

Something Fragile

The milk at the one-stop
is now 4.49 a gallon and the best
expiration date is just moments away.
It's riskier to stock something fragile; there's more
money to be made selling lottery tickets.
You don't want to believe this
as you go to pay, but know it's true
that the stools off to the side of the cash
register were never about convenience.
They are filled with tired bodies hunched over hopes
and lucky nickels, eyes glazed like donut holes.
You are the lost leader, the democratic vote.
On the radio, waiting for the train
to pass and the car to cough up some warmth
you hear a chipper woman from the new Boston Tea Party
say nothing, with the conviction of a cheerleader
who's never had to work hard to win a game, while you were
diligent in primary rules - maybe skipping your lunch
to make it to the polls, maybe letting your kid slide the ballot
into the machine so that she could feel in charge.
With no corporate spending limit, the senator on the radio
proudly tells you that this is a windfall for the First
Amendment, for the fundamental right to free speech.
You want to call in, to have your two cents,
to explain that his wall of sound has none
of the tenor and timbre of one solitary, fragile voice
waiting to meet others in song.
Tell him that a noisy cheer, like "a dollar and a dream,"
never rings true, but you rarely get through
on a call-in show, you've got to get ready to get
to work if you are lucky
and the milk has already started to turn.

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