

# End of Shift

*by* Bill Yarrow

He fell back against the pillows  
inert as a noble gas. I watched  
his body weave in and out of  
delirium, listened to it suck all  
the sleep out of the tired air.  
He was losing his fight with  
malaria, but you would never  
know it from his dreams  
which were fierce and fearless  
ruddy and red, in which all the  
weapons were drawn, all poised  
to clash. He was fighting the  
bees, who had the heads of  
lobsters and bellowed like  
kittens in the microwave.  
Against him was the Yakuza  
in league with the Mariana  
Trench. Italian circus clowns  
wearing emerald ties bubbled  
up from the rarefied deep  
and made snipping sounds  
as they broke the surface of  
the piebald bay. The agricultural fair  
was interrupted by an invasion  
of shirtless workmen with stalks  
of corn growing out of their backs.  
His body heaved arrhythmically  
to the music of God's lost bones.  
Was I watching him die or recover?  
I couldn't tell. In ten minutes  
I will be done for the day.  
Someone else will witness

the wry dénouement. I will be  
miles away where the porous  
walls are covered in bituminous  
cheese, where the scorpion  
clocks are drawing the water  
for their velveteen candle baths.

