ONE SUMMER

With the laundry machines, we spin and whir through the afternoon small, inessential—braided girls, boys in torn shirts, babies crying. Women smoke as they fold hot clothes, a bone-thin attendant wipes down the machines.

I stay until my gaze is pulled from the concrete floor and orange plastic chairs to the heavily vined streets, to the ashes beginning to fill with nightfall.

I carry a sack of clothes along the honeysuckle-lined roads empty of young students.

I let the rain cool my sweating back and legs.

Nothing ever touches me during the days of that summer as I type forms in a basement office, windowless.

I spend the summer nights alone.
The woman upstairs passes over the floorboards hourly to her crying child. I finish a paper for school on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, writing at night beneath the hurricane lamp, serge-blue curtains drawn between me and the awakened cicadas, skunk, possum.

A few times a man visits me in the kitchen.
I lean back in the rocking chair.
One night he leaves then returns an hour later during a fierce thunderstorm knocking out the lights.
I let him into the house. I am holding a candle.
We make love, and rain-filled air cools our bodies. And he leaves.

I wake to find the living room ceiling caved in, the plaster covering everything.
I stand among the ghostly shapes of furniture.