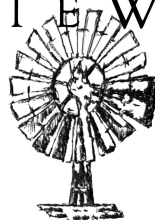


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The Cleaning Lady

Yvonne Higgins Leach

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The Cleaning Lady

by Yvonne Higgins Leach

Once every two weeks I pretend
like a child with a dollhouse.

My house consumes a huge lot on Madison Street—
oak floors, oriental rugs, cathedral ceilings,

bay windows, a solarium with hundreds of wild plants,
and more. The statues, masks, the crosses

I dust take me to places I'll never go.
In the three-way mirror, I wrap my hair

in a pearl pin, drape my neck with rubies,
wear high heels, and dance the hallways

singing and dusting the paintings as I go.
And when the phone rings, I sing louder

and louder so I can't hear the machine
call me by the wrong name.



Photo (detail) by Joel Kendall

