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 presumed 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"?