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## Uncle

Margie Snowden North

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# INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

## UNCLE

by Margie Snowden North

A young man's father  
was with that other woman;  
his mother was work-worn,  
his brothers and sisters hungry,  
and despair and rage that had begun  
with earlier injustices  
cast him down  
to the cutting off of the mountain,  
and the weeds wrapped tightly about his  
head.\*

A hammer in his hand  
pounded away at the injustice,  
brought blood and death  
but never solace.  
Newspapers said that other woman  
was slaughtered as she knelt praying by her  
bed  
and the jury said, "Guilty as charged."  
Prison bars compassed him then,  
years of aloneness,  
and the cutting off of the mountain  
was his dwelling place and  
the weeds squeezed tighter.

As children, we saw this man who  
occasionally grew violent and who  
was also gentle,  
whose mind was sometimes here,  
sometimes there,  
a man uncouth and unloveable,  
or laughing and jolly and happy.  
We knew (for it was whispered)  
that prison bars had held him,  
and then the insane asylum,  
but we laughed with him sometimes  
or scolded him for the picture on his wall  
and ate roasted peanuts  
with him from the breadpan on the table.  
Later we understood that  
prison bars and  
asylum walls had compassed him more than  
once,  
but a prison of another kind  
had held him first ■

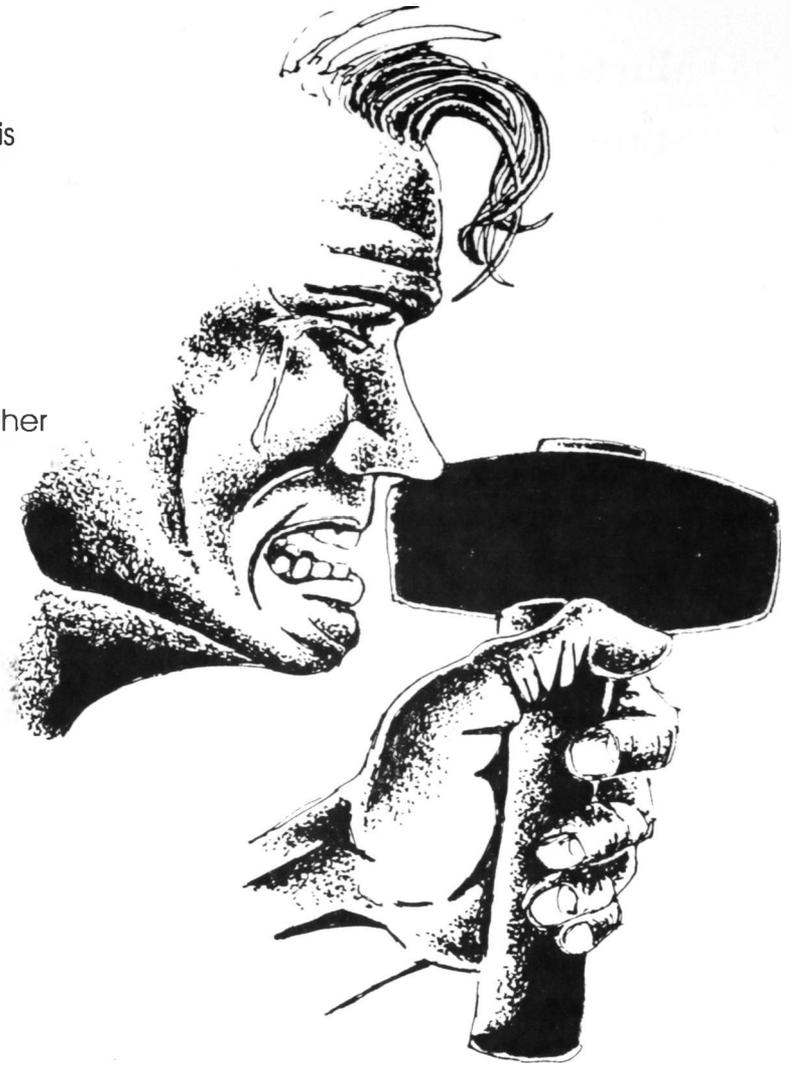


illustration by *Mongo Allen*

\*See JONAH 2: 3-6.