

The Approaching Sky

by James Baker Hall

I told the story of a child
 in a big place of wandering
 from window to tall window
 fearful of the approaching sky
 and then forgot I ever
 told it until I heard
 the story again today
 on the news

 There
 were two of them Boys
 A settlement the Israelis
 called it Spring 2001 Both
 in the joy of their bodies
 thirteen and fourteen playing
 hooky in a nearby power place
 known for its caves

The younger bolder
 by nature got closer

Once his eyes adjusted
 what did he see inside
 looking back at him
 How many were there

Or did they come up behind
 heard before seen
 How many were there
 picking up stones

Imagine a conversation
 There may have been one

Can I stop now
 Isn't this enough

Who wants to see what happened
 next which Arab wielded
 how many stones
 in what fashion

 As he had had
 done unto him no beginning
 To see the skulls broken
 and bleeding at the cave entrance and witness
 the exultation of children hand-painting in blood

Here's one of its lessons
Pray to yourself only and often
Pray for love in your heart
Enough for your thoughts to clarify

Here's what we have to look at
The floors give way within the towers
White dust settles over the city
Wandering loss holds its pictures up
begging for us to look please please look
Has anyone seen the loved ones

I'm only a guy another guy
off here in the boondocks
thousands of miles away
How can anyone formulate
the challenge

Oh

we leaders
Some day
one of us
or more
will put an end
to this madness
Clear the way
for the next
Is that what we have to offer
Love forgotten ignored lost