

She Belonged to God

by Brent Jason Royster

My mother spent three years in a convent near Bardstown. At that time in her life, I was no more a thought in her mind than a fly on a window screen. All around her, the world must have waged, while she spent hours in study and prayer, kneeling when others were falling and rising again. If she could look into the window right now, she would see me hunched over the desk unaware; were I to glance up, the lax muscles in my face would show my lack of recognition. She is a stranger to me now as she must have been before I was carried inside her, while she walked in the cloister and thought about God. After her stroke, I hovered above my mother's eyes as she lay in the hospital bed, and in those eyes I saw that I was as foreign to her as I am now. Before she met my father, my mother wore a habit and prayed all the time. The country she had known had become an island at war with itself, and she was far off in contemplation. She was in the convent when Merton came back to Kentucky in a coffin. She belonged to God. At any moment, I should have been passed over for something more important, but here I am. One way of looking at it: The fact of my birth is miraculous. No more special than anyone else's birth. But miraculous nonetheless.