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Nightmare on the Street

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Nightmare on the Street

Rachael Rochocki

One the steps of the Vietnam War Memorial
 In magical, beautiful, downtown Chicago
 Lays a sleeping man who drains the magic and beauty
 out of everything
 His skin is dark as night, a thick layer of grime
 covering his flesh, bruising his face
 His clothes are shabby and torn,
 dark colors of midnight black, forest green
 Multiple layers, though the air is hot
 His shoes are without laces,
 frayed at the tongue
 His head rests against a dirty purple backpack,
 hair smudged with grease
 He is curled up in the fetal position,
 protecting himself
 from the harsh world that is his reality,
 the same reality of his parents, and their parents
 A reality he thought he would escape
 He would do better
 but he couldn't
 His eyelids flutter and
 he twists his body in a dream
 A small, youthful girl with long red hair and blue eyes
 who smells of vanilla and her father's riches
 skips by without a second glance
 An old woman carries a large bag and an umbrella
 and she walks, without stopping
 A freckled, gangly teenager,
 who has yet to grow out of her awkward phase
 treads through the memorial site, looking at her feet
 She sees the sleeping man
 through the hair falling in front of her eyes
 She walks along the black marble wall
 As she passes him,
 she tucks several bills between his arm and chest
 The man jerks in his sleep, a quick reaction to an intrusion
 But his eyes peel open too late
 The teenage girl is gone
 Noticing the money, six dollars total, he tucks it in his bag
 eyeing the other homeless men with greedy suspicion
 until he is certain no one notices his new fortune
 He sleeps again
 A soiled soul in a magical, beautiful place