



Fall 2013

Little Soldiers

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Collins, Macy F, "Little Soldiers" (2013). *Student Publications*. 206.
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Abstract

"Little Soldiers" is a poem that examines the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on a personal level.

Keywords

creative writing, poetry, Sandy Hook, shooting, Newtown, Connecticut, school violence, school shooting

Disciplines

Creative Writing | Education | Peace and Conflict Studies | Poetry | Student Counseling and Personnel Services

Comments

This poem was written for Professor Nadine Meyer's *English 302: New Poems, New Poets* course, Fall 2013.

Little Soldiers

By: Macy Collins

As I drive past exit 10 the bile rises in my throat,
familiar,
and stinging,
As I struggle to control my mind,
to change my thoughts,
by changing the radio station.

Lauren won't allow it.
"So sad, I can't even..." she says looking to me,
for a sense of comfort, of commune,
but I stare forward,
and stay silent.

"You American's and your guns" my Spanish host brother had said to me.
"Such a violent people."
And I smiled in return, and pretended
not to understand.

Everyone thinks the color of their flag shines the brightest.

But it was him that I thought of that day,
my second day home after months abroad.
We were making my bed
When my father called,
and my mother's face whitened
as the words crept out of her,

“Sawyer’s school is on lock down. There’s been a shooting.”

And I pictured my brother
and his friends
locked up in their high school
too tough to be frightened by a teen-ager
wielding a stolen gun,
and too close to spring football
to miss lifting
due to something like this.

I assumed the scene to be at a different high school,
I pictured the enraged teen
mad at the cards he was,
or wasn’t dealt
mad at his school,
mad at society,
mad at the *world*.
His hair dyed jet black
from CVS boxed dye
just to show everyone
how *mad* he was.
The blonde of his youth
just peeking through.

“The *elementary* school?” my mother exclaimed
before dropping the phone and herself
to the ground.
I left her there,

on the ground,
picking up only the phone.

Elementary school?

“Don’t turn on the TV” my father’s voice commanded.

But I too dropped the phone, and turned it on.

“Shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, at least twenty dead--

First grade classroom--

mother also dead.”

I fell onto the carpet

turning it off in silence,

I didn’t cry, I didn’t console her,

I had no words.

At least twenty dead?

Names and faces battled through my mind

as I fought to push them out:

My hairdressers daughter,

My sixth grade teachers son

My campers,

My campers,

And suddenly I could feel their tiny fingers

braiding my hair

and coloring pictures

of rainbows,
and hearts,
and suns,
every cliché
so simple but sincere
that they made my entire summer
smile.

I pictured my two favorites,
twins Mitch and Cole,
and remembered
how one held me down
while the other colored frogs
(my greatest fear)
all over my bare legs,
but when one girl approached with a real frog
they had stood in front of me
like two little soldiers.
I wasn't sure whether it was the frog
or their loyalty
that had brought me to tears.

I wished I could stand in front of them now.

Were they in the room?
Would I never feel their tiny teeth
sink into my upper arm
earning an immediate time-out
and an "I'm sorry" picture of batman

ten minutes later?

Or were they part of the group
led out in a line of hands and fear,
told to close their eyes
as they grasped each other tightly
and began to grasp the severity
of what had happened.

We didn't play the news in my house until February.

I know there will be a day where I sit down
and feel the twenty six faces,
but I'm afraid I won't get back up.

I know now that none
were *my* campers,
or brother, or cousin,
or student, or peer
but they were all someone's.

They were all someone's believer
so excited for the presents
already wrapped and ready
for Christmas
eleven days away.
Each stuffed toy
left unopened
and unloved,

with no sticky fingers
to matt their perfect plush fur,
and make them beautiful.

And I can find no words that work
to help, or heal, or understand.

So I drive on in stoic silence
past exit 10 Sandy Hook,
while Lauren searches my face
for any sign of acknowledgement,
but I just keep on
changing the radio station.