

Lockdown Drill, Third Period

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The alert comes mid-sentence,
the same chord they use
for severe weather.
Ms. Chen stops talking
about the Treaty of Versailles
and locks the door.

We're supposed to sit
against the wall
where the window can't see us.
Twenty-three bodies making themselves small
in the slot between the file cabinet and cinderblock.
Someone's knee finds my ribs.
I smell whoever didn't shower after gym.

The protocol says:
silence, lights off, phones on silent.
It doesn't say what to do with your hands,
which keep wanting to check the time.

In the dark, someone whispers,
Are we supposed to actually..
Ms. Chen puts a finger to her lips.
We practice being
what hiding sounds like.

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My phone lights up against my thigh—
Mom asking if I've decided about
summer jobs.
I don't text back.
The future requires different weather.

Last month they added a new part:
if the shooter gets in, throw things.
Textbooks. Staplers. Chairs.
The girl next to me has a pencil case
shaped like a cat.
She unzips, rezips.
Unzips, rezips.
The sound so small
it's almost a prayer.

When the all-clear comes,
Ms. Chen turns the lights back on
and we return to our desks.
She pulls up the PowerPoint and asks:
So—what made the Treaty
a document of revenge rather than resolution?
I raise my hand.
I have an answer prepared.
I've been thinking about it the whole time.

Tonight I'll do the homework:
read Chapter 12,
answer the questions,
study for Friday's test.
I'm very good at planning
for things that might not happen.
We all are.