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Lent

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LENT

Lauren Hoepner

Red brick walls on all sides of us but one,
behind a fish fry on the third Friday of Lent.

Carbonation bursting from stolen liters of pop, hearts swelling in chests
still growing above stomachs full of liquor store pizza.

Not knowing the difference between holding a lighter in your right hand
and smoking a cigarette in your left, but holding the lighter all the same.

These were the things passed down to us that we swore would never die.
Jesus Christ was still alive and so were you.

Death was the man with his collar turned up on the stranger signs of Toepfer,
on the East side of town, where I refuse to be a stranger now.

My sister and I make a pilgrimage to your house,
and we bury what's left of our guilt in the ground that broke my leg.

We walk down Universal Street and think about
robbing a dollar store because it would make you alive again.

And two blocks away, the mother of my oldest friend
is committing a murder she doesn't have time to care about,

Because she learned the difference between holding a lighter
in her right hand and holding a cigarette in her left a long time ago.