

Hit and Run

Jim Daniels

The girl was crossing the street, birthday cake in hand.
The bus against the curb blocked traffic.

My daughter dances ballet three nights a week
with graceful insects—level three, purple leotards.

Last night I played softball in the park and leaned
against the fence where the girl's friends left flowers.
You will never be forgotten, the scrawled sign read.

I was dropping my daughter off at dance that night
right after the accident. Body parts strewn across the road
in front of the studio. Even the police looked stricken.
I swerved around them, kept going. My daughter
claims she closed her eyes and saw nothing.

At softball, I eyed the frayed flowers, the plaintive sign
streaked by rain. Liquid life goes on, and everyone
is forgotten. I was 2 for 3 and made a couple of plays
at second base. I cannot tell you the final score.

I cannot tell you who that birthday cake was for,
splattered amid the gore. The ritual singing of sirens.

The other team had some asshole pitching,
whining about every call. Old guy my age
who should've known better than to care. Safe. Out.
Ball. Strike. Who gives a shit? Nobody got hurt.
At our age, isn't that enough, oh worthy opponent?

A severed leg in the road. You can still see
the imperfect yellow circles drawn by police, fading.

Oh, dancing daughter. Watch me make a catch. Watch me
run the bases. Open your eyes, girl.