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Lipstick

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Lipstick · Laura Jensen

Cosmetics are your noble
benefactors, far away
at department stores
where the counter girls
glare at your pale face,
thinking you shoplift.
You try a perfume and carry it
at your now-royal wrist
through all the rest.

The store
is crowded and terrible. The lips
of the women are red like alleys
of cardinals, eyes are green
like alleys of bamboo. But none
of the colognes is like the scent of snow
on bamboo, or rutted snow
by the trees where cardinals slum
alertly, saying *light. Morning.*

In the alley of *now* the dusk is
trying out the garbage cans. Among them
I am looking around at the dark
after squashing down the trash somehow.
Suspended in the heavens of
the third floor, steam is still blurring
my mirror, soap still haunting the air.
My lipstick clings, cosmetic,
reassuring, its scent feminine and hearty.

Dream: I am an Oriental print.
I turned to walk down the road
after companions when suddenly my face
stopped living, a window painted shut.
Of me there were single hairs, brown with damp,
I was looking up. In the white air by me
there was printed an emblem in a black square,
a signature. I was what was there.