

**CHARWOMAN INTERRUPTED AGAIN  
(For Ella Watson, From, *American Gothic*)**

**Jason Reynolds**

and so when you were posed,  
inched into the center of the frame  
like a heavy sculpture, woman  
chiseled from workday,  
and when the question came of  
whether or not you could turn  
the broom upside-down, the detritus  
of a good guh'ment job dancing  
on the straw head, and when  
the mop was placed behind you looking

on like a jealous white girl,  
backdrop blurred, bars of american rag,  
stitched-on star-shaped peepholes, light  
shining in from some future  
where my grandma would beg  
for the same job not too far from you  
so she wouldn't have to keep going  
all the way to silver spring to put  
elbow grease to miss barbara's baseboards,  
did you think,

who is this little man with this camera  
telling me to stand, telling me to smile  
or not smile, telling me to act normal  
and poised? don't he know you can't  
raise five kids without poise? that's my normal.  
don't he know I got five kids to raise  
and they won't want to hear nothing  
about no modeling or even care or question  
why someone would want to make art of char?  
don't he know I got a job to do?

and on the off chance you were not posed,  
on the off chance he came into the building,  
body and lens swinging from his neck  
after the suits and hard shoes had made their way  
back to their families for roast chicken  
and small talk about FDR, and spotted you,  
alone and perfect at the top of the steps,  
tell me, please tell me, he found you  
with that broom off the floor,  
beating beating beating dust out the flag.