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## Writer's Block

Carolyn Paprocki  
*College of DuPage*

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# Writer's Block

Carolyn Paprocki

I'm a coward in the face of a poem,  
Want to run away from the page.

Each line is a kind of death,  
The jump off a cliff into pitch darkness,  
The mad attempt  
To plant my flag  
In mid air.

The landscape artist learns the lines  
To mold the muscle of a cloud;  
He learns the golden slice of paint  
To shine on fallen nettles  
Like cut hair.

But what arithmetic does the poet have?  
What sums?  
He gropes in a sack of air for diamonds,  
Struggles to catch a lifeline  
As he drowns.

Each poem leads me blind,  
And blindfold  
To the firing squad,  
With no sure promise  
Of redemption or relief.

And as I sweat, and say my prayers,  
And hope for God,  
The poem rocks on its heels,  
Mocking me in its arrogant perfection.

But when that pardon finally comes,  
When that Great Hand reaches down  
And catches me  
In that net of miracle words,  
It is worth everything,  
Everything.

And I know why I come back  
To the edge of this precipice  
Again and again.

For I learn what every coward  
Or daredevil  
Who cheats death knows:

There is no death.