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Self-Check-Out

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Self-Check-Out

Elizabeth Theriot

Ryan Chighizola Memorial Scholarship Winner

In the fall I'd make unnecessary rounds
over scuffed, speckled tile
in case you were ~~namelessly~~ there-
an anonymous book browser, a stranger buying milk.

Watching life at noon, seven, dusky three,
I saw the protruding stomachs
pregnant with hamburger-death
stretching filthy shirts and wide-eyed navel

(Cyclops, do you still blame Nobody?)

and the young man's leg,
tendons swimming a
synchronized stroke
delicately in cream smooth skin
under the fluorescents hairless and illuminated.

(But I am relieved you're keeping busy
discharged from the squealing basket wheeled
nail-biting purple eye socket army
of sleepless bags, potato chip bags, plastic bags of groceries)