

AN ELEGY FOR CLARA FRYE

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POET LAUREATE,
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Angels of Mercy, cloistered in

This healing house for darker skin

Across a river, brown as bled

the blood of the living and the dead. . .

T'was here she saw it, clear and free

A light-break in the misery

of a people, shackled hard and fast

to a wretched life of second class,

which disallowed the soft and sweet

caress of white hospital sheets

around black legs, whose calloused feet

were scuffed on segregated streets. . .

in a realm that swore the Color-line

included the sickly and confined!

She saw the vision, clear and free

Though warned what she was not to see,

She saved her pennies, purged her doubts

and built her dreams to bear her out

that in this little Southern town,

they valued life, white, black or brown!

Miss Clara Frye had her hospital here

And where you stand is hallowed ground!

Her nurse's wings brought needed care,

and hope renewed, where none was found.

O' Stranger, won't you cast an eye

At what was once the Clara Frye?

And as you scan the open air,

Please pause to make a silent prayer

for, the days of race and cross-burnt wood,

when Black folks did the best they could!

Nurse Clara Frye, despite constraint,

became Black Tampa's patron saint!

Her statue points with upraised arm

to a place that kept Black folks from harm!

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