

## Night Janitor

*William Stobb*

The vacuum goes on in the hallway.  
The night janitor's clocked in.  
You've passed his closet office  
door ajar so you've seen his pictures  
pinned to the board of a teenage girl  
with a trophy fish, four  
marines hanging out of a hum-vee,  
a snow-capped peak, a Siberian husky.  
You've thought of stepping inside  
and looking through the desk to maybe  
find a flask, or a magazine  
or a more intense secret.  
Someday you're going to do it.  
You know you're not a good person.  
He hates collecting left-behind  
coats and mugs and water bottles.  
You know because you've seen him mutter  
and shake his head—he must hate  
the carelessness he's paid to serve.  
You know he worked at the brewery  
because it's the only thing he ever said to you.  
"I worked at the brewery  
before," and you said, "wow,"  
if you remember correctly.  
You know how you can be.  
Creating mean distances might  
spare you the pain of real human connection  
but you're lingering late  
in the administrative building  
because you can't face a person who won't  
touch you anymore.

It has a loose  
belt, the vacuum, and the squeal echoes  
long after you leave  
long into your night  
like the bleating of suffering animals.