

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