

Praying in bed

by Steven Pirani

When I was a kid, I was terrified of dying in a bombing,
which is strange, really, because I lived in Long Island,
which has relatively few bombings to speak of.

The thing was, we lived by JFK,
and the planes would fly low over the house.

I used to see, in my mind,
fat ACME-brand bombshells
birthing from each roar overhead.

Each, with big red labels:
"BOMB"
"YOU'RE DEAD"
"EXPLOSIVE"

The louder the planes were, I thought,
the worse it would be for me.

Because of this, I used to pray, a lot,
tossing out "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" like kosher salt, like
olive oil.

And at the end, I'd always ask the big man:

"Keep the bombs from killing us, and the asteroids from hitting the
Earth."

Ah, yes, the asteroids.
Essentially bombs,
just from space.

I don't do this anymore,

I stopped when I was ten or eleven,
and I know better now:

A bomber, you'd never hear it,
and an asteroid?
You may as well shrug your shoulders.

I haven't done the whole praying thing in a long time,
but I still remember the whole script,

and sometimes, I feel a lot like my nine-year-old self,
and I sit up in bed,
and I wonder if it worked.

