

## Altar Boy

I was on my own for Mass  
That night, hair parted, cassock clad,  
Shuffling in behind the old priest  
With black rosary cradled  
And a pendulum of dark incense  
Choking the few bowed heads.

The gold plated altar  
Cross wobbled. We kissed  
And held up our trinkets  
For blessing, asked that our sins  
Be forgiven. The creaking oak  
Pews joined in for good measure.

I rang the bell for Holy Communion,  
Reached into a cold tabernacle,  
Found blood and body for obedient tongues.  
Crown of thorns, genuflections,  
Mouthing the final hymn  
And it was over. Amen, I whispered. Amen.