

(4) Honorable Mention

Carol Saul Bayma – *Norfolk, VA*

Evening Prayer

Filtered through cracks
in hallway doors,
phosphorescent night lamps
shed an amber fog
that settles lightly upon mats
where restless sleepers,
wrested late from city streets,
trade aching feet
for aching backs.

The evening chaperone stands,
Alone; she roams
amid their muffled coughs.
Quivers of their hollow
nasal moan vibrate
in her inner ear. Her soul
winds night watch,
while her feet tread
shiny tile paths
between beds:
dingy egg-crate foam,
gray monk-mantle blankets
(throwaway comfort
for disposable people).

Upon this homeless labyrinth,
this patchwork puzzle prison,
silent cries now issue,
prayer call from a distant muezzin,
voiceless intercession
where she casts her shadow.

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