THE ACCUSED

By Ellen Moore

Out of a scarlet storm
Into the mouth of a multitude,
One man stumbles
Leading a lash,
Bound by a bell—
The brands of a crucified question:
Beware the unclean!—
While taut throats chant a preassumed conviction,
Murderer,
Adulterer,
Dreamer,
And a judge with dripping hands
Delivers a Barabas.
But who shall cast the stones,
Drive the nails
When crowds dissolve
Into twisted vines on temple walls,
Into vultures lost in hostile cityways—
No branch straight for a cross,
No talons strong to rend the flesh
Of even one man?
And who shall answer
One man
Stumbling out of a scarlet storm,
Crying,
"Brother,
Friend,
Accomplice,
Where now your miracles,
Your Christ?"
Fog and the whisper of barren vines,
The shadow of shattered wings?
Who shall answer:
"Once there was a Judas,
a Pilate,
a Crowd"?