

## Walking Through Target on a Tuesday Afternoon

Olivia Pretorius

Mothers push red plastic carts containing milk,  
strawberries, and young screaming children  
in the grocery loop, yet I can't find the eggs.

Did you know grocery stores are designed to be inconvenient?  
Necessities hide in the back of aisle eleven, so that on your journey  
to what you need, you find what you think you need instead.

The maze grows colder the farther in you go, like you're wandering  
toward the Ninth Circle. My eyes peruse the people surrounding  
rather than the overpriced peaches.

I try not to notice that I am the only single woman walking  
through this limbo. I have no home to bring groceries to.  
I have no devil baby mouths to feed.

Not having a family isn't typically something that leaves me  
feeling bereft, but within these fluorescent lanes  
I am aware of my isolation.

My cart is filled with peaches, pink Moscato, freezer waffles,  
and single servings of mac n cheese. I put my purse in the cart  
where a child would sit and go back to look at the vodka.

I wonder if I should ask for help since I still can't find the eggs,  
although I know they must be buried amongst the back-wall secrets.  
When the cashier asks me if I'm ready to check out I say yes.

The store greeter acknowledges my lone departure with a wave.  
There are no eggs in my basket. I tell myself I have no need for eggs.