

5-1-2016

Maytag

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Recommended Citation

Chase, Jared (2016) "Maytag," *Gandy Dancer Archives*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 , Article 23.
Available at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/gandy-dancer/vol4/iss2/23>

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Maytag

In a din of whirl and thrum
and the chatter, bicker, natter,
whole families who are broke
and solitary suits
down on their luck just now
mill in this grainy brown carbuncle
with the chipped yellow sign—
sand white once, years ago,
when I had a teddy in one hand
and Mama's finger in the other—
we, the salt of the earth in the grit
and the clean swill of Tide.

Kids take turns pushing the carts
and, bored, play pretend for hours
learning half by accident
how to count change, read a clock,
how to fold and wait and dream
while they push hot, wet laundry
to the wall of thundering dryers
and they push hot, dry laundry
to the tables for Mama to sort.

Back by the dumpster with a plastic bag:
two cans of no-brand soda sweat in the heat
bright packets of chips yellow the teeth,
three ten altogether from the wilting mart

up on the corner. We smoke Rez cigarettes
in shifts but, always, are drawn back in
and our veteran eyes keep glancing
at all but the clothes on our backs
churning in the Tide and the brine.