

## Cleaning Lady

Her face is open  
expectant shiny  
Spanish radio wailing low  
laughter and long  
songs that sound of desert  
summers

Black birthmarks  
live beneath her girlish lip

Short and soft she  
walks like a rich woman  
although her only shoes are black  
leather frayed and tired

She smells like cotton  
white dresses pungent  
wood green flowers and  
Mexico but  
I've never been there

Her daughter once came  
to clean and she  
was my age  
caramel pretty

The girl came into my room  
and said nice room  
nice room she said  
voice warming me and  
making me ache for answers.

Chicago's possible and blue like  
the lake  
and you have friends that understand  
the language of  
french fries and  
bread-smelling hair that  
can't be washed  
everyday  
you live in an apartment and have air  
that understands you  
right right right

But I don't ask just smile  
suburban mind clean and trimmed  
like the artificial lawns  
outside

The cleaning lady calls me  
by my name  
not sticky like my  
teachers but close  
like she knows me

And when it's time to  
go she quietly  
steps away like  
we are crazy  
like we are a family of  
animals and  
I want to tap her used  
car and shout  
a thousand times  
I love you

Mira

*Mira*  
she says  
*My name's Mira*  
as she shuts our  
front door  
calm cool  
and I nod  
to her fake crocs and  
thick coffee hair

Eyes careful  
I think she  
knows why I  
stumble  
red and shaky  
*Hello*  
*Hola*

I am embarrassed  
I want to say  
yeah we eat at  
McDonalds too  
all the time  
like you  
like you

Mira's mom  
she cleans the  
floors so  
hard and shiny  
I feel small  
standing over the  
small woman  
as she wipes my dust  
and smiles

We listen to swan lake  
in my room  
music box whirring  
and her lighter eyes  
softly clench my  
darker ones and she  
says

*I don't know  
about you but  
this sort of depresses  
me*

I want to  
say me  
too me too  
but I keep quiet

And I wonder about  
Spanish music  
not sad droopy  
but lights  
gold hoops  
like arms  
legs spinning  
hair waving  
tumbling

She will be having  
a quinceañera  
in four years

Eating quesadillas  
dancing with boys  
that are tall and  
know how

And I know it is  
stupid  
but  
I want her to  
take me  
away