

# The Mission

William Virgil Davis

I gave my word and was accepted.  
I knew what I had to do. It would be  
easy enough everyone said. I didn't  
need to think any more about it. I  
should only think about the afterlife,  
what was prepared for me, and what  
I would leave behind—the glory  
for my whole family. I would be  
remembered forever, even written  
about, and told of on television  
around the world.

I stood still  
as they strapped the bombs around  
my waist. They weren't heavy. No  
one would see them. I practiced  
carefully what I was to do. I knew  
it step by step. They'd showed me  
the building in a picture, the exact  
place where I was to wait.

The men would enter the room  
by noon. I would stand at the back,  
near the back wall. I would wait  
until the elders had all taken their  
places. When everyone was settled,  
the ceremony would begin. Then I  
would step forth and pull the string.  
Then I would not see anything but  
the vision. It would be wonderful.

**William Virgil Davis's** most recent book of poetry is *Dismantlements of Silence: Poems Selected and New*. He has published five other books of poetry: *The Bones Poems, Landscape and Journey*, which won the New Criterion Poetry Prize and the Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Poetry; *Winter Light, The Dark Hours*, which won the Calliope Press Chapbook Prize; *One Way to Reconstruct the Scene*, which won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize. His poems have appeared in most of the major periodicals, here and abroad, including *Agenda, The Atlantic Monthly, The Gettysburg Review, The Georgia Review, The Harvard Review, The Hopkins Review, The Hudson Review, The Nation, The Malahat Review, The New Criterion, PN Review, Poetry, The Sewanee Review, Southwest Review, The Southern Review, TriQuarterly*, and *The Yale Review*, among many others, including *War, Literature and the Arts*—as both poet and critic.