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stranger

Mia Maglicic
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the august sun overwhelms,
silently

grape popsicles sting the inside
of soft cheeks
and sticky fingers reach
for a faded door inside

a familiar laundry room,
machines rattling, dull blue tiles,
a crevice under the old countertop
for two small bodies to curl into

we embrace the buzzing of
fluorescent lights like dewdrops
embrace morning

our hands press the worn patterns
on the floor and uncover
a tattered box, a capsule of time

cotton candy lip gloss,
frayed stuffed animals,
flimsy polaroids
of a forgotten, buried time

our blurry fingerprints
trace the past –
does your chest feel this heavy too?
does your popsicle taste this bitter?

my vision turns to static,
a thick, sour sensation –
i yearn to linger
a bit longer.

but she leaves, gritted teeth and
a shrinking reflection of “keep in
touch”

she leaves me with the idea that
goodbyes are impermanent
when really they are the most
solid thing i’ve ever felt

i say i’ll miss you but
my words are hollow –
how did we ever
have anything to say?

i hoped it would be us in the end
but we grew up and now
my fingers are numb
and my teeth ache

i think about it often –
do you?
do you wish we had more time?

but she has forgotten.
she doesn’t hear me –
i am speaking to
an empty room

now the lip gloss has dried out.
the teddy bear’s threads unravel
and
the places we stand, giggling, in
the photos
don’t exist anymore

but i remember it all
and i have nowhere to put it down

please don’t be a stranger