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Alive

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ROBERT DANA

Alive

A taxi full of blood.

Wallpaper of amputations and bandaged children.

*

War, assassination, mass murder, and murder are the bread of our days.

Who will not speak of it?

Who will not?

*

May they never know sleep.

May they spend their old age weeping and weeping and weeping.

May they hear the rhyme rats hear before they die.

*

Sweetness of oncoming spring curdles.

*

We waken each day

drugged to dullness by repeated acts of savagery.

Imping mortality.

*

O walk me again, Friend,

under the red and gold of Woolworth's Five and

Ten.

Past the Tangee.

The moon and stars of Evening in Paris.

Bottles of Carter inks

—Sunset Red, Sea Green, Midnight Blue.

And boxes of deckle edged writing papers.

Embossed envelopes lined in gold a boy might envy.

*

Lead doughboys and ceremonial hussars.

*

The counter girl who asks, smiling, “May I help you?”

And she could, but neither of you is certain how.

*

Soft silence of summer afternoons.

Cloud-throated.

Every sense alive.

And the voice in your ear saying,

“Never tell anyone your secret name.”