Spring 1999

In the Supermart

Melissa Huseman
IN THE SUPERMART

there was the bag boy
who saw clean through
the produce man
who caught her in his arms
the morning she lost her way
and the pharmacist she went to
to ask for directions
he, too, saw clean through
saw how horrible it was to want
and whispered his cure
of any man, any man will do
then stood aside
minding his prescriptions
and averting his eyes like a good father

as she walked the aisles
with her new purpose,
then lined earrings and shoes
on the plastic aisle
as if she were having them for lunch
and pushed off her skirt like a snake her skins
her shirt unbuckling like a rotten rail
for the slouchy bag boy and the slippery manager
and the vegetable man peeking the corner

until they made their plays
in fluorescent light
fumbling and gesturing
so she took to the aisles
like a runaway train
while they ran marathons
in light tan and blue

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her slip around her ankles
her socks in her fist
the look in her eye bowing down
though she stared straight
the look in her eye kneeling down
and all her tiny bones breaking their scaffolds

till they all stood panting
by the cake decorations
leaning into the yellow roses
and chocolate sprinkles
and candles thick as boots

and the fishmonger arrived
bored of salmon and the frozen counter
to brandish his fishy weapons at them

to pull her down for company
for a party by the muffin trays
parting oysters like walnuts
and slipping them into her mouth
and pulling up her slip
and keeping with the questions
until she felt dreamy and unalarmed
until pearls streamed like waterfalls
from his mouth to hers
and she slipped him on
the definite finger of her love hand
and fell asleep in that place:

* a lemon an oyster
* his nametag spells his name
* at the threshold of the electric doors
* I fluttered my skirts like the sea