

*L. Swansen*

## **Shorty's Song**

beyond midnight  
outside the liquor store  
with enough rope  
Shorty tethered  
a shivering gray pup  
to the lampost

inside, a bottle  
of muscatel glowed  
like a fetal ember  
in the new brown paper sack  
"To keep me warm,"  
he urged, toothless

"It'll snow damned sure,"  
a voice returned  
surgically counting  
the change  
and added,  
"Goodnight Shorty—"