



1993

Praying Mantis

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Recommended Citation

McBride, Nancy (1993) "Praying Mantis," *Inscape*: Vol. 13 : No. 1 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/inscape/vol13/iss1/18>

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Praying Mantis

by Nancy McBride

I saw you in the door jamb,
an odd twig wedged in the wooden crevice.
When you moved, I jumped, horrified
by your foreign appearance:
the triangular head with its two
long hairs reaching out,
your slender body bulging
with autumn's eggs—poor mother,
too swollen to fly.
Your summer green hue has faded
to dry brown—wings tattered,
like old papyrus disintegrating.
Selfish, I put you in an empty mayonnaise jar,
catching moths in a kitchen strainer
to feed you and your burden.

Your reverent, folded arms
lash out as lightning
snaring your clumsy prey.
First, you tear away the tissue-paper wings
and they float to the ground like falling leaves.
Firm in your grip, you devour the body
quickly with your nimble mouth.
Then you hang upside down
and motionless, camouflaged once again.