Thoughts and Prayers

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MAY 1, 2018 ~

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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 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,