

Zerina Zahirović

cereals

while you're purchasing milk, grains, and citrus fruit
through a cash register line, your sweat is numbered out
through a bill. a sum of six and a half tokens
drops down into the rims of your eyes. the screen is blurry. you're a number.

as your credit card unthreads itself down the sharp,
rectangular ridges of a cavity identifying the remnants
of your volitions, you're yawning in eight oh!
clock in the morning. teeth long for olympic bites.
are you hungry, the cashier asks? tell me what you
eat and I'll tell you what number you are.

a serene face is sketched out over the cereal box. wind is slapping
the woman's cheekbones. the breeze is somewhere between mild
and sharp. her smile, right beneath cheap glimpses of sun,
is only a jpeg compression at one hundred and fifty in width
and two hundred and fifty pixels in height. you're a number.

imagine her breathing in tiny particles of polluted air
as she is proving her existence through a birth
certificate. piles of paper. her id number does not hide the birthmark
on her skin. she is breathing a string of digits out. you are free now.

can a stamp carry the softness of her skin as you're rubbing it
off with the tip of your forefinger? one hundred percent natural
ingredients, it says. blood wobbles beneath stacks of epidermis.
the bluish imprint fades away. you're a number.

now shock your gizzard with some evergreen tree
nurtured vitamins before eating cereals. next, peel off piles
of skin with your cannibal nails. engulf the fuzzy,
sour nectar in your throat, and claim yourself guilty
for eating an orange. you're not zeus. only a certain amount of fruit
can fill a crate. you're just a number.

as you're pouring dried banana chips, raw oats, and nuts
into a well-sculptured, eight-ounce-sized bowl, ask yourself,
did you properly count them and say you're sorry?
sink the beads down in milk after a minute of silence.
cow's udders have deadlines. sealed and slaughtered, they never die
in their sleep. somewhere between killers and numerals,
we are numbers. serial.