

JULIO

There's a crust around each of his nostrils, it's been there for a while.

A layer of dust covers his body and dull disheveled hair.

His smell is sour with an overtone of old urine.

One small cracked toenail protrudes from his scuffed and worn shoe.

Buttons are missing from the grimy shirt, the ripped pants are too tight for his small frame.

I want to enfold him in my arms, well, after I've bathed him,
and feed him thick slices of toast soaked in butter and honey and cream,
then tuck him into a warm bed with clean sheets and read him a story.

He's only 6.

But, he'd look at me with those old eyes.

He's not like the giggling children I know. He left childhood long ago.

His attitude is serious, all business.

Today he sells chicle on the street, tomorrow who knows?

I feel rich, spoiled and fat on my diet of American consumerism standing next to him.

I weep for the millions of Julio's in the streets of the world,
but my tears are just drops on the powdered dust of his face.

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