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## Burning Crosses

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# Burning Crosses

By: Laurie Reiche

Every time I've hung a crucifix around my neck it burned.  
No matter what size or style the cool gold metal sizzled.  
The first time was at seventeen, a going-steady gift from Russell,  
a commitment even though my being Jewish made him squeamish.  
A delicate gold cross from Sears, it had a speck of a diamond  
in the center, a tiny fragment like chipped mica or bone.  
He was doing me a favor, protecting me as a garland of garlic would  
to keep demons away. His fingers grazed my neck and as he  
locked the clasp, I think he was relieved I didn't shriek.  
I couldn't tell him that it burned or that I'd have to hide it from my father.  
Thirteen years later as defiance in the face of that father's death,  
I bought my own cross-choker--- the singe against my skin felt good.  
But then one day in a store, I spied a thin chain around a woman's neck,  
it lay flat against her linen-white collar bone, and I was scared—  
I can't say why. When I let my eyes glide to where her pendant lay,  
it glowed and stung like a bite from the sun, it blinded me:  
a Cross in many pieces,  
the Star of David burning, too.