

The Passenger's Seat

Liz Richardson

This Sunday on the subway
I met a homeless man
and his pushcart, placed nearby,
sleeping across three slick tangerine seats
In one corner of the C train to Brooklyn.

I sat two places down.
The doors pulled closed.
The car pulled forward
and the man's pushcart began to roll
toward his resting place.

Instinctively I reached for the handle
to steady the cart
as the car jerked onward into the darkness,
as the man dozed on into the morning.

In silence we spoke,
this sleeping man and I.

His closed tired eyes, they talked.
My hand bracing the buggy, I listened
as the stories dripped from the wrinkles
around his mouth and nose

spilling out until our third stop
when at the slip of my grip
I realized that the cart was wedged,
and could stand on its own.

But all the same I held tight to its blue plastic handle,
because I didn't know what else to do.

And as the car swayed
as a mother takes her child in arm,
like a ship battered in some great gale
fighting for calm,

I wondered what was behind
those closed, tired eyes.
I wondered what he was dreaming.

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