Horror in the Dairy Aisle
By Phoebe Thatcher

A cut tube, a Freon leak - a fortune in freezers
destroyed overnight.
Of course I am the one in
the stiff polo shirt and
dampened Target loafers,
running a blackened mop
over the swollen hills of
ruined linoleum, all day
and into the night,
when the yellowgreen lights
flicker on like hesitant
bioluminescent beetles
and I am alone and cold in the dairy aisle.

The promised repair truck does not arrive.
Never throw away what isn’t expired
(says my manager);
no one in the
Greater Glenleaf Crossing Township cares
how long their Chobani yoghurt has been
lying in wait;
The containers are all stiff
to the touch, turgid with some
dark, pulsing thing -
and after lights-out on
the sixth night,
one by one,
with quiet pops,
they rupture
like eggs.

Rhonda and I watch
the security camera footage
on our lunch break,
like Animal Planet:

having awakened, the young must seek nourishment
white syrup drooling
down the side of
the gutted freezers
defenseless in their larval form, they must grow quickly - or die
bristles of turquoise erupting
in bouquets, a mossy floor of
mold by Monday morning,
borne of the same litter, they are all much alike and all hungry -
and more colonizing the
whiteplaster walls
like a patina.
after their long dormancy, they will eat anything in their way.

End it
(says my manager) -
I upend two bottles of bleach
and, sheathed in white spores,
give up.

I come in on Wednesday
and the lights are off.
The doors erratically
open and close like
the jaws of a
dying thing;
the parking lot is empty,
a thin trail of turquoise blossoms in the cracks
of the asphalt.