

I volunteer in my first grade daughter's classroom every Friday. Today, about 3 minutes after I got there, the school held a lockdown drill.

It is terrifying. It is not comforting, even acknowledging the preparedness factor, to know that they hold these drills, because as an adult, you know why they're doing it. You know there's a reason for it.

The teacher is calm, because she's done this drill countless times already, but she gives you a look as she hurries to lock the classroom door, and you know you both hate that this is our world now.

You look at a class of 22 6- and 7-year-olds, as they quietly scramble toward the side of the classroom not facing the door, as they jam their little bodies against the wall, trying to stay silent but unintentionally making little gasps and noises anyway, because they're 1st graders and that's what they do. One coughs, and it's the kind of cough that sounds like he's getting over a sinus infection or something, and you know he can't help it, but you think that's something that could get them all killed. Then another kid shushes him, and the teacher gives the second kid A Look, because the shushing is just more noise. And the kids are all still crammed tightly together, in a mess of backpacks and coats.

And you look at all of them, as you sit there in pretend silence, and you find your daughter, who is jammed in the very back, behind everyone else, obscured by a winter coat and a backpack, and you selfishly think, "Maybe she'd be okay there? She's tiny. She's really hidden. So far in the back, she might be okay?"

And then you remember that the winter coats won't be there when the weather is warmer. That it's a false barrier anyway, because winter coats don't stop bullets.

It's several minutes into the drill when a teacher or administrator checks from the hallway to make sure the door to the classroom is locked. It clicks, and you jump, even though you know it's all just practice, because one day it may not be practice. And you sit there, overwhelmed by the entire experience, the stories and images from Parkland still so fresh in your mind, the horror of Sandy Hook never leaving your thoughts for any real length of time.

The kids are having a harder time staying still now, staying quiet is even more difficult. They're antsy and one of them starts to play with a zipper on one of the coats. It's not an especially loud noise, but it's a noise, and the teacher once again silently admonishes the fidgeting with A Look, and the child stops playing with the zipper but immediately starts playing with the leg of a nearby chair.

The drill finally ends. The kids get up from their huddled positions and return to their desks. They're young, and innocent and they don't really understand why they have to do these drills. And the teacher sighs and returns to her lesson and you help pass out the papers for their next activity, and blink back tears, because this is a reality now. And our kids deserve better.