

~Loose Screws~

“my friends look like school shooters,” you said  
and i thought back to the drills in the hallways in elementary school.

you laughed and i grimaced and a man with a duffel bag entered a school a few hours later.

*i should be thinking about crystal clear, bright blue swimming pools.*

i remember fear of the color blue—“CODE BLUE”  
when blue bellows over the intercom during drills.

*instead i remember red, pooling at the feet of my teachers.  
they didn't teach me what to do for CODE RED.*

you laughed and i gasped and a boy with a rifle pulled the fire alarm.

what you meant was aloof and lanky and alone and lonely and awkward.  
~~he was~~ they are cowardly and spiteful and filled with an evil and enraged.

*and we were scared.  
scared as we watched,  
horrified as equally awkward bodies of teenagers (like us) dropped at our feet  
and pools grew like flaming algae before our scuffed sneakers.*

but you laughed and i cried and a kid took aim in a ~~shooting range~~ hallway.

*no number of drills could prepare us as we cowered in corners  
arms thrown over our heads like tortoiseshells, tables pushed against doors that opened the wrong way.*

*and what then?  
when no number of tables can barricade him out and us in?  
when the window offers a clear shot of the kids (like me) under the lab tables?  
when my death is lined up on his shoulders and i wait for a click and ~~all i get is a~~ **BANG***

as you laughed and i shook and families read horrific messages on their phones and mascara ran down cheeks and blood pooled in classrooms and teachers consoled students and parents looked desperately for their sons and daughters and one set of parents learned that they raised a monster.

drills don't protect from the loose screws rolling ominously in the toolbox in the bed of the truck.  
drills don't prepare for the anger-dread-denial-pain of loss and losing loved ones.

drills didn't make me ready to watch the news on this second valentine's day massacre.

yet you laughed and i stared as it all demanded to be felt and I wondered where next? *where will it stop?*

but you're right. let's laugh about the loose screws...  
the ones even drills can't fix.

when next? *when will it stop?*  
who next? *who will be the last?*  
why? *why me?*