

Someone's Gotta Do It

Wield that long-handled rake
to level the boiling asphalt
burning through your souls
and filling your lungs with
carcinogenic crud that sends you
home at night coughing and wheezing
and smelling like your jobsite
no matter how hard you scrub your skin,
which your wife caresses ever so gently
because of the blisters on your forearms
as she asks you again to find another job --
then falls asleep by your side until
morning when you slip from bed,
pull on your stinky clothes and scarred
boots, stop at KwikTrip for a coffee ☕ roll,
and just beat your foreman to the parking lot
your crew should finish today so tomorrow,
thanks to your sort, shoppers can effortlessly
wheel their groceries to their cars
while you're sweating away elsewhere,
smoothing a bit the lives of others who can be
damn glad there's someone like you
willing to do it.

Darrell Petska
Middleton, WI

BLUE COLLAR REVIEW

Ghosts in the Machine

They turn up once our offices darken,
our voices exiting hallways and doors:
like ghosts traveling floor to floor, lights
flashing on ✦ off in their wake.
Come morning, we'll see what they've been
up to: trash cans emptied, floors shiny
and mirrors spotless, paper dispensers filled
and toilet bowls no longer suspect.

Who are these ghosts picking up after us,
brightening our reflections, leaving behind
soothing auras of wax and cleaning products --
with nary a gum wrapper to betray them?
And where do they go as we return,
in the name of business, to undo their labors?
Do we bump their elbows at the grocery store,
share church pews or the community pool?

We work in sunshine, they in darkness
at the expense of daylight, family, and movie night.
We tell ourselves they're paid -- and not badly.
But how must it feel -- being these unseen?

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