

Honorable Mention

Berrie Neller – *Dallas, Texas*

Big windows

What are you drawing? I ask.

A house, she replies.

Nice, I say, seeing her earnestness.

We'd been grocery shopping.

Everyday stuff that everyone needs:

cereal, milk, fruit, eggs, shampoo, etc.

Driving home we'd seen a forlorn man
in a faded army jacket leaning on a wall.

Beside him an old backpack full of
forgotten learning, and a pillow stuffed
with broken dreams

I'd answered her questions: he's homeless.

No. No cell phone, he's talking to himself.

To a six-year-old, a grown-up with no place
to live, and no one to talk to is as mysterious
as a metaphor.

She'd been silent all the way home, wearing
this same frown of concentration as she kept
drawing.

After putting up the groceries, I looked over
her shoulder.

She'd drawn a house with big windows,
a fenced yard and a kennel.

There was a tree with dollar signs for leaves.
A smaller house in her yard had a red cross
on the side.

Everything was surrounded by a huge heart.
With the patience inspired by innocence she
explained the sun has to shine inside, as well
as outside a house.

Everyone needs a friend to talk to.

You have to have money to buy food.

And a place you can go to get well.

Looking away, I couldn't ask what the heart
was for.