



## *Jihad*

---

I carry a suitcase through the  
busy streets, slip past the checkpoint  
into the open-leaf avenue.  
I walk into an outdoor café  
packed nicely with a noonday crowd.  
I find a seat at a table  
across from a child whose  
watercolors and papers scatter  
the ground.  
He paints rapidly, then holds it  
up smiling to show me as his parents talk.  
I push my chair back waving goodbye  
as the child begins another piece.  
I slip out easily past the crowded  
tables and chairs, leaving the suitcase  
behind.  
My pace quickens to match my heart  
and I am once again moving through  
the streets as primary colors rise  
behind me.  
It is all the colors  
that child could ever paint.

JAMES KOCH

*James Koch was born in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1964 and now lives in Pittsboro. He holds a Masters degree in Political Science from Appalachian State University and saw action in the 1991 Gulf War as a company commander with the 24th Mechanized Division. His poems have been published in many local, national, and international journals. When not pursuing his literary interests, he is a probation officer for the state of North Carolina and works with Cyberangels, a law-enforcement team fighting computer crime.*

