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Poem by Julia Lisella



Faculty Development Workshop

Do you know the sound of the gun?
One person raises his hand.

Locate. Leave. Live.
There is another rule, but I forget the "L" word for it,
Lock? It will make all the difference,
but I can't remember it. There is *Barricade*.
That's put all your junk up the wall—
and it will take that much longer for the *bad guy*,
he says *bad guy*, to get in with his gun.

But that is a “B,” and I don’t know the “L,”
and now I’m breathing fast
during this demonstration, trying to
relocate from my memory the fourth “L” that will
make all the difference.

Do you know much about guns?

Know the kinds of sounds each kind of gun can make?

No one raises their hand in this little northeastern college.

Do you know how to hunt? Anyone here hunt?

Do you know how to be hunted? *You should run.*

When should we run? After we have locked the door?

No, it depends.

When the sound of the gun is far away, you can run,

or you can stay. Really, you can stay.

You only need 15 minutes of safety. That’s all.

In 15 minutes, he says, the cops will have arrived.

Let’s watch this demonstration of a man

trying to break down the wall in a classroom

in which the door has been barricaded.

The classroom is six floors up, so there is no Leaving. We are working on

Live. Do you know the force of a man against a wall

barricaded with desks and empty filing cabinets and the pressure

of your feet against the chairs?

It may take 4.34 minutes, which is a good long time

to prepare to do the next thing, which is, in this case,

not to Leave, as this is not an option,

but to Live,

which is the one we are working on right now

when the gun pops into the door, between the barricade

and us. There is more to the video;

there is more to the reenactment. The barricade’s fallen,

and my heart’s still pounding. If only I could remember

the fourth “L,” as *Locate*, *Leave*, and *Live*

have taken me as far as I can go now.

Art Information

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Julia Lisella's poems have been widely anthologized and have appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Beloit*, *Valparaiso*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Ocean State Review*, *VIA: Voices in Italian Americana*, *Antiphon*, *Literary Mama*, and more. She has two poetry collections—*Always* (2014) and *Terrain* (2007)—from WordTech Editions, as well as a chapbook, *Love Song Hiroshima* (2004), from Finishing Line Press.

Visit her on Twitter [@julia_lisella](https://twitter.com/julia_lisella) [5].

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