

# 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.

