

Burn Ward

Ellen Kartchner

1.

Late at night, the kids in their rooms come
drifting towards me, thinking of home, perhaps,
wrestling a kiss fire of pain.
And the ward is yellow with breathing,
the bedsheets blue; fast, slow movements
taming the black to their faces.
What they don't know are which facts
open a window, who is to die,
which dying has nothing to do
with their bodies, their faces melting
into fact, the sense of trees.

2.

The people that walked in darkness
have seen a great light
which He saw first, being God,
on the metaphysic beaches of light,
and slept, and when He woke, walked again
in this light daily over Sienna, daily
above the white houses.
And they that lived in the shadow of death,
upon them hath the light burned.

ELLEN KARTCHNER has recently received her master of fine arts degree in creative writing from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, where she has also taught literature classes. She is a member of the Iowa City ward.

The hills of Sienna in
the light darkness of evening
a circle, in perpetua, were a good idea—
internal, clean, rising like a moon—
and what a good idea, coming
as it did when I wasn't alive,
nor yet dead, burning.