

## Scenic Route

On trips downtown, Dad would circle the cobblestone Old World 3rd Street grumbling about downtown parking, slamming the brakes at the occasional *goddamn* jay walker, sliding over snow left by *shitty* plow jobs, so he'd suggest to my mother that it'd be easier drive around, burn cheap gas, than park five blocks away, walk, shop, walk back, and *God knows that someone's gonna park us in Lynn, and then there's another ten minutes just to back out this big red tank without hitting someone.*

Quickly, Mom would drag me out of the warm car, into Usinger's Sausage, to stand in line with wool coat waiters and Packer jacket standers, all there to buy meat with names that sound worse than they smell or taste: kielbasa, blood tongue, olive loaf, liver sausage, smoked butt; she'd hum church hymns to past the time, I'd squirm at the long lean tubes of dried, spiced, and seasoned meats, and cheeses diseased with blue, white, and green flecks.

As quick as before, Mom marched me out the Bavarian delicatessen and scanned the block, waiting for dad, watching cars pass by, hearing a tire screech, seeing our dented grocery-getter (thanks in part to my older sibs driving) veer around the corner, pedestrians staring, my mom yanking my sleeve, hurling me into the car, holding the butcher wrapped package tightly, snugly, with dad saying *Jesus Lynn, could it have taken any longer?!*

Sometimes, heading home, dad would take MLK drive to North Avenue, cautiously navigating the tires over the transition of cobblestone to asphalt; mom surveys the tri-story wood buildings morphing into street level steel and glass; she points at a house, blood graffiti rage across its plywood doors/windows, cornered behind a chain link fence; she asks the quiet car: *didn't the Koepke's used to live there?*