

# Intercession

by [Jean Janzen](#) in the [April 5, 2005](#) issue

Winter dawn pinks even this dirty air,  
here where the currents of the world  
stall between mountain ranges.  
We awaken inhaling fumes and dust,  
the calls of crows, breath and prayers  
from around the globe.

A child in church, I knelt with  
the congregation, leaned into the wails  
of women around me pleading for the son  
lost to Chicago, for Hiroshimo's victims,  
the girl with the iron lung. They would  
begin on a pitch around middle C  
and slowly rise with arched phrases  
into a high tremolo toward the amen,  
as though reaching to heaven.

Now the sun tears  
the gray veil, and doves repeat  
their soft, low moaning, for heaven  
is nearer than we think—in the undersides  
of leaves and in their shine,  
warmth on my shoulder, scent of bread.  
Even in that sick, black night when a man  
stood in the center of the lane, his arms  
out, pleading for the headlights to come in,  
as we stood beside him, now in a silent  
heap, his boots flung off, as we  
breathed "mercy," as we breathed "help."