

Please grant mercy, Ella Webb!

by [Saul Bennett](#) in the [June 15, 2004](#) issue

Sealed within a windowed tube
that struck me as a giant
chrome-and-ivory jumping bean,

the girl my age smiled
thin as airplane model tissue
through me to her end.

*ELLA WEBB! THE GIRL IN AN
IRON LUNG! PLEASE HELP ELLA
WITH YOUR GENEROUS DONATION!*

prayed the sign tacked on her tiny tent.

Though scared to drift too near
on the noisy festive sprawling floor
of the ancient armory, I spied dark hair surround her

aging newsprint-yellow cheeks,
feeling guilt with every easy stride
50 years ago this week.

Maybe we gave a quarter.