Getting Mighty Crowded

David Kresh
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The preacher squats hidden in the shadow of the Big Boy Washer.
His hands float and flutter in a swan dance of invocation.
His face waits, smooth, blind.

The naked man moves his encampment from washer to drier.
The quarter falls from his fingers.
He tries to remember how to say "Damn!"
I wish I could help him.
He bends toward the quarter for a while. Then he stands up for a while.

The preacher has been leaving warnings everywhere, that he will be happy,
that there will be fire, he has spoken solemnly of the inevitable advent of cannibalism. You can see that, can’t you.

One by one everyone respectfully takes a cigarette from the naked man’s pack. He frowns, "please help yourselves" he wants to remember how to say.
The pieces of the naked man, 
his grooming, his desire 
for the right word, 
his beautiful manners, his 
fingers at the edge of the quarter, 
I wish I could help him.

From the pay phone Hakim 
calls the radio doctor 
of psychic science for confirmation of 
his mission on earth. She says 
he will either meet or be 
a tall, dark stranger. "Now 
what was your other question, honey" 
she titters, "I forget." Is the messiah 
already on earth? She giggles. "No, no."

The naked man brushes his 
fingers across the edge of the quarter. 
Then he stands up for a while.

The Big Boy plainly says 
DO NOT OPEN DOOR 
UNTIL CYCLE HAS COMPLETED 
but the preacher is prodded and driven now 
from his warm corner, comes to his feet 
preaching, that devil, that 
devil, they despise him.

He flies almost falling fast past me. 
Such changes flash fire across his eyes that 
I turn away.

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