

*Niki Johnson*

## 5 YEARS LATER



I am living in hell  
but stepping on clouds  
where everyman's heaven  
is the Kingdom's lower level.

Up here the leaves, tumbling to earth  
whisper goodbye in jaded streaks  
and Jesus is our brother  
calloused and soiled  
by the side of the road  
where bougainvillea stoop  
tending his wound.

This is hell, the red prison pulsing  
through my limbs, the years  
falling too as everything falls  
against the emerald me, still new  
still pushing up dirt  
with shouldered leaves.