

Three Poems · *Janet Piper*

COWARDICE

The pattern has been
Fear and flight
At the first sight
Of the Ugly or Evil.

I have been no comfort
In trouble, to anyone—
Not even my son—
The unforgivable sin,

For which no tears atone;
The burden of age,
Which no prayers lighten
Or assuage.

EAST TEXAS WILD LIFE

I
Roaches I dislike
For the arrogance
Of their stance,

But more, I suspect
From fear and respect
For their power of endurance.

Entomologists say
They are not as old
As the earth, but nearly,

And here they will stay
When the human race
Has long passed away.

II
Moths have depleted my wardrobe,
And, unlike other bugs
Have eaten my rugs.

What mercy do they merit
Who work such mischief
In secret?

III
As for ants, the small
Sugar ants, I mean—
I fear I may have ingested
A bit of that infinitesimal
Protein, unseen.

“BEHIND THIS MORTAL BONE”

My life is over
And my days are done.
It is my turn—
My time has come.

Adelaide Crapsey said,
“I weave my shroud
But no one knows.”
I add: “Nor cares

What one wears—
To drape the skeleton,
Cover the bone—
We die alone.”