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Afoot

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Afoot

I joined the handful of spectators
to watch a girl step into the air
to hang-glide like a big-bodied bird,
proud flesh in bright yellow shorts.

Near me paced her father
to worry his winged daughter
through the air like an angel.

We overheard the master-glider say to the novice
as she winked at admirers,
"Leap out in faith; trust the wings
to float you to the green
beyond the canyon;
You'll soar like a seagull."

The girl nodded, sprinted on tanned legs
before the doubting spectators,
and leaped toward heaven like a long-jumper,
trusting her weight to white nylon wings.

She sailed ten feet,
then dropped
like a shot bird.

The father, a dog before the bear death,
damned heaven and earth.
He peered over a sea of swamp and trees below,
thinking his child dust.

Down on all fours,
he called to the white wings
tangled in a tree below:
"Jane! Jane! Are you alright?"

From below on a ledge came a voice:
"I'm okay. Just flesh wounds. I'm on my feet."

"Thank God!" said the father, "what luck."

When the master-glider appeared with a rescue rope,
draped like a halo over his shoulder,
we spectators dangled him like a spider
over the cliff to raise the girl.

At his word from below we tugged and lifted
the white wings, then raised the master-glider,
his arms and legs churning
like a beetle's.

On firm ground, he mourned his wrecked wings:
"Bent and torn," he said, "but it can be saved."

"Things can be fixed," said the father.

"Where's my daughter?"

"She's too proud to be pulled up

by those who saw her fall,"

said the master-glider.

"She'll walk the canyon."

The father's face fell. He crept

to the edge and cried:

"Jane, these men can pull you up.

You can't cross that gulf."

"I'm going down," came the voice.

"I can make it on foot."

"Child, child, you're my flesh and blood.

You can't make it," said the father.

"I got legs, ain't I?" she retorted.

"I'll make it on my own."

"Yeah, you got legs," muttered the father,

"but if you can't fly like an angel

or walk on water,

your legs can't get you home."

Mike Vanden Bosch

The Church

"You are the body of Christ, and each one of you
is a part of it." I Cor. 12:27

This body loves its Head which serves its feet,
Bends stiffened knees to shoulder Satan's heat;
Its fingers search through heaven's piercing Word,
And gather guts to wrestle for the Lord.

Stout chests will stomach battle, legs will run
Should Satan kick the groin, a throat and lung
Will suck the Ghost that gives the body bones,
And feet will toe the law that shapes and hones.

It grows soft hands and laps to cradle rue,
Long arms to hug a bellied boy—a blue
Or blackened child—a back like any mule's
To lug lost legless stumps, a heart that heels.

Mike Vanden Bosch