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I Linger

Valkyrie Bradford

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I Linger

Valkyrie Bradford

*"Your city gave me asthma,
so that's why I'm fucking leaving.
And the water gave me cancer,
and the pavement hurt my feelings.
... Shout at the wall,
'cause the walls don't fucking love you."
– Wilbur Soot, "Jubilee Line"*

I could walk these sidewalks
for a thousand years or more,

and I still wouldn't know
the city, the streets, the neon lights

apart from one another.

I try not to be offended,
take it to heart or personally,

but I can't help but wince
at my stabbing insides that whine

that your city hates me so.

I tried to leave a year ago,
and yet I'm still wandering here,

the labyrinth wove around me,
so I got a job at a gas station—

I like the discount on smokes.

I've seen you around,
in passing moments, near

your shit apartment complex
and your sister's worn-down house.

I never say hello, or goodbye.

I could wave or call out to you with some awkward greeting,
and you'd turn slow, suspicious and glaring like you do.

It wouldn't matter, we said too much at the door
to try and resuscitate what we killed and buried.

This city aches like a tumor, but surgery's expensive and cigarettes
aren't.

Valkyrie Bradford is a second-year English graduate student, passionate about cheesy literature, bad humor, and her dog and cat that constantly distract her from actually writing.