

Lull

by Helena Pantsis

They play a certain type of music at the grocery store, like elevator music, only horizontal, something to mirror the perfectly parallel aisles spanning the market. It is here, in the homemaker's church, where bells of registers chime sweet hymns in exchange for spare dollars, where bread is broken by cheap imported wines, and aisles of sombre women don downcast eyes. Amidst shelves of dried pasta and stacks of plump fruit their souls come to rest. Brides of duty, these women find home in recurring responsibility – both hunter and gatherer, father and mother. Mrs Woman, Miss Lady, Ms Girl, Mx Giver of Sustenance and Life, face to face with their looming forever. An infinite of filling shopping carts and lonely roaming hours.

Woman is abruptly stirred from her devastating reality with the fall of a great orange pyramid. Rolling fruits meet untethered feet; a tumbling display of sunset pirouettes as dame battles gravity. Woman comes crashing down in a magnificent flurry. The darling supermarket chatter replaced by a cacophony of fracturing bones; her legs fold backwards and her head splits in two, a puddle forming by the crack of her opened skull. It's here, in the centre of the swarming hypnosis of revellers, shoppers gather and workers titter. Over the tinny grocery speakers, a voice echoes.

'Clean up in aisle two.'

She is damned, as are the workers in their navy-blue collared shirts. Retail work is hell.



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