

Every Life Has Its Beat

On the park grass
of the Lincoln Saturday market
a different type of produce is available.

Parents and tots
circle round
a deeply creased man
whose hands are antique maps
that search and find
the hidden treasure
of the skin drum
between his knees.
A coffee can of come-on dollars
beckons at his feet.

“Every life has its beat,”
he proclaims his message.

To prove it,
his hands razzle-dazzle the drum
as his laughter backgrounds the revelation.
No rehearsed notes,
just now,
just palm and fingers
pulling sound out of what,
a moment before,
was mute.

He waves to the toddlers to come close.
They cautiously walk toward him,
checking over their shoulders with parents
who smile and encourage.

He takes their small hands,
places them on the altar of his drum,
then leans back and waits,
as they summon the courage to strike.

As each brings into existence
their singular sound,
the priest assures the worshippers,
“Every life has its beat.”

John Shea

© Copyright 2017

