

Zaccai's Poem

by Grace Dvorachek

Just a boy, you say... just an immature youth
So how could I possibly know what is truth?
Would you but listen, I'd tell what I know,
For all this destruction began long ago.

I stand in this city, destroyed by the flame;
Destroyed by the fear, the doubt, and the blame.
The fire that long has been raging inside
Has finally crept out to hurt and divide.

For years upon years, you've lived by these tales;
You've locked up the outcasts, you've thrown them in jails.
And, worse even still, you've put them in fire
To meet the demands that your fears did require.

Yet, this is the day when the flames reached your door,
And all of your terror's been realized once more.
The evil you've done to your neighbors, your friends
Has come back to drag you to untimely ends.

And, all of a sudden, you know how they felt
To watch all they'd cherished smolder and melt.
You know how it is to flee for your lives,
Hoping you'll be the one who survives.

Then the God you've been begging sends help unawares;
But is it the answer to nightmares or prayers?
For who should He send, but those you have wronged;
These are the people who step from the throng.

Now they stand before you, their lives in your hands.
They've proved all they could, they've taken their stands.
You would not give heed to my pleadings before...
If you won't hear one, will you listen to more?

For now, up to you, this choice to be made:
Will you rise in courage, or go on afraid?
This is the time... your options are clear.
You cannot have love and also have fear.

The silence is heavy, as is the dread,
And all eyes are fixed on that one shade of red.
That color—that hue—what a shocking contrast.
But is it really a difference that vast?

Then, out of the crowd, a voice rings out true
And steps from the many to stand with the few.

Then another, and more, 'til all are agreed
That, from here on out, all outcasts are freed.
And, together, you rise to fight back the flame;
Outcast and townsmen, as one and the same.
Now, suddenly, this doesn't seem quite as grim;
The bright, blazing fire looks a little more dim.

At last, we have won—the last spark is put out,
Along with all feelings of terror and doubt.

What's left of this city is ashes and dust,
Devoured by the flames of fear and mistrust.

What am I, but a boy, to know what is true?
But, now that's it's over, I know what to do.
Yes, I—young Zaccai, just a boy with a heart—
I know what to do... we must make a new start.

The worst of the flames we've already weathered;
Now we will rebuild... and, this time, together.

Gone is the city you built upon lies.
We'll start over again; together, we'll rise.

We'll build up a city of mercy and love,
And pray for a blessing from Heaven above.
A land of forgiveness—this we proclaim—
And city of ashes, no more to be named.