

Elizabeth McKim

KNIFE/LIFE

For Etheridge Knight

when you were busy with your dying
 i left it by mistake
 in the bed
 on my side
 after i had pared the plum
 and fed it to you
 bit by rosey bit
 and later you found that knife
 in the bed
 and brandished it
 to **'keep the heroes back'**
 waved it through the air
 like a comanche warrior
 same way you brandished it
 when you ran down the long corridor
 at the indianapolis central post office
 federal agents running out from their offices
 yelling **'stop that man stop that man'**
 and later on
 after your mama had moved in with us
 you asked for the knife
 and francy and i gave it to you
 mama said
'you crazy?
no tellin' what fool thing
he might do with that knife
'cause he's sick
and i don't want him wavin' no knife in the air'

POETRY

and she was right she almost always is
but still
when you waved it
when you brandished it and flourished it
i knew you were **gaining** on that angel in our room
you were gaining back some control
before the storm and strife
began to roll into our little life you waved
that paring knife and sliced the air
and listened to some formal
music there
and carved a prayer to lil' hope
and that's the truth

(and that's the dope)