

# We Have Only the Night

*by Tom Miller  
for Karla Winberg*

The Grand Jury charges:

On or about April 28, 1981, in the State and District of Colorado, JAKE KELLER NEAL did, by force and violence, and by intimidation, take from the person and presence of Karla Winberg approximately \$14,100.00 in United States currency and . . . and JAKE KELLER NEAL, in committing the aforesaid offense, did kill Karla Winberg . . .

Karla, there is no hope for you.  
I thought maybe I could do it once they hired me  
and tonight when you count your final till  
I'll wind the cord from a Venetian blind  
around you milky throat, then stuff  
your slowly stiffening corpse  
into the safe before making my escape.

You know it's nothing personal. "Just business,"  
I'm sure other hired guns for Pinkerton's  
reasoned before killing. So what if the gun  
was hired for your protection. So what!  
Tonight I'll be free from minimum wage. It's me  
who'll count the money and you'll be looking glum.

Who am I, dear? You never knew  
each time I held the door for you at lunch  
that soon you'd never eat again, sleep  
down the hall from your father, or whisper  
"rent-a-cop" and giggle with a girlfriend.  
You and your wool suits and white hose.

You'll miss your class tomorrow,  
but the worry of your day's take in my keep  
will drift slowly from your memory  
while my hands ache, pulling the cord tight  
until you're dead. Dead! Baby,  
this was no way to make love.

Judge Carrigan said it was "the coldest,  
most calculated, most premeditated crime"  
he'd ever seen before he sentenced me.  
But listen -- I can pull fire through keyholes --  
yellow flames like fur between the tiger's stripes.  
Unlock the door, call away the guard --  
here, watch me breathe.