

Winter 3-1-1996

Back Alley of Chicago

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Survival (4-4-92)

At six corners,
in the city, where
Irving Park, Cicero and Milwaukee
collide
Life in the street, at the store front
is difficult.
But around back,
in the alley,
there is not even the
glow of neon
to soften reality.

Around back, delivery trucks and alley pirates
cruise through trash and life's leftovers.
A woman's underwear, soiled, torn, discarded
in the walkway.
Graffiti-filled walls (Niggers suck) (Lords rule).
McDonald papers and wine bottles. Cans and
coat hangers. Vomit and discarded love letters
are the reality.

But over there, next to the building,
growing out of a crack and holding on
to life tenaciously, is
a thistle—
Dark green, symmetrical, full of seeds
and thorns with one small flower.
And you know just to look at it that
it is there to stay for
as long as it wants.

God do I love the
survivors
of life.

Just imagine. The thistle had
a flower.

-Mark Milligan



"Back Alley of Chicago"
-Elizabeth Tovar