

Not A Love Poem

It's summer, and I am perched on a washing machine in a basement laundry room, bathed in yellow light, hot air, and clean smell. It's after eleven now, and the smashed heels of my pebble-worn, red-canvas shoes drum the sides of the jostling machine. A sloshing sound as my clothes are cooked and shaken, spun and cycled, soaked in three stages. I'm waiting alone.

The door slams, a short, metallic clang above me. Someone's legs take the stairs by storm and my feet stop swinging as he steps in. He slow-smiles, brown eyes rimmed in what might be silver, and turns to his clothes, lying still in the dryer. I catch sight of a red shirt asleep under striped shorts, which he shovels into a bag before slipping away.

Seven stairs and a minute later he's back and I feel like asking him to stay. Wait a while, it's lonely here, just me and the whir of wash. I forgot detergent. Is this even doing any good? My dollar twenty-five swallowed by the machine that shudders, threatens liftoff. But he's already slipping paper into a bag, lines jagged on clean pages, poetry he forgot on the counter. I count to ten six times: A minute, maybe. Wait for the machine to sputter, to stop.

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