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## The Rain on Alan Avenue

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## The Rain on Alan Avenue

### *How the Missionaries Came to Marion, Virginia, 1955*

In that far year when I was a child  
(you were not yet), I saw how rain  
on long afternoons can chitter and chat,  
gurgling and chortling out the downspout,  
its sing-song tune boring a brat  
with nothing to do.

That was the winter rain made us slip  
and slop through mud, and noses drip,  
till April drizzle made way for the sun.  
The roadside rocks were slickered with light  
and cherry trees rose out of the dark  
chemised in white.

That year heaven made constant noise—  
ice that sizzled in the pale beech leaves,  
blackberry hail that rattled the roof,  
the high fall wind (it made trees bow  
till they licked the ground) with a whirring voice  
*repent, rejoice;*

and boys in the street going two by two  
wearing snow-white blooms *Good morning* said  
to Sister Rain in the leaf-choked gutters,  
*Good morning, brother,* to Mr. Brown  
at the window pane who reversed his frown  
and said, *How do.*

—J. S. Absher