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Scapegoat

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Cover Page Footnote

Winner of the Writers' Block Choice Award



SCAPEGOAT

Andrew Barba

*Winner of the Writers' Bloc
Choice Award*

Clear Californian sky and a field
Full of ripe grapes. I pick as fast
As I can and put some in my
Bucket. Thorns cutting
My fingers as I go.

I am not the only one hunched
Over in the same nauseating
Rhythm. A six-year-
Old girl wearing a yellowed white
V-neck, jeans, and shoes with holes.
She is plucking furiously. Her youthful
Skin barely Torched by the ruthless sun.
She graciously still moves. The hammer
Of time has not crushed her yet.

There is also an old man
In front of me. Straw hat and
A faded plaid shirt and jeans.
His skin scorched by the sun and
Folding over, a raisin.
His eyes transfixed at the
Fruit he is picking. He
Has done this for many
A decades over.

There's nine-year-old
Me. Torn oversized jeans,
A super bowl t-shirt for
A team that didn't win,
And shoes that are taped
Together at the sole.

We work by a highway and
Every Saturday morning I
See cars full of happy families
Headed to the beach to eat the grapes
I picked. I hope to one day
Sit on that sandy Pacific beach
Eating grapes and away from
The Inferno that is this grape vineyard.

I haven't talked to many of them
Except for the Overseer. They seem
Nice. Except for the one on TV
Who said I was a rapist or the
Ones who say I am
"Milking" the system. I don't
Know what any of those things
Mean, so I had to ask Papá. He
Told me what "milking" meant
But said I was not a rapist.

How can I milk the system
when I'm in the field picking
grapes every day? The sun milks
My youth from me so the families
Going to the beach can pay \$.89
A pound for grapes that I picked for \$.25 per 5
Gallon bucket. My parents brought me here
Because they needed work. I'm trying to
Help them.

Back home I went to
School and had friends and a house.
I go to different schools every few months
And can't make friends. I live in a shack
With no furniture and I sleep on the
Floor remembering home and the
Great things there. My Papá and
Mamá say things could be better here.
They aren't yet and I want to go
Home.