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First Born

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Claire Bachofner
First Born

875 days apart,
we were both born
on rainy Tuesdays.
Grandparents rushed across state lines,
their windshield wipers
working overtime, cutting paths
of clear vision,
they gave us all they knew.

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Grade school woes broke and entered
ruthless midnight bandits who
snatched up your secrets
and spilled them:
A neighborhood crush here,
a furious fistfight there
and, at home,
we watched a marriage fall apart
over grilled cheese and tomato soup.

You took up burdens like bricks,
shoved them into your Nightrider backpack
no questions asked—

as if they belonged to you
as if they were too heavy for me
(and they were, thank you).

It's hard to say how many
sand castles and snow angels
we scattered through time, through seasons—
soft evidence of a united past
now sifted, melted, gone.
Later, we choked down the heavy smoke

of someone's dad's cigarettes
and boldly guzzled our dad's tequila-
straight from Mexico,
went straight to our heads,
there was nothing smooth about
those first stolen highs.

15 years since we harvested sap
from the unsuspecting Maples on
East 5th and 6th.
Dad drilled holes so deep
the trees wept from their cores.
We tapped their sweet veins,
hung silver buckets, two per tree,
all the way around the yard.
We spent months, you and I, gathering
each day's fill, after school,
into dusk, and, in the end,
only two bottles of syrup
that tasted like gold
and were gone in a flash.

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