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Jeanne Pachaly
College of DuPage

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Inner City Ecstasy

by Jeanne Pachaly

Hopscotch marked with stones.
Hide and seek, finding refuge under broken stairs.
Throwing balls on the treeless street.
Running through dusty parkways to catch the other boys.
Mother never there.
And father, who is he?

In school I tell the teacher
What the strange man said to my mother in the middle of the night.
I can talk to my teacher.
She listens.
My mother just works, fixes dinner and sleeps with a man I do not know.

I have never been anywhere.
My teacher is going to take us to the zoo.
All week we learned words, sang songs and talked about animals.
I can't believe it's true - all those wonderful things.

The day came to go.
Mother dressed me in my black suit, tie and white shirt.
We got on a bus.
When we got to the zoo the bus door opened.
There was green grass as far as I could see.
All of us fell on the green grass.
I rolled in it.
I ran in it.
I smelled it.
I felt it with my hands.
I lay in it.
I loved it more than I could say.
This was really truly grass!

If this was our whole trip and nothing more
I would have given everything I had just for that green grass.
- And my teacher who brought us to this place.