

# The Song of a Sparrow Trapped in a Supermarket

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Rachel Smith

Amidst the melody of beeping registers  
and the harmony of whirring carts,  
I stand at a table of graphic tees  
in the men's department, folding a shirt depicting  
a cat on the moon, dressed as an astronaut,  
when a couple and their five- or six-year-old son  
stop to look at Ball State hoodies.  
The boy, bored with clothes not meant  
for him, zips between the racks,  
unaware of smears of bird droppings  
left on the metal frames like notes on sheet music,  
the sparrow's unwitting addition  
to the song of supply and demand.  
After a while, the boy tires of his part  
in the store's rhythm section and throws in his own refrain.  
*I wanna look at toys.*  
When his parents answer with the resolving  
notes in their chord of *no*,  
his piano pleas crescendo  
into forte wails; a countermelody  
taken up by the bird in the rafters.  
Only when the parents drag the boy away  
does his chorus of demands decrescendo  
into silence, but the bird remains,  
belting out his dream of free air,  
unheard by anyone except me.