

Honorable Mention

Susan Hendrickson - *Columbus, Ohio*

Harbor Cafe

Suburban coffee shop
fills with the scent of hazelnut,
mornng noises.
Computer cases snap open,
mugs clatter, toddlers jabber
The clerk repeats our order, drowning out
dissonant sounds of snoring somewhere
in the room.

A crumpled man of the streets
surrounded by duffle bags, blankets
naps in the corner. He's
brought his exhaustion indoors.

Silently,
we acknowledge his presence.
The morning papers' crossword puzzles,
half-finished, tossed aside on the table,
hint of other conundrums.

Nearly horizontal in an overstuffed chair
he slumps into appropriated space
wool watch cap pulled down to grizzled chin,
immune to strollers rattling by.

Brought his exhaustion within our reach
sleeps publicly, claims scraps of comfort
after a night of foraging, avoiding
harm and authority.

I wonder if he comes here often.
Someone has approved,
sanctioned this chair, this harbor.
The sun seems warmer.
When the man wakes, moves on,
he may, like us, carry something with him.