

Honorable Mention

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Gray

All gray. Gray steel doors locked till 6,
even when its dark at 5,
even when its cold outside,
so cold my hands are chapped and red.
Hands stiff from holding shut my coat,
the thin gray coat they handed me,
the grim gray man who took my name,
the name I swallowed full of shame
many long gray days ago, days filled
and fogged with dreary gray,
nights I only dreamed in gray.
I shuffle now, each night at 6,
down long dim halls to dirt-gray rooms,
different rooms, but each the same,
each curtained off with sad gray cloth,
cloth that cannot hold back wails,
or fearful quiet that prevails
where steel-gray cots with worn
gray ticking, lumpy pillows,
smell of others lingering, sticking.
Through the night, cold gray seeps
through dingy windows, waking, sleeping,
until the morning light comes pushing.
Out at 8, out the door, onto the concrete
gray sidewalk, to walk and sit, to shiver gray
until the light leaks from the day
and then again, to wait till 6,
when gray steel doors will slip their locks.
Till 6, when I will slip again,
down long gray halls to a cold, gray bed.

