Victoria Hugo

Ms. Ann Sullivan

Sandbox 101

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Guns Were Constitutional.

So, I was raised on a ranch in Idaho and we always had a gun in every room. I was taught to shoot beside learning how to walk. To my uncles, to shoot was more important than walking anyways. America was just underneath God in my hometown, and for some people, it was the same thing. I learned how to become a man as I went on hunting trips with my dad and I came to know him as a superhero with a great eye and quiet footsteps drenched in Elk urine. When I heard about those liberals who wanted to take that away from us, it was a threat that would raise my hackles and boil my blood as if someone was threatening my right to education or go to church. It is in our constitution to have the right to bear arms and anyone who thought differently must be wrong. Some people just didn’t see how silly they could be, only idiots would be dangerous with guns.

I moved to Oregon with my parents and little sister when I was a young man. I was driving home from high school and thinking of who to ask to winter formal when my reverie was interrupted by an ambulance. Annoyed, I pulled to the side and then took off again in my thoughts and ride home. Then it happened again and I felt for the people wherever they were going, obviously, something terrible was happening to some poor people. It wasn’t until I heard the helicopters get louder as I rounded the corner towards my house that a cold sweat began to break out on my neck. They were heading to my neighborhood. I’m afraid the speed limit was more of a guideline after that. I was relieved when I saw no smoke coming from my house. I ran inside and found my sister sitting on the floor, staring at the news, crying. My sister ran over and hugged me until I thought she was disintegrating in my arms from shaking. I had refused to give her ride home that day because she wanted to study. She rode the public bus to the mall to meet up with her group that day and she heard someone whisper that there was a shooting happening at the mall, and the whisper grew to panic. The bus driver pulled over and confirmed the rumor and said that he would take them all to the next bus stop where they all would have to get off. My sister ran all the way home while calling my dad. She got his voicemail the first time she called, and the second, and the fifteenth time too. We had moved to Oregon and to that neighborhood specifically because it was so close to my Dad’s new position as manager of the auto center attached to the Clackamas Town Center Mall. “Papa is in there,” she told me.

It was so surreal as we sat together on the floor and watched the helicopters film video after video of my dad’s garage. The news wasn’t showing footage of some alien place, but of the place, we had spent so much time. We fanatically scanned the streams of people running in and out of the exit, searching for his curly mop of hair. We never saw it. We instead saw people come out on stretchers. A man, earlier that day, went to the food court where my dad often took lunch and began to shoot everyone with a semi-automatic rifle. He had a shootout with the police while employees and shoppers were trapped for three hours. Eventually, the police and SWAT rippled through the mall. They found the shooter’s body in the corner in Macy’s where he had shot himself.

Macy’s is right beside the auto center. My dad was trapped in the back room of his garage with the mechanics and wasn’t allowed to make any calls. When my dad came home, we hugged him until my arms were sore. I don’t remember who I ended up taking to winter formal but I remember that feeling when I first heard my sister’s words, “Papa is in there.” It’s funny how one second can overcome a whole evening’s worth of memories.

I still go shooting with my dad and buddies on the weekend. I still demand to defend my rights and my family, especially now that I have my own family. I still believe that guns are only dangerous in the hands of idiots. But now I know that it is fatal in the hands of the dangerous. All guns were constitutional in the days of our forefathers when it took a good 30 seconds to reload. That isn’t the case anymore. All it would have taken was thirty seconds more for the man to go to the garage and unload on my superhero with quiet feet and so many more lives. My father didn’t almost come home that day. I don’t know what we should do, but I believe we need to do something. I never ever want my little baby to have to hear those words “Papa is in there,” when she grows up. I will protect her, no matter what, even if it means to give some things up. She shouldn’t live in a world where she has to carry a gun to go to kindergarten. We might have to forget the constitution in order to remember what is right.