

Son

He slept in his mother's arms fifty years ago
but now Charles sleeps with me on the concrete floor
during my volunteer night in a shelter
that sits in the rotting gut of Atlanta,
not far from my comfy-suburban home.

Charles is no stranger to poverty,
and is employed by the shelter
to screen knives, alcohol and drugs,
and to keep the peace during long, winter nights.

A bank gives a fixer-upper to us and fix it up
we do with nails, paint and sweat but
Charles says "No, I'm here- I cannot live there."

A few years later he dies on the street,
in the light of the moon's grace-
alone.

Some mother loved him.

By Arlin Buyert