

JENNIFER GIVHAN

Prayer

When I lost you at the market, I cleared
each shelf for your folded little boy body

(what was it you loved in hide & seek?
the brief escape, the minutes you didn't belong

to me, when no one could find you until)
I found you with a muumuu'd woman

hunkered between shopping carts. You'd gifted
her your animal crackers for offering you

a prayer. My son, performing miracles
every time you wash your feet or clean your

plate of fish sticks, my heart cliff-dives
when I find you weeping for a classmate

or alone in the yard watching a cloud
rising from the river, so when I grabbed your

little body, hugged you, took in your scent
of sweat & cookies & dirt, I swore I'd

never lose you again. My cheeks hot
against yours, I wondered if you knew my

only prayer, whispered nightly: God, if you
ask me to let him go, I'll say no.

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