

(3) Honorable Mention

Carol Saul Bayma – Norfolk, VA

Sniffing Blankets

**This job sucks! I'd rather
be the driver, or the kid
that hands out floor mats,
or the woman who check bags
for knives
and stores the guns
beneath the driver's seat for shelter
overnight. I'd even look for
bottles stashed in bushes
underneath lamps,
unscrewed to hide a late
nightcap tryst in the hedge.
But it's Wednesday,
shelter move and blanket pickup
day. This week is my turn
to sort a hundred twenty blankets
and select the sixty rankest,
foul -- most noxious of the lot.
If we chose them by their looks
or feel, we'd bum them all:
grimey, damp, slimey, stiff;
not one would pass that cull.
And so we sniff
to find just sixty that are
vile enough to tear my eyes
and choke my throat with bile.
We send them
to the voluntary laundry.
while the rest remain,
attest to just how cold
a shelter floor can be.**