

The Bridge2009 – *Honorable Mention*

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HOMELESS ... NOT HOPELESS!

There's a distorting crack in the washroom mirror
And a face I barely recognize.
I run my fingers through my hair and wonder
if I really am as inconsequential
as the steam on the broken mirror before me.
The reality is painful. But right now it is all I have.
Though I believe in God, family and country
I don't understand how this happened,
From hero to homeless in a few short months.
How quickly I went from Salesman of the Year
With an expense account and company car, to
"Sorry. We have to let you go!" Now I am one of the faceless.
Outside the others wait, near a police car, nervous,
People pass them with averted eyes.
There's a chill in the air with light rain falling.
They huddle together for warmth and support,
backs to the world, with thoughts known only to them.
Sometimes they make me uncomfortable. Yet we need each
other.
But there is a change in the land and it's welcome,
as welcome as the promise of Spring.
The air is fresh, green leaves show, and buds will come.
The myrtle will flower like one we planted.
I flash back and see it again in bursting bloom.
Brushed by the breeze, it gently sends falling petals, pale
confetti.
I join the others, my plastic bag held tightly.
Seeking evidence that someone cares,
I grab for my last ounce of pride and stand tall.
Today will not be like all the other days.
Whatever happens, I am still the same person
With a string around my neck keeping a gold band close to my
heart.

The crowd is there already, eager, desperate.
I fiercely grab the yellow wristband.
With my lifeline, I jostle others who dream.
Inside it's clean and the fresh paint smell lingers
as intoxicating as expensive perfume.
I flash to our painted nursery; see my wife, heavy with child.
My friends are excited and impressed. They chatter
like starlets on some third rate talk show.
There are even tears in a few weary eyes,
but there's laughter too, with surprise and relief.
How hard it is to express how grateful we are
for opportunity, given by those who did not turn away.
It's a gift, a blessing, the answer to a prayer.
A chance to forget that hated word,
"Homeless", with all its negative undertones.
They call this house, "The Bridge" and I step forward.
Hope is intoxicating, and I feel re-born.
I flash forward to the future. "Welcome Home, my love," she
whispers.