

BARBARA B. ROLLINS

The Man Child

I am the judge. He is the man child, just past the watershed
seventeenth birthday. Before three other judges he is an
adult, charged with adult misdemeanors. In my court he is
a child charged with murder because nine months ago he
followed the home boys.

He followed the home boys and drank beer.

He followed the home boys and drank gin.

He followed the home boys and took Valium.

He followed the home boys and smoked weed.

There was a pecker wood, a white man who presumed to invade
the sanctum of the Hood.

The wood was a loser.

The wood was an old man at 38.

The wood was HIV positive.

The wood was drunk.

The wood was contentious.

The wood was in the wrong place.

The wood singled out the lady sitting on a car and demanded a
light.

The wood and the lady argued.

The lady was friendly.

The lady had been friendly with the old home boy.

The lady had been friendly with the young home boys.

The lady had been friendly with the man child.

The old home boy socked the wood for the name of the lady and
the Hood.

The wood lay on the pavement.

The young home boys hit the wood with quart beer bottles.

The young home boys hit the wood with gallon gin bottles.

The man child hit the wood and he hit him and he hit him.

The heat came. Everybody left. The wood lay dying on the
pavement.

I am the judge of the man child.

I am not the judge of the man child's mother who let him grow
up a wild child and would not come to get him when called.

I am not the judge of the man child's father who disappeared after the genesis and does not know the man child. It is said the man child's father now lives with the man child's step sister as her man.

I am not the judge of the man child's step father whose leaving prompted the man child to transform from a good student to a Crip home boy in two brief years.

I cannot judge the juvenile system that kept slapping his hand and sending him home to mama, when she would take him, and to his aunts and grandmother when mama would not take him.

I am the judge of the man child. God help me, I am the judge of the man child.