

The Ballad of Francis Houle © 2009 David Schein

Back in nineteen sixty- one,
or maybe it was sixty-two
In a third floor classroom
by the window stood Francis Roule
Francis was looking down
at the kids on the playground.
It was recess time
but Francis had to stay inside.
Francis cried

Francis was cornered.
He'd really messed up in school
sworn at the teacher,
called her every name he knew
Mrs. MacFarland
had the ruler in her hand
so he opened up the window
and out onto the ledge he crawled
and Francis bawled

Leave me alone
Why don't you all shut up?
Leave me alone
That's what Francis cried
to the kids outside

Francis was short
only bout 4 feet tall
His teeth were awful
His family couldn't pay at all
He lived on Marble Avenue
in the French Canadian ghetto
when the mills closed down
the Roules were out of luck
They were just Canucks

All the playground kids
were looking up at Francis
It was the first time
most of us had noticed him
I remember the fire
In Francis' eyes
when he realized
he was three stories tall
and he ruled us all, he called

Leave me alone
Why don't you all shut up?
Leave me alone
You all go to hell
That's what Francis yelled

It wasn't me
must have been that sixth grade punk
Percy Pauquette
who called out "Francis jump"
We all took up the cry
"Come on Francis, fly....."
so he spread his arms
and inched out to the edge
of the window ledge.

Principal Ransom
in the window behind him
was talking softly
" Please Francis, come back in."
Francis just shook his head
gave us all his toothless grin
That's when Mr. Bouchard
grabbed him by his belt
and Francis yelped

Leave me alone
Whyn't you just shut up?
Leave me alone
And he squirmed and fought
but he was caught

Three big teachers
struggling with Francis
we all watched them
haul him in like a little fighting fish
We all got detention
hadn't acted like Francis' "friends"
but for a week or two
Francis was a ruler in the school
Francis Roule

50 years later
I'm driving up Marble Avenue
and I'm really in trouble
and I'm remembering
Francis Roule
Supervisor called me in
talked about restructuring
and I realized
I was against the wall
with no place to fall.
I told her

Leave me alone
Why don't you just shut up
Leave me alone
and I drove away
from the factory
singing

Leave me alone.
Why don't you just shut up
Leave me alone.....