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College Literature, 30.1, Winter 2003, pp. 146-147 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2003.0015>



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For a Chance at Warmth

James Miller

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working on a collection of poems.*

The wind howls low in
the grim labyrinth of stone and concrete,
the dingy soot-stained walls rising high,
choking out the stars above.
With gnarled hands
I pull my cardboard blanket closer,
against the knife-edged gusts
that drive cold into my very bones
and slice into the mists that
seem to sublimate from the very streets.
The tatters of my clothes can barely
keep me warm amid the endless
dankness of these gutters.
Repository of the downtrodden.
Some were once noble,
working for a living.
For them, things will never be the same.
Some are here for their temptations,
unable to live on what could be eked out
of a job.
For them, life never was the same.
And yet they, and I are all the same.
Dismissed by a world more intent

on keeping their bellies full and staying warm
than dealing with those less fortunate.
The Cirocco slashes across my weathered face,
and I know,
I know that I cannot give up on hope.
For worse than the death of flesh
is the death of hope.
Only when hope dies are we truly beaten.
For now, the human spirit endures,
willing to suffer another night in the cold,
for a chance at warmth.