

A TALE OF BLACK AND WHITE

The two were chromosomal sets
Of pigmentation black and white.
In nursery blankets swaddled tight
They lay in separate bassinets.
Their mothers chatted while they fed
From breasts of tender ebony
And creamy pink security,
With compliments from bed to bed.

The pair were playmates in the park:
They dug in sand-box castle lands
And laughed to meet each other's hands
From different tunnels cool and dark,
Or flew their homemade newsprint kites,
Or sealed a lasting brotherhood
With carved initials in the wood
Of trees they climbed to daring heights.

They later met in sports events
(Opposing teammates, different schools)
And followed competition's rules,
While classmates cheered contrived offense.
But subtle customs made them hide,
Avoiding one another's face:
Feigned strangers all because of race
And adolescent peer group pride.

The white boy turned to booze and drugs.
The black boy trained to be a cop,
And one night had to try to stop
An armed and robbing gang of thugs.
Then after all the lead had flown,
He peered into the dying eyes
Of one, in shock to recognize
A childhood dream deemed long outgrown.

"It's you," he whispered, kneeling near,
And stroked the white, blood-splattered brow,
Remembering a youthful vow
Of lasting brotherhood sincere.
"You black son . . ." cried the gurgling lip,
Then stopped and stared, with gasping breath,
And said, "Take care," to seal a death
Of interracial fellowship.

— *David L. Hatton, 4/10/1993*