



"Dew Roses" Copyright 2000 Dancing Bear

## Plastic Army Men in Snow

They patrol *in country*, posed  
in the snow killing ground, boot-deep  
like wedding cake brides and grooms  
married inside a ring of icing roses,  
in a picket line crossing a picnic tableland,  
where their general left them

for hot chocolate.

They are good men, who melt  
like crayons when they die,  
whose grim, green faces  
watch the backyard no-man's-land  
as sun scores furrows for dragon's teeth,  
falling between the tabletop's planks.

They are good men, even when they feel  
that their hands are tied molded to gunstocks,  
that they wear leg irons and roach motel shoes  
around their feet planted in a kidney  
slice of motherland, that their enemy is near:  
Wearing my small balled-up fist  
like a glove, I set them up  
for drumhead art and friendly fire.

## Campers

The white Army blanket of snow  
Winds between stones,

Drifting to the base of some  
As though those named needed pillows.

The kaddish, on crow's wings,  
Clears the trees,

And we can lift our heads,  
Leave the graveside-and Death,

Wearing flesh and gloves,

Gathering its purple burgee  
From all our cars.

Night comes and the windows turn black.  
Our loved ones sleep beneath stars

-and they are the scouts again,

For whom backdoors were left unlocked,  
For whom a light was left on

Should they hear a noise,  
Should they ever fear.

James Reidel

James Reidel has published poems in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Verse*, *The New Criterion*, *Ploughshares*, *Conjunctions*, and other journals and magazines, including *Cortland Review*, the online journal. His translations of Thomas Bernhard and Ingeborg Bachmann have appeared in *The Greensboro Review*, *Artful Dodge*, and *Painted Bride Quarterly*. He is the author of *Vanishing Act: The Life and Art of Weldon Kees*, which will be published by Story Line Press in early 2001.