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## Thoughts and Prayers

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# Christopher T. Keaveney, “Thoughts and Prayers”

MAY 1, 2018 ~

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## Thoughts and Prayers

The Hello Kitty piñata  
was doomed from the get-go,  
ditto the sheet cake  
we left at the door of US GUNS  
the store that anchors the local strip mall.  
We decided too late that bleeding hearts  
scrawled inside our bodies  
outlined in chalk on the sidewalk  
might be overkill.  
Five more shootings this week,  
one mass and four regulars,  
staccato to parse  
the familiar rhythms of summer:  
beach balls and barbecues,  
Thai takeout  
and tired TV jingles as therapy.  
*Special orders don't upset us.*

I love you this much,  
the child's arms spread wide enough  
to accommodate the bouquet of lilies  
and forget-me-nots  
for the brother  
who caught a stray bullet  
while playing in the local park  
toward dusk—  
drug deal gone bad in a nearby parking lot,  
playing zombie apocalypse star wars  
with classmates.  
found wedged in the highest point  
on the monkey bars  
sporting the Darth Vader mask,  
not a whimper.

*Like a good neighbor.*

What if "IMAGINE" spelled  
out in Ferrari red  
in the frosting  
misses the mark?  
Maybe a poster with photos  
and names of each  
of this week's casualties?  
Perhaps a bottle of whiskey  
and enough shot glasses  
to toast individually each of the lives lost,  
the 1970s sitcom  
theme songs looped  
throughout the day from speakers  
in front of the store as BGM?  
*You deserve a break today.*

The brick and mortar of Ecclesiastes,  
a dereliction of duties  
and a the silent linking of arms  
on a warm Sunday afternoon  
on the steps of the Capital  
waiting on a sweeter chariot.  
Surely the familiarity of rituals  
applies even here,  
reading names  
beneath the Schopenhauer flex  
of stained glass,  
our involuntary flinch  
at the *pop pop pop* of fireworks that marks  
another *quinceañera* celebration in the park.  
*Have it your way.*

As soon as he opens the door we notice  
right away his arm in a sling,  
the cast all the way up  
to the elbow,  
the constitution wedged  
into the holster above the Glock.  
He laughs about the  
challenges of cutting the cake  
with his cold, dead hands  
and gives us a thumbs up  
and a wink  
before propping Hello Kitty  
in the window  
as the shop's *maneki-neko*  
beneath the Group Therapy bull's eye poster,

a familiar face  
to welcome the elect.  
*I'd like to teach the world to sing.*

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**Christopher T. Keaveney** teaches Japanese language and East Asian culture at Linfield College in Oregon and is the author of three books about Sino-Japanese cultural relations. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Columbia Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *The Minetta Review*, and elsewhere, and he is the author of the collection *Your Eureka Not Mined* (Broadstone Books, 2017).