Highway Tollbooth Worker

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Ten o'clock hits, and I am nestled.
Thermos, newspaper, radio,
Pictures of my wife, my kids
Dog-eared and taped to the glass.

Midnight; traffic becomes lighter.
A few gulps of coffee help
Wash my heart pills down.
Doc said "Take 'em at bedtime"
But when you work a double,
You sometimes forget.

Two o'clock comes; the night whispers.
I turn up the radio
Against the chill of the winter air
And the stillness of this highway.
Funny beats in my chest—it's just the coffee.

Four o'clock glides; the night is long.
My legs are heavy, cramped;
The sweet surrender of sleep
Beckons like the soft hoot
Of a barn owl, or the horn of a barge
On some cold, black water nearby.

Six o'clock settles; the dawn quietly peeks.
Notes of sweetness arrive
On the crisp morning breeze
And my heart, now steady,
Lifts and soars; my soul warms
With thoughts of home.

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