

Spring 1964

by [Diane G. Scholl](#) in the [March 24, 2009](#) issue

In June the World's Fair with bright red strawberries
and cream over seared Belgian waffles. It grows hot.
Trapped in the crowd, a tangled skein of nerves,
lost and hungry for quiet, for tenderness, I ride
with my aunt on a long conveyor belt to see the Pietà.
So gentle the grieving, tranquil mother with her downcast
eyes, the stone folds still around her, the cold flesh
of her perfect son. She does not attempt to cry.
My aunt, primed by *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, leans
to recognize "Buonarroti" on the chiseled band, tasting
the contours of each round unaccustomed syllable.
She whispers the name. She will not last two years.
Silent, thrilled and careful as dancers, when we step off
on solid ground we are joined by our secret, sworn
never to tell what we have no words to say. This is how
it will be in the winter we take our leave: bitter flakes
in a sharp ribbon of wind beyond tears or anger,
the long frozen loop home from the hospital waiting
for me, as we both know. Suddenly shy and tongue-tied
as a girl, she will reach out from her bed to touch me,
recalling too the marble brow, faintly wrinkled,
the white hand, open, as if it were asking a question.