

# Ballad of Birmingham

By: Dudley Randall

Adapted by Fishtank Staff

*(On the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963)*

- 1 "Mother dear, may I go downtown  
Instead of out to play,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
In a Freedom March today?"
- 5 "No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For the dogs are fierce and wild,  
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails  
Aren't good for a little child."  
  
"But, mother, I won't be alone.
- 10 Other children will go with me,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
To make our country free."  
  
"No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For I fear those guns will fire.
- 15 But you may go to church instead  
And sing in the children's choir."  
  
She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,  
And bathed rose petal sweet,  
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,
- 20 And white shoes on her feet.  
  
The mother smiled to know her child  
Was in the sacred place,  
But that smile was the last smile  
To come upon her face.
- 25 For when she heard the explosion,  
Her eyes grew wet and wild.  
She raced through the streets of Birmingham  
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,  
30 Then lifted out a shoe.  
"O, here's the shoe my baby wore,  
But, baby, where are you?"