

THE
SPOON
RIVER **Poetry Review**

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Sin

from the painting *Order Our Original Records* by Prophet
William Blackmon

I. In The Valley

By spring the ice was eight inches thick. That stiff cold lip
would bend, moaning slow and promising. When it finally
buckled, sounding like gunfire, it scraped the bank, tearing
out trees. The river heaved those huge blocks onto the River
Road where they lay panting, exhausted after silencing a river
all winter.

II. Talking

I didn't speak in kindergarten.
Mrs. Mulcahey read the morning attendance
like a conversation:
"Hello Eddie."
"Hello Mrs. Mulcahey."

A conversation that always returned to me
and the drawn-out silence that followed.
The circle of children held its breath.
I could not look at them or her
could only stare at the triangle of carpet
between my open thighs.

III. About Jesus

God watches me undress.
God never eats.
God never smiles.
God only sits in a chair.
God looks like Santa Claus only meaner
like my father
who puts his hand in my panties.
God thinks it's good to hide

but he still can't find me
in my attic fort, between the lilacs
in the basement corner, he can't find me
behind the sofa, in my body that lets it happen
in the dogwood tree, under the pool table
in the scalding bath water.
God is my witness and my father
and the only pictures of Jesus I see
show him bloody and beaten
but still lucky, still a boy.

IV. If I Was Hungry

would you feed me?
Would you push my teeth aside
and let the frozen river come? I'm here.
I have been here all along.