

Not Even A Day
Sydney Lee

They sat in rows
of pews in their sanctuary,
Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue
gathered for a saturday morning
service. The early sun
was only visible through the stained glass
windows lining the walls, a shadow
swaying with movement
from outside.

I imagine it was a nice service
at first. All eyes where facing forward
as they rose and sat in one
swift movement, the music blending
together with each voice a different note
in the harmony.

The shot wasn't quiet. It could
not have been mistaken for a dropped book
or slammed door. Their voices
where not enough, and never really are
enough, to drown it out
as it tore through the melody
in a single stroke.

I was at that service myself, reading
the very same texts just a few states down
while it happened, oblivious
to the lives just like me
lost to hate.

This one hurt.
It stuck, not just to the residents
of that little hill in Pennsylvania,
but to the one's watching
at home, fists clenched, helpless
and hopeless for what it meant

about the future.

This wasn't the first time
we watched from the sidelines
as a community fell apart, unable to fully rebuild
from the deteriorated foundation
that lay in front of us. Two years
have passed and we are forced
to move on, to dismiss October of 2018's
"Tragedy of the Month" without question.

Every so often as I watch
a protest unravel in the media,
a group of people from every corner
of the nation uniting under a cause, I find myself
sitting in those very same pews,
shoulder to shoulder with those oblivious
to what is about to happen.

How many more need to die
because one man thought it was right?
When will we finally learn
to stop evil at the roots
before it has time to act? There is a fire
in all of us now, deciding whether to consume
all opposition in its path, or give in
to the water trying so hard
to put the flames out.