# Clean

*by* Jon Davies

I decide to abolish certain parts of my wardrobe. It has, after all, been a long and lousy drive home, the first time in a while I've not come home to lie about working late.

At the door, my keys fidget in the lock, reminding me of the importance of accurate instruments. I remove my tie and open the door with both hands. Once inside, I drop the tie on the floor, let the jacket glide off my shoulders and arms. I do not pick them up.

As I walk to the bedroom, I unbutton my shirt, remove my belt and my shoes. I stand at the closet doors in my underpants and socks. I open the closet and begin to pull out my clothes. A suede jacket worn down at the elbows. I think of a college biology lab, of the emptied skin of rats and possums--veins, muscles, bones, memorized body parts, notes passed between her and I. And then I think about the brake system of her car, how I'd been warned about it. I throw the jacket on the floor, pull out a brown striped shirt with a corduroy collar. My mom bought it for me for my twenty-first birthday. I wore it once, and only at Louise's urging. There is also the tuxedo shirt from the wedding--ruffles, the fashion. Now they look sinister, like flesh congealed over bone. I see white and think broken vows, retribution. I come to the golf pants Esther gave me, at work, for my promotion, the ones I told Louise I bought at the Salvation Army. Perhaps, without these pants, none of this would have started. Without these pants, Louise wouldn't have taken the car.

I yank out all the clothes, gather the items from the floor, and place them in the center of the bed. I scoop the sheets together so that all the clothes are within them, and then I position the sheets over my shoulder like a bag. The clothes are heavy. I look at Louise's closet but do not open it. Another day, I tell myself. I enter the kitchen and drop the clothes in the garbage. They don't fit. They sit atop of the

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garbage pail like a brain spilling out of its skull. I grab hold of the sheets again and go to the dumpster outside. Not there, I think. I go next door, walk along the driveway and into my neighbor's back yard. I open his garbage can and swing my clothes off my shoulder and into it. I am standing in my neighbor's back yard in my underwear, and my trash can is clean. I look across at the house. It seems strange now. It is not our house anymore, I think. It is their house, that couple's, the couple that lived there.