**VICTORIA SOTO** by Kayla Czaga

In the poem I show to no one, a young teacher hides
her students from a gunman, lifts
them into cupboards—her hands smoothing

their hair, closing cupboard doors. Thousands of miles
away, snow falls on a small northern town
where I write, Twenty children fell as snow. The light

*turned less familiar as it reflected
off their bodies*. I’ve never been to Connecticut,
but I imagine a town hall filled with photo albums,

yellow roses, teddy bears, family members circling small tables, retelling the story of twenty
short lives- They woke, ate cereal, and a stranger walked

into their school with his hands fullof guns. I stay awake all night, clicking through holes
in the Internet, finding her photo, Victoria, thumb-sized

with dark hair, light eyes, clear skin. She stared
directly into the camera and then, how much later, hid
children in cupboards and turned

to the shooter to collect a violence the television
calls 'random'. It turns over in me, repeats as snow
repeats—on the radio, television, in the thin voices

of my neighbours—when twenty children fell,the world felt less familiar—and, falling again with each
retelling, the snow and the stranger,

the teacher who smoothed their hair.