

Charlie Peck

Leaving Lafayette

And I'll bet for a nickel that behind
Menard's I could still find our pond
where the long grass is matted flat.
How we used to go sit with fishing gear
and cold beers those June mornings.

Over at the brewery where the car
died, we just stayed until closing,
eating bar pretzels and watching folks
speed down 9th on their way home.

That studio apartment where I first lived,
remember it? You found it charming
how the sink and shower ran at the same
time, even just trying to wet a toothbrush
or rinse blood from a hangnail's mess.

That Saturday we drove a half hour
to Delphi just to see the robot opera,
those costumes of aluminum foil tubing
and spray-painted jeans, we laughed

so hard in the theatre the flashlight
came on. That one actor knew none
of his lines and couldn't dance worth a damn,
but god we loved that show. Arm in arm
afterwards we wanted to go for a drink,

but every shop window had posters
for the two girls who disappeared
by the river, ten grand reward
for finding the man responsible.

Look, if you have to go to New Zealand,
just go. I can stick around here a while
longer, with the wood steps I slept on the night
my key broke in its lock. Long painted
brick walls we stood against in the rain

trying to get cigarettes lit. I could gather
every last bit of it just to prove a point:
none of this will change unless
you stay. Just look at that truck

with antlers on the grille, the dust
it kicks up as it spins out of the lot.
Overhead, clouds drift and separate,
like shelves of ice that break
from shore to float downriver.



Charlie Peck is from Omaha, Nebraska. He received his MFA from Purdue University where he served as Editor in Chief of *Sycamore Review*. His work has appeared previously or is forthcoming in *Ninth Letter*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Quarterly West*, and *Best New Poets 2019*, among others. He currently lives and teaches in Freiburg im Breisgau.