

Honorable Mention

Jack Cooper - *Valley Glen, CA*

LONG SHADOWS

Outside the video store
a woman in a serape
sits unbathed, unassuming
on the cold cement,
a white cup at her feet
collecting change
like falling stars.

I circle the room inside -
Nickolas Cage the flim flam man,
Kate Hudson the flim flam girl,
Frodo the flim flam hobbit,
but the movie in my mind
is about the woman outside,
the once-upon-a-time farm girl

from Jalisco
or Juarez or Encinada,
whose father and grandfather
raised pigs on field corn
until the soil gave out
and their gums bled
and they fed animals to animals,

and her little brother
who ate the seed with fungicide
and could never go to school,
and the *coyotes* that came sniffing around
promising work up north
but took the Virgin Mary from her,
and poor Mama, poor Mama.

I think about this woman's story,
that movies have been made for less,
that we have ended our own lives for less,
and I walk out the door,
hoping to drop her a wish or two,
but she is gone,
leaving me in long shadows
with a pocketful of stars.