

MARLENE KADAR

Clean Poem

Squared by how many times a handkerchief white
 for a man's pocket, I guess
 But how does it migrate from the place it started
 looking like this, a square
 I only wondered afterwards after the laundry
 Lucky I did not see a man's square handkerchief
 in the mounds of wounded white
 Tossed just like that, with towels, socks,
 underpants, undershirts, jeans.
 No, I just bent at the knees, straight back, lifted
 the whites
 And with speed anew or I threw the laundry into
 the front loader.

The water pulsed through the hose and the drum
 clicked and clacked, whooshed and
 swooshed, pretty things scampering this way,
 and that, rolling over like puppies with itchy
 tummies the other way. But not me, I didn't notice
 much, or care then.



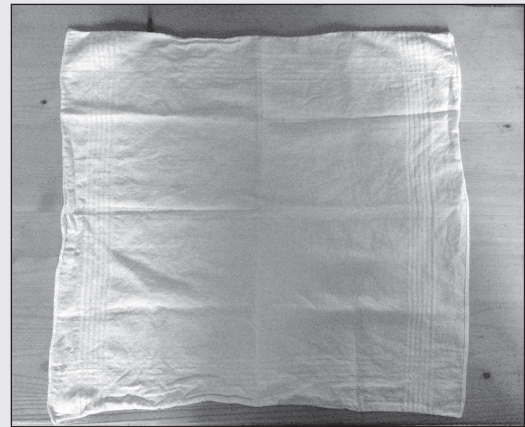
A near perfect square like that in there, wet now
 but holding its perfect shape.

I removed the laundry from the front loader and
 wanted to just pick it up and heave it with all my
 strength into the dryer,
 But instead I hesitated.
 Who cares really, who really cares, I have
 pretended that I care

But then in a red fire of burned skin I saw the
 square and knew then it had been left for me,
 A gift,
 Folded,
 Because I would, of course, expect a good woman
 to unfold the handkerchief, so that it could be
 properly washed, made clean again.

But I was meant to unfold it before the load was
 consecrated. So it would be washed equally in
 all its parts, and more easily ironed, maybe with
 a flourish, and the whole thing would have
 worked much better, wouldn't it?

Would it look like this then?



And you would be able to scrunch it up to wipe
 your brow or blow your nose, and then maybe
 fold it up so it fits like a square in your sleek hip
 pocket. No one would ever know how I had not
 unfolded it, nor how it wasn't really sanitary,
 after all. Even though I did the whole load of
 laundry, bending with a straight back only.

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