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Under the Grocery Lights

A small child, just a boy really, strolls along next to me, small like a life-sized doll,
small like a parking meter and the third step to a stair well.
He strolls there beside me under the lights of the grocery store,
with his own cart, reaching his hands up over the bar,
pushing with every muscle in his body; pushing with every ounce of strength he doesn't
even know he possess. But he knows what he possesses because he was born to
be possessed and to maybe disappear today.
His mother, who appears to be unaware how far behind her son is, who I assumed
is her son because he is alone
and she is alone and their blonde hairs both glow under the grocery lights.
And they don't deflect strangers or bigger grocery carts,
or store managers with their PA systems.
But how easy it could be for someone to just scoop him up,
cupped hands like the city plow, hands over head, raised to the sky, to the child's
victory—like a shiny plastic acrylic trophy—and carry him right out of there,
And yet her tiny son, tiny like a G.I. Joe now, as the edge of his mother's foot
disappears down four aisles ahead of us.
And within minutes I hear the squeaking of the wheels stop and her feet shuffle as
she screams,
"Anthony? Anthony?"
And Anthony still stroll alongside of me, along side of my empty basket and swaying
purse, stopping briefly, hypnotized by the bright colors of the labels facing out.
And the disappeared mother, who is now running frantically down the aisles, similar to
the game show, but I assume, with a look of fear, and anxiety, and guilt. And
Anthony knows, he knows it's his mother screaming
and running frantically around the store.
But he continues to hide behind the sway of my purse. He continues to stroll alongside
of me and I want to take him home with me. Feed him ice cream for breakfast
and hide lima beans under the couch with him. With Anthony.
And now I've forgotten what I came here for. Suddenly it's just me and Anthony
strolling aimlessly around the store.
As we both continue avoiding something, neither he nor I acknowledging the
The comfort takes over and I near him and he draws towards me
Like some magnetic force my purse touches his shoulder and a smile from my lips purse.
Anthony bolts away from me like a steed in a race, hungry for his oat bag.
Gallops past the cereal aisle, past the frozen foods and liquor,
past all that he or I was running away from, all that he or I or we had discovered
without the hand of his mother, and back into her arms.
And in the morning, eating my ice cream in bed, I remember Anthony.
And I remember for that second, in the grocery story, under the lights,
I belonged to someone.