

S. P. ZITNER

## A SECOND CHANCE

Sheldon Paul Zitner (1924-2005) was born in Brooklyn, New York. He attended Brooklyn College for three years and then served in the U.S. Air Corps in the South Pacific during WWII. After the war, he earned a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College in 1947 and a master's degree from New York University in 1948. He taught at Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) before earning a doctorate from Duke University in 1955. He then taught at Grinnell College, and in 1969 he became a professor at the University of Toronto, where he remained for the rest of his career. He began to publish poetry after his retirement in 1989, and the following poem was published in the summer 2001 issue and included in the collection *Before We Had Words* (2002).

Soon enough we'll meet again in hell,  
where we spent the last of our long married life,  
and resume our travesty of man-and-wife:  
me hating the cigarette-and-liquor smell  
of your undoing, and the nightly "Nothing,  
never" in your stare; you, mock-meek, loathing  
my condescension and my casual  
dishonesty, my wielding language like a knife

Or if death's mindless pity should erase  
all that, we'd love again as at the start:  
even our silences the heart-to-heart  
of two made whole and one in each embrace—  
then lose that paradise of wasted breath,  
dying a third and just as painful death.