

A Confession

by Shannon Moore

I worked for the E_____ cosmetics company
for three years, and a few months to my birthday.
I was a Diamond star employee, friendly, well versed
in the trade. In three years, I
fell in love
with many women.

I fell in love with women I worked with,
the pros, women who were there before
the new company bought the old company,
who spent their fluorescent, empty
department store afternoons swapping medical records
to soundtracked pop radio intercom,
gossiping in cigarette huddles all winter,
out behind the dumpsters.

I was in love with the women who prayed to be beautiful,
women who came to me for skincare redemption,
for a new doctrine of color,
who needed to know how to look younger, feel younger,
be younger. What mascara should they use to make their eyes
look like mine, younger?

I was in love with the women who visited
the counter without their purse,
bribed, flirted, begged for free samples, free advice,
laughed musically, leaned in close
to reveal to me their worst sins:
I went to bed with my makeup on last night.

I was in love with the golden aged customers,
with prominent names, coral lips,
their daughters and their daughters.
I gave them golden rules,
and they brought in their sweated dogs and
eccentric sons for me to meet.

I fell in love with the makeover women.
I craved the expression on their faces
the first time I reached out to touch them.
Rigid at first, unfamiliar with soft hands,
some smiled shyly, sighed, hummed, breathed
the perfume from my wrist, and watched my face.

They fell asleep to the movement of my brush, then
flushed, laughed at themselves.

Face close to face, I fought incredible urges to kiss
women I touched, old or young,
women who came in with their fiancées,
stroller of young children, sozing hubby.
I was in love with the faces they made
in the mirror, when I was done
with my work.

I left my position at the cosmetics counter,
wilted in August, aglow with well wishes,
goodbye kisses, and something else
warm with guilt inside.
I had tasted what I desire too much,
and I knew all too well.