

1985

## Barren Precinct

Bill Knott

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Knott, Bill. "Barren Precinct." *The Iowa Review* 15.1 (1985): 19-19. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3150>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

## Barren Precinct · *Bill Knott*

Tightropes cross swayingly from church belfry  
to church belfry, in one street a pileup of mattresses  
is burning. If it was snowing it would be  
like their very first sheets returning,  
fresh from the sky's laundry. In the bracingly cold air  
I see doorframes with no houses, houses with no rooms, and houses  
where they serve lunch in its most naive form. I amble toward  
a wood fence, a childishly-chalked bullseye, in which  
I find some kind of old military medal pinned dead-center:  
the medal has a pale, harmful ribbon; it flutters and rattles  
whitely, withstanding the wind,  
defending the bullseye's secret, inmost ring.  
If cornered, I would agree—with almost no argument—,  
this medal should get a medal!

Barren precinct,  
eyes stare at you without our even knowing,  
like the statue of a buddha  
they regard you with immobilized eyes, with  
carven idol eyelids,  
you are the eternal non-unguent of tearless eyes,  
the blink that shall never be.