

JAMES NORCLIFFE

## Squeegee

I squeeze the mop. I push the squeegee. The fine oil of humanity shines and rainbows on the tiles. I push the squeegee. All slides and slithers before me in a broad detergent smile, in a swathe of suds and scurf and tired bubbles. I squeeze the mop. I squeeze the mop's wet afro into the maw of the bucket. I push the squeegee. Sweet-scented steam clams on my brow. The mop's damp dreadlocks flip and flop. Body hairs curl, they shine like little springs of brightness, like crescents of bantam feathers. I push the squeegee. Bantams run before me in a frightened eccentric scatter. Behind them, behind the squeegee all is shiny, new. Before me sweat puddles and puddles, stains and stains. Behind me gloss glimmers. Hopes skitter before me with bright eyes, with frightened little feet. I push the squeegee. I squeeze the mop. I press the treadle and squeeze the mop. I move the bucket. Silence. Wide empty boulevards and broad leafy suburbs behind me. Quietude, the beatitude of sheen, shimmer and shine. Mess before me. Shambles, seepage and dreams. I push the squeegee. Squeezed foam filtered and flecked like wet feathers flows before me. I hear the cries of birds, the squeak and scrape of black rubber on shiny tiles. The scatter and fear. Blood flows before me red-feathered red and bubbly. I squeeze the mop. I move the bucket. I push. I push the squeegee.