

**The Bridge 2009 – Honorable Mention**

**Roger Wright** - Chicago, III

**Houseless. Not Homeless.**

She lays a yellow daffodil on the blue plastic dashboard of the old green Honda.  
Pillows, blankets, towels in the back seat.  
What's left of their clothes in the trunk.

"See?" she says.  
Just like home.  
Not homeless. Just houseless.  
*And it just can't be like this forever.*  
Hardest part is finding places to clean up.  
Brushing your teeth in a gas station sink.

It's noon on a Friday.  
Darkened sky as if there never was a sun.  
They move with the traffic.  
The few who still have jobs motor home for an early holiday  
So the two in the Honda---not homeless--- they are houseless-- find the flow and drive.

When this all started, they were worried most 'bout the privacy  
But no one really sees them.  
And there are no phones.  
So it's not so bad.

*And it just can't be like this forever.*

Nights they're so tired, that it's easy to sleep anywhere.  
What's hard is that one of them has to stay awake,  
Waiting for the glass to smash, the steel cylinder, oily smell of the gun.

They have to save the car.  
Because they know about the shelters.  
And after that comes only cardboard.  
Their blanket can't look too good, or it's gone too.

They came to the car so fast,  
Such a thin cold line between the house, the TV set, big winter coats and shoes.

Then he got sick, they closed the store, the insurance was gone  
And they became invisible  
One day they were serving food to the homeless at the Wednesday night meal

And then a light went out. Some problems with the insurance.  
And they were lining up to eat.

*And it just can't be like this forever.*

Come 3:00 on that dark afternoon

Everybody almost home now

Everybody almost home, but the couple in the Honda

They keep driving.

Sam Cooke sings on the radio.

"See, she says, we still got some music."

Sam Cooke sings on the radio in the crowded car they now call home:

*"It's been a long time coming*

*But I know*

*A change is gonna come.*

*Oh yes it is."*

"I can drive for awhile" she says. "You just rest. Close your eyes."

*And it just can't be this way forever.*