

In "The Store With Beautiful Things"

Jan-Henry Gray

I wander the aisles
listless
in shoplift,
knee-deep
in trinkets.

I shop for things not worth keeping
with cut-out coupons for
plastic wrapped in plastic,
cassette tape carousels
and honorable mentions.

The clerk with a name too beautiful for this world
sees me in line,
four deep
a sadsack
holding a bag of melting ice
and he waves me over.

In a Spanish only we understand
I say I'm stranded
with a jittery compass
pointing me to nowhere in particular.

I make announcements so loud they become true:
The Philippines is ghost-country!
And the island we left
has been sinking
one inch

every
year
for the
last
one
thousand
years.

I tell him that
the door labeled WC
stands for *who cares?* and that
civilization stopped using closets weeks ago.

It happened
on a midweek afternoon
without pomp
or circumstance,
without preamble
or prediction.

There is no archive,
no blogpost,
no livefeed
for the day everything changed.

Now, in our new iteration:
I need certain certainties like the choir kneels to listen.

I lift my palms upwards, as if to say:

Let us sing a song made up of a single word.

And the Word,
it can be anything:

like jigsaw
like peanut
like heartbeat
like Amen
like bingo
like crisscross
like dripdrop
like shipshape
like rowboat
or rickshaw
or crisscross
or singsong
or frogleg
or ticktock
or halo
or seashore
or comeback
like gohome