

Matthew Adam White, Grade 9
University High School, Los Angeles
First Place, High School Poetry

Song of Mother Superior Anna Borkowska, "She Who Dared"

Morning, pale blue morning over the city
And the singing sighs of bells in the convent
Suddenly silenced by the ubiquitous wail
Spitting tongues of flame, burn the city, watch her bleed
All so fast, we cannot see through the smoke
Wondering aloud in the deadly tranquility following the red death
The new flag flies high in the summer breeze as the old one cries in its own ashes
The twisted and spidery black German cross
Looking out from the convent's rooftop, sad wrinkled corners of her eyes upon
Such a sight burning into her mind; nothing is sacred anymore
So carry on with your prayers, Reverend Mother
"O Merciful Christ, grant us this clemency!"
And though she cannot see it, it is beginning already: one by one, they disappear
Women, children, babies, men, the elderly, the invalid of the *Untermenschen*
Crippled, naked, kneeling in the pits in the green woods
Gunshots carried on the warm upwellings of wind through the horrified birch trees
Scatter the birds to tell their families of the injustice
O Mother Superior, lead your nuns in prayer in chapel
Sing "Ave Maria" louder, louder to drown out the bullets
But you know you can't override the screams of the dying Jews
Come one night, black as the German's heart
A knock at the door, shrilly resounding through the twilight: Hebrews begging
And she knew she had to make a difference
For when it means saving the life of an innocent victim, theft is usually justifiable
So she stole those weapons and risked her existence running them to the oppressed
The time came when explosions rocked the city and the Vilna ghetto fought
And she could smile, her soul filled with a new knowledge of right and wrong
For she had released freedom and liberty gently from its iron cage
And nurtured the undying spirit of resistance when it lay half-buried in a muddy grave
Smile forever; you showed how to be the light in the black night of perpetual death