

## **The Year of the Monkey**

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"Do you remember the kid down the street...  
I can't remember his name, but what a shame!"

When everything was shinny and new in  
his young life, the aroma of spring flowers,  
warm breezes, clear blue skies and multi-  
colored butterfly in-flight; all was well,  
with little or no strife.

Four was he, in a wonderland so big and wide,  
"What is this?" "What is that?" What and why,  
he asked, repeatedly, for only four was he!

Time passed, and seven he quickly became!  
Stick horses, cowboy hat, and pearl handled  
cap guns, fireflies in a mason-jar and eating  
tootsie rolls and watching the bright stars.

Sand through the hourglass and ten was he!  
Summertime, climbing trees, riding his bike  
down Fifth street, eating wormy mulberries  
from the old mulberry tree. Life was free  
and so was he!

Turn around, and fifteen he became.  
Baseball, fishing pole, swimming holes,  
Boy scouts, and the discovery that all the  
ugly little girls had magically turned pretty!

Time fluttered on, and now seventeen was nearly gone.  
Football games, high school queens, late night movies  
and stolen kisses at the drive-in, and that's how his time  
had passed, without a serious thought or a single sin.

In the blink of the eye and twenty-one was he!  
Now where were the butterflies in-flight,  
the summer breeze and the old mulberry  
trees and his young future, so bright?

Gone forever by an AK round, on a dark

monsoon night, in a jungle firefight,  
during the year of the monkey...  
Nineteen-sixty-nine!

"What was his name...  
Ah! *I can't remember!*

Jackie R. Kays