

The Last Act of Defiance

Exodus

The prison system, inherently unjust and inhumane
Is the ultimate expression of injustice
and inhumanity in the society at large.
Those of us on the outside do not like
to think of wardens and guards as our surrogates, yet they are.
And they are intimately locked in a deadly embrace
with their human captives behind prison walls.
By extension, so are we.
The terrible double meaning is thus imparted
to the original question of human ethics
"Am I my brother's keeper?"

The second of February, 1980
Began three days of misery
A scene of retaliation
Epitomizing violence, horror, and vindication
Thieves, murderers, and rapists
Inundated their prison like homicidal sadists
Guards and convicts alike would pay the price
To them the electric chair would look like paradise
Only degradation, torture, and cremation would suffice

A sea of agony rolled in like the coming of the tide
The more fortunate escaped the insanity through suicide
The screams of the dying would haunt the living to the grave
Survivors of the riot relive the nightmare every day
The last act of defiance

With a never-ending appetite
Barbiturates set them off like dynamite
Eradicating informants
Acetylene torches dealt the punishment
Melted from skin to bone
The fire silenced their screams to moans
Smoke filled the air from bodies set aflame
Begging for mercy, but their words were spoken in vain
They weren't allowed to perish until they cherished all the pain

Guards they had taken hostage
Were to blame for pushing them over the edge
Their brutality would be their demise
Like sharks in a frenzy they lashed out at their prize
When the madness had ended
The gore was too intense to be comprehended
No one explained the real reason why
For cruelty of a few, so many should die
They knew of the flaws, but still insist the cause was justified