

Honorable Mention

Nanette Orange - *Miami, Florida*

The Streets of Downtown

It's five o' clock, the rush begins.
The workers, of all titles, meet
in front of elevator doors
to leave behind the hectic street
that bellows metropolitan
(from county courts to fine retails,
from uniforms to tailored suits,
from blaring trains to chiming bells).
By eight at night, the buildings rest
as private guards protect and roam.
Their moonlit shift will end at twelve;
all other staff recline at home.
But here I stay, from dawn to dusk,
no home to rest my weary feet
that walk the streets with hopes to find
recyclables and strips of meat.
Some days I reach my goal to eat
and sigh when I receive a dime.
On other days, my belly growls,
and I am viewed as homeless slime
that plagues cemented avenues
with boxes, tents and grimy clothes.
The eyes of passersby project
a frigid glance from all of those
uncaring of the life I lead,
untroubled by my blemished skin
and plight with mental illnesses,
too busy for a look within.
I long to leave a job at five
and flee the wrath of homelessness.
But all is not a total loss--
I still have hope and worthiness.