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Brownfield Heart

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brownfield heart

There was a factory in my hometown,
boarded over, every interior door hanging

open by the screws and broken glass glittering
the floors throughout. A few pigeons, sure,

but no condoms or needles or homeless
people. (It wasn't that big a town.)

Only the iridescent glass to make us tread
lightly when we broke in on a high school dare.

Years before, right when it closed, they found
a storage room full of barrels—sealed, no labels.

Developers came to look many times
but would never close the deal. It wasn't

the economy. It was the barrels, and the lack
of paperwork to prove what wasn't inside.

I thought about that beautiful ruin
the day the judge signed my divorce papers,

which also didn't say what wasn't inside.
And I thought about my condemned heart

and how I could not be trusted to testify
to its harmlessness or fitness for future use.

I knew that for years to come they'd declare me
too risky until eventually the calendar ticked off

the half-life of some imagined poison.