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Wash Duty

Victoria Rostovich

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Victoria Rostovich

Wash Duty

I That boy from the gas station comes in

I had your welfare in mind. I designed it all for you.
The machines run themselves. They stretch out their
strings
to each other. They want to help. Just follow the
lights,
in sequence. You'll get used to it. Even the noises
will
sound like drums. It's easy and I'm grateful. Believe
me,
I'm grateful. I want to help too. I can cut hair in a
straight
line. I will color inside the lines of your body and
hide you
in my crawl hole when cops knock. Only the
machines will know.

II Our Secrets

The giraffe is eighteen inches tall. He's a nice pet.
He always uses his box and he eats very little.
He talks back, but not in a smart way. His name is
Alesso.
He needs me. I need you to drain my too-full
breasts.
I need to fatten you up when icicles hang by the
wall.

I spent years in Switzerland. I kept alive a small
cactus.
I fed it with dried blood from ground marrow. I used
ESPOMA

brand. The nitrogen allows the soil to breathe. The
cells
breathe so clearly. Most people don't understand the
value
of nitrogen. They think soap and water are enough.
Safe
under sheets, they let their hands tramp across skin
full
of waste. We will sweat forty minutes each day. At
least.
I'm making you an offer. We'll be so clean, inside
and out. My uniform stays fresh and so will yours.
I'll wash them the right way. Chopchop, Daddy-O.

Men fold laundry with such quick hands.
I've taken to wearing lipstick. Peach.