping the porch*). It's handled!

GRANDPA. Here come the rugs!

(MATT bring out the rugs to put down, GRANDPA helps him.)

GRANDPA. Mosquito lotion?

GRANDMA (*takes lotion out of apron pocket and holds it up to him*). Mosquito lotion!

GRANDPA. Unh... lemonade!

GRANDMA (*remembers suddenly*). Lands' sake. (*Darts inside, darts out with pitcher*.) Lemonade!

GRANDPA. Cigars?

MATT (*producing cigars from pocket*). Cigars!

GRANDPA. Great-grandma? (*GREAT-GRANDMA has been waiting behind the front porch screen to be brought out*.)

GREAT-GRANDMA (*off*). Great-grandma, dammit!

(They bring out GREAT-GRANDMA and tremble her into a rocker. Meanwhile, DOUGLAS, TOM and JOHN are sneaking in from one side.)

TOM (*whispering*). Shh, quick! C'mon! This way! We can eavesdrop on the front-porch, summer-night gossip! Mortal murders! Drownings! Train wrecks!

DOUGLAS. Hey, sure!!!! (*DOUGLAS, TOM and JOHN hunch down, crouch near the ferns under the front porch, where they can hear everything but, maybe, not be seen*.)

JOHN (*whispering*). Swell!

GRANDPA (*surveys all*). Well now, summer-night porch, mosquito lotion, cigars. All we need is... people!

(As if summoned, The Green Machine honks offstage. The ICE CREAM MAN pedals on, ringing his bell. TOWN PEOPLE and NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS arrive. COLONEL FREELEIGH

glides on in his wheelchair. ANN comes from the other direction. BOARDERS stream from the house, among them are LENA and LEO AUFFMANN. Cushions are brought out, chairs are arranged to a great bustle of music. Everyone settles themselves on the porch, the stairs or the lawn. The Green Machine arrives, honking, carrying MISS FERN and MISS ROBERTA in their electric runabout.)

GRANDPA. Miss Fern! Miss Roberta!

MISS FERN. Hold the catastrophes, everyone!

MISS ROBERTA. We're here!

GRANDPA. So you are. Ain't it a fine night?

MISS ROBERTA (*with a grand, evil smile*). It won't be by the time we're done with it!

DOUGLAS, TOM and JOHN. Boy! Gosh! Swell!

TOM (*sotto voce*). Great! Why, they're just *full* of blood and guts!

DOUGLAS. Criminy, heah, I remember one night when they crashed nineteen cars, two dirigibles, and blew up the gas-works! They— (*Lightning, thunder. DOUGLAS, TOM and JOHN jump, gasp, look, holding each other in frightful glee. Off to R, we see and hear lightning and thunder. DOUGLAS points*). Aw, it's just Mr. Tridden the trolley-car conductor, off his streetcar!

(MR. TRIDDEN trots on, waving the brass control-handle of his streetcar. He darts to the bottom of the porch stairs, neat in his uniform.)

MR. TRIDDEN. Evening, passengers! (*Lightning comes out of his fine yellow-embroidered cap! The "PASSENGERS" on the porch beam and wave.*)

ALL. Evening, Mr. Tridden!

GRANDMA (*offering glass*). Lemonade, Mr. Tridden?

MR. TRIDDEN (*as if it were the wine of the gods*). Lemonade. (*He drinks, savors, as ALL watch. Then he remembers why he had gotten off his streetcar. He broods over his kidneys. His face*

remembers. He clears his throat.) Excuse me. (He vanishes into the house. The door slams. Everyone stirs, settling. GRANDPA looks around.)

GRANDPA. Well, now, guess we're ready.

GRANDMA. Grandpa, the porch swing. It ain't hung, dammit! *(GRANDPA trots over to the middle of the porch, nods to MATT, they bend, pick up the swing, handle the chains.)*

GRANDPA. Up we go!

MATT. Up it is! *(Everyone watches the chain-hanging to a kind of ritual music.)*

GRANDPA. Steady!

MATT. Steady. *(The swing is hung. They all stare at it with admiration. GRANDPA gives the swing a push. It... swings!)*

GRANDPA *(in awe)*. Look at the way she glides! *(They all nod at him to try it. GRANDPA sits down alone in the swing. He waits for all eyes to be upon him, then swings up once, back once, and pauses, eyes shut.)* Just dandy! *(A beat. Then, GRANDPA gets up and bows MISS FERN and MISS ROBERTA into the chain-swing chair. They sit.)* Well, now. *(He looks around. Everyone nods.)* Everyone who's going to use newspaper fans to stir the warm air, stir. *(Some of the WOMEN do so. GRANDPA, like a sea-captain at the rail of his summer-night ship, gives further instructions all about.)* Everyone who's going to knit or crochet, start your fingers. *(Some of the other WOMEN do this.)* Everyone who's going to smoke, smoke. *(The MEN, including GRANDPA, light up.)* Everyone who's going to swing, swing. *(He starts the porch swing in which MISS FERN and MISS ROBERTA glide.)* Everyone who's going to listen, listen. *(He bends over the rail to find DOUGLAS, TOM and JOHN, winks at them. They rustle, deliciously, waiting.)* Anybody, anywhere wants to play the piano, play. *(Far away, in some house somewhere in the night, a piano plays a fine old sentimental tune. Everyone sways to it for a moment.)* Now...

MISS FERN. Well...

MISS ROBERTA. ...shall we start with burglaries, suicides, or murder?