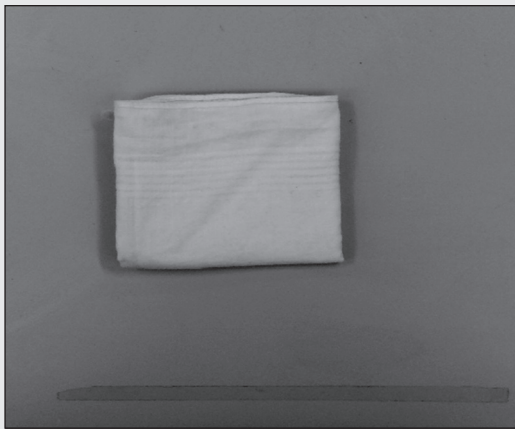


MARLENE KADAR

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.



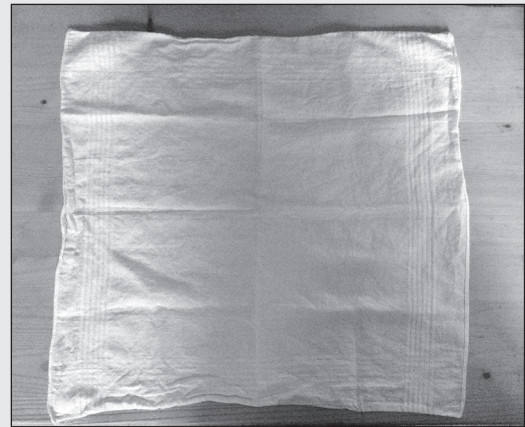
A near perfect square like that in there, wet now
but holding its perfect shape.

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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