

## He's Coming

by Scott Wenske

The monotone voice of Ms. Gonzales's lecture served as a nice bedtime story for Cameron, a not-so-enthusiastic student in her English class. Earlier, his best friend David had left to go to the restroom—probably to free himself from boredom—and now Cameron felt like joining him. But a really good nap was fast approaching. His mind slowly faded into a peaceful darkness, that wonderful sensation before nodding off to sleep. *Nighty night, prepositio*—A high-pitched sound plucked his consciousness from the abyss and placed it back in awareness. Scowling at the teacher, Cameron realized that her now motionless mouth couldn't be making that bothersome noise. The PA system was going off; apparently, Principal Corrin had a really urgent announcement . . .

“All school buildings are presently in lock down. Take cover in the nearest available shelter, and wait for further instruction.”

Everyone in the classroom looked at each other like deer in the headlights. Even Ms. Gonzales seemed to have no clue what was happening . . . which was understandable. Dayton ISD never bothered practicing any lock down drills. The administration believed the chance of an emergency too insignificant to interrupt the enlightening of students. So Cameron sat there, confused and still slightly dazed. *What the heck do we do, then?*

Slowly, the class started to recall a cheesy school safety video they had seen very early in the year. Ms. Gonzales, now ardent and alert, ordered Sarah (who was nearest to the door) to lock said door. After she fiddled with and finally locked the bolt, the students looked up at the

teacher, awaiting instruction. By now, they fully remembered the lock down procedures, but kids like to get some grownup reassurance, especially in stressful times.

“Okay, everyone get down in this corner and squat down. You don’t hafta get real close together, just make sure the principal can’t see you when she walks by.”

Feeling at ease, Cameron got up from his desk and started chatting with his friends. Kids love these ten to twenty minute mini-vacations—pep rallies, send-offs, fire drills—not because they are particularly any fun in and of themselves, but just because they are a break from the un-fun. And so a large social gathering emerged around the teacher’s desk; about ten different conversations were going on at once, students were rummaging through the teacher’s desk (stealthily), and a few even made a tent with their jackets underneath a small table. Some juicy Facebook gossip distracted Ms. Gonzales from dealing out discipline, and for a good long while those fifth graders had a blast in that corner. Cameron, realizing David wasn’t there to play DS with, decided to continue his previously interrupted nap. This time he nodded off to the beat of a repetitive, low-pitched thumping. It was probably just some of his friends using other peoples’ stomachs as drums again.

“AAIIEE!!”

Cameron sprung up from his sleep once again. *Really, what now?* He was about to give the clearly excited girl a peace of his mind, but now he looked in the direction that everyone else was looking. Just outside the door window, an unrecognizable student hobbled across the hall, clutching his abdomen. His tan cargo shorts were stained a deep red color. *Blood.* More students cried out in fear, and some of them were brought to violent tears immediately. Two possibilities

crossed Cameron's mind, and only one of them was plausible: either he had reached a state of ultimate dream reality, or (more likely) this was not a drill.

All tomfoolery and trivial banter ceased at once. Ms. Gonzales ordered all twenty-three students to huddle up even more; somehow she managed to get them all in a six foot by six foot box. Normally, Cameron would have objected to two people crushing him under their weight, but instead he gazed intensely at the door, icy fear in his eyes. Then his blood ran cold at a sudden realization. He turned his head to Ms. Gonzales as best as he could.

“What about David!?! He's in the restroom!!”

“I know, I KNOW! But it's a lock down, we can't leave the room . . . don't worry, he'll be fine!”

Ms. Gonzales actually was handling the frightful situation better than most would expect. The class believed her words to be absolute truth, even if she didn't wholly believe herself... many minutes passed by, and the students' stress and anxiety level was slowly petering out.

*K-bow, k-bow, k-bow . . . k-bow, k-bow, k-bow . . .*

The distant yet undeniable sound of gunshots caused screams of terror to rise up in the cramped corner. Someone kicked Cameron in the side and another rolled over his face (both on accident of course) as the close-knit pack of kids was slowly unfurling. Ms. Garcia tried in vain to maintain control of her students as complete chaos slowly ate the class alive. A boy spontaneously started yelling (and at the same time spitting) in Cameron's face for no clear reason, other than panic. *Why are you yelling at me!?* Not knowing what to do, Cameron yelled back, thinking it was a coping mechanism.

All of a sudden, they noticed the far-off banging had subsided. Knowing that a killer was loose in their building, the conversation again turned to David and what to do about him.

Cameron was now deeply worried about his friend.

“Someone just needs to go over there and bring him over here! The restroom’s only about fifty feet down the hallway!”

“Why don’t you go, he’s your friend!”

“You can’t leave the room, are you kidding me?! The shooter’s gonna see that there’s people in here and kill us all!”

“Cameron’s right, we can’t just leave Davie by himself, he’ll die!”

“Better than the whole CLASS dying!”

An emotional argument ensued . . . Cameron and his peers felt sick to their stomachs at the thought of leaving David alone to fend for himself. But others couldn’t see the logic in trying to rescue him. Led by a boy named Alfonso, they argued against the insanity of opening up a door that led to a hallway of gunfire. Now, it was no secret that Alfonso held a grudge against David ever since the second grade. He and his friends had treated him unkindly on many occasions, and it’s quite possible that this bias influenced Alfonso’s reluctance to go save him. Of course he didn’t want him to die—no one in that class was that cruel—he just wouldn’t potentially sacrifice himself to save someone he disliked so very much. The argument wore on and on until a sharp sound silenced both sides.

*K-bow! K-bow! K-bow . . .! K-bow! K-bow! K-bow . . .!*

The crack of the gun was now much more audible. By the sound of it, the killer must have been only two rooms away from them. A student named Emily pointed toward the door, her skin white as a cloud.

“He’s coming.”

Mayhem took the class by storm once more. Even the previously composed Ms. Gonzales had regressed into a terror ridden child. Cameron laid there, crying softly. The gunfire was so close now that any action he took to save his friend was guaranteed to end in his own death. *I’m sorry, David.* Across the room, one student rushed to a window and realized why no one else had thought of escaping: a three story fall onto concrete awaited him below. Considering his chances with both options, he leapt out the window with a hopeful look on his face. Mrs. Gonzales ran over to see if he had made it . . . her grave face said it all.

*K-BOW! K-BOW! K-BOW BOW BOW BOW BOW!*

The killer was now in the next room. Ms. Gonzales’s students fell silent as they listened to the horrifying screams of the other class and the loud bangs that ended the screams. Unexpectedly, three bullets came through the wall and flew right past Sarah into the wall behind her. Alarmed by this very near miss, the students once again bundled up in the corner behind the teacher’s desk, hoping not to catch a stray bullet. One particularly honorable and selfless kid named Alex moved toward the door, crouching for cover. He took a chair and jammed it underneath the door handle so as to make it hard to open. For extra security, he pushed a few desks into the form of a barricade. Then, with a meter stick in hand for defense, Alex sat upon the desks as a lookout for the killer.

As admirable as his courage was, Cameron couldn't help thinking he was a fool. *He'll just get shot first.* The others tried to coax him into getting out of there, but he would not leave his post. They could only hope Alex had the sense to move the moment he spotted the slaughterer. The ear-ringing bangs continued on and on. Cameron sat there counting the shots. *Twenty bullets for each clip, so he can't kill us all before reloading. That's when I go, when he reloads. That's when I attack!* Looking around for another meter stick, he noticed that the gun had gone silent once more. A door could be heard slamming, followed by footsteps.

Poor Alex could not move out of the way in time. A deafening blast rang out, and he fell over, clutching his chest. The door handle rattled a bit, and then a rapid succession of shots blasted away the feeble lock. As the killer walked in, Cameron closed his eyes and cleared his conscience.

Alfonso was hit next. His body was riddled with many bullets even after his life had clearly ended. Then the killer ceased aiming his AK rifle and started firing from the hip. Aiming wasn't necessary—the mass of students in the corner was one enormous, unmissable target. Cameron shook fiercely as helpless hands grabbed at him and as blood sprinkled on his skin. The screaming turned to moaning, and the moaning turned to silence as solitary shots were fired. Cameron waited for his turn. At each shot he quivered even more ferociously. And then a pause. *He must think I'm dead alrea—*

*K-BOW!*

Finally opening his eyes, Cameron looked at the carnage around him. A few feet away, there David lay with a gun across his chest and a hole in his head. Cameron wept for his friend. *He's gone.*