

# Absolution

by Philip F. Clark

Father, trouble me memory;  
laconic, idle, some glint on the dark.  
Recall us to me: what did we have,  
or what did we lose? Like some late  
affection, open me again, laugh it  
out of us. It is not loss I'm looking to  
put back together, papered over by  
time, but rather that spontaneous  
picking through vaults -- suddenly  
opened -- let's both search there,  
with just the light of that caustic  
twinge of recognition in your voice:  
"You were ten, I think," "Perhaps older."  
An Easter, all dressed up, waiting, impatient,  
bored stiff as the dresses your daughters  
wore, or our ties -- too tight on bright  
white shirts as we walked to mass,  
to listen, sullen under stained-glass  
pontification -- the men taking communion;  
the women, veiled. Everyone waiting  
for the bars to open. What prayer  
passed us by as the incense blessed  
us, heads bowed in genuflection?  
I too, have taken bread on my tongue,  
and with other unguents fed need.  
We fled, each of us, to different exits:  
You to home, and I to men I would  
never go to church with.

