

MARKERS

by

Barbara Greenbaum

Markers

One

In class on the white board,
we do word banks.

Sand,

sun,

brackish,

wave,

gull,

tern,

crab,

salt,

lobster.

And we're almost there,
almost ready to write a poem
using the words of the ocean

when the alarms blare,

lock down.

1. Lock the door,
2. Close the blinds,
3. Turn off the light.
4. Duck

under computer tables,

silent, as some person we know

or don't,

walks annihilation down the
hall.

I don't tell them the walls at their backs
won't stop an AR15.
I wonder if they make bulletproof sheetrock
just for schools
as the kid to my left,
the one with the purple streak in her brown hair,
holds up her finished poem.

She'll tell me later,
she wanted to get it done
just in case
time was up.

8

Two

Somewhere in San Jose
there's a girl in a white casket.

Her friends are writing messages on it,
like we used to do on casts.

I wish it were that
she's broken her arm, and her friends,
giggling, crowd around her
with their colored markers
signing their names, writing corny jokes,
whispering secrets.

Bobby Franklin likes you, one says. He does not!
I'll strangle you if you tell, she says
getting a little red. They all laugh,

the whole girl scout cookie troupe,
bible study class,
junior soccer squad.

That's how it should be,
a slip off the monkey bars.

Three

Hold a marker in your hand,
think about the ocean,
swell, breaker,
churn,
rip tide.

I hope you got to see it. 9
You were a nice kid.

You would have been a great thirteen.

Remember your first lemonade stand?

Did anyone ever tell you
about
profit and loss?

Supply and demand?

A guy makes a gun,
a boy thinks a gun his only friend

and you are to blame for everything. Think.

Floor. Blast. Wet.

Stain. Rip.
Shatter. Boom.
End.
Help me
find
the right
words.