

# Prayer at Archangel, Siberia

by Jean Janzen

This blinding light is ice,  
its wing a slippery silence,  
its summer thaw a broken cry.  
How can a child stand upright  
on a hill of shifting logs?  
She balances on one piece  
of bread, pulls out the quota,  
her thin arms dragging one tree  
after another and another,  
her skirt a frozen weight  
around her rag-bound feet.

*Is mercy bound beneath  
this ice? The children caught  
in history's vise lie there.*

Angel-above-all-angels, your light  
diminished in our wintry days,  
guard their bones and crowns  
of brittle hair, their final  
stumble, and the drifting down,  
arms out in frozen flight.

For Lena Wiebe, who survived

*—Jean Janzen is a poet living in Fresno, California. She has six poetry collections, the most recent being "Piano in the Vineyard," Good Books, 2004. She has taught poetry writing at Fresno Pacific University, Eastern Mennonite University and Fresno public schools. Jean is married to Louis Janzen, with whom she enjoys travel, music and grandchildren.*