Contaminated

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“A doctor’s hands are never clean,”
he said to me that first day.
Ignoring my outstretched palm,
he emptied the antiseptic wash
into his hands.
Smelling of sanitizer, he would sit
in my cleanest chair
and explain that the medication wasn’t good enough,
wasn’t safe enough.
But he would try to take it anyway.
His name on the schedule made me groan.
Each month, like an obsessive-compulsive carousel:
“Doc, don’t you have something to take away this feeling?”
But he was scared to take the pills.
So I did my best sales pitch:
New drug, fewer side effects.
But he still emptied the antiseptic.
Then, the phone call came.
His wife sobbed and told me
suicides cannot be buried on hallowed ground.
They had to cremate him.
Would I be at the memorial service?
All I could do was empty the antiseptic bottle
and wonder why.
A doctor’s hands are never clean.

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