CAIN

When the shopbells tingle, making the musty air shiver and crack, out of some inner mouth he comes to hover vaguely behind frayed lamps and the crumbling mounds of books.

Whatever the thing chosen, the curled, arthritic fingers slowly caress and then—with a limp reluctance—yield to your hands.

Long ago
the mark on the high forehead
has faded away—
along with the straight back
and the proud, blue candor
of his eyes.

Though children tell of standing outside the screen on summer days and hearing voices within quarreling one known,

one strange.

When the wind is right one dry November dusk and the bells gone deaf with clamor he will vanish curl up behind some bureau in a dusty corner like a huge spider

and vanish-

still held in the protecting hand of God.

11 Paul Petrie