

Small Brown Hands

By Albert M. Ward

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*Small brown hands
tie butterfly knots
on black dressy shoes.
On their first attempt,
the knot slips,
a right shoe falls loose,
the small brown hands
clenching..*

*Determined,
the hands attempt again,
a right shoe bow appears,
nearing perfection,
Ready now to move forward,
confident, expectant,
one tentative step,
the left shoe string breaks,
the bow wound,
too politely.*

*Brown fingers...
now grieve into fists,
coloured darkly,
bundled anger prickles
their heated tips
seeking release/relief,
self directed.*

*Older hands intervene
worn fingered, tender nerved,
and elder natured,
cup the small fingers gently,
firmly with clarity
...and with purpose,
mentoring their reach
to the dressy shoes
with buckles...*

Dust of Life

*By Albert M. Ward
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Broadside Press*

*I am the dust of life,
These steps taken,
I have walked
From neighborhood to
neighborhood'
One at a time;
Dreams nurtured.*

*I am the dust of life,
These steps taken,
My heart exposed
From homeland to homeland,
Tear after tear;
Voices blighted.*

*I see children
Streaked with ash,
Eyes crouched, bellies distended,
Lips parched...in houses
Without heat, running water,
Wrapped in thread bare blankets,
Waiting for rations of cheese;
Powdered water.*

*I see children,
Limbs pitted, hearts feral,
Souls blurred with shadows,
Muddied in huts
On dirt floors
Waiting for rations
Of rice and a cup of water;
Naked.*

They wait 'til freedom rises.

*I am the dust of life,
These steps taken,
Brown, black, poor
From mountain to river basin,
These steps taken,
Burdened and enlightened
Through urban streets and alleys:
Without love, there is no freedom.*

*This hope sprinkled,
This fluttered voice,
This dream raging:*

***rise...Rise Freedom
Let it storm.***

Love the Children

By Albert M. Ward
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Broadside Press

The small shoes
Leave only their fingerprints
In the snow, the cold fills their
Broken gloves, even the little coats
Carry the winter in their pockets;
but...The cocoa, brown and browner
faces (one is sweet cream)
Laugh anyway.
Bright eyes and small bodies
Make loud sounds
At the people passing,
Remembering when they, too,
Made snowmen;

Love the children.

Fingers clenched and wet
Hold a blanket breathlessly...
Fearing the shadows
And faces painted on the wall.
Shivering so slightly, pressed tightly,
Tearful eyes push their dreams away
And listen cautiously to the floor,
Creak toward their sanctuary.
Frightened knees cling
To give aid and comfort ;
One to the other hoping to hear
A mother's song,
A sweet and gentle breeze,
That rocks her child to sleep.

Love the children

Sunday suits, spring dresses,
Black and patent shoes
Bring this day brightness,
Small kittens and warm puppies bring
bright smiles:
A young boy is crying in Church

In Church this Sunday,
His puppy killed,
(the night before),
crushed by four wheels
or too much wine.
When his Duchess died,
No purple hearts were given,
Only tears behind
A little boy's thick glasses
On a bright Sunday:
In mourning.

Love the Children.

On a playground
Where city streets are softer,
Black children listen
The "hawk" as it sings
To street corners past street lights
And fences,
A brown and grey building
Watches passively from its windows
(Judged criminal for teaching false
futures)
The alley professionals wearing
High tops and Allstars,
A basketball catapults the day into dust
As the twilight becomes the moon...

The voices and shouts carry
Into the night

Love the Children

Fingerprint pictures of little faces
Melt wood tables into children smiling,
Seeing biographies of themselves,
They touch their separate struggles,
Their fingers will inherit our
Fears and scarred mirrors,

Held by tiny nails
Are precious colors
That in time will come to sketch
Their own myth-images.

Behold the children

The small shoes
Leave only their fingerprints
In the snow, the cold fills their
Broken gloves, even the little coats
Carry the winter in their pockets;
but...The cocoa, brown and browner
faces (one is sweet cream)
Laugh anyway.

Love the children.

Mr. Bridgewater

By Albert M. Ward

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*'s OK,
Mr. Bridgewater, Mr. Bridgewater,
We're from the County.
Don't try to move , just yet.*

*Mr Bridgewater, Mr. Bridgewater,
Can you hear me,
Do you know where you are...?
Mrs. Bridgewater, speak to him.*

*Charles...baby, I'm here,
You're still at home,
I called these people
....on 911.*

*Mr. Bridgewater, Mr. Bridgewater,
Sip this juice,
We've given you a shot,
Please blink, if you hear me.*

*He blinked, baby...you blinked,
I've never been so scared,
You were shouting and fighting,
The bed is soaked with sweat,.*

*Seemed like you were burning up,
'couldn't wake you,
'couldn't move you,
I've never seen you like this before.*

*These people saved you Charles,
No, Mrs. Bridgewater, its what you learned
In class that saved him...
You knew just what to do...*

Next of Kin

By Albert M. Ward

Copyright 1998 (unpublished Manuscript.)

Brother talkin' to his self
Holdin' conversation with shadows
His mind dishelmed and dismembered.

Washed in dust,
Chaffed and cobwebbed,
Brother's self image flickers
Like a streetlamp just before dusk.

There was...once,
Strength in veined hands,
A working man's pride and purpose
Heart felt in each breath...

No longer...Brother fades
With the time of day
Like the photographs in his back pocket,
His tenderness faded grey.

A casualty of downsizing,
Brother slurs hi rage
At this night mare, homelessness
And at the eyes of strangers
That won't meet his...

Ruby

by Albert M. Ward

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I can't find my daughter,
She's never been this late,
I'm 'fraid of what
Might have happened

...A good girl
We have such hopes
She'd marry a fine young
man of means and independence

...And go to school
to be somebody special

And have many children.

Where is she...
We've been searching for hours,
No one has seen her,
Since she left the nursery school

...She reads
to the little babies

I can't find my Ruby, my baby,
We've talked to all her friends,
She'd never run away,
This is so unlike her.

She wore her beads today,
A sunny yellow blouse,
New white jeans,
Her favorite sandal shoes.

She's such a petite pretty thing...

Where's my Ruby...
So sickly when she was a baby,
Wasn't sure that she'd make it,
My sweetie struggled so hard to
live.

...I want her back
whoever took her,
Give her back,
Somebody stole my baby.

*I might never find her...maybe
But, I will look forever...
Until or when I'm gone.
Ruby, my sweet precious Ruby,
I want you home.*

Same Oh/Same

By Albert M. Ward

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*Same oh/same,
The daily drudge
24/7 for pennies,
Clothes appropriately sullen,
Outerwear soiled and stained,
Layered with several months
of smells and remains.
Two sizes too small,
Year old Halloween candy
Tucked beneath
A old army outlet shirt,
No work permit,
No license for
The day's assignment,
Downtown East , his placement,
restaurant district, four block rotation,
Goal, standard quota,
Food, coupons, or cash,
Wheel chair bound amputee,
Homeless characterization
Same Oh Same,
The daily drudge,
24/7 for pennies,
No benefits...No pension.*