

The Mangy Tiger

by Con Chapman

As we entered the circus tent
We passed the big cats' wagon.
A sleeping tiger lay
in what I knew was hay.

I looked closely; it seemed
like our cats at home, but
gigantic, as if they were
just models of the tiger.

As it dozed, its breath
caused its whiskers to
bend like wheat in the wind
of a storm heard rumbling
from within the cat's chest.

I saw in its coat a bare, red patch,
as if a prairie fire had burned
it raw. I thought it must be

because it was cooped up
in a cage, and not free on the velde,
and so I told you I would not stay
in our little town, that I must be

free to roam wild, and not sit up
at the crack of a small town's whip.
We are older now, and I wandered
far while you stayed home
and yet I gather you've had a wilder
ride than me, with your wives and
mid-life career change, while I have
learned even tigers in the wild get mange.

