

## **my ultimate fear**

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ask me again, what's your greatest fear?

i'll tell you my deepest fear.

sending my kid off to kindergarten in the morning,  
pigtails and lit-up rainbow sneakers,  
with a butterfly clip safely secured in her hair.  
innocent and perfect.

she's so scared to let go of my hand  
at 7:24 in the morning because the sheer  
thought of separation from mommy  
makes the butterfly flutter in her tummy.

i'll tell you what i am scared of.

a little boy smearing his best friend's blood all over  
his brand new american eagle jeans.

rubbing it into the fabric.

he's shaking as he plays dead on the ground.

eyes closed.

holding his breath when a shadow  
dims the red on his clothes.

so he doesn't end up on the news as just another one  
of the twenty who pass away,  
while the shadow stays hidden in the darkness.

i'll tell you what terrifies me.

power.

in the hands of someone like me.

a kid my age with the

power to send a bullet to shatter the glass of the cafeteria windows.

power to smear the lockers with the dna of your teammates.

power to make me just another tick on his tattoo.

the school entrance is shielded by candles and flowers,  
with teddy bears that sit near their pictures.

the graphic display of the blood-smeared floors

that takes the front page of the paper.

as friends, family, and strangers stand over their memory.

the children who never saw it coming  
the teachers who became the shield  
the students who stood on toilets, using the four walls of the stall as armor  
the ones who got away.

perhaps after everything that has occurred  
crazy i may be for believing a school is a safe haven.  
a haven where a five year old need not harbor the fear of  
not ever returning home to her mommy.  
space where teachers shouldn't have to show students  
how to stop bleeding when shot.  
but i cannot get over how the  
security of our lives  
lives of our children  
lives of our students  
lives of our employees  
lives of our people  
is placed in jeopardy by loose regs of gun possession!

after the blasts from the barrel of an AK47  
and thuds of bodies falling  
peace and serenity have now set in over you, my darling baby,,  
kind thoughts and prayers pouring in from those untouched by the tragedy,  
yet, in our hearts eternally we keep you.

my darling child,  
can you feel my pain when i cry in pain crouched over on the gym floor?  
can you hear me begging for the return of my darling baby?  
can you see my face with tears staining my collars?  
do the bullets embedded in you still excruciate you?

will you know me, my darling baby, when you see me in heaven?

society tells us to  
fix a chasm with cement,  
ignore the fire because there isn't a detector to tell you otherwise,  
find it normal that something crumbles because it wasn't secure enough in the first place.

with my hands raised high to heaven, i ask  
when might the fog clear for you to realize that the

bloodshed is staining our hearts?  
must i wear my grief on my sleeve?

so ask me again, what's my greatest fear?  
or rather, what don't i fear?