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Spring 1962

## Good Friday, 1944

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## Good Friday, 1944

At Mary Magdalen's I fought  
for silence. Three hours tense  
a boy required talk. A son  
resolved and knelt to distant Christ  
and kept his heart inside his head.  
From twelve to three my mouth was dead.

But my tongue lived. My voice could ask  
for movies on Good Friday night.  
I saw the Zeroes drop with Japs  
into the sea in Brentwood while  
I munched hot popcorn in the dark,  
the blackest, wettest night in Lent.

"But why go home so soon?" I asked  
Aunt Catherine, in whom I knew  
good sense was sweet (and could turn hard  
at times I couldn't know); "today  
is Saturday." "Go home," she said.  
A year went by me on the bus.

A year of visits. Dad, berrybrown,  
huffed in his bed and rolled his head,  
the needle in his sucking nose.  
Last night I'd planned to go and see  
how he was getting well. I had  
three hours' sacrifice to sell.

To God to buy my father's health.  
My aunts, some nuns, I'd taken at  
their word. My mother lolled, then wept—  
"Your dad is dead." Her hand was slim;  
I held on tight. It seemed like time  
to kneel. But it was time to fight.

*PETER L. SIMPSON*