



Russell Rowland

A Schizophrenic in Church

In our little church today, attendance is trebled by the inner congress: consonance, dissonance of voices. *We are legion.*

What does the Product, the Savior, the Chairman of the Board, have to do with succubae assembled inside her Sunday best (and worst)? Does he intend to clear the house, straighten the chairs, re-hang the curtains, wash blood from the windows?

Now, those altar roses are pretty, they smell like grandmothers, others sitting here must think them pretty, but she sees the limber serpentine muscle lazily uncoil among the thorns and blossoms.

One must be watchful here, as elsewhere. The ties that bind are rattlesnakes, whose rattling first alerted her that she was naked. She sees herself in several pews.

It's time to go: the good, empty, untenanted people are standing. A dark angel at the exit smiles at her, and she recognizes him. *Kill the pastor.* Good morning!

Russell Rowland is a four-time Pushcart Prize nominee and a recipient of the *Descant* Baskerville Publishers Poetry Award. He lives in New Hampshire.