

A Beggar's Welcome

by Philip F. Clark

He stopped and asked if I could spare some change.
I thought, Oh yes, I could spare so much: another job,
a new home, other clothes, better weather, more chances,
less pain. Yes, I could spare some change.
He held out his hand -- callused, sooted, cracked.
I groped for my wallet, and I held his eyes:
still young, if half alive; as if they and his body were not
the same -- there were the chances he mistook,
the changes on a dime -- the house, the car, the wife
or lover, the constantly put off grave.
All I had was a clean last twenty.
Without a thought, I handed it to him.
As he gently took it, his hand in mine, I knew:
It's all we ever want -- the holding. The asking
is never as hard as the needing; the accepting
never as hard as the taking.

