

# Please grant mercy, Ella Webb!

by [Saul Bennett](#) in the [June 15, 2004](#) issue

Sealed within a windowed tube  
that struck me as a giant  
chrome-and-ivory jumping bean,

the girl my age smiled  
thin as airplane model tissue  
through me to her end.

*ELLA WEBB! THE GIRL IN AN  
IRON LUNG! PLEASE HELP ELLA  
WITH YOUR GENEROUS DONATION!*

prayed the sign tacked on her tiny tent.

Though scared to drift too near  
on the noisy festive sprawling floor  
of the ancient armory, I spied dark hair surround her

aging newsprint-yellow cheeks,  
feeling guilt with every easy stride  
50 years ago this week.

Maybe we gave a quarter.