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Campsite, 2 AM

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dirty work. It all came to her so fast that she had to remember her place in the whole business. Her body glued to the corner of the stairway, she felt almost calm. The boys were just boys, so young their voices still were sweet enough to sing high soprano. Their conversation was laced with what Alice considered the ugliest of obscenities. They used it as an adjective, as a pronoun, as a metaphor. She wondered about the metallic flash of a blade. Newspapers had often reported that even junior high kids right here in Des Moines took handguns to school. Her own fright loomed before her like a vision.

One edge of the oval window was loosened from the wall; she could see it move in the darkness, its exposed frame highlighted by the light of the street outside. Of course, she could die trying to speak to them, trying to be human. These kids could kill her right here on the entrance steps of the sanctuary. The lamb seemed somehow unaffected above her. "Little lamb, who made thee?" The line spilled out of her memory like wine from an overflowing glass. The lamb seemed so innocent, so powerless here, so tragically at ease. She wanted to collect the frustrations of a lifetime and scream at the lamb to come down from its blessed innocence, to take up the battle, to fight like the Man who had purged the temples of buyers and sellers.

Robert J. De Smith

Campsite, 2 AM

Around the campfire

We sit and tell jokes

For fun, and

Fall out of our lawnchairs, laughing,

But stay on the ground

Because pine needles, like fingers,

Are soft and warm.