

\$2.50

I've begun an affair
with a customer from
the dry-cleaner

she'd come in
with her husband's shirts
to press
but she always flirted with me
twitching the flesh colored
mole on her upper lip

everything she said
in her Russian accent
made it seem playful,
sexy

and her short shirts
let her bellybutton
free
to look like a
little brown
almond-

Her husband had
a dirty neck and wrists

I'm greasy too,
I tell her

yes, yes
but he doesn't know
how to pleasure a woman,
she says

I don't know much better

but there's just something about you,
she tells me,
something powerful

I never get tired of hearing that,

I say,
I'll come over tonight
what time does your husband leave for work?

Around midnight

I'll be there at 12:30-

That night
I knock on her door
and she answers
in a nightie

her cunt hairs coming through

it's been a while
since I've been with a woman
who had a little hair

do you not like?

no, no
a guy like me
can't complain-

Afterwards
we lay there in bed
her rubbing my fingers

What are these black marks
on your hands?

those wire hangers
get this grease on them,
it sticks to my fingers
and no matter how hard I scrub
it won't come off

I guess it's the mark
of the dry-cleaner,
I remark jokingly

let me try,

she says
as she puts my fingers
in her mouth
and sucks on them

you've got such strong hands,
she says-

after a while
she went over to the table
and opened a bottle
of pills

she popped a couple
in her mouth

want some?

no thanks,
I said,
do you have a beer?

only my husband's
and he'll know
some is missing

I'll go get us some beer

I crawled out of bed
and started to put my clothes
on

get me some cigarettes
while you're out

sure,
what kind?

camel ultras-

When I returned
she was almost asleep
from the pills

and the slurring
of her words mixed
with her accent
made it almost
impossible to understand her

I shook her shoulder
and showed her the beer

did you remember my cigarettes?

I threw them on the bed

you should knock off the pills,
I tell her

they're the only way
I can get some sleep

she puts a cigarette in her mouth
clutching just the ends of her lips
to the filter

my husband detests smoking
and he knows I only do it after sex,
he'll know someone was here tonight

is your husband a big man?
I asked

are you afraid?
she taunted me
lighting it up

I'm not afraid of anything
goddamn it
hell, I'll carve my
name into your arm

she laughed
and rubbed my belly

in your dry-cleaner
how much is wool to clean?

\$2.50

what about silk?

\$2.50

how can you afford to be so cheap?

we're the best in town, baby

you do not seem
like a dry-cleaner,
she tells me

I think about telling her
about the writing
but I don't have enough
strength

a lot of people
don't become
what they want to be.