

we are made of broken tongues

After 118 years, the Balangiga Bells were returned to the Philippines. American soldiers stole them upon their burning of the towns on Samar Island in 1901. The Filipinos spent decades trying to recover them since 1957. It was said that the bells signaled war for the Filipinos, but in fact, these bells were a symbol of the Catholic Church, the government, and ultimately, hope.

we are made of broken tongues, missing bells

of balangiga echoing in our

wake, taken hostage in the free. we are

made of quadrants: part sojourner, part lost,

part native, & part ghost, we have returned,

un-exorcised in our fury. we kiss our

fears farewell, reconciliation dies

unfamiliar in the chest. we miss us—

peace in our barrios, kapamilya,

ourselves. we are made to miss the taste of

departure, dependent on its success.

we are made to carry the letters &

legacies of our forgotten, they are

here: between oceans, untranslatable.

retail's a bitch

welcome to bed bath & bullshit where we're here to serve
everyone's welcome - just come by with your money & questions
our registers welcome you

every penny counts

“every single one”- that's the tenth time today, thanks.

every coupon counts - the expired ones

the redeemed is if you bitch enough, of course.

thank you come again

i'll see you thanksgiving black friday christmas eve i'm here all year making money
for them, not me,

for the machine that keeps going

bills, school, gas, car, coffee, living, breathing, existing

it's all a charge

all too fucking expensive

new products here, new products there

a machine with all ten-in-one functions and somehow it's our fault that it costs an arm &
a leg

the sherpa is cuter this year & oh look someone walked out with four

it's all brand fuckin' new, & for who?

the suburban moms, the prius owners, junkies, thieves, everyone else benefits

it's fuckin' great

a woman got her coupon after the register line looped around seasonal;

she didn't give a fuck that this line was for her,

all she cared about was a goddamn dollar

oh right, every penny counts

every second wasted on her is no different than the next

bargain hunters, they call themselves

assholes, I (want to) call them

a druggie left their needle in the empty cardboard of a toilet seat cover container;

but that's normal, that's life, that's the everyday

they come in for somethin', sell it, shoot up in the bathrooms, & repeat,

no end, just repeat

a pack of fratbros knew what a sous-vide was but not personal space;

I'm no animal, yes, a woman, but I don't exist to be corralled in an aisle

or the parking lot

I don't exist for customers to hit on me, alright

respect that I am a person too, that when I say, “no, thank you”

that's still a no

and, here's the kicker,
a man bargained for a coffee maker and tried to make six hundred dollars become
three hundred. he lied & lied, & finally, can you guess the ending?
bought it
 why the fuck can't a woman lift "such a heavy object" anyway?
 why did I have to be a two-hundred and fifty pound man to qualify?
 better yet, why did he tell the manager the day after about how he
 got on that ladder himself?
 actually,
 here's the real kicker,
 why did the manager *believe* him?
Fuck the ten-foot rule, I should've dropped it on him.

need a price check?
 sorry, my scanner's a little slow
 we're in a dead zone, it's us not you I promise
 but it is
 you
 (always)
haha, no, that item is not free
 neither is my time
that's retail for ya
 the registers are waiting
 don't forget to prep, they like 'em extra hefty

time to check out
 get the chopping block ready

were you interested in this month's I.O.M.?
 it's the item of the month, we give--
 oh okay, no problem
 hold here
 clench that fist
 lost the feeling? it happens
 just remember: new credit card = new limb
did you need a bag or gift receipt?
 are you sure?
 yes, they're free
 they've never stopped being free
 that's a first for you *and* me
no problem, let me call my manager over
 it'll just take twenty minutes
 you have the time

why else would you spend forty minutes after closing?
don't worry, you'll be back
next time it's the other arm
don't take too long though
our registers miss you

thank you come again

welcome in to bed, bath, & bullshit
what can I help you find today?
not finding what you're looking for?
we have thousands of items on our bullshit store
three to six business days to arrive - shipping's \$2.99 here, \$5.99 at home, so what's better?
don't believe me?
are you *beyond* this yet?

I'll wait.

I can't breathe at the thought of forever--

chest constrictions
loop lovingly
across acres
of oscillating

circles crying,
living lifelessly
among arsonists,
offering only

cluttered caresses.
lips lavishing:
antsy acceptance
over & over

//

scared of nothing but this world & the next one
I begin to ask myself what part of it makes sense,
if it ever will, won't
whenever, however

granite tops speckled infinitesimally
complete each punctuation
sitting with no other
point but to be

how silly that when i look & see
there is only grey among the black & white
touching: never quite settling,
a wanderer

alone but conditional.

dandelion

(pretend he isn't there anymore,
close your eyes,

*it's hard to forget a smile
not just for the win, but the reward*

(he might hear you,
make a wish, but hold it

*pleas are nothing but an echo
to a four-walled cage*

(breathe)
okay,

*there is no escape
until collection*

(you gotta breathe)
before you open them, take a breath

*the loss is inevitable,
a familiar bed holds no comfort*

(try as you must,
then exhale,

*this person is no friend,
only a monster in disguise*

(even if it hurts,)

*feels so dirty,
so wrong*

(you'll go homehomehome)

*hot water holds no baptism
the marks are still there*

(breathe)

burrowed underneath flesh
nothingness

open them—watch
it all disappear.

life

energy does not disappear
it transforms from one thing to another
becoming and unbecoming
existing only to exist further
down the path of here, there,
and everywhere

between here to there,
desire lurks to diminish intent,
aching for another chance to be
something spectacular;
yet becoming another—
blooming

rooted in tangibility,
its plausibility endless,
bounding toward forever:
moving

and

moving

and

there

the seed plants itself
one branch after another
more

and

more

“thank you”
bountiful

fallen leaves, “good bye,”
shredded beneath soles
its soul embedding into the earth
mounds transferring

becoming

/

god is somewhere, maybe

planting, watching, whittling, playing,
[repeat]

waiting, weary, wistful,

wondering what it is that makes the plants grow as they please
despite guidance from an expert,
why resist a hand that feeds and nurtures?
why determine fate in futility?
but,
 why not?

god may guide, maybe,
but plants become

as so it goes

[repeat]

energy does not disappear