

# "VANISHINGS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD"

BY: MICHELLE P. HEATHERTON

There is a silence that is not peaceful.

As the police cars arrived,  
no children climbed on the jungle jim now;  
yellow tape began to outline the playground  
where laughter was once heard.

Spectators gathered as  
the frantic jogger, shaking with the surge of  
adrenalin, directed the officers to the shallow grave  
next to the path that led into the woods.

A young police officer laid his hands on the worn fabric  
with gentleness, so as not to cause any pain;  
but his hands could not hold the remains of a child  
like a child.

He wanted to embrace this child like his own,  
like something that was meant to be cherished and nurtured -- and protected.  
Instead, he was pushed aside by the investigators.  
His cheeks burned with the heat of his tears as he watched  
every bone being counted,  
but not accounted for.

How does life pass so quietly into dust?  
How does blood leave the body with such faintness?

There is a silence that is horror.