



# The Rack

A play by  
Dan Kehde

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## “The Rack”

“The Rack” premiered April 3, 2014 on the stage of the West Virginia State University Capitol Center Theater, Charleston, West Virginia. The original cast:

George Canova...Nik Tidquist  
Loretta Canova...Mandy Harper  
Noelle Canova...Olivia King  
Nikki Canova...Caitlin Moore  
Jenny Hicks...Angel Gandee  
Lena Phillips...Katie Shaver  
Billie Edison...Siercia O'Brien  
Sid The Grip... Janna Bailey  
Vince Mazolla...Matt Connelly  
Melody Harmon...Rowan Maher  
Willie Layton...Elea Paybins  
Acting-Sheriff Jack Krenshaw...Clayton Spry  
Pastor Jenks...Jeremy Drake  
Dr. Wallace...Patrick Felton

Directed by Dan Kehde

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Interested in producing this piece? Send all inquiries to [CYAC2001@me.com](mailto:CYAC2001@me.com).

Enjoy the play!

**CHARACTERS:**

**LORETTA:** MARTY'S MOTHER PLAYING AGE 35-40

**GEORGE:** MARTY'S FATHER PLAYING AGE 35-40

**NIKKI:** MARTY'S YOUNGEST SISTER PLAYING AGE 14

**NOELLE:** MARTY'S YOUNGER SISTER, A YEAR OLDER THAN  
NIKKI

**PASTOR STEVE:** FAMILY PASTOR, PLAYING AGE 35-40

**SHERIFF JACK KRENSHAW:** TEMP. TOWN SHERIFF PLAYING  
AGE MID 20'S OR OLDER

**LENA PHILLIPS:** YOUNG NEWS REPORTER PLAYING AGE  
MID TO LATE 20'S

**DR. WALLACE:** SCHOOL PSYCHIATRIST WHO GOES  
PRIVATE MID 40'S

**VINCENT MAZZOLLA:** NRA SPOKESPERSON MID 35-45

**JENNIE:** MARTY'S FORMER GIRLFRIEND PLAYING AGE 14-16

**WILLIE:** MARTY'S ANDROGYNOUS CHILDHOOD FRIEND  
PLAYING AGE 15-16

**MELODY HARMON:** LEFT WING POLITICO, USING LEFT  
CAUSES FOR POLITICAL  
GAIN MID 30'S

**BILLIE EDWARDS:** CASUALTY OF A FORMER SHOOTING,  
17-19

**SID THE GRIP:** MALE OR FEMALE MID TO LATE 20'S

**MAX AND RICHARD--**MARTY'S FRIENDS SUCH AS THEY  
WERE

## The. Time: Present Day.

### The Set:

With the exception of the morgue at the beginning of Act 2 which takes place in front of the curtain or, in the absence of a curtain, far downstage center, this is a static set. Because of the number of locations on the stage itself, set pieces are restricted to a few characteristic pieces of furniture and some hand props. The studio is on a low platform far down right; the living room center stage; the girls bedroom on a low platform down left; up several steps directly upstage of the living room couch at center is Marty's bedroom. Platforms 1-6 run right to left butting up to the first row of seats. Depending on the layout of the theater, they can be nothing more than a row of 2'x8' platforms, a foot or so high, invisible to the second row [now the first row of the audience]. With the exception of George, Loretta and the girls, the cast is seated either left or right of the stage, in folding chairs, facing the audience. This is critical not only to the speed of the play, but also to show the audience their reactions throughout the piece.

Lighting is, of course, critical, with each area of the stage lit discreetly and with a minimum of spill on the other areas.

**NIKKI:**

(at the bedroom, far left, looking out over the audience and reading from a cloth bound sketchbook. A slightly raised platform behind her holds the edge of a bed, and a small desk?)

...The **rack** is a torture device consisting of a rectangular, usually wooden frame, slightly raised from the ground, with a roller at one or both ends. The victim's ankles are fastened to one roller and the wrists are chained to the other. As the interrogation progresses, a handle and ratchet attached to the top roller are used to very gradually stepwise increase the tension on the chains, inducing excruciating pain with each click of the ratchet's turn. By means of pulleys and levers this roller could be rotated on its own axis, thus straining the ropes until the sufferer's joints were dislocated and eventually separated. Click. Click.

Additionally, as the muscle fibres were stretched excessively, they would lose their ability to contract, rendering them ineffective. Click.

One gruesome aspect of being stretched too far on the rack is the loud popping noises made by snapping cartilage, ligaments or bones. One powerful method for putting pressure upon prisoners was to force them to watch someone else being subjected to the rack.

X FADE TO STUDIO

(A pole light, two stools. Behind her far right is the edge of the news desk. A bluescreen diagonally behind her)

**VINCE:**

(At stool left, Lena sits at right as if on camera)

This never would have happened if they'd have armed the teachers the way we begged them to after Sandy Hook. This is as much the fault of the school administrators as it is the shooter himself.

**LENA:**

It was a Catholic school, Vince. They're not about to arm Nuns.

**VINCE:**

They haven't had nuns in those schools in years, Lena, and you know it. Look, it's been two days since the massacre, you would think the lefties would have stopped their squawking against gun control and gun-up with the rest of us. I tell you what. That kid's lucky he didn't attack a Christian school or he'd never have gotten a shot off.

**LENA:**

Aren't Catholics Christian?

**VINCE:**

You know what I mean. I got a brother runs one of those schools out the basement of my church and there's not a day, not a day that he's not packing a .357 on his hip and sawed off propped up in the corner of his office. Now, which students are safer--no, which students were safer two days ago when the shooting started?

(lights change. Vince and Lena relax, Vince begins to take off his microphone )

How was that?

**LENA:**

Perfect as always. Thanks for coming in.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

(to the living room on. stage. George is down center on his cell, left while Loretta's sitting on loveseat, facing the chair and the small coffee table center. )

**GEORGE:**

That was Hemmings Funeral Home. They won't take Marty.

**LORETTA:**

(her head in her hands,  
looking up)

What do you mean, they won't take him. We have a contract, don't we?

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to left end of  
couch)

They're afraid of violence at the service. Besides, they're already booked for six of the kids. They don't want... You can understand how they feel.

**LORETTA:**

Great.

**GEORGE:**

[ Taking out his phone again and crossing down right] I'll call around. Maybe there's someone.

**LORETTA:**

(bitterly, looking at him)

You do that.

**GEORGE:**

(To her)

This was NOT my fault.

**LORETTA:**

Then whose fault was it, mine?

**GEORGE:**

No. It...It was nobody's.[toward the audience, on phone again

**LORETTA:**

Bullshit.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NOELLE:**

(sobbing,from the bear, on the floor at the foot of the bed. Nikki is at her desk, far downstage. On her laptop)

He really did it? Oh Nikki, he really did it?

**NIKKI:**

(going to her and hugging her)

Oh, Noelle...

**NOELLE:**

He really did it.

**NIKKI:**

Mom! Noelle's talking!

(Loretta runs up the stairs to the bedroom and hugs Noelle, George follows, but hangs back. Loretta is right of Noelle, Nikki's left)

**NOELLE:**

Mom, is it true?

**LORETTA:**

No.

**NIKKI:**

Mama, she knows.

**LORETTA:**

I don't know. I don't know what he's done. [She crosses to hug her, George crosses back to couch, on phone]

X FADE TO PLATFORM 6

**DR WALLACE:**

(at down left platform 6, in front of bedroom)

Little Marty Canova? I remember him. He was having nightmares, no, his parents brought him in after an incident at school. Oh, it was innocent enough. A fight out on the playground. He was what, five or six at the time. He and another boy got into it, and Marty beat the little fellow up. Quite badly, as I recall. There apparently was small metal toy in the sandbox, a

dump truck, I think, or maybe it was bigger, a steam shovel, anyway, one of those metal ones that I'm not sure you can even buy anymore, but Marty had picked it up and was hitting the boy in the head with it. Holding him down and hitting him with this large metal truck. But, you know, these things happen all the time. Little kids don't have alot of impulse control to begin with. They learn that as they socialize. He was just a little kid who lost it on the playground. I talked with him. He was fine. I sent him back home, and, as far as I know, he was in school the next day, apology in hand. [After Sheriff begins, Wallace walks off platform.] (phone rings in living room, George answers it)

X FADE TO CENTER PLATFORM

**SHERIFF:**

[Center platform downstage. To audience Press conference]

I'm sorry this has taken so long. If you don't mind, I have a prepared statement I'd like to read at this time. I know you all have alot of questions, but,we're trying the best we can. We're short-handed as it is.

(clears his throat)

"As you all know, yesterday was a nightmare for this community. As of last night's press conference, 12 students and 3 faculty members of the Notre Dame Elementary school were confirmed dead, as well as the alleged gunman. This morning, a 13<sup>th</sup> child died of her wounds, making the count 17 dead and 14 wounded. As you know, many of the wounded were taken to Sisters of Mercy Hospital, and four of the critical were airlifted to the trauma center at Pittsburgh General. After the evacuation, students were moved two blocks down to the Church of the Immaculate Conception, where, after a very short processing period, they were reunited with their parents. In order to accurately process the scene, we, along with the FBI, chose to allow the bodies of the deceased students along with the shooter to remain, untouched, at the scene, while we tried to figure out just what happened down there. You all know that these things take time, just as they did at Sandy Hook, or Virginia Tech. It's a process now. At noon today, we will begin to move the bodies to the county coroner's office where he and a forensic team from the FBI will begin to evaluate and autopsy the victims. While the parents of the victims and the shooter were notified as quickly as possible yesterday afternoon, we are not comfortable releasing those names to the public until after the bodies have been released to their loved ones for burial. I'm sure you understand the need for discretion. Hopefully, we'll



have the list for you this afternoon. Thank you." [He turns and walks off Island]

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**GEORGE:**

(at phone)

Well, what the hell are we supposed to do with him? This is our son. I know it's a delicate time, who do you think you're talking to? [Hangs up, starts looking up other funeral homes on the phone]

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**WILLIE:[WITH RICHARD AND MAX]**

(on platform 1, in front of Lena's studio)

I was there.

**MAX**

So was I.

**RICHARD:**

There Wasn't A Kid On The Playground That Didn't See It.

**WILLIE:**

And We All Had Nightmares From It Afterward, Believe Me. It Wasn't Nothing. Everybody Says, "It Was Only A Playground Fight. It Happens All The Time." [Max And Richard Laugh] Right. A Playground Fight Is Pushing One Of Your Classmates Down And Making Him Cry. Not This. A Kid Trying To Rip Your Face Off With A Tonka Truck Does Not Happen All The Time.

**MAX:**

It Took Two Teachers To Pull Marty Off Grover. The Poor Kid Went To The Hospital And Got Twenty Seven Stitches. He Didn't Come Back For Two Weeks. And When He Finally Came Back, Marty Walks Over And Apologizes And Grover Starts To Shake And Cry. The Kid Won't Stop Crying The Whole Morning. Finally His Mom Came And Took Him Home And They Sent Him Over To Notre Dame Across Town.

**WILLIE:**

It's Funny, None Of The Rest Of Us Were Scared Of Marty. He Was Just Too Cute.

**RICHARD:**

It Was All The Blood That Gave Me Nightmares. Grover Bled So Much That They Had To Replace All The Sand In The Sand Box. I Remember That.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**GEORGE:**

Hello, hello, this is George Canova. [They hang up] Hello? Hello?

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**LORETTA:**

(Having relaxes somewhat,  
leaning against the bed with  
Noelle resting on her  
shoulder. Nikki's beside  
Noelle on her left)

Honey, we're going to survive this. You'll see. We're going to survive.

**NOELLE:**

How, Mama? How?

**LORETTA:**

We're strong. We love each other. We'll survive.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**GEORGE:**

(to the dead phone)

Have a little compassion why don't you? Christ.

X FADE TO STUDIO

(to studio. Lena is drinking a cup of coffee, Sid is coiling wires and setting up the mike for the next guest)

**LENA:**

Who's next?

**SID:**

How much do you love me?

**LENA:**

With all my heart. Who?

**SID:**

Melody Harmon.

**LENA:**

(nearly spills her coffee)

You didn't. Under what rock did you find her?

**SID:**

I don't recall, but I know it was on the left side of the road.

**MELODY:**

(Entering past the coffee maker. And past Sid)  
Are you talking about me?

**SID:**

Of course not.

**LENA:**

(hugging her)

Melody, darling.  
(sitting as Sid fits her for the mic)

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

(Loretta crosses down to living room and crosses up left to coatrack to get her coat)

**LORETTA:**

I'm going to the school.

**GEORGE:**

[Standing] No. No you're not.

**LORETTA:**

(putting on her coat)

That's our boy in there, not that you care.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to her)

Loretta...

**LORETTA:**

(crossing to the couch for her  
purse)

Face it, George, you never cared about him. From the first time he got into trouble, all you did was harass him.

**GEORGE:**

(following, but blocking her  
path to the door)

Harass him??? I was the one who drove him to the shrink the first time--you were too embarrassed. Remember?

**LORETTA:**

The girls had a soccer game.

**GEORGE:**

God, it must be nice to have a memory as selective as yours. You know what, go ahead. [Loretta crosses toward the door] Go down there. See what happens when they find out that the mother of the shooter has shown up. Go on. You deserve it.

**LORETTA:**

(stops)

Damn you.

X FADE TO GIRL'S BEDROOM

(angrily takes off her jacket and purse as the next scenes ensue)

**NOELLE:**

(leaning against Nikki, still on the floor)

God, Nikki, now what do we do?

**NIKKI:**

I don't know.

**NOELLE:**

How much does anyone else know about...you know.

**NIKKI:**

[Getting up to get pillows] About what?

**NOELLE:**

About the way Marty...was.

**NIKKI:**

Nobody knows, do they? [Throwing them to Noelle]

**NOELLE:**

So we should keep it quiet?

**NIKKI:**

How should I know? Noelle, I'm the youngest. You're supposed to be guiding me. [Straighening the bed]

**NOELLE:**

Since when? You're the smart one, I know that.

**NIKKI:**

Not smart enough to keep Marty out of trouble. [Nikki sits beside her]

**NOELLE:**

Nobody could have done that.

(to Studio, Melody is left, Lena right. To camera)

X FADE TO STUDIO

**MELODY:**

The first thing we've got to do is get the guns out of the hands of the criminals and the mentally ill. This is a no-brainer, isn't it? We've got to ask the difficult question-- Where did the shooter get the guns?

**LENA:**

(to Melody)

We don't even know who the shooter was, do we?

**MELODY:**

(to camera)

What does it matter? Anyone who did what he or she did can't be stable. Why was he allowed to purchase weapons in the first place? I'm sorry, but those children would still be alive if we'd only learned from what happened at Sandy Hook and Virginia Tech. Instead, the politicians white-washed the whole issue and diluted the gun-laws until there was no real revision in them at all. You want to blame someone? Blame Congress. Blame the President. Blame the NRA.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 6

**DR. WALLACE:**

(at 6)

Marty was fine after that. Kids go through times when they just act out. I don't know where it came from--but it never happened again. He didn't attack another classmate until he was in high school. He was a cute, little kid. Very polite. Very courteous. It was just a one time deal. We had worst kids in that school, that's for sure.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(Crossing to hang up her coat)

What are we supposed to do? Just stay here? That's our son down there.

**GEORGE:**

[On couch, then standing and crossing to her] Nobody knows it was Martin. If you go down there, everyone will. [Taking her arm and walking her to the couch] Sit down. Let me get you a cup of tea.

**LORETTA:**

Calm as always. Perfectly well tempered. You prick.

**GEORGE:**

That's me. The well tempered prick. If Bach had only been here now.

**LORETTA:**

(laughing)

For God's sake, shut up. [Cross to coffee maker for tea????]

X FADE TO STUDIO

**LENA:**

(to Melody)

After Sandy Hook, the NRA suggested that all educators be

armed...

**MELODY:**

(to camera)

That's ludicrous and we all know it. Honestly, Lena, how many parents would feel safe knowing their children's kindergarten teacher had a 357 magnum strapped to her side? The answer here is not more guns, it's more regulation. It's simply common sense.

**LENA:**

(to camera)

So you'd sacrifice 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights?

**MELODY:**

(to camera)

What wouldn't we sacrifice to keep our children safe?

**LENA:**

(to camera)

But there's a limit.

**MELODY:**

(to camera)

Is there? Are we going to line up all of the children in the country and decide which ones will die so that Fred Redneck out there can keep his AK47? And which ones will die so Sony can keep on making Grand Theft Auto? And which ones will die so Paramount can make one violent movie after another? "Gee, my little Sally had her head blown off by an Uzi, but I still have my rights to free speech so she didn't die in vain."

**LENA:**

(to Melody)

That's not fair.

**MELODY:**

(to camera)

Is what happened yesterday fair? There are at least 13 sets of parents who'd say no.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

(A knock on the door, George crosses to answer it)

**LORETTA:**

Aren't you ever going to fix that doorbell?

**GEORGE:**

Right now I'm thankful that I didn't.

(Opens the door)

**JENNIE:**

(entering)

Mrs. Canova? Is it... Did Marty?

**LORETTA:**

(crossing up stage right, behind bedroom and off)

Go ahead, let in the world.

**GEORGE:**

How did you find out?

**JENNIE:**

Then it was? Oh God.

**NIKKI:**

[From just above]

Pretty much.

**JENNIE:**

(crossing past couch to "step")

Nikki! I'm sorry. How?...Why...

(Nikki crosses down the steps and hugs her. Noelle stays on the steps above them)

**JENNIE:**

Mr. Canova, I'm so sorry.

**GEORGE:**

I think the condolences are mutual, Jennie.

**NOELLE:**

Daddy?

**GEORGE:**

Okay, go ahead.

**NOELLE:**

Why don't you come up to the room?

**JENNIE:**

[Looking questioningly at George] Really?

**GEORGE:**

I said okay.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

(Jennie into the girls room)

**JENNIE:**

So this is the forbidden zone. Noelle, I don't know what to say.  
(hugging Noelle)

I can't believe he actually did it. When did you find out it was him?

**NIKKI:**

Yesterday afternoon.

**JENNIE:**

(sitting on bed, downstage of

Noelle. Nikki crosses to her desk and sits)

They didn't know until THEN?

**NIKKI:**

I think they knew, they just didn't tell us right away. Then they came last night and searched Marty's room.

**NOELLE:**

They did?

**NIKKI:**

You were out of it.

**NOELLE:**

Yeah, I guess I was.

**JENNIE:**

Did they find anything?

**NIKKI:**

They took away his laptop and a few books of poetry.

**JENNIE:**

His sketchbook? Did they find it?

**NIKKI:**

No. I don't think they know it exists.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(returning)

Did you send her away? I'm sorry, I just couldn't face anyone.

**GEORGE:**

(having put tea on coffee table to answer door)

Here's your tea. She's upstairs, with the girls.

**LORETTA:**

(sitting on left end)

Really? Aren't you afraid they're going to do drugs or something?

"No children allowed in your rooms, period. Visitors stay downstairs."

**GEORGE:**

(standing at left end)

I stand by that. But...not today. Not after.

**LORETTA:**

If you'd only have loved that boy the way you did the girls...

**GEORGE:**

Loretta, I did love him.



**LORETTA:**

The hell you did. You sent him to boot camp!

**GEORGE:**

(crossing behind couch to  
right of her)

So did you. And you're telling me that was a bad idea? If he had stayed...

**LORETTA:**

(looking away, toward  
audience and Tea)

That wasn't the answer. Besides he was too young for it then. We could have saved him, then.

**GEORGE:**

We tried.

**LORETTA:**

Bullshit.

(George sighs, and crosses to the phone, finds the phone book and dials)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 5

**FATHER STEVE:**

[At left platform 5] Marty was nine and a sweet kid. He was very polite, very considerate. I credit that to his parents. George and Loretta raised their children...I guess sternly is a good word. They were stern parents--oh they didn't hit them or lock them in their rooms, but the children--Marty and Noelle and little Nikki--they knew the rules and they obeyed them. That's why what Marty did back then was so...disturbing. And completely out of character.

ADD X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**WILLIE:[WITH MAX AND RICHARD]**

(at right platform 1)

Marty...there were a bunch of us neighborhood kids who'd hang out together, but Marty...Marty was always the craziest. We were all in school together--from the time he beat the snot out Grover Reamer. But we didn't become best friends until the summer after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. It's funny, to everyone else he seemed like a really nice little kid, but, he had this streak--it would just kind of come over him. And then things would get wierd.

**RICHARD:**

It was a kitten, by the way. He told everybody later that it was a squirrel he'd found dead by the side of the road. But that was after he got caught.

**FATHER STEVE:**

(at 5 throughout)

Little kids play with fire. You tell an eight year kid like Marty not to play with matches and the first thing you know, he's carrying a cigarette lighter around or he's starting fires in the woods with a magnifying glass. You expect it. You tell him it's wrong and you turn him over to his parents and that's the end of it. But this thing with Marty, I just had the feeling this was different. I don't know. It just...

**MAX:**

It was in the middle of the summer. Marty came over to the house and he was carrying something in this trash bag. It smelled terrible. So we asked him and he said it was a kitten that he'd found in the woods.

**FATHER STEVE:**

One afternoon in the middle of the summer I looked out my office window and there, back by the edge of the woods I could see Marty standing over a trash back and he's hitting it over and over again with a stick. I thought maybe he had a snake in there the way he was pounding it, but when I got to the door to go find out, he'd disappeared.

**RICHARD:**

So he opened the bag and he showed it to us. I didn't know what it was, but it was definitely dead.

**FATHER STEVE**

I didn't pay much attention to it. Back then the Canova family were good church goers--George coached one of our youth basketball teams and Loretta was in the Altar Guild.

**WILLIE:**

I asked him what he was going to do with it. And he said, he wanted to keep it. He looked at it the same way the hunting guys look when they hold up the head of the deer they just shot. And Max told him he thought he'd kept it long enough. And he laughed. I guess it was kind of funny.

**MAX:**

So I asked him where he found it. And that's when he told us "I

killed it." Only it wasn't like he was sorry for it--or proud-- it was just...it was just the way you'd say "I read my book" or "The sun's out today." Just like that.

**WILLIE:**

I asked him why and he got that streak--like this darkness just passed over him--and he walked away.

**FATHER STEVE:**

He came back a few days later and started the fire back there in the woods. I ran out and caught him and put it out. It was a plastic bag and he'd doused something in it with charcoal lighter and set it on fire. By the time I got to it it was really disgusting. What is that? What are you doing? And the way he looked at me? He was eight years old. Only he didn't look like any eight year old I'd ever seen.

**RICHARD:**

Later he told everyone it was a dead squirrel he'd picked up on the side of the road. But we know what he said. It was a kitten and he killed it himself.

**FATHER STEVE:**

I brought him into the office and called Loretta and she came down and took him home. We never spoke of it again.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM AND LIVING ROOM

**JENNIE:**

(still on the bed in the girls' room)

This is so weird. I saw him the other night, he didn't seem angry or anything.

**NIKKI:**

Hah! Marty was always angry.

**NOELLE:**

Not always. [Crosses to the stairs] Mom?

**NIKKI:**

Seemed like it to me.

**NIKKI:**

Marty was...Marty. You know. He was always changing. (Loretta looks over)

**NOELLE:**

Can we look at the album? Would it be alright? I want to show Jenny some pictures of Marty.

**LORETTA:**

I think that would be fine. I'll bring it up.

**NOELLE:**

I can get it.

**LORETTA:**

(looking over at George mumbling on the phone)

No, I'll bring it up.

**NIKKI:**

Uh, oh. Mom alert.

**JENNY:**

Your mom seems nice.

**NIKKI:**

That's because you don't know her. How many times have you been here?

**JENNY:**

Twice. Once for Marty's birthday party. Remember?

X FADE TO PLATFORM 6

**DR. WALLACE:**

I think he was around eight years old when I saw Marty again. I wasn't supposed to see him. The school district has strict rules about us seeing students during the summer, but George and Loretta were panicked, and who was going to know? So I brought them in.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**GEORGE:**

[On phone] They haven't released the body yet. No, I can't give you our name, not yet, not until the Sheriff has given us permission, but would you be willing to handle the arrangements? Trust me, I don't think it will be crowded. Thank you. Thank you so much. You don't know how much this means to us. Thank you.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**LORETTA:**

([SITTING ON THE floor, Jennie to her right and Noelle to her left. Nikki is above them on the end of the bed])

Now then, this is Martin when he was first starting school.

**JENNY:**

I can't believe that's Marty.

**NOELLE:**

I told you.

**JENNY:**

Who gave him his hair cut?

**NIKKI:**

Dad.

**JENNY:**

Really? He looks like a little monk.

**NOELLE:**

I think that's what Dad was going for.

**LORETTA:**

And here's one when he was eight. The girls, of course were adorable.

**NOELLE:**

We still are.

**LORETTA:**

Let your father hear you say that and you'll be losing bedroom privileges. "Modesty and humility are the words to live by."

**NOELLE:**

Fine, we're ugly.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 6

**DR WALLACE:**

He'd set fire to some dead animal he'd found in the woods. George and Loretta were very worried. Okay, so to the untrained eye this would appear to be an aberration. What sort of child does this? But, as an isolated incident, it's nothing. He said he wanted to give the creature a funeral pyre. What kind of 8 year old even knows what a funeral pyre is? Really. He's just acting out. He's using fire because it's something dangerous that he can control. It's all explainable. He was doing well in school; he had friends; he was a good, moral kid. Except for this and the episode in kindergarten, he was perfectly normal. Honestly, you should see the kids that come through that door. Marty was one of the good ones. At least at that time.

(Doorbell)

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM AND LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(from on the girls bed)

Don't answer that.

**GEORGE:**

I am NOT going to cower in my own home.

**LORETTA:**

(getting up and marching down to the living room, just at the bottom of the stairs. When she leaves the room Nikki crosses to the floor to take her place)

Don't answer it.

(knocking gets more insistent)

**SHERIFF:**

George, Loretta, it's me, Jack Krenshaw.

**LORETTA:**

Jesus. Our "Sheriff".

**GEORGE:**

(sarcastically)

Can I open it now?

(opens door, the Sheriff enters)

**SHERIFF:**

(entering but stopping few steps into the room)

I'm sorry. I needed to stop by. How're you holding up?

**LORETTA:**

Just how the hell do you think we're holding up?

**GEORGE:**

I'm sorry. It's difficult.

**LORETTA:**

(crossing to center, downstage of coffee table)

Difficult? My son is lying on the floor of that school and I can't go to see him. I can't leave my house according to my husband. I can't go down to the school. That's my boy down there. Our first born. We need to go to him.

**SHERIFF:**

That's why I'm here. He's not there anymore. We've taken all the bodies for...processing.

**LORETTA:**

Processing? What does THAT mean?

(suddenly the kids burst into laughter. Loretta, exasperated, picks up her tea cup and crosses to coffee???)

**NOELLE:**

It was Halloween. We were all pumped up on sugar.

**JENNY:**

Which one is Marty?

**NIKKI:**

The pretty one on the left.

(They all burst into laughter again)

**GEORGE:**

Excuse me.

(crossing to stairs and shouting up to the room)

Dammit, I let her come up there. Can't you be quiet, just this once? You know what happened. Can't you just show us a little respect?

**NOELLE:**

[Running to the top of the stairs, Nikki behind her] We're sorry, Daddy.

**GEORGE:**

You sure as hell don't act it.

**NIKKI:**

We said we're sorry.

**GEORGE:**

I don't like that attitude. You change your tone of voice.

**NIKKI:**

Yes, sir.

(George returns to the living room, crossing stage right to coat rack to straighten up the coats. The girls slump back on the pillows)

**JENNY:**

Maybe I should go.

**NIKKI:**

Too late. You're already part of the demon generation.

**LORETTA:**

(returning, at up right)

Can we see him?

**SHERIFF:**

Well, yes, I hate to ask you this but...can you wait until later this evening? For the sake of the other parents?

**LORETTA:**

[Turning away] Christ.

**SHERIFF:**

Mr. Canova, you know what I mean.

**LORETTA:**

(turning toward him)

I don't care what the other parents think. I want to see my son.

**GEORGE:**

Loretta...

**LORETTA:**

[To George] Don't "Loretta" me. [Crossing center to Sheriff] I want to see my son. That boy is just as... [Looks momentarily up towards the girls room and lowers her voice] that boy is just as dead as the others. Can't I grieve like the others? George? Can't I? [Pausing, then turning downstage] Fine, fine.

**SHERIFF:**

If you can come by my office around, say eleven tonight?

**GEORGE:**

But your office is across town from the morgue

**SHERIFF**

It wasn't safe to take him there. We've made a place for him upstairs at city hall. It'll be better there. More private

**GEORGE:**

Fine.

**LORETTA:**

Yeah, just great.

(George leads Jack to the door. Jack exits, George crosses back to the loveseat, sits, and makes calls)

**NOELLE:**

Oh God, that's the lake.

**NIKKI:**

That's the rowboat.

**NOELLE:**

Let's turn the page.

**JENNIE:**

What about the rowboat?

**NOELLE:**

You don't need to hear about it.

**NIKKI:**

Maybe she does.

X FADE TO STUDIO

(At Studio. Lena's at the coffee table drinking a bottle of water, Sid's upstage on set. )

**LENA:**

Well now, that was exciting. You want to get some dinner?

**SID:**

Can't, you got one more. Billie Edison.

**LENA:**

(turns downstage)



No! No! I won't do it.

**SID:**

Boss says different.

**LENA:**

(still facing audience)

I can't. Call Jessie, get her to do it.

**SID:**

They want you.

(crosses up to guest chair and sits silently for a moment. Visibly shaken)

**LENA:**

Christ. I was there. You remember. I was standing there.

**SID:**

That's why they want you. She's on her way.

**LENA:**

(crossing behind the stool,  
left)

Dammit. Why can't they just let this be another school shooting?  
We cover them all the time. Melody and Vince have their own  
coffee cups in the green room for chrissakes.

**SID:**

Maybe that's why.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

[George, on couch hangs up phone as Loretta enters]

**GEORGE:**

They'll take him in Plainview.

**LORETTA:**

Plainview?

**GEORGE:**

Sherman Funeral

**LORETTA:**

(crossing down front of  
coffee table)

In Plainview? We have to drive 50 miles to bury our son?

**GEORGE:**

They'll cremate him.

**LORETTA:**

Oh.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to her)

We talked about this.

**LORETTA:**

I know. I know. [She sits on couch]

**GEORGE:**

(A pause, then crosses to sit at her right)

It's for the better. All the way around. We can bring him home then. And later on, when things have settled down...we can bury him at the cemetery.

**LORETTA:**

Do you really think that's ever going to happen? I'm sorry, you're going to have to do better than Plainview.

**GEORGE:**

No one else...

**LORETTA:**

(standing)

Make them! You bully me and the kids all the time. Bully them!

**GEORGE:**

(standing,)

They won't take him here! [Takes out his phone] Here. You call them. Go ahead. I'll give you the numbers. Make the calls.

MAKE THE CALLS.

(Shoves the phone in her hand and storms off to the coffee maker)

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NIKKI:**

Marty loved that boat.

**NOELLE:**

I can't believe you even remember this. You were really little.

**NIKKI:**

I'm only two years younger than Marty.

**NOELLE:**

Marty spent every day on the lake in that boat. Just rowing around, looking in the water. Mom would have to call him in for dinner.

**NIKKI:**

It was the happiest he'd been...Did you even know him when he was happy?

**JENNIE:**

Sometimes--when we were down by the pond.

**NIKKI:**

That's different. He really was a great big brother. Even then.

**JENNIE:**

How old was he here?

**NOELLE:**

At the lake. Ten maybe? I was eight and Nikki was almost seven.

**NIKKI:**

The puppy's not in there, right?

**NOELLE:**

Thank God.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(sitting on couch, yelling at  
George, still fixing his coffee)

Are you satisfied now? Are you? Marty's dead, we'll be pariahs for the rest of our lives, and not even a funeral home will take our son. Nice job fathering.

**GEORGE:**

(Turns and returns to the  
living room)

Loretta, you don't mean that.

**LORETTA:**

You're damned right I don't. You were a bastard to that boy and look at him now. You're going to stay away from the girls from now on.

**GEORGE:**

Just what do you mean by that?

**LORETTA:**

I mean that's it. You're not going to do to them what you did to Marty. You're not. The games, the contests, the whole "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" thing. Forget it.

**GEORGE:**

I am a good father. I was a good father.

**LORETTA:**

And look where it got Marty!

**GEORGE**

(Sit angrily and picks up the  
newspaper, then throws it  
down and picks up a  
magazine instead)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**WILLIE:**

(at 1)

There was one summer. If I had to say there was one time where Marty... I think when he was little, I think Marty tried to fight it. That darkness. Even after the whole kitten thing, there was still a part of him that didn't want to be that way. Until...it was the summer when we were both ten. I remember, I had my birthday party--my birthday's June 30--and right after Marty and the girls and their folks went up to Birch Lake for the family vacation. Marty was really happy that they were going, I remember that. So were the girls.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NIKKI:**

Someone had abandoned this little dog at the cabin. I don't know what people do that, I guess they think that the next guests will take it home.

**NOELLE:**

It was so cute. Marty fell in love with it at first sight. He named it Ralphie after that kid in A Christmas Story? It kind of looked like him in an odd sort of way. I don't think there was a minute where they weren't together. He'd take it out on the lake with him, sleep with it, everything.

**JENNIE:**

Marty never said a word about any of this. He never said anything about his childhood.

**NIKKI:**

Some childhood.

**NOELLE:**

He had happy times back then. He did. Some times. Even last week there were still moments when, if you looked really deep, you could still see him in there. The old Marty.

**JENNIE:**

I miss that. I wish I hadn't...

**NIKKI:**

Please don't.

Dad has this strict policy of no pets. No dogs, no cats, no fish, no nothing.

**NIKKI AND NOELLE:**

"Animals are animals and people are people."

**NOELLE:**

I'm sorry but Mom was just as bad. We always blame Dad for

everything, but Mom let him do it. Mom gave him that power, we all saw that.

X FADE TO STUDIO

(Billie Edison, makes her tortuous way down the aisle to the studio. Willie cannot walk without the help of a cane and, when she gets to the steps of the platform, has a very difficult time climbing them, even with the help of her husband. As she steps into the light, the audience sees that she's wearing a pair of glasses, the left lens of which is totally blacked out. There is a long scar running from her forehead across her left eye and down her cheek. Her left hand is withered and contracted into a permanent fist. She is young, late teens or early twenties. She speaks with some difficulty--a stammer and a slight slur.)

**SID:**

(crosses to the down left stairs, Lena at first won't look at her)

Let me help you.

**BILLIE:**

Thank you. I'll be fine. I hate steps.

**LENA:**

I'm sorry, Billie.

**BILLIE:**

Ms Phillips, you've been saying that since this happened. Isn't it time you gave it a rest?

**LENA:**

I meant not...

**BILLIE:**

I know what you meant.  
(She crosses to her stool left)

**SID:**

Let me get you wired up.

**BILLIE:**

Thank you.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM AND MARTY'S ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(Getting up and crossing to stairs leading to Marty's room.)  
I need to get Marty some clean clothes. He must be dirty lying on the floor like that all night.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to follow her)

He's not... Sure, fine.

**LORETTA:**

(turning to George)

God, I don't want to go in there.

**GEORGE:**

(trying to cross in front of him)

I'll do it.

**LORETTA:**

[Crossing in front of him] You have no taste in clothes. [Goes up the stairs, then pausing at the threshold, then stepping in and turning on the lamp]

Oh.

**GEORGE:**

(following, then stopping)

Oh.

**LORETTA:**

I didn't realize. After the Sheriff left. I haven't been in here since Marty was alive.

**GEORGE:**

It's okay.

**LORETTA:**

Do you think they found anything? Anything that might tell us why he did this?

**GEORGE:**

I think they'd tell us, don't you? [Crossing past her into the room] Let's find him those clothes.

**LORETTA:**

(wandering to his dresser)

It's...he's supposed to be here. Look, his pillow. It still has...this is where his head was. And the blankets.

**GEORGE:**

What shirt would you like? [Holds up a Metallica T that was on his bed]

**LORETTA:**

NOT THAT ONE! Something milder, please.

**GEORGE:**

I don't think he has anything milder. I could ask the girls for one of their kitten t shirts.

**LORETTA:**

Here, let me look.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NOELLE:**

The last day before we came home.

**NIKKI:**

Excuse me, I need some water. [Runs down across the set for a bottle of water]

**NOELLE:**

Marty wanted to bring the puppy home.

**JENNIE:**

The old Marty.

**NOELLE:**

And Mom and Dad both said he couldn't. I'd never seen Marty so upset. And I know little kids get upset and we cry and then we get over it, but Marty--this was different. This was way past that.

"Can I please take him home. Can't I please? Mommy? Daddy? Please?" But, you know. The no pet rule.

**NIKKI:**

**NOELLE:**

It was awful. I remember Marty looking to me to help him, and there was nothing I could do. They weren't going to give in.

**NIKKI:**

(returning and standing in the doorway)

You remember what Daddy said? I do. I'll never forget it. He said "This is why we don't have pets. Pets make you cry. Pets make you weak. Martin, you need to be a man."

**JENNIE:**

But he was just a little boy!

**NOELLE:**

And he stopped crying. Just like that.

**NIKKI:**

(crossing and sitting at her desk chair)

And Dad looked so triumphant.

**NOELLE:**

Will you stop that? This wasn't Daddy's fault.

**NIKKI:**

Oh come on, Noelle. The guy's a bastard. He's a bully and...

**NOELLE:**

No, he isn't. He's just a father. And Mom stood by him on this and you know it.

**NIKKI:**

Because he wouldn't let her disagree.

**NOELLE:**

God, you really think Mom is innocent in all this? You really think Mom wouldn't have stopped it all if she'd wanted to?

**NIKKI:**

No. I don't know.

**NOELLE:**

Watch them sometime, Nikki. Sometimes I wonder who's the worst. If there even is a worst one. I think they're just being parents and we're just being kids trying to get out from under their thumbs.

**NIKKI:**

Some thumbs.

X FADE TO STUDIO

**LENA:**

(to Billie and camera)

So, Billie, we've all been following your progress since the tragedy at Elizabethtown. You're an inspiration to us all.

**BILLIE:**

(to Lena)

I'm just trying to live my life.

**LENA:**

(to Billie)

Well, you're doing fine.

**BILLIE:**

(to camera)

I'm trying. I...I wanted to...come on today to...remind people that there are victims out here...who survived. Like me. We...we don't all die. We lose our sight or our hearing...or our brains...but we don't die. Don't turn away from us. Don't hide...your heads when we come into the room. [After pause, to Lena] How are you doing?

**LENA:**

I'm fine.

**BILLIE:**

Do you still have the nightmares?

**LENA:**

This isn't about me. I...

**BILLIE:**

[Reaching over and patting Lena's knee] I do too. Are...you seeing someone a...about them?



**LENA:**

I haven't had time.

**BILLIE:**

Make time. Sid...make her..make time. Just because they didn't shoot you, doesn't make what...happened to me...your fault.

**LENA:**

I know that.

**BILLIE:**

But...do you believe it?

**LENA:**

I try.

**BILLIE:**

Try harder.

X FADE TO MARTY'S ROOM

**LORETTA:**

[Breaking down, at the far right head of bed. Picking up a small bluetooth speaker]Goddamnit George, Marty's dead. Marty's dead. Look! Look! Look at this, I remember when we bought that for him at Christmas. Do you remember?

**GEORGE:**

[Holding her] I remember. I do. Shhhh.

**LORETTA:**

(pulling away crossing left toward the desk)

And this. And these??? His life was here. His soul. His chair. Look, this was his chair. How many times did we stand here and look at him drawing and writing.

**GEORGE:**

When he should have been doing his homework.

**LORETTA:**

[Suddenly laughing] He sucked at being a student.

**GEORGE:**

That he did.

**LORETTA:**

[Crying again, hugging George] Oh, George, what have we done?

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NOELLE:**

So Marty turns and goes down to the beach where the boat is. Doesn't say anything, just walks off and, of course, Ralphie follows him.

**JENNIE:**

That poor kid.

**NIKKI:**

(Crossing to sit on bed above them)

Yeah, and the next thing we know he and Ralphie are rowing out into the lake and Mom's yelling "Marty, we're leaving in ten minutes, make sure you're back by then."

**NOELLE:**

And Marty rows out into the middle of the lake. Did you see it?

**NIKKI:**

I had my back turned. I was playing in the sand.

**NOELLE:**

Mom and Dad had gone into the cabin to pack.

**NIKKI:**

I heard you scream, though. When I turned around, all I saw was Marty, sitting down in the boat.

**JENNIE:**

Oh my God!

**NOELLE:**

He was way out there, past the raft and nearly to middle so... And I'd like to say I didn't really see it, but... Marty suddenly stood up in the boat, and there was Ralphie looking up at him and wagging his tail and Marty lifted up the oar and...and I screamed.

**JENNIE:**

[Silence]

**NOELLE:**

He kept hitting the poor thing. Over and over and over. And then he looked over at me. And he threw the body into the water and sat down. "Mom! Mom!"

**NIKKI:**

Mom ran out of the cabin. I turned around to look.  
(a long pause)

**NOELLE:**

Marty rowed back in, alone. He tied the boat up to the dock, walked to the car and waited for the rest of us to get in. That was it. Nobody spoke on the way home.

**NIKKI:**

But Dad got his way.

**NOELLE:**

Shut up.

CROSS FADE TO MARTY'S ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(having crossed to the dresser and gotten a shirt and pants, crosses back to George down right)

I guess that's good enough. Should he be in a suit.? Maybe he should be dressed in a suit.

**GEORGE:**

I'm not sure anyone's going to see him.

**LORETTA:**

Oh no. He's going to have an open casket. There's going to be an open casket just like the other kids. He deserves that. Not to be hidden away like some...criminal. [Turns crosses to lc of platform] No.

**GEORGE:**

(following)

Sweetheart. There may not be anything to see. We don't know how he killed himself.

**LORETTA:**

(not facing him)

Then they'll see that. They need to see what they did to them.

**GEORGE:**

What who did to who?

**LORETTA:**

(turning to face him)

Those schools. Those principals that expelled him. Those teachers that sent him out rather than deal with him.

**GEORGE:**

I'm not sure they'll be coming to the service

**LORETTA:**

(crossing to left toward the steps)

Then they're all a bunch of cowards. [To George] That's what they are, that's what they always were, a bunch of cowards who'd rather dismiss a kid than deal with him.

**GEORGE:**

They did their best.

**LORETTA:**

Some best. [Walking back to George] This room is empty because they did their best. The rooms of his victims are empty

because they did their best. If everyone did their best then why did Marty do this? Why was he so tormented his whole life? Whose best failed us, George? Yours, mine, the educators, shrinks, clergy? The NRA? Who? WHO?  
(The sheriff climbs onto the island)

X FADE TO CENTER PLATFORM, STUDIO AND GIRLS  
BEDROOM

**SID:**

The Sheriff is reading the names. Watch.  
(Lena, Sid and Billie look up at an imaginary monitor)  
(Jennie's cell phone goes off. She looks)

**JENNIE:**

They're reading the names. Here, look.

**NIKKI:**

(turning away, toward  
audience)

God, why?

(Noelle and Jennie look at Jennie's phone)

**SHERIFF:**

These are the names of the victims of yesterday's shooting, as authorized by the next of kin.

(Nikki crosses to left of Jennie and watches)

Jacob Andrews, aged 6  
Josh Andrews, 5, his brother  
Mary Barrows 8  
Sidney Cross 8  
Alison Forth 7  
Jenny Graley 5  
Jenny Hall 7

**BILLIE:**

This is wrong. This is all wrong.

**SHERIFF:**

(breaks into tears as he continues to read and never recovers)

Lois Ingraham 7  
Willie Jefferson 8  
Antwan Krebs 8  
Georgia Martin 6  
Lester Martin 8 , her brother  
Andrew Parton 9

Charles Turner 6  
Mary Ann White 5

**JENNIE:**

That's fifteen, now.

**SHERIFF:**

The names of the three teachers are still pending notification. The presumed shooter, Martin Canova, aged 16, died in the school shortly after police arrived.

(Nikki crosses to her desk and breaks down, Noelle crosses to comfort her)

**SHERIFF:**

I know you have questions, but right now I don't have any answers. We'll have more information at a later time. You'll all be notified.

(lights out on Sheriff)

**BILLIE:**

How can this happen again? I don't understand.

**LENA:**

I don't either.

**NOELLE:**

Mom! Mom!

(George and Loretta cross down the steps, Noelle finally crosses to the doorway holding Nikki's hand. )

ADD LIVING ROOM

**NOELLE:**

Mom, they just read off the names. Everyone knows. Everyone knows!

(Noelle runs down the steps to hug George, Nikki and Loretta stay apart. Finally Loretta crosses to hug Noelle, Nikki sits on steps and sobs)

X FADE TO STUDIO

**BILLIE:**

How can they say that this was an accident? Fifteen kids dead. This wasn't random. A boy got a gun and did this. 16 years old. Just like...Ho....How can you say that what happened to us was an accident, Lena? How can they say it was an act of madmen, when three--three teenagers came into the basketball game with automatic pistols and assault rifles? Nobody accidentally shot me or assaulted you. They did it on purpose. Where did they get the

guns? THESE WERE 15 YEAR OLD BOYS! WHY DID THEY SHOOT ME? I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEM. I WAS A CHEERLEADER FOR THE OPPOSING TEAM. WHY DID THEY HAVE THOSE GUNS? WHY DID THEY DO THIS? WHY DO THEY DO THIS??? ANSWER ME. SURELY SOMEBODY HAS AN ANSWER!

(Billie begins to sob, Lena crosses to hug her, sobbing herself.)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**WILLIE:**

(at 1)

When Marty came home from vacation, the darkness had taken over.

**RICHARD:**

He was never that little kid again.

**MAX:**

If he was, I never saw it.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NIKKI:**

(gets up from stairs, wiping her eyes and crosses to the downstage edge of the bedroom.)

He was ten years old. Somewhere out there, little cogs in little wheels were turning against bigger cogs in bigger wheels and the outer most parts of Marty's being were being pulled further and further away from his soul. Click. Click. Click.

**END SCENE 1**

(Scene 2)

(Black cloths drape the living room furniture. Downstage, the body has been rolled in. )

LIGHTS UP ON STUDIO

**SID:**

(at coffee, getting them both a cup)

Billie seems to be doing well.

**LENA:**

(at her seat in studio)

Better than I am.

**SID:**

You never told me about the nightmares.

**LENA:**

It never came up. One minute you're interviewing high school cheerleaders and the next all you can see is bodies, and holding Billie's head together with my hands so her brains won't fall out.

**SID:**

(crossing, giving her a cup, putting her down on other seat and crossing to wires on floor upstage)

I wish I'd been there.

**LENA:**

Don't be stupid. You'd be dead instead of Jack Morgan.

**SID:**

Survivor's remorse.

**LENA:**

We all have our burdens to bear. Billie's is worse than any of ours.

**SID:**

You saved her life.

**LENA:**

(still sitting, cup in hand)

Yeah, wow. I'm a real hero. I should interview myself. The worst part of this is that I have to think about it again. I have to look down at my hands again and I have to see those three kids with the guns climbing the stands and I have to hear the girls screaming and I have to look at my hands and that beautiful child bleeding into them. And there's nothing I can do to stop the blood.

(Mazolla crosses up the steps to Lena. Sid wires him up as others speak)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 6

**DR WALLACE:**

(6)

Marty had a classmate in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Jerry Pallone. This kid was a sociopath if ever I saw one. He was ten years old and had already stolen his neighbor's Toyota and taken it for a joy ride. The teachers couldn't control this kid. He was voted most likely to spend high school in prison. When you have a kid like that roaming around the halls, nobody notices the quiet kids like Marty. My job is not to notice everyone. If we had a shrink in every school in the county it would be different. If we had walk-in centers where troubled kids could go and vent it would be different. If anyone actually cared about these kids mental health then maybe it would be different. But we don't. We can't. One psychiatrist for 25000 students? What do you expect of me?

X FADE TO MORGUE [L/R]

**SHERIFF:**

(George, Loretta and Sheriff enter from right, behind studio wall. The Sheriff leading them, he crosses to behind the body. George and Loretta cross to right end [foot] of body.)

I'm sorry you had to wait until now. I'm very sorry for your loss. It's just, the others...right now emotions are taking the place of rational thought. I...I just didn't want any more trouble

**GEORGE:**

We understand.

**LORETTA:**

Then he should have been moved someplace else. You could have moved him.

**SHERIFF:**

Loretta, we're still a small town. As it is most of the funeral homes are doubling as morgues. You've got to believe me, this is the best we could do.



**LORETTA:**

(pushes past George to  
beside Sheriff. George  
following)

Can we see him now?

**SHERIFF:**

Of course. Before you do, I need to...George...Loretta, Marty's  
body's sustained significant damage. His head. The shotgun  
blast.

**LORETTA:**

(turns to him)

Oh God.

**SHERIFF:**

I just need to warn you. You may not want to look at his face.

**LORETTA:**

Then how the hell am I supposed to identify him?

**SHERIFF:**

He's wearing a watch on his left wrist, and a ring.

**LORETTA:**

I want to see him NOW.

(Reaches for the shroud to pull it away. George grabs her hand to  
stop her)

**GEORGE:**

Loretta, listen to the man.

**LORETTA:**

I want to see my son.

**GEORGE:**

Jack...?

**SHERIFF:**

I'll leave you two, three alone, then. [Begins to cross behind them  
towards right]

**GEORGE:**

Jack, we brought some clothes for him. I'm sure the others...

**SHERIFF:**

The coroner doesn't dress them. ...we've saved his, in a bag, you  
can pick them up on your way out. If you want them. Leave the  
clothes by the...Leave them by the gurney, I'll make sure the  
funeral home gets them.

(The Sheriff crosses off right, George and Loretta cross to the  
body. George lifts the sheet, Loretta gasps and cries into  
George's shoulder)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**MAX:**

(at 1)

I think Marty was doing some weird stuff even back in the fourth and fifth grade. I know he had that collection that, well at the time I didn't think was that strange, actually I thought it was pretty cool.

**WILLIE**

The Canova's had a garage--detached--like most of the houses on Lancaster Avenue. You know the kind, the driveway was on the side of the house and the garage was out back. Mr Canova had put up a basketball hoop over the garage door, but nobody used it much. Marty never really liked sports. Anyway, up in the rafters Marty had carved out a little office like where he'd hide out and draw in his sketchbooks or whatever.

**RICHARD:**

We'd hang out up there, when it wasn't too hot. And one day he said "You want to see something neat?" And he pulled out this wooden drawer from under this board where he drew and it was full of skulls. Animal skulls. All different kinds and sizes. And claws. I think he must have had a hundred skulls at least and more claws than that.

**MAX:**

To a ten year old kid, this was the greatest thing ever. "Don't tell anyone," he says. "Where did you get them?" "In the woods" he says. And I remembered the kitten. But the skulls were really cool.

X FADE TO STUDIO

**MAZZOLLA:**

(in the studio, to the camera)

Hasn't America seen enough tragedy? Hasn't America lost enough of its children? Isn't it time that America comes to its senses? Don't ask where they got the guns, ask why they weren't stopped. Don't ask who armed these criminals, ask why the teachers weren't able to defend themselves. This was wholesale slaughter, brought on not by legal gun enthusiasts, but by not allowing teachers to arm themselves in their own defense. Isn't it common sense to kill the shooter before he has a chance to pull the trigger in the first place? This is madness. My organization will

hereby pledge to train, free of charge, any certified educator who wishes to purchase a handgun. We'll walk you through the licensing process and we'll get you protected. No charge. Just go to our website for a list of classes in your area. We want our students safe again. We want our classrooms safe again. We want America and all Americans safe again.

**LORETTA:**

(turning to Marty)

Oh. Oh, what did you do? George, what did he do? [Leaning over him, stroking his hair] He was such a beautiful little boy. Do you remember? His beautiful blonde hair shining in the summer? His laugh. How his laugh would just light up a room. Do you remember, George?

**GEORGE:**

I remember.

**LORETTA:**

Marty. Marty. Did we do this?

**GEORGE:**

I don't think so.

**LORETTA:**

Was it the schools? The discipline? What should we have changed? A different shrink? A new hospital. When? He wasn't always like this, George. He wasn't.

**GEORGE:**

I know.

**LORETTA:**

He was happy when he was little. He was happy even sometimes now. Maybe the doctors. Maybe that damned medication--maybe we should have forced him to take it.

**GEORGE:**

Maybe.

(Loretta reaches over Marty and hugs him)

**LORETTA:**

Oh my God. [Feels his chest] George?

(George peels the sheet halfway down Marty's body, Loretta steps back in disgust)

My God, George, why did they do that?

**GEORGE:**

I don't understand.

**LORETTA:**

How many times did they shoot him? Didn't he kill himself?

That's what everyone's saying. That the shooter killed himself after killing... What did they do?

**GEORGE:**

(shouting off right)

Sheriff! Sheriff!

**LORETTA:**

Marty, what did they do to you? Oh my God, what did they do to you.

(The sheriff appears at right walking halfway to the body)

**GEORGE:**

(pointing)

What happened here?

**LORETTA:**

(crossing angrily to the Sheriff--still right of the body)

What did you do to him? What did you do to him?

**SHERIFF:**

They...they weren't sure he was dead.

**GEORGE:**

Half his head is blown off!

**SHERIFF:**

They said he was still moving.

**LORETTA:**

Oh my god. [Runs back to the body] Oh my god. You had no right to do this to him. You didn't.

**SHERIFF:**

He was on the floor in the hall. He still had the shotgun in his hands. He'd shot twenty kids and teachers. If my deputies said he was still moving, then he was still moving and they stopped him.

**GEORGE:**

He was already dead and you know it.

**LORETTA:**

Marty. Marty.

**SHERIFF:**

You weren't there. You didn't see. Do you think any of us are going to be the same after this? Emotions run a little high when you're surrounded by the bleeding bodies of five year old children and the shooter is still twitching right in front of you.

**LORETTA:**

Oh Marty. My dear sweet Marty.

**GEORGE:**

Leave us alone.

**SHERIFF:**

You called me, remember?

X FADE TO PLATFORM 5

**JENNIE:**

Marty was always really sweet to me. Even after the fight thing in Kindergarten, he came over and sat down by me and we waited for his parents together. We were playing in the play kitchen when they took him away. He had this wonderful smile, and when he'd giggle it would make me feel so wonderful just be around him. You only have a few classmates growing up that you share moments with--not like best friends--but just school mates that mattered, I guess. Marty mattered to me. All through school. He was just sweet.

(Girls have moved up to their room. The girls are sitting on the floor in front of their beds. Noelle to the right.)

**NOELLE:**

Do you think Marty was evil?

**NIKKI:**

No. I don't know. I loved Marty.

**NOELLE:**

So did I.

**NIKKI:**

What were we supposed to do? You know how he was. One minute he was normal and the next he was dark.

**NOELLE:**

So he was like everyone else?

**NIKKI:**

Who do we have to compare him to? Dad?

**NOELLE:**

Do you think Dad's normal?

**NIKKI:**

(laughing, getting up and crossing to her desk and laptop)  
God, I hope not.

**NOELLE:**

Do you think Mom is?

**NIKKI:**

I don't know. Part of that is being married to Dad, isn't it?

**NOELLE:**

I think SHE's the crazy one.

**NIKKI:**

This is one screwed up family. [Opens her laptop, Noelle pauses for a moment or two then begins. After a few moments, Nikki turns away from the computer and listens]

**NOELLE:**

God, I feel like I'm waiting for something else bad to happen. But what could be worse than this? Nikki, what are we supposed to do now? Are we going back to school? How can we do that? Life can't go back to normal, not around here. Are we going to move? Where? Where in this world aren't they going to know about Marty Canova? "Oh, you're the sisters." Are we going to have to go through life like that?

**NIKKI:**

Probably.  
(returns to her laptop)

**NOELLE:**

Great.

**NIKKI:**

Have you done your homework yet?

**NOELLE:**

You're kidding, right.

**NIKKI:**

(turning to Noelle)

Think we can use this as an excuse?

**NOELLE:**

What an awful thing to say! I hope so.  
(they both laugh)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 6

**DR WALLACE:**

(at 6)

There was another incident but not until Marty was 12 or 13. They didn't happen all the time. His parents were concerned that Marty was having a hard time with puberty but, honestly, he was only approaching puberty at that time. I think, sometimes, they were overly sensitive and definitely prone to overreacting.

X FADE TO STUDIO

**LENA**

(Mazolla is still in the studio, even though Sid has, in the interim, removed his mike)

Do you even believe the stuff you're saying, Vince.

**MAZOLLA:**

Every word.

**SID:**

Uh huh.

**MAZOLLA:**

I do.

**LENA:**

Vince, you were an actor for how many years? A child star? "Vinnie Versus Life."

**MAZOLLA:**

My golden years. It doesn't change my politics.

**LENA:**

So guns are politics now?

**MAZOLLA:**

Now who's being an actor? You know damned well the gun lobby targets the right and the anti-gun lobby targets the lilly livered liberals.

**LENA:**

And I'm guessing you're on the right.

**MAZOLLA:**

All the way, baby.

**SID:**

(upstage left corner of studio)

I'm a lefty and I have a gun.

**MAZOLLA:**

You're just a closet righty with the rest of us. Don't you feel safer when you're carrying?

**SID:**

(crossing between the stools)

I'm sorry, Lena, but I do. After what happened in E-Town, I take it with me everywhere.

**MAZOLLA:**

I'm betting a .357?

**SID:**

No, a Baretta.

**MAZOLLA:**

That's just a pea shooter. It's got no stopping power. At least get a .38

**LENA:**

Would you stop the gun-talk? I don't carry one and I've been a hell of lot closer to the front than you two.

**SID:**

That wasn't my fault.

(Sid crosses down the stairs with a handful of sound equipment)

**MAZOLLA:**

I'm not just doing this for the money, Lena, although the money's really good, if you really want to know. I do believe in this. I really believe that, if those nuns had been armed...

**LENA:**

You told me there were no nuns...

**MAZOLLA:**

Okay, so if those teachers had been armed and trained, they'd have taken that Canova kid out after the first few rounds and a whole lot of parents would be sitting down to dinner with their children tonight, rather than planning their funerals.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**RICHARD:**

(at 1)

We started middle school in the sixth grade. Marty wasn't a big kid--he was bigger than me, but everyone was bigger than me back then--and there were some eighth grade boys who were throwing their weight around.

**MAX**

Look, there are going to be bullies, I don't care how much money you spend on anti-bullying programs in school, they're still going to be there. Honestly, when I have kids, I'm going to teach them to be bullies. I am. Why? Because it's the bullies that get ahead in this world. They're your chief executives, and your Senators and famous stars and athletes. The guys that are ahead in this world are the ones who've fought everyone else, pushed everyone else down and out to get there. You might call it good business, or the winning attitude but it's all bullying.

**WILLIE:**

Marty caught on to that the first day of middle school. The eighth graders were picking on this new kid out front when he got off the bus. Most of the rest of us got off and tried to ignore them. You know how you do it, anything to survive. Marty, though, Marty walked off the bus and ran over to the new kid and started kicking the daylights out of him.

**RICHARD: [LAUGHING]**



The eighth graders were only pushing him around, but Marty, this was the first day, and Marty was killing this kid right on the sidewalk. Just kicking him over and over. He didn't even know the kid. Finally the bell rang and everyone went inside. Except for the new kid, he just lay there crying.

**MAX:**

Nobody ever messed with Marty in middle school.  
(a knock at the door)

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM AND GIRLS BEDROOM

**NOELLE:**

[Standing, suddenly] Oh, no, I've got to get dressed.

**NIKKI:**

Heaven forbid they see you in a robe.

**NOELLE:**

I care about how I look.

**NIKKI:**

(from top of stairs)

Should I let them in?

**NOELLE:**

I don't know. Probably not.

(Nikki crosses to the door, Melody Harmon immediately pushes her way in and crossing to center, then turning to Nikki, still at the door, nearly off right)

**MELODY:**

Close the door and lock it. Those guys will stop at nothing for a story.

**NIKKI:**

Who are you?

**MELODY:**

(crossing right, holding out her hand)

Oh, I'm Melody Harmon, Institute for a Sane Gun Policy.

**NIKKI:**

(taking it out of courtesy)

Of course you are.

**MELODY:**

I think your brother is innocent.

**NIKKI:**

Then you didn't know my brother.

**NOELLE:**

(from top of stairs, still putting her hair into a ponytail)

Who is it?

**MELODY:**

(crossing left, hand outstretched.)

Melody Harmon, Institute for a Sane Gun Policy.

**NIKKI:**

She says Marty's innocent.

**NOELLE:**

My parents will be glad to hear that.

**MELODY:**

(dropping her hand and looking left and right at both of them)

I'm so terribly sorry for your loss.

**NIKKI:**

Who are you?

**MELODY:**

Melody Har...

**NIKKI:**

Why are you here?

**MELODY:**

It's important that I speak to you before they get there claws in here. I think your brother was a sick man.

**NOELLE:**

(coming down the stairs, but only coming into the room a step)

Really? Had you known my brother long?

**MELODY:**

(to Noelle)

I'd never met him. But you know he was. [To Nikki] So do you. [Crossing behind the couch and sizing up the room] And I'm guessing that none of you, your mom, your dad, you--none of you were really surprised when this happened.

**NOELLE:**

That's a terrible thing to say. We just lost our brother and...

**MELODY:**

You know I'm right. I'm here to stop putting guns into the hands troubled kids like your brother.

**NIKKI:**

Who put guns into Marty's hands?

**MELODY:**

(coming right around the couch and to the right of Nikki, speaking only to her)

Guys like Vince Mazzolla and the NRA. The people who say guns don't kill people, people kill people. You know the kind. I want to put them out of business. I want them to be the laughing stock of this country. And you can help.

**NOELLE:**

(A step towards her)

Oh, yeah, we can help.

**MELODY:**

(stepping past and in front of Nikki)

I'm not the problem here. I'm the solution. Those folks out on your lawn right now? [Alluding to the audience] All they want to do is blame your brother. And when they can't blame him, [to Nikki] they'll blame your parents. [To Noelle] And when they can't blame your parents, they'll blame you. [To Nikki] You know they will, they've done it at every mass shooting in the past ten years. [Cross to Noelle] They don't care if it's the truth or not. All they want is the story. And the story is the blame. [Cross to Nikki, as Noelle takes a step toward her] They'll force you out of your school. [cross to Noelle as Nikki steps closer] They'll force you out of this state and, eventually, [to both of them] they'll make you find new identities just to live your lives and all that because your brother was insane. Not you. Your brother. Now, I can help you out of this. [Crosses around coffee table and sits down in the center of the couch

**NOELLE:**

(crosses to left end of couch)

Bullshit.

**NIKKI:**

(cross to stand just left of Melody)

How are you going to do that?

**MELODY:**

(about Noelle)

Is she always like this?

**NIKKI:**

Elle...it's okay. [Sits beside Melody] How?

**MELODY:**

I want your stories. The truth. From the very beginning to the very end. I want the world to know how sick Mike Canova was.

**NOELLE:**

Martin, his name was Martin.

**NIKKI:**

Sick?

**NOELLE:**

(turning to Melody from left end of couch)

Marty was never sick. He got kicked out of every school he ever went to, but he was never sick.

**NIKKI:**

He was just different.

**MELODY:**

(shifting in her seat to get more comfortable)

You see? That's what they don't know. That's why I'm here. I've been looking into the kind of kids that do this. The Columbine shooters, and Virginia Tech, Southern Illinois, Sandy Hook, E-Town and now this.

**NOELLE:**

She's writing a book, Nikki. That's why she's here.

**MELODY:**

Who said anything about...So what if I am? Don't you want the truth out there? Finally. Don't you want to stop this from ever happening again? Because I do. I want to stop this. All of those shooters were sick in their own way. Bullied and harassed.

**NOELLE:**

God, are you off-base.

**NIKKI:**

Marty was never bullied a day in his life. Ever.

**NOELLE:**

(turning away from her)

You don't know shit.

**MELODY:**

Then tell that story. Let the outside world know just what kind of person your brother was.[diving into her oversize purse] Look, I have some papers here. All I need is your signature agreeing that I have exclusive rights to Marty's story and we can get the truth out there.

(Nikki and Noelle laugh out loud)

**NOELLE:**

Our signatures? We're not even 15 years old.

**MELODY:**

It doesn't matter, I need your signatures. That's all. Do you have any pictures of Mike/Martin?

(George and Loretta enter from left,)

**LORETTA:**

What's all this?

(the girls stand, automatically, Loretta crosses upstage two steps and takes off coat, George helping her)

**MELODY:**

(standing, crossing a step left, extending her hand)

Melody Harmon, Institute for Sane Gun Policy

**GEORGE:**

What the hell? How did you get in here?

**MELODY:**

The girls...

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to Melody's right)

Get the hell out of here.

**NIKKI:**

Daddy?

**MELODY:**

(a step toward the door, then, to both George and Loretta)

I think your son is innocent.

**NOELLE:**

No she doesn't. She's writing a book.

**MELODY:**

I can get the truth out there. I can get your son's story the publicity it needs. It can help keep the guns out of the hands of the unstable.

**GEORGE:**

Like you? Get out. Goddamnit it. Get out.

**MELODY:**

Girls. [Turns to Loretta and extends her hand] Nice to...

**LORETTA:**

God damn you.

**GEORGE:**

Out.

**MELODY:**

(crossing to the door, then  
turning toward all of them)

I'm on your side.

**GEORGE:**

OUT!

(Melody is finally backed out)

**LORETTA:**

[At door, turns to girls, still standing, center] How'd she get in here?

**NOELLE:**

Nikki let her in.

**NIKKI:**

She said she thought Marty was innocent.  
(Nikki crosses away and up to her room)

**GEORGE:**

(taking off his coat and  
hanging it on the coat rack)

~~She wanted Marty's story.~~

**NOELLE:**

It's not Nikki's fault. They wouldn't leave us alone.  
(Noelle follows Nikki. Nikki goes to her laptop and Noelle reads on her bed)  
(Doorbell)

**LORETTA:**

Don't answer it.

**GEORGE:**

(Of course I'm going to answer. [Moments later] I'm sorry, I'm sorry I don't have a statement right now. Hey Hey. Leave my door alone. Get out of here. Get out of here. Slams the door)  
Jesus. Jesus.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**WILLIE:**

The summer we all turned 13 our families went on vacation down to the beach. [They all laugh]

**MAX:**

So Marty asks us to buy him some cherry bombs.

**WILLIE:**

He gives me a twenty dollar bill. I don't know where he got it,

birthday money, I guess.

**RICHARD:**

Everybody always did it for everybody else--when you go to beach you always bring back fireworks for your friends.

**WILLIE:**

Anyway, we bought him a box of cherry bombs.

X FADE TO STUDIO

**MAZOLLA:**

(putting on his overcoat in the studio)

Can I take you guys to lunch?

**SID:**

(from just right off the platform)

I'm game.

**LENA:**

I think I'll stay. You never know when we might have another kid excersizing his second amendment rights.

**MAZOLLA:**

Do you really believe that?

**LENA:**

Maybe if we'd been more concerned with the rights of potential victims...

**MAZOLLA:**

That's what I'm doing! We're protecting our citizens from the crazy people!

**LENA:**

You're arming the crazy people!

**MAZOLLA:**

Nobody wants that. But you don't disarm an entire population just because some kid goes nuts with a gun. Come on, Sid. I'm hungry.

**SID:**

You sure you want to stay?

**LENA:**

Yeah, bring me back something. And leave him behind.

**MAZOLLA:**

Gladly, I've better places to be.

X FADE TO PLATFORMS 1 AND 6

**MAX:**

(1)

The thing that most people didn't know about Marty was that he loved to fish. He'd always be skipping school to go down to the pond and fish for bluegills. There were always bluegills in the pond.

**DR WALLACE:**

(6)

There are parameters into which normal behavior falls, and abnormal and sociopathic and then psychopathic. Very distinct parameters though, of course, there are instances when the lines designating those parameters are blurred to better categorize an individual.

**RICHARD:**

(1)

He'd dammed up this little stream way back up there in the woods and whenever he caught a bluegill he'd throw it in a bucket lug them all the way up path and put them in this little pond. It wasn't very big, like ten foot by three foot or something like that.

**DR WALLACE:**

(6)

I'm sorry, but kids do weird stuff. How many kids burn ants with a magnifying glass, or blow up their model airplanes with firecrackers? We see adults torching tent caterpillar nests every spring--are these psychopaths? Only in the eyes of the caterpillars.

**WILLIE:**

(1)

So we went over to Marty's house one afternoon after school we took the cherry bombs up into the woods.

**MAX:**

I figured we'd blow up some cans or bottles or something.

**DR. WALLACE:**

(6)

Loretta calls me all upset. Marty's had an episode, she said. Marty's had a episode. So I bring them in. Marty looks fine to me. Really kind of happy.



**WILLIE:**

(1)

So we get to that little pond and there must have been fifty bluegills in there. Splashing around. It was crazy.

**DR. WALLACE:**

(6)

So I get him in my office. "What did you do this time?" And he laughed. "I was shooting fish in a barrel." He said. He starts to laugh and he tells me that his friend had bought him a box of Cherry bombs from Myrtle Beach. And then he tells me about the fish.

**WILLIE:**

(1)

"Give me the cherry bombs" Marty says, and he lights one. "Watch this." And he throws it into the water. Kablam!

**RICHARD:**

And he lights another Kablam,

**MAX:**

and another Kablam!

**DR. WALLACE:**

(6)

Kablam!

**WILLIE:**

(1)

And pieces of fish are flying everywhere.

**DR WALLACE:**

(6)

Kablam!

**RICHARD:**

(1)

And Marty's laughing. He just keeps lighting these cherry bombs and throwing them into the water. Kablam, kablam.

**DR WALLACE:**

(6)

And I look at him. And I'm not sure whether this is innocent or malevolent.

**MAX:**

(1)

And soon there's no water left in the pond and no fish and he and I are covered with fish guts.

**DR. WALLACE:**

(6)

Kablam, kablam.

**WILLIE:**

(1)

Only he doesn't stop. He just keeps lighting them and throwing them into the mud. Kablam.

**DR. WALLACE:**

(6)

Until he runs out of cherry bombs.

**RICHARD:**

(1)

But, by then, his mom had run up the path to see what all the noise was. And Marty. He just puts the lighter back in his pocket and walks down the path, right past her. Doesn't say a word.

**MAX:**

And we were left standing there, covered in this crap, watching his mom run after him. I thought I would get into trouble, for the cherry bombs, but she never said anything to my parents.

**RICHARD:**

I don't think it was as traumatic as Mrs. Canova made it out to be. We still laugh about it.

**MAX:**

Well, we did.

**DR WALLACE:**

(6)

[Laughs] This was a twelve year old with a box of cherry bombs. What do you expect? They were only fish, it's not like he blew up the family pet. Hell, my cousin fishes with dynamite all the time. It's not for the fish, it's for the fun. Boys like loud noises. I was more worried about the girl. Willie? Girls aren't supposed to be like that. But Marty? Right smack in the center of the parameters of normalcy.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM AND MARTY'S ROOM

**NIKKI:**

[Crossing to sit on the steps to the bedroom. Loretta is on the couch, George is in Marty's room, straightening it up]  
How'd it go at the morgue?

**NOELLE:**

(from bed)

Jesus, Nikki?

**LORETTA:**

Why don't you come down to the living room?

**NOELLE:**

I guess it didn't go well.

(Noelle crosses eventually to Nikki, who stands with her at the top of the stairs, but don't go down them, yet)

(knocking again at the door, George storms down the stairs)

**GEORGE:**

I said go away, Goddammit! We're not answering any questions.

(knocking continues)

I've got a gun and I'm going to use it.

**LORETTA:**

George!

**GEORGE:**

I'm sorry but...

**LORETTA:**

It'll be all over the news. Shooters father threatens press... Is that what you want?

**GEORGE:**

Maybe I do.

**LORETTA:**

[To the girls] We saw Marty.

**GEORGE:**

[Crosses silently to Loretta and puts his arm around her. She sobs]

**NOELLE:**

(standing behind Nikki, now crosses down to her, Nikki reluctantly following. Noelle sits to Loretta's left, and comforts her)

Mom.

**LORETTA:**

It...it was terrible. Nobody deserves to be treated like that. Alone, on that cold metal table.

**NIKKI:**

(sitting on the left arm of the couch)

Oh.

**GEORGE:**

Loretta...

**LORETTA:**

No, they deserve to hear this. We've never sheltered our children. We shouldn't now.

**NIKKI:**

Was he...did he shoot himself?

**GEORGE:**

Yes. Apparently so.

(Nikki turns away left, silently crying)

**LORETTA:**

He's...[crosses downstage away from them] At least he's at rest now. At least we can say that. He's at rest now. But...Oh God, I'm so sorry. [She holds out her arms and the girls and, eventually, George, rush to her] I'm so sorry. [After the lights go down they help her back to the couch. ]

X FADE TO STUDIO

**BILLIE:**

These stairs are the inv...ention of the devil. That's what Gramma would call them.

**LENA:**

You startled me.

**BILLIE:**

Not easy considering the attention I get entering a room.

**LENA:**

[After a pause] How can you be...so cheerful?

**BILLIE:**

[Laughs] I used to be a cheerleader?

**LENA:**

Must be it. Sorry about the stairs. The ADA says we should have a ramp but the owners are cheap.

**BILLIE:**

I'm used to it.

**LENA:**

You're not scheduled...

**BILLIE:**

Just a visit. That okay?

**LENA:**

Yeah.

**BILLIE:**

[Sits, with effort] You're in more pain than me.

**LENA:**

[Hold up her empty coffee cup. Billie silently refuses, Lena crosses down steps to coffee] Ha. I doubt that.

**BILLIE:**

You are. You haven't faced what happened to us yet.

**LENA:**

[Not looking at her] Everyday.

**BILLIE:**

Bullshit. I see it in my mirror. What do you see?

**LENA:**

A target for another kid.

**BILLIE:**

That's not the same.

**LENA:**

[Looking up at her] I hear the shots. I see them coming toward us.

**BILLIE:**

And you shut your eyes.

**LENA:**

Don't you?

**BILLIE:**

You didn't do this to me.

**LENA:**

[Crossing up the stairs] But I'm still here.

**BILLIE:**

So am I.

**LENA:**

And you have scars. What do I have? [Spills coffee on her hand.]

**BILLIE:**

Guilt.

**LENA:**

[Gets up and crosses down to coffee for a paper towel] No shit.

**BILLIE:**

You're one of the few people who are jealous of this.

**LENA:**

[Wiping her hands and crossing up to her seat and coffee again, but not sitting] It's true, what they say about us. What we say about ourselves. [Turning downstage] Why me? Why isn't that me? Why didn't I die on the floor of that gym like all the others? [To Billie] Why wasn't I at least wounded. Bruised? Something? There were thirty of you wounded, why couldn't it have been thirty one? [A tear?] Would one more made so much difference?

**BILLIE:**

So get a gun and shoot yourself.

**LENA:**

[Laughs] Thanks for the sympathy. [There's a pause, Lena finally sits down. Wipes a tear]

**BILLIE:**

We get together sometimes. Secretly. You're welcome to join us.

**LENA:**

Who?

**BILLIE:**

The Walking Wounded. That's what we call ourselves. This is private. Like an AA meeting for survivors. You might like it.

**LENA:**

No. No scars, remember?

**BILLIE:**

Hi, my name is Billie Edison and I'm happy to be alive.

**LENA:**

You actually say that?

**BILLIE:**

Try it. It's not as easy as it sounds.

**LENA:**

Huh.

**BILLIE:**

Well, when it's time, then. [A pause] What a lonely place to work.

**LENA:**

It's usually not this empty.

**BILLIE:**

That's not what I meant and you know it. Do you ever go back there? To Elisabethtown? To the school.

**LENA:**

They want me to. The five year anniversary... I don't know.

**BILLIE:**

Is that what's bringing the nightmares back?

**LENA:**

[Shrugs]

**BILLIE:**

I went back.

**LENA:**

You're kidding.

**BILLIE:**

[Gets up, crosses downstage] It wasn't my school, remember? I thought it would be easy. You know, it was just a place. Like passing the scene of your first car wreck. [A pause. Laughs] It

was awful. I'm really not as brave as you think I am. My mom and I walked in the front door an.... [She reaches her hand out to Lena, who stands, crosses to her and takes it] The whole school goes silent. Students staring. I couldn't go in the gym. I can't go in there. That's a bigger step than either of us are ready to take right now. [As lights fade, Lena helps Billie back to her stool]

X FADE TO PLATFORM 4

**JENNIE:**

(at 4)

I guess it's no surprise that Marty Canova was my first crush. Maybe it was more than that...my first hint at love. He was a really sweet boy. I know you don't believe me. But he was really sweet. We were in the sixth grade. June. He was an artist, did anybody know that? He would draw these beautiful pictures of me. Here, this is one of my favorites. He was twelve years old when he drew that. Twelve! We'd meet after school and walk down around Haskell's pond and just talk. I don't think anybody ever understood him and what was going on in his head. He was just this sweet, sweet kid.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(sitting at couch, Nikki is sitting on the stairs leading the girls bedroom , George is on the couch right of Loretta, Noelle sits on the floor, in front of Loretta. Loretta caresses her hair )

I don't know how you're going to be able to go back to school after this.

**GEORGE:**

Loretta, we haven't discussed this.

**LORETTA:**

It's their decision, George. Isn't that what you're always saying? Make your own life, make your decisions.

**NOELLE:**

And live with the consequences.

**NIKKI:**

I guess we're pretty much doing that now.

**LORETTA:**

There are any number of private schools out of state if you're

interested. I'd be willing to go into Gramma's trust to pay for it, if that's what you want.

**NOELLE:**

I don't want to go away to school.

**LORETTA:**

You may not have a choice.

**NIKKI:**

We have friends here.

**LORETTA:**

I'm not sure you do anymore.

**GEORGE:**

(crosses to back of the couch and rubs Loretta's shoulders. She's appreciative, and rubs his hands)

We're going to have to go to Plainview for Marty's service. The funeral homes here won't take him.

**NIKKI:**

That figures, doesn't it? They're booked up with his victims, why would they risk it?

**LORETTA:**

It's not fair.

**NOELLE:**

Mom, Marty killed all those children. I'm not ready to face their parents. Not yet. Plainview is fine.

**NIKKI:**

Why even have a service?

**LORETTA:**

(standing)

He's going to have a service. He's going to have a regular funeral just like all the others.

**NIKKI:**

But nobody's going to come.

**LORETTA:**

Nonsense, Marty had friends.

**NIKKI:**

Mom...

**LORETTA:**

Marty had friends. You'll see.

(George gently eases her back onto the couch, Nikki returns to her room. Noelle slides next to Loretta and puts her head on her



mom's shoulder.)

X FADE TO STUDIO

**LENA:**

Are you sure I can't get you anything? I think there's still some coffee left. Water?

**BILLIE:**

I'm fine. That's the hardest thing. People staring at me for the wrong reason.

**LENA:**

There's a right reason?

**BILLIE:**

When you walk into the room and people recognize you, it makes you feel good, right? It makes you feel important, like you've done something to earn their respect. Am I right.

**LENA:**

I suppose.

**BILLIE:**

Bullshit. You love it. It's one of the reasons you do it. When I walk into the room, I get pity or they turn away. My presence is guaranteed to stop conversation, yet nobody will talk to me. After the shooting, my school picture was flashed all across the country. The pretty little girl with the great future and the perfect smile. You called me the angel of Elizabethtown.

**LENA:**

I stand by that.

**BILLIE:**

That's who they think Billie Edwards still is. They don't want to see me now. They don't want to admit that I'm still alive and trying to make it. They want to change the channel, put it all behind them, and get on with their own lives. So they refuse to remember. Do you want to know why this shooting happened? It's because they all refuse to remember the last one. And the one before that, and the one before that, and the one before that. God, I wish they'd just once look at me and say, That's Billie Edwards, we've got to stop that from happening again. But that's the last thing they think of. They're too busy trying to find a way to get out of the room so they can get on with their lives.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 4

**JENNIE:**

(at 4)

It was the end of school year in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. My parents were sending me to a music camp in Colorado for the summer, so Marty and I had to say goodbye. It was awful. We sat in the sand by the water and held hands. Marty started to cry. And I started to cry, and we hugged each other. "I can't make it stop." He kept saying. "I can't make it stop. I just can't make it stop." And I thought he meant the crying. "I can't make it stop." I had to go home to pack. We kissed good by and I left him down there. I remember looking back and he was sitting on a log by the water, just sobbing. That poor sweet boy.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NIKKI:**

Slowly now, several of Marty's muscles, namely the ones that might have kept him from ever walking into that school, are being stretched to the point where they will never regain their former strength again. The joints connecting the remnants of his spirit as a little boy to his core humanity are separating as relentlessly as the morning tide and more painfully than any human can bear. And the cogs and the wheels continue to turn. And the ratchet continues to tighten. Click. Click. Click.

END OF ACT 1

## **ACT 2 SCENE 1**

### LIGHTS UP ON PLATFORM 5

#### **PASTOR:**

(at 5)

We're supposed to be able to see good and evil. It's our obligation not just in this job, but all of us, as we lead our lives. God has given us parameters--the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Golden Rule by which to judge not only our own actions but the actions of others. We are human, we make mistakes, errors in judgement. We have regrets. And we seek forgiveness--from ourselves, from those we've wronged, and ultimately, from God. But evil? Seeing evil...actually seeing it? Only God can be strong enough to fight that.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

#### **WILLIE:**

(at 1)

I was alright with Marty dating Jennie. I was. I know alot of gay boys in school who hang out with straight girls but it's different if you're a girl and you're gay. Usually hanging with straight guys is...it's kind of weird. Like you don't know if they're going to come on to you anyway, so you just don't get close. But, Marty and I were close even last week. Jennie was nice to him. That's all that mattered.

X FADE TO STUDIO

(Melody and Lena are sitting in their interview positions at studio. Melody is facing the camera, as the interview ensues, Lena gets more and more angry)

#### **MELODY:**

(to camera)

It's a lie, the whole bullying thing, it's all a lie.

#### **LENA:**

(to Melody)

There were witnesses. The Columbine shooters...

#### **MELODY:**

Were NOT bullied. Read the final report. Even the shrink says that those boys were far more likely to be the bullies than the bullied. This whole ethos that bullying created mass murderers...

#### **LENA:**

Nobody says that...

#### **MELODY:**

Not in so many words, but the minute one of these shootings happens, every politician in the country sponsors more anti-bullying legislation. As if it's the cause. Everyone wants to tie it in, and there's no link. It just makes everyone feel better if they can point their finger to the reason. Oh...poor Marty Canova was bullied when he was five. Except that it just wasn't true. I spoke with his sisters. I spent an afternoon in their home. And I quote "Marty was never bullied. Not in school."

**LENA:**

(with rising anger, to Melody)

How did you get in their house?

**MELODY:**

(more insistently)

That's not important. What is important is that his sisters believe that he was an innocent kid caught up in this darkness that's surrounding today's young people. This was once a cute little boy. What happened to him? I'll tell you. It was the violence that surrounded him. Did he play those damned video games? Of course. Did he listen to hardcore rap music? Of course. Look at the kids wardrobes these days. It's dark, and violent and contemptuous of all of society. That's what needs to be examined here.

**LENA:**

(sarcastically?)

And the name of your next book is going to be...

**MELODY:**

Massacre Of The Innocents.

**LENA:**

(disgusted)

Are you telling me you're writing about this, already? Isn't that a little crass?

**MELODY:**

It's a free country. I'll do what I want.

**LENA:**

Of course you will.

(Lights go out, Melody looks over at Lena who quickly and angrily gets up and crosses to the coffee stand. Melody fumbles with her mic, finally getting it off and storms, angrily off the stage)

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

(the family enters followed by Jennie, Max. Richard and Willie.

**LORETTA:**

(crossing to center and stopping, George crosses to Loretta and helps her off with her coat, Willie and Jennie hang to the left, Nikki and Noelle cross to the right,)

Come in. We've food over in the kitchen. The girls thought I was crazy to buy so much. See girls, they came. I think Marty would be pleased. Don't you, Willie?

**WILLIE:**

Absolutely, Mrs. Canova.

**LORETTA:**

(Hugging Willie, Max, and Richard, Jennie stands in line behind them to be hugged)

Thank you all for being willing to make such a long drive. It was really above and beyond the call.

(Willie crosses to the girls)

**JENNIE:**

No problem, Mrs. C.

**LORETTA:**

(Hugging her)

Oh Jennie, Jennie, I'm so glad you could come. I'm sorry I didn't say hello to you the other day.

**JENNIE:**

You did. Eventually. [Hugs her] I loved Marty. He was my first kiss.

**LORETTA:**

He loved you too. In his own way...I guess I shouldn't put it like that. Oh, you know what I mean.

(Jennie crosses to the girls, George crosses to Loretta after hanging up her coat and they sit down on the couch. Loretta leans her head against George's shoulder as the girls are speaking)

**WILLIE:**

(to the sisters)

Did they ever find the sketchbook? The good one?

**NOELLE:**

They were all good, weren't they?

**WILLIE:**

You know the one I'm talking about.

**NIKKI:**

And they never will.

**WILLIE:**

Did he burn it?

**NIKKI:**

NO! No. He didn't.

**NOELLE:**

I don't know why you're being so secretive. He showed it to everyone.

**WILLIE:**

Take a look around, Elle, WE're everyone. Besides, I don't think anyone's seen what he was working on this past month. The torture stuff? Which might really be scary.

**NOELLE:**

I suppose.

(enter the Pastor, George crosses to him, Loretta gets up and crosses up left, disappearing into the kitchen)

**NIKKI:**

(after seeing the Pastor enter, to Noelle and Willie)

Come on, let's go up to our room.

**WILLIE:**

Really? I thought it was verboten.

**NOELLE:**

Is, was and will be again. Got a joint? Wanna light up?

**NIKKI:**

Shut up.

(The kids cross up the stairs to the girls room)

**NOELLE:**

I'll be right there. I'm hungry.

(Noelle crosses offstage right, into the kitchen)

**GEORGE:**

(bringing the Pastor down right.)

Thank you for the nice words. It was a good service.

**PASTOR:**

Under the circumstances. How are you doing?

**GEORGE:**

Ha.

**PASTOR:**

I'll be back in my office tomorrow. Shall we schedule something?

**GEORGE:**

I'll let you know.

**PASTOR:**

For both of you? I know you feel guilty about this. About...other things.

**GEORGE:**

It was discipline. The boy needed discipline, you know that.

**PASTOR:**

Do I?

**GEORGE:**

He was out of control. The fish pond, for chrissake. He needed to be told what was right and what was wrong. He needed to be taught respect for nature and for life itself. It was for his own good.

**PASTOR:**

I don't think you or Loretta believe that.

**GEORGE:**

This was a family issue. You shouldn't have been told.

**PASTOR:**

You didn't tell me, George, Nikki did.

**GEORGE:**

Well, she shouldn't have.

(Noelle passes Dad and the pastor with her plate of food, and goes upstairs.)

**GEORGE:**

[Following her to the foot of the 4 stairs] Don't make a mess.

**NOELLE:**

I won't, Daddy.

**GEORGE:**

You'll be cleaning up after. You hear me?

**NOELLE:**

I will, Daddy.

X FADE TO STUDIO

(Sid climbs back up the steps to tend to Melody's abandoned microphone. Lena is still fixing her coffee)

**LENA:**

Why the hell do we bother, Sid? What's the use? We're no closer to stopping these things than we were fifty years ago. Melody Harmon is one of the stupidest women on the planet.

**SID:**

(at Melody's stool)

Or one of the smartest. She's got your goat. That'll be in her book for sure.

**LENA:**

(crossing to her own stool,  
with a cup of coffee. "They" is  
the audience)

They were supposed to stop these things. They were supposed to pass gun legislation and improve mental health and security at the schools. What's the sense in putting locks on all the school doors if you keep them unlocked? Vince Mazolla might be right--arm everyone and nobody will start the fight.

**SID:**

It would be worth a try.

**LENA:**

They'd just keep getting bigger guns. [After which she walks down the stairs and off, eventually crossing to the chairs and finding a seat.]

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

(Jennie is sitting on the floor with her head tucked to her knees, leaning on the downstage edge of the bed. Willie is sitting beside her, on the floor at the center of the bed. The boys are sitting on the bed behind them. Noelle is lying on the bed, her head toward Nikki's desk. Nikki is on her laptop at the desk. Nikki turns, and touches Jennie's shoulder)

**NIKKI:**

You alright, Jen?

**JENNIE:**

(looking up)

I guess. This wasn't his room, though, right?

**NOELLE:**

(rolling on her side)

On the other side of the house.

**JENNIE:**

Yeah, good. It looks too...perky.

**WILLIE:**

One thing you could never call Marty.

**JENNIE:**

I keep thinking maybe...maybe if we hadn't broken up last year.

**MAX:**

Don't think that. You didn't make him do it.

**NIKKI:**

Definitely not. He really liked you. You gave him the few true



moments of happiness he ever had.

**JENNIE:**

But breaking up...

**NOELLE:**

It didn't make a difference. You didn't break his heart. By then...

**NIKKI:**

It was gone by then. Come on we all saw that. Willie?

**WILLIE:**

I don't know. I don't think he ever stopped fighting it.

**JENNIE:**

I don't know how to make it stop. That's what he told me once.

**RICHARD:**

He wanted to. Sometimes. But then it seemed to all build up inside him again and he'd go to the dark place.

**NOELLE:**

I always hated when that happened.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM, BEDROOM STAYS LIT

(Sheriff enters downstairs)

**LORETTA:**

(crossing from kitchen to left end of couch. To George)

Get him out of here. [Crossing to center] Get out of here.

**SHERIFF:**

(crossing to her)

I've come to offer my condolences.

**LORETTA:**

(slaps him)

The hell you have.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to right of Loretta)

Loretta!

(The girls get up and cross to the top of the stairs to watch)

**PASTOR:**

(crossing between Jack and Loretta, and gently pushing Jack back.)

Come on, Jack, let's go out and get some air.

**LORETTA:**

You let them shoot him! You let them do that. You don't know, Pastor, but his body was riddled with bullets. Riddled. And then

they left him there on the floor.

**SHERIFF:**

(past the Pastor to Loretta,  
as the Pastor slowly walks  
him backward toward the  
door)

He murdered 15 children! Do you expect sympathy? You're  
damned lucky I stopped those parents out there from storming  
over here and burning you out!

**LORETTA:**

You bastard. You'd do it too.

**PASTOR:**

Come on.

**GEORGE:**

Let him go, Loretta. Let him go.

**LORETTA:**

It's not right. It's not. He was just a little boy.  
(Loretta turns and storms off up left, George follows.)

**GEORGE:**

Loretta!

(Nikki pulls them all back into the room before they're seen)

**NIKKI:**

Damn.

(They automatically return to their former positions)

**NOELLE:**

It's not the Sheriff's fault. You think the parents would really do  
that?

**NIKKI:**

If we only knew where Marty'd hid his guns. Maybe he left a few.  
[A glance from the others] For self protection?

**WILLIE:**

I'm still kind of numb.

**NOELLE:**

We all are.

**NIKKI:**

And we're supposed to go back to school tomorrow.

**JENNIE:**

Good luck with that.

**NOELLE:**

(sitting up on the bed)

They're talking private school up north.

**WILLIE:**

That would suck.

**NOELLE:**

I guess we'll see how it goes tomorrow.

**WILLIE:**

(curling up in a little ball)

Damnit, damnit, damnit. I should have done something. I knew how Marty was. I should have stopped it. Maybe I should have turned him in. Gotten him help. I knew there was something wrong.

**NIKKI**

Who didn't? They knew all about him.

**WILLIE:**

I don't know, but I should have done something.

**JENN:**

(reaching for her and  
touching her arm  
reassuringly)

You were his friend. We were all his friends. I think that was enough.

**MAX:**

If it was, then why did this happen?

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**DR. WALLACE:**

(1)

Thirteen was a difficult year for Marty. There was another incident after which Marty ended up down at the sheriff's office. Marty's mom had refused to go get him and he'd had to spend the night at the station. When she finally showed up, he wouldn't speak to her. When she pulled the car into the driveway, he refused to get out and wouldn't for a full day and night. I would have chalked it up to teen rebellion but, when she brought him in, there was something different. He was terribly angry and, well, I got the impression that he was going to act out dangerously. He wouldn't speak about what was setting him off. He barely spoke at all. So I suggested we place him down at Hillside Memorial for evaluation. Mrs. Canova agreed.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 2

**LENA:**

[To audience, 2]

The nightmares--I was right out of college, this was my first job and only the third time in front of the camera. It was soft news--

was supposed to interview the cheerleaders at a local rivalry to see how they felt about their counterparts. How much softer could it be? Everyone knows the rest. The nightmares? Sometimes I can hear the shooters coming down the hall, which is strange because I never heard them that night. And sometimes I don't hear them at all, or see them. But I know they're there. The fear tells me they're there. The fear? I'm not sure I can even describe it. It's the kind of fear that you could never stand if you were awake--this huge mass of threatening darkness and death-- and it drives you slowly, steadily, inevitably into a state of raging, shrieking panic that finally mixes with the screams and the cries of the kids in the gym only there's another voice too and it gets louder and louder until it drowns out the sounds of the gunfire and the screams of the children and suddenly you realize that it's coming from you. And you're panicked because you know that what's making you scream is still out there, and it's still coming closer. And there's nothing you can do to stop it. So you force yourself to scream louder and louder because some small part of you hopes that, maybe, if you scream loud enough someone will come in and finally shoot the boys, and then you can wake up and get out of this. And these screams--they don't come from up here like those of the kids in the gym, but down from inside you and they don't sound like any noise you've ever made before, and they don't feel like any scream you've ever made. But it's the only noise you can make, and the evil is coming closer, and you start to smell the gunpowder, and you hear the glass from the windows shatter and you fight and scream and try--you try so hard just to move--while all the time you're trapped while this evil is coming closer and closer--trying to get in--trying to kill you too. And finally you scream so loud that you hear it from the outside and it wakes you up. And then you're lying in silence, listening to your breathing and praying that the dream will never come again. And what's strange is that, all the while you're still straining to hear the children, and the gunfire as if, I don't know, as they're almost comforting. They're shooting THEM right? Those are the nightmares. The only thing worse...the only thing worse is what really happened.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(returning from kitchen with coffee, George following)

I want to sue. I want to sue the junior Sheriff and his whole band of thugs. [Between couch and coffee table but not sitting down.

George is to her left] For that...that violating a corpse thing they charge people who have sex with corpses.

**GEORGE:**

(trying not to laugh)

Loretta, that's ridiculous.

**LORETTA:**

I want people to know. I want the whole world to know what they did to my boy.

**GEORGE:**

Our boy. He was our boy.  
(George sits)

**LORETTA:**

Then act like it, Goddammit. [Alluding to off right] Jack Krenshaw's a kid. ~~He's not even supposed to be Sheriff.~~ [To George] Hell, you took on kids twice his size when you were in high school.

**GEORGE:**

(standing)

I am not going to beat up Jack Krenshaw.

**LORETTA:**

(crossing right just past couch)

Then I'm going to. [To George] Do you think this is funny? [Alluding] What part of our boy lying on that table was funny to you. What part of driving a hundred miles to go to our boys funeral funny? [Reliving morgue] Or the twenty five bullets in our boy's body? Or seeing him, lying there, naked with half his ... With half of his face blown off?

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to her, soothingly)

Loretta...

**LORETTA:**

(pushing him)

Don't Loretta me, you asshole, do something. God knows you didn't do anything for him when he was alive.  
(The girls can't help but overhear)

**GEORGE:**

What do you want me to do? What's going to bring him back?

**LORETTA:**

You can start by just being sorry. [Turns downstage] Just feeling a little guilty might help.

**GEORGE:**

For what?

**LORETTA:**

(to George)

For what? FOR WHAT? You've got to be kidding. For the fights in school, for that damned kitten, and the dog at the lake...

**GEORGE:**

(stepping up to face her,  
angrily)

I had nothing to do with those!

**LORETTA:**

You were the reason. You were always taunting him, telling him wasn't good enough, making him think he was worthless.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing right, behind her as  
he speaks)

And what did you do? Every time I tried to instill a little discipline what did you do? Ohhhh poor Marty. Ohhh my dear sweet Marty. I know Daddy punished you but we won't tell him. Now go out and play nicely. That did a hell of lot of good, didn't it? [Then turns downstage

**LORETTA:**

It made him feel loved.

**GEORGE:**

Well, I guess it worked then. [To Loretta] Because he certainly learned how to show his love to those kids at the school on Monday, didn't he?

**LORETTA:**

And that Goddamned camping trip. He hated you for that.

**GEORGE:**

You were part of that. We both decided to remain firm on that. Both of us.

**LORETTA:**

(turning downstage away  
from George.)

I hate you.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing left, just upstage of  
her)

Christ. Then go get the gun. [Point off left] It's in the safe in the bedroom. Go ahead, I'll wait. You can shoot me too.

**LORETTA:**

That was an accident.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to her left)

You didn't shoot anyone and you know it. You were just covering for the boy. Just like you always did.

**LORETTA:**

NO! No. And you even whisper a word differently and I'll pack up with the girls and leave your ass. I will, just watch me. JUST WATCH ME. I was putting your gun away in the garage. It fell and went off. It's not like he killed her. It barely grazed her leg.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM, LIVING ROOM STAYS LIT

**WILLIE:**

(to Nikki)

HE shot the little girl across the street?

**NIKKI:**

No, Mom did.

**LORETTA:**

I swear I ought to just walk out right now and take the girls with me. I swear. What's keeping me here now anyway? Our lives are already ruined.

**WILLIE:**

(standing, as she does, Max and Richard stand as well)

Um... I've got to be getting home. Do you think it's safe?

**NOELLE:**

As safe as it ever is.

**NIKKI:**

Go quick, she hasn't gotten the guns yet.

**NOELLE:**

Nicole?

**WILLIE:**

Is that your name really?

**NIKKI:**

[To Jennie] Are you ready, too? There's safety in numbers.

[Jennie stands as well.

(crossing to top of stairs)

Mama, these kids have to go home.

**LORETTA:**

Fine, fine.

**WILLIE:**

(coming down the stairs to Loretta, Jennie follows. Loretta and George stand

where they were, making a receiving line, of sorts.)

Um, I'm really sorry for your loss.

**JENNIE:**

Good bye. I'm really sorry.

**GEORGE:**

I know.

**NOELLE:**

I'll see you at school.

(The kids cross and exit, eventually finding their way to the chairs)

X FADE TO CENTER PLATFORM

**SHERIFF:**

(at 3)

I felt sorry for Marty. He was just so...confused. Just flat out confused. He was 13 when I first met him, standing on the other side of the counter in his underpants. That's all. Just his underpants. Three in the morning, tears streaming down his face. Shivering hard enough to break a rib or something. Who the hell are you? Don't tell my dad. Can I sleep here? I'll leave before morning. Do I need to break something? How can you not feel sorry for a kid like that?

ADD PLATFORM 1

**MAX:**

(1)

It wasn't right. It just wasn't right. His dad taking him out to the woods like that, taking away his clothes and leaving him there? It just wasn't right.

ADD PLATFORM 4

**JENNIE:**

(4)

We weren't supposed to know. But he had to walk past my house to get to the police station. My dad saw him. Why didn't you help him? God, parents are so stupid sometimes.

**SHERIFF:**

(3)

He finally asked me to call his mom. He pleaded for me not to tell his dad. Mom, Dad what's the difference, right? One parent's as good as another. Besides, she answered the phone. Only...take him back to the woods, she said. Let him learn what he's done.



**JENNIE:**

(4)

It wasn't just his dad, you know. His mom's just as bad.

**RICHARD:**

(1)

She was always nice to me.

**JENNIE:**

(1)

She's nice to everyone... Sometimes.

ADD PLATFORM 6

**WALLACE:**

(6)

I didn't know they did that. I didn't. Not until Marty's last session. They didn't get that from me.

ADD PLATFORM 5

**PASTOR:**

(5)

I confronted them. Marty had changed so radically so quickly I had to ask them what happened. At first they wouldn't talk about it. But even little Nikki was so upset. Finally, she came to me and told me about them leaving him in the woods overnight to "teach him about nature." This wasn't a camping trip. They stripped him to his underwear and left him there in the cold--no tent, no blanket, no fire. Just dark and cold. I'm sorry, I couldn't let that go, so I confronted them. Finally Loretta said they were trying tough love. That's what she called it. She said she and George had seen a segment on Dr. Phil and it made alot of sense. If he wouldn't respond to love and kindness, maybe giving him a taste of his own medicine would work. The kid almost froze to death.

ADD PLATFORM 2

**MELODY:**

(2)

That bitch is not taking my book away from me. I don't care if she was at E-town. I've been to every site she's been and she's not the only voice in town about this. I deserve to be heard just as much as she does. More. I've put more time into this. I'm more qualified. Just because she's on the news---well, sister, I'm news too. And I'm going to make news just like she does.

(Willie, Shrink, Pastor, Sheriff, Jennie all return to their seats after Melody's rant)

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NOELLE:**

(lying on bed, reading, rolls onto her elbow)

Who are you texting?

**NIKKI:**

(at laptop)

Seymour. He sends his condolences, but he spelled it wrong. It looks like he's sending us his gondolas.

**NOELLE:**

Not the brightest star in the sky.[sitting up] Do you think we'll be able to have boyfriends again?

**NIKKI:**

Just don't expect to be invited over to dinner anytime soon. "So, Nicole, Byron tells me your brother was a mass murderer?"

**NOELLE:**

That's right. He blew his brains out right there in a Catholic school hallway but, you know, there's always some good that comes out of everything. They tore down the school after that, so now all those youngsters get a brand new school. Isn't that wonderful?

**NIKKI:**

You think they're going to tear it down, really?

**NOELLE:**

How should I know? I don't think I'd go back there if I were a kid.

**NIKKI:**

(after a pause)

He should have stayed at Hillside. I think he liked it there.

**NOELLE:**

At least he didn't have to stay here.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 2

**VINCE:**

(2)

Are guns that bad? Really? Do any of you really believe that? You put a hand gun in the hands of an average citizen and he's not going to shoot anyone. Right? And that's the criteria.

X FADE TO STUDIO

**LENA:**

(to camera)

Today, Jonathan Peabody, aged 11, succumbed to injuries he received during the Notre Dame massacre earlier this week. Jonathan was cheerful child who loved legos and wanted to be an engineer when he grew up. Since the shooting Jonathan's been kept on life support in the slim hopes that his wounds might heal. But while all around him knew that his spirit was still fighting to survive, the small body was simply too damaged to endure. He leaves behind his mother, Anna, his father, Jacob and two younger brothers, Kirk and Curtis. [Lena begins to cry] Damn it. Damn it. I'm not allowed to do that. I'm not allowed.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**GEORGE:**

(bringing sandwiches for him and Loretta on the couch)

At least it was a nice service. Don't you think it was a nice service?

**LORETTA:**

The music sucked.

**GEORGE:**

(sitting beside her)

She was a replacement for their regular organist who apparently was booked this afternoon.

**LORETTA:**

I'll bet.

**GEORGE:**

You know, people really do have other things in their lives sometimes.

**LORETTA:**

I bet she did.

**GEORGE:**

Well, I thought it was a nice service. Where are the girls?

**LORETTA:**

Where do you think? God, I wish I were an alcoholic. I could use a drink right now.

**GEORGE:**

I think we still have some wine somewhere.

**LORETTA:**

We don't. I didn't want Marty to get into it so I poured it down the sink.

**GEORGE:**

That was a 40 dollar merlot!

**LORETTA:**

And that was our son! I think it was a fair trade. Not that Notre Dame Elementary would agree.

(a pause)

**GEORGE:**

My God the quiet is nice. The pastor thinks we murdered our child.

**LORETTA:**

Who? Our pastor? Why?

**GEORGE:**

The camping trip.

**LORETTA:**

That was three years ago.

**GEORGE:**

Apparently he was never the same after that.

**LORETTA:**

God. [Pause] He should have known him before that. I'm sorry but until the man walks in our shoes he has no right to judge us. Let him deal with a psychopath in HIS house for a few years and see how he handles it. Pray boy, pray, let the demons out. Maybe we should have tried exorcism. This turkey's good.

**GEORGE:**

It came from Lorenzo's. They always make good turkey. Maybe we should have kept him in Hillside.

**LORETTA:**

Maybe. Maybe we should have enrolled him in art school. You know, copy those pictures on the match book covers. Art students are all so weird anyway. He'd have been with others of his kind.

**GEORGE:**

He might have done well. He had a talent for it.

**LORETTA:**

Now you say a nice word? NOW? Why didn't you say that to his face? Why didn't you tell him just once that you thought he had talent?

**GEORGE:**

Because he would have sat on his ass and done nothing with it just to get back at me. At least this way he was still drawing. You want a pickle?

**LORETTA:**

I'll pass. For all the good it got him.

**GEORGE:**

It might have kept him alive longer, you never know. He might have done this two years ago if he hadn't had his notebooks and his pencils. Hell, I gave him an easel for Christmas. That was encouragement, wasn't it? How far do you go before...before he uses it as a weapon against me. [Takes a bite of the pickle]

**LORETTA:**

What weapon?

**GEORGE:**

That's why he did all those things. To get back at me. To make me angry. To make me disappointed. [Picks up his sandwich again, takes a bite, chews, then begins again] He knew what he was doing was wrong, don't tell me he didn't. He just wanted to hurt us--me, he just wanted to hurt me. I don't know why. Maybe because I was the one to take him to Dr. Wallace back in kindergarten, I don't know. But no child does those things without purpose. Even this...even killing all those kids.

**LORETTA:**

And you think it was to get back at you?

**GEORGE:**

And you. At least partly yeah, I think it was. In spite of you taking the fall for his target practice.

**LORETTA:**

I was not going to let my child go to jail for an...accident. I was not going to have him labeled as some kind of psychopathic monster just because he didn't see that girl over there. He was shooting at birds. You heard him. He was shooting at birds, and one flew low and he took the shot and she was across the street. But if it had gotten out that he had done it...his life would have been over.

**GEORGE:**

A little irony in that, don't you think?

**LORETTA:**

(standing)

Well, I wish they'd hurry up. Oooo. We still have beer. I hid some in the basement. You want a beer?

X FADE TO STUDIO

**MAZOLLA:**

(Crossing up the stairs, carrying a small box to Lena, cleaning up the studio down right)

**MAZOLLA:**

(at her left)

Here. I brought you something.

**LENA:**

(turning toward him)

Who let you in?

**MAZOLLA:**

I'm a regular these days. They don't even ask any more. Here. It's a gift.

**LENA:**

(turning to the table, wiping it with the paper towel)

I'm not supposed to take gifts from impartial guests.

**MAZOLLA:**

[At her right] Who the hell ever said I was impartial?

[Pushing it in front of her] Go on, open it. I'm not the devil, you know.

**LENA:**

I never said...

**MAZOLLA:**

Yes you did.

**LENA:**

(Opening it and pulling out a small handgun)

Are you kidding me? I don't want this thing.

**MAZOLLA:**

[Edging her toward center] Why not? It's a thirty two. It's the perfect woman's gun. You can shoot your rapist in the nuts and he'll still live to stand trial. See? You can still be a lily-livered liberal, only you'll be well armed.

**LENA:**

(trying to hand it back to him)

I don't want it!

**MAZOLLA:**

[Putting his hand over the gun and her hand] Does it feel evil? Is there anything in how it lies in your hand that makes you want to kill anyone?

**LENA:**

(taking a step toward Vince, then trying to force him to take it)

I don't want it.

**MAZOLLA:**

(Releasing her and crossing behind her, to her left)

But it feels good in your hand, doesn't it? Not too heavy, not to

light? Don't you want to learn how to shoot it?

**LENA:**

NO!

**MAZOLLA:**

Don't you want to know what it is that you're against?

**LENA:**

I know what I'm against, Vince. I'm against the power that one of these things gives you.

**MAZOLLA:**

Of course it gives you power! It gives you the power over life and death. It gives you the power to protect yourself. Most of all it gives you the power to make the right decision when your life is threatened. Hell it gives you the chance to make that decision before some crazy comes in and blows you away. But that's all it does. It doesn't make you fire the damned thing. It just gives you alternatives to being massacred, unarmed in a school hallway or on the dark parking lot late at night, or in your own home. It's not evil. The gun is not evil. That guy, that guy who did that on Monday and the guys who shot your friends at e-town--they were evil. They were, not the guns they were holding. There is nothing wrong with you having that in your hand. A fact that the founding fathers found so important that they added the second amendment just so we remember it. Damn Lena, if everyone just held a gun in their hands, just held it, they'd understand this. They would. Just like you do now, whether you want to admit it or not.

**LENA:**

(backing away)

No. No. Take it! Take it! Get this...thing away from me now. NOW. You've never been shot at, have you? HAVE YOU. You didn't stand in a crowd of teenagers and look right down the barrel as it...

God, Vince. You are such a... Coward. This...kills people. Trust me, I've seen it. I don't want that power. I don't. Do you think I want the power to blow Billie Edison's brains all over the floor? Or kill five year olds on the way to recess? No one should have that power. No one. Jesus, Vince. Why don't you fight your own fights instead of hiding behind this? [Gun] Founding fathers, my ass. Those were muzzleloaders they were talking about. You ever try to load a muzzleloader, Vince? It takes three minutes, at least. All the kids at Sandy Hook were killed in the time it would have taken our founding fathers to reload their rifles five times. Five. Hell, after the first shot they'd have all had time to run out of the

building and down the street! Ten times at Columbine. Don't pull the founding fathers crap on me. They didn't know about guns that shoot 120 rounds a second. You think Jefferson would have agreed that that much fire power was a right? Madison? No, That's only for the schmucks who actually listen to the shit you spout. [Shoves in against Mazolla's chest, forcing him to take it] Now get out of here, goddamn you, or I'm going to load that sucker and let you see what it feels like to lie dead on the floor just like those kids.

**MAZOLLA:**

Feels powerful, doesn't it.

**LENA:**

[Turns away, sobbing]

**MAZOLLA:**

Fine.

**LENA:**

Why can't I stop this crying shit? [Sits on the floor and sobs]

X FADE TO BEDROOM

**NOELLE:**

(still sitting on the bed,  
reading)

I think he chose Notre Dame because of the uniforms. He always hated school uniforms.

**NIKKI:**

(working on her laptop, not  
looking up)

I think he just hated Catholics.

**NOELLE:**

Really?

**NIKKI:**

(to Noelle)

I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

**NOELLE:**

(slamming her book and  
getting up, frustrated)

Then why?

**NIKKI:**

Knowing Marty, it's probably because he liked the architecture. Goth for the goth.

**NOELLE:**

(crossing to Nikki)



He liked drawing that stuff, that's for sure.

**NIKKI:**

He liked drawing everything. [In mock salute] MonstroMan!

**NOELLE:**

(in mock salute, finally smiling)

Saving the world one latte at a time. Remember? He'd have to go to Starbucks in order to become a super hero?

**NIKKI:**

Maybe he didn't like church.

**NOELLE:**

He didn't, did he? He stopped going. [They return to their homework]

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**WALLACE:**

(1)

I never felt right about Marty leaving Hillside. I guess I should have had him committed, but, I didn't have any reason to. Not really. And the staff there insisted that there was nothing wrong with him. Honestly. So I let him come back home. In retrospect, I guess it was a mistake but, at the time, there was no reason... Really. Just another troubled young teen--how many young teens do we know that aren't? Honestly.

ADD PLATFORM 2

**PASTOR:**

(2)

After Nikki told me, I met with Marty after school. He was...cold. That's the only way to describe him. Just cold. He wouldn't talk about the night in the woods, or about his parents. I knew the old Marty, I knew how he'd been even a year or even months before and I couldn't help but believe that that kid was still in there somewhere. But it was as if someone had turned out the light. [Looks to Wallace momentarily] The trouble is, the longer it's dark, the less likely that light will ever come on again. [Wallace looks away] It wasn't that he was silent, we spoke but not like we used to. One of the things he said was that from now on nobody would know the things he did. He'd learned, he said, from now on nobody sees. And then he told me he was sorry and he left.

ADD PLATFORM 6

**MAX:**

(6)

There's a place out in the woods where Marty would go when he was upset. Hell's Half Acre, he used to call it. He'd gotten hold of an ax, not a hatchet but a big woodsman's axe and when he got mad he'd go out there and chop down trees. When he got kicked out of high school that first time, I followed him. I just wanted to make sure he was alright. All afternoon he just chopped and chopped and chopped. Chop, chop, chop. It was almost dark when I left him out there, he was still at it. You could hear him for miles. I don't know how he got out. There was something--wrong--about that place. It just scared me.

ADD PLATFORM 1

**BILLIE:**

(1)

I don't know whether the violence that happens to a person is the same as the violence that happens by a person. I've tried to think this through. And I think fine. That part of my brain wasn't hurt. Getting it out... I think sometimes that when people are hurt by accident that the violence is forgiveable. It's so much God's will and so little our own. How can you not forgive God? Even if you do it by saying God, this is what you wanted or you wouldn't have done this to me. You're still forgiving God. But when you see another person do you harm, when your body is violated and you go through all those feelings of helplessness and shame and guilt along with all that pain, it's easier to believe that it was all the same violence. That all of the hatred and anger and madness that was inside the guy who did this was somehow all bottled up and shot, along with the bullet, and that's why we feel so bad afterwards. That's why WE want revenge and violence and blood. Because I never felt this way before it happened. If I can forgive God, why can't I forgive the kids that did this? And I still, everyday, thank God they're dead. Every day.

(knock on the door, Pastor, Wallace, Willie and Billie return to their seats)

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(returning from the kitchen  
carrying two beers)

Oh God, now what? Isn't it over yet?

**GEORGE:**

(sitting on the couch, stands and crosses right)

Apparently not.

(answers the door)

Hello, Jennie. Forget something?

**JENNIE:**

(enters, sees Loretta and crosses center, in front of coffee table to meet her, still holding the beer)

No. Um.

**LORETTA:**

(turning left, George crosses to center, flanking Jennie)

I'll get the girls.

**JENNIE:**

No. No, that's alright. I...I wanted to speak with you. It... Do you remember when Marty got kicked out of school?

**LORETTA:**

(noticing the beer and putting them on the coffee table)

Ha. Which time?

**JENNIE:**

The first time.

**GEORGE:**

Kindergarten?

**JENNIE:**

No, no. High school. When we were freshman?

**LORETTA:**

How could we forget, we're still paying off our lawyer.

**JENNIE:**

It...it was my fault.

**GEORGE:**

You hit Sam Wilson in the head with that pipe?

**JENNIE:**

No, no.

**GEORGE:**

You called the police?

**JENNIE:**

No, one of the teachers did, I think.

**GEORGE:**

Then what are you guilty of?

**JENNIE:**

Marty made me promise never to tell anybody. [To Loretta] So I didn't. [To George] But now that he's...I feel so bad. If I hadn't...maybe things would have been different. [To ground] The fight was over me. Sam and Marty, they were fighting over me.

**LORETTA:**

(placing her hand on Jennie's shoulder)

Oh, my dear.

(George reaches behind Jennie, grabs and beer and crosses to the right end of the couch, where he sits, and sips)

**JENNIE:**

(to Loretta)

No, they were. You know how Marty was. And Sam...Sam said some things to me that were[turning to George for a second, then returning to Loretta]...they were...[to the ground] I think Sam had a crush on me and he didn't know what to say. So he told me I was pretty and that I should be a model and then he... [To Loretta] You know boys. They learn their manners from the internet.[George grunts] So Sam thinks its okay to reach over for...me and Marty's coming around the corner and I'm already pushing Sam away but...

**GEORGE:**

Then it wasn't your fault. Marty knew what he was doing.

**JENNIE:**

(crossing to right end of couch)

No he didn't. Did you ever see Marty when he goes nuts? Once he gets into that, he doesn't know anything. It's like he's a wild animal or something. I shouldn't have talked to Sam. I shouldn't have felt so flattered when he called me pretty. I wasn't flirting with him, Marty knew that or he might have gone after me to...o

**LORETTA:**

He never...

**JENNIE:**

Oh no. No, not ever. He was always sweet to me. Always. Even after this. [Pause, then, to George] I'm sorry. [Crossing to Loretta] I'm just so so sorry. If I'd have spoken up, then maybe Marty wouldn't have been kicked out. He'd have had a reason, you know? It might have helped. But he kept saying, don't tell anyone about you and Sam. Don't tell anyone. You had nothing to do with this. Promise me. And I promised. I'm sorry.

(sobs in Loretta's arms)

**LORETTA:**

It's okay.

(then looks over at George. George gets up, hugs both of them.)

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NIKKI:**

And one by one we were led into the room to watch as the pulleys turned and the gears on the wheels fell into place. Each one of us watching a different part of Marty as he was stretched tighter and tighter. Each one of us hearing his cries and still, even then, not understanding who, at any given time, was doing the tightening and where those cries would end. And the ratchet kept on. Click. Click. Click.

## **ACT 2 SCENE 2**

### LIGHTS UP ON PLATFORM 6

**NOELLE:**

(at platform 6 beside Nikki)

The day of the fight with Sam Wilson, after they kicked him out, he came home, it was after dark and he was really upset.

**NIKKI:**

Nobody would tell me what was wrong. I sat up there in my room and listened to them yell at him.

**NOELLE:**

How could he? Dad kept yelling. "How could you do this to us?" And Marty was crying. And Mom, Mom was as bad. "We can't even keep you in school. What's wrong with you? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU!"

**NIKKI:**

And Marty kept yelling "I don't know. I don't know" And Dad was screaming "You're doing this to us, do you understand?" Marty was crying and crying. Finally he ran up into our room and we locked the door. He just lay on Noelle's bed and sobbed and sobbed.

**NOELLE:**

So did I.

**NIKKI:**

So did I.

### X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**GEORGE:**

Can I get you another beer?

**LORETTA:**

That would be nice.

(George crosses up left and off)

**LORETTA:**

(sitting on the couch)

Do you think the girls inherited what Marty had?

**GEORGE:**

(from kitchen)

I don't know. Any violence on your side?

**LORETTA:**

Aunt Henrietta was bi-polar. Does that count?

**GEORGE:**

Not the same thing.

**LORETTA:**

Your dad?

**GEORGE:**

(entering, crossing to Loretta and handing her a beer over the back of the couch then crossing around the right end of the couch and sitting)

My dad was a disciplinarian, but he wasn't a monster. No, whatever drove Marty came from Marty himself.

**LORETTA:**

Your daughters will say the same thing.

**GEORGE:**

Nice to know he had a reason for beating the snot out of that Wilson kid. After all these years.

**LORETTA:**

I guess.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 6

**NIKKI:**

(still standing, speaking to audience)

"I hate myself. I hate myself." He kept saying that over and over and over.

**NOELLE:**

He wouldn't go back to his room.

**NIKKI:**

I think he was scared to go back down there. Even after they'd gone to sleep. He just didn't want to go back.

**NOELLE:**

From then on, whenever he needed to, he'd come up and sleep with us.

**NIKKI:**

But then they sent him away.[to Noelle] I'm sorry but that was just cruel. I hate them for doing that.

**NOELLE:**

They were trying to help.

**NIKKI:**

NO THEY WEREN'T. They were trying to get rid of him.

X FADE TO STUDIO

**WALLACE:**

[In Lena's studio on guest seat. Speaking to the camera.]  
Northfield Academy, that's right. It's a place for troubled kids--  
boys--teenagers. They had strategies for dealing with any number  
of problems from drug addiction to eating disorders, alcoholism, all  
manner of things. I really thought that Northfield might have  
straightened Marty up. They have a great record of success.

X FADE TO PLATFORM 4

**JENNIE:**

(4)

Marty's letters from Northfield broke my heart. He was miserable  
up there. They treated him like a criminal--it was boot camp and if  
there ever was anyone who didn't fit into boot camp it was Marty.  
He had the heart of an artist. Didn't anybody see that but me?  
(door knocks, Jennie return to her seat)

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**LORETTA:**

(standing)

What is this, grand central station?

**GEORGE:**

[Rising] I'll get it.

**LORETTA:**

(crossing to the door)

No, no. You got the last one. Though if its the Sheriff...

**PASTOR:**

Hello Loretta, George.

**LORETTA:**

(looks at the beer in her  
hand, and laughs)

Come on in.

**GEORGE:**

(crossing to shake his hand)

Pastor.

**PASTOR:**

I thought I should stop by after things had quieted down a bit.

**LORETTA:**



(to George's left)

You mean after I'd cooled off a bit.

**PASTOR:**

That too.

**GEORGE:**

(leading him into the room)

Can I get you something, coke, coffee, beer?

**PASTOR:**

Just water.

**LORETTA:**

(returns to her seat on the couch, Pastor sits in George's place)

That we have.

**PASTOR:**

How are you getting along?

**LORETTA:**

We're thinking of going out dancing tonight.

**GEORGE:**

(from kitchen)

Loretta!

**LORETTA:**

How do you think we're getting along?

**PASTOR:**

He was a troubled boy. I'm sure you did the best you could.

**LORETTA:**

Weak praise, don't you think? You think you could have done better?

**PASTOR:**

I don't have children so I'm really not at liberty...

**LORETTA:**

But you think you could have.

**GEORGE:**

(entering, with a glass of water for Pastor, and crossing to chair down right)

Loretta.

**LORETTA:**

We sent him to Northfield and he set fire to the school dormitory.

**PASTOR:**

An accident, perhaps?

**GEORGE:**

If it was he never said so. Did he to you?

**PASTOR:**

No.

(The girls enter from the outside door, Pastor stands)

**NIKKI:**

Hey Mom we're...home. Reverend.

**NOELLE:**

Hi.

**NIKKI:**

Anything new we should know about? A secret stash of weapons under the sanctuary?

**NOELLE:**

Nikki!

**PASTOR:**

No. I'm just terribly sorry for your loss.

**NIKKI:**

Really?

**GEORGE:**

(standing)

Nicole! Apologize to the reverend.

**NIKKI:**

For what?

**GEORGE:**

You know damned well. You apologize!

**NIKKI:**

Yes, sir. I'm sorry, Reverend.

**PASTOR:**

That's, that's quite alright.

**GEORGE:**

To your room, both of you now.

**NIKKI:**

Yes sir.

**NOELLE:**

(crossing)

Your mouth gets us in more trouble.

**NIKKI:**

You're lucky it's only my mouth. It could have been an AK47.

**GEORGE:**

(watching them leave before continuing. Still standing)

I suppose you think I was too harsh to them too?

**PASTOR:**

I never said that you were too harsh with Marty.

**LORETTA:**

(still sitting)

Oh come on. The whole town thinks that.

**PASTOR:**

I'm not sure throwing him out of the house was the answer but...

**GEORGE:**

You weren't here with him, were you?

**LORETTA:**

(still sitting, George sits in his chair as she speaks, Pastor turned to listen)

He didn't listen to us anymore. We finally got him into the Brooks Academy across town by begging the headmaster and promising that we'd make sure he was getting help. Their shrink wouldn't touch him.

(pastor crosses to right end of couch and leans against the arm)

**GEORGE:**

They didn't have a shrink. They had a school psychologist who doubled as the basketball coach. Marty was way too hard core for him.

**LORETTA:**

He wouldn't go. He wouldn't. Five hundred dollars for school uniforms and he wouldn't even put one on. What do you do with a kid like that? We threatened him. We bullied him. We'd drag him physically out of bed and push him into the car and he wouldn't go.

**GEORGE:**

He went once.

**LORETTA:**

Yeah and he told the homeroom teacher he was going to blow up the school. That's all it took. The next morning they called. "Not appropriate behavior for Brooks."

**GEORGE:**

Didn't matter, he took off that night with the uniforms in a plastic bag and we never saw them again.

**LORETTA:**

He wouldn't do anything. He'd just sit in his room with those crazy sketchbooks of his and stomp around slamming the doors and screaming at the top of his lungs about...

**PASTOR:**

You couldn't find him any help?

X FADE TO STUDIO

**WALLACE:**

(still at Lena's, Lena leaning  
in as if she'd just asked a  
question)

There was an appointment. Loretta had described his behavior as being...anti social, I suppose. So we made an appointment. I know they came in because I could hear them arguing in the outer office, but I was still with a client. By the time I got to the waiting room, Marty had stormed out and Loretta was in tears.

X FADE TO LIVING ROOM

**GEORGE:**

That was it. That was the last straw. [Standing, angrily, crossing a few steps toward Pastor] If he's not going to do anything and he's constantly disruptive and refuses to go to school then he can go and fend for himself. See how he likes living in the real world. Let him try to get a job, get money for food and a roof over his head. He'll learn then.

**LORETTA:**

We had to. Our whole family was being torn apart by him. I'll be damned if I'm going to let that happen. We've worked too hard on getting where we are to let him destroy everything we have.

**PASTOR:**

But he did.

(Loretta turns away in disgust)

**GEORGE:**

Get out.

**PASTOR:**

(standing)

I only meant

**LORETTA:**

(still turned away)

Get out now.

**PASTOR:**

I'm sorry, I am.

**GEORGE:**

I don't care. I'm tired of being judged by people who have no idea

what it was like to live with that...that animal. He went back out to the woods, that's where he went. That's where he deserved to live. That's where he deserved to live all along. Get out.  
(Pastor exits)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 1

**WILLIE:**

(1)

I just wanted to hug him and I couldn't anymore. I tried to talk to him--"Hey Marty, let's get a cup of coffee, or Hey Marty, you want to get high?" He'd look at me. He'd just look at me. And he'd walk off. He used to be so warm. He could be funny. Really funny. He would pick flowers along Haskell's pond and give them to us. But that Marty was gone. And I don't know where he ever went.

X FADE TO GIRLS BEDROOM

**NIKKI:**

(crossing from her desk and sitting beside Noelle on the bed)

You wanna see what I have?

**NOELLE:**

(looking up from her book)

What?

**NIKKI:**

[Climbing under the bed and pulling out a box]

You've got to promise nobody will ever know about these.

**NOELLE:**

(looking down at her from the bed)

You have them?

**NIKKI:**

This is where he kept them. After they kicked him out he needed a safe place for them.

(Nikki sits on the bed and puts the box on her lap)

**NOELLE:**

(as Nikki opens the box and pulls out one of, presumably, several sketch books. It's the same book Nikki had in the first act.)

Oh my God. Is that the last one he was working on?

**NIKKI:**

Yeah.

(she opens the book and she and Noelle sit side by side turning the pages and looking at it)

**NOELLE:**

Ohhhhh. God, Nikki. Look at them.

**NIKKI:**

I know.

**NOELLE:**

Marty!!!

(George and Loretta walk off the set, down the stairs and onto the island, center. George leads, Loretta follows, talking as they go)

X FADE TO PLATFORM 2

**LORETTA:**

How did you know he went to the woods? Did you follow him?

**GEORGE:**

Not after we kicked him out. Before. While we were fighting him over Brooks. The day he disappeared with the uniforms. I had to. I had to see.

[To audience]He would leave, you know how he'd just disappear. I wanted to know where so I took the day off and I followed him.

He's got this clearing way up off the trail. And all the logs and brush are piled up to make like a fort or something, I don't know. But he was only there to dump the bag of clothes and then here he came back down the trail and home. Loretta, I went into that fort. And he had this ax that I'm guessing he cut all that forest with. But...Loretta there was blood on that ax. And there was blood on some of the logs outside.

It scared the hell out me, Loretta. I didn't know what he killed out there, if he killed anything at all. But there was blood. And he was headed home. I didn't know what to do.

**LORETTA:**

You saw the ax? You saw the blood? And you didn't tell me?

**GEORGE:**

I didn't see any bodies. There's no one missing. No one had been stealing family pets in the neighborhood, had they? But wasn't it enough? I didn't want him in the house. What the hell else was I supposed to do with him?

**LORETTA:**

You could have told me. I didn't know what you were doing.

**GEORGE:**

He was my son. Up until then, I don't know, maybe I thought it would all blow over. He could grow out of it? [To Loretta] You felt the same way. But then...I couldn't admit that I was afraid of him. Not to you. Not out loud. No. No. "Get out of my house. Get out of my house and stay out. We've done all we can do for you. Get out, you're on your own."

**LORETTA:**

George...

**GEORGE:**

It was the right thing to do. You know it was. It kept you and the girls safe. That's what a father's supposed to do, isn't it?

**LORETTA:**

Yeah, it worked out real well, didn't it?

ADD PLATFORM 3

**SHERIFF:**

I can't get it out of my head. I've tried. I've sent two of the other deputies down to Florida for a few weeks to the post trauma center. But somebody's got to stay back here and run things, right?

Yeah, I fired some shots into him. We...I knew the kid. I was on duty when the kid came in, I put a blanket on him when he was nearly frozen to death that night. He cried on my shoulder.

And still I emptied my revolver into ... God.

**LORETTA:**

You told us your deputies did that. You prick.

**SHERIFF:**

You didn't see it. You weren't there.

**LORETTA:**

I was there in the morgue. That was enough.

**GEORGE:**

Loretta, shut up. Just shut up.

**SHERIFF:**

He was in the hallway. Down past the principal's office and the cafeteria doors. The smell of gunpowder hit us and then...this was a school, right? It's not supposed to be so quiet. Just quiet. Everything except for the sound of his shoes--he had those combat boots on and he was twitching so his boots were making the soft scuffing noise across the floor. The glass wall in the office was smashed and the principal and her secretary were dead on the floor. Blood and glass. That all there was, just blood and

glass and the bodies and that scuffing noise. And then...the first classroom was empty and I thought maybe...you know...maybe we were lucky. Maybe this was all there was. [Begins to cry] And then we got to the cafeteria and...and they were all in there. "Don't go in there" I shouted. "Don't" but the others, they wouldn't stay out.

They were so little. Like dolls, just lying there, so still, so silent, against the blood. All that blood. We didn't....I didn't. What do you do? And I went in and Pete Murphy, one of my men behind me slipped and fell in the blood and against the far wall a little blond haired girl began to cry. She was covered with it. Her teacher lay dead at her feet and she just cried. And others. And back behind the kitchen doors were a whole bunch more only he'd just shot into the doors so the teachers who were holding the doors to keep him out were killed right in front of the kids and the kids themselves were bloody and wounded and they started to scream because they thought we were going to shoot them too. And I'm on the radio screaming for all the ambulances there are and I hear gunfire. Shit, another shooter. And the kids scream and I slam the kitchen doors and try to run back across the cafeteria but it's so bloody it's hard to make any speed. It's like one of those dreams you have where you want to run but no matter how hard you try you can't get anywhere. And there's more gunfire and I finally make it to the hallway and there's Pete, and he's covered with the kids blood and he's crying and cursing and shooting into the boy's body like it's going to do any good.

I should have said stop. I should have stopped him. But those kids, and all the blood, and the screams and there was nothing I could do for them. I'm the damned Sheriff, and there's nothing and could do.

Yeah, I shot too. And so did the others. My God, so did the others. Over and over again. Kablam... Kablam.

Somebody had to do something. I had to do something.

ADD 4

### **MAZOLLA:**

There. You see? Guns matter. Guns are important. They gave them a sense of power. Of vengeance and if there was ever a time when vengeance was needed it was then. Guns did not do that crime. That boy did that. Those deputies didn't walk over and shoot the boy's weapons, they shot the boy. Even when he was dead, they continued to shoot the boy. The boy.



ADD 5

**MELODY:**

Here we go again. Guns don't shoot people, people shoot people, right? This is crazy. This was a troubled boy. What were we doing allowing this boy access to weapons?

**MAZOLLA:**

Because he's still an American. He's still protected under the Constitution and, until Monday, he'd done nothing to break the law. He was as much a citizen as you or I.

**MELODY:**

We should screen them. We should have background checks.

**MAZOLLA:**

He would have passed.

**MELODY:**

He was sixteen years old.

**MAZOLLA:**

I don't care if he was twelve. All across the country men take their children hunting. They teach them gun safety, they buy them their first rifles for Christmas. If everyone out there with a gun went their local school and did what that boy did, then I'd say take the guns away and so would the rest of the nation. But that's not going to happen. Guns are just politics. We live in a brutal society, taking way the symbol is not going to irradicate the cause. I'm sorry, sweetheart, but my conscience is clear.

**MELODY:**

What conscience?

**MAZOLLA:**

Come off it, Melody, this is just the cause of the day. What, attacking the pro-lifers isn't paying off the way you thought it would?

**MELODY:**

Go to hell.

**NOELLE:**

(from bedroom just upstage  
of Nikki)

It was your fault, Daddy. You made Marty what he was.

**LORETTA:**

Hear that, George? From your own daughter.

**NOELLE:**

You're just as bad. Look at what you did to him. Look. You think

the Sheriff and his deputies hurt Marty? Shoot, that's nothing compared to what you two did. And you don't even know it. This past year? This past year was nothing but hell for him. Did you care? You were too damned busy trying to find a doctor or a hospital or a school to undo everything that you'd done to him up until now that you never ever saw it. He loved you. Did you ever even consider that? Did you ever consider that everything he ever did from the time he could walk was for your approval?

**GEORGE:**

Well he had a hell of a way of showing it. You heard the Sheriff. You heard what he did. Well, he's got my approval now, by God.

**NIKKI:**

Will you shut up? I have no idea why he did that. Nobody does and nobody ever will. But he wouldn't have done it if you'd just given him a break.

**GEORGE:**

He set fire to the Northfield dormitory!

**NIKKI:**

You abandoned him in the woods in his underwear. And when the Sheriff called, you told him to send him back.

**LORETTA:**

We were trying tough love.

**NIKKI:**

Bullshit. You were just being cruel. That's all. Just cruel. Even his shrink said so.

WALLACE CROSSES TO PLATFORM 5 BESIDE MELODY

**WALLACE:**

That's great. You always want to blame us. "Why didn't they find help for him" "Why wasn't he given the care he needed" "He should have been locked up in an institution." You think I've slept at all since the shooting? Oh sure, we're supposed to leave these things in the office. Go ahead and try. I didn't make any mistakes with him. I didn't.

**GEORGE:**

Bullshit. Then why aren't Marty and all his victims alive right now?

**WALLACE:**

I DON'T KNOW. I don't know. Is there anyone here that didn't know he was in trouble? Why didn't you do something about it? Why didn't you lock him up before it happened? Why didn't you put him in a facility that at least would keep him away from guns. Why didn't you tell your teachers that you thought he was a threat

to society.

**NIKKI:**

What good would it have done, they'd already kicked him out.

**WALLACE:**

It would have raised a red flag.

**GEORGE:**

Christ, there were fifty red flags out there already. I didn't know what to do, okay? I didn't know what to do. I failed as a father. But I had to kick him out. I did. This last year, there were times when Loretta and I were scared for the whole family. We didn't know what that boy was going to do. He'd disappear out there in the woods. He could just as easily come in one night and killed all of us. Did you want that, Noelle?

ADD GIRLS BEDROOM [ALL DOWNSTAGE PLATFORMS,  
GIRLS BEDROOM AND STUDIO ARE LIT]

**JENNIE:**

(crossing to bedroom to  
stand beside Noelle)

He wouldn't have done that. He wouldn't have. Everybody thinks I broke up with him because I thought he was crazy. That's not the reason. I knew Marty. I knew he loved you guys, just like Noelle said. He'd never do anything to hurt you. Ever. I think that's why he killed himself. Whatever drove him to do those things...that wasn't against you, Mr. Canova. But when it was over, I think he killed himself to spare you the pain of him going to prison. He loved you. As much as anyone like him could love, he loved you.

**SHERIFF:**

I still see them. The innocents. I close my eyes at night and I can't seem to see anything else. Will that ever go away?

ADD STUDIO

**BILLIE:**

(on set with Lena)

With time, sometimes, it does.

**WALLACE:**

There are specialists for post traumatic stress.

**SHERIFF:**

I've seen them. And we talk about it. But it's not helping.

**BILLIE:**

(crossing to edge of studio)

I wish I had an answer. I was only a survivor, you...you were a first responder. I will always have the horrors here and here. I will see them every morning. And feel them with every step. You hope to forget...but I pray to remember. They shot my friends and I can't remember it. They killed my boyfriend out there on the court and I can't remember. I can't remember. They shot that part of my brain away and I want it back. I want to see it. I want to relive it once more. I want to know that I knew what happened when it was happening that I was a part of it and not just...a half brained spectator who everybody says is lucky to be alive. But I won't ever know. Sheriff, don't forget...please please don't ever forget.

**LENA:**

Where were you? Any of you? I'm here with all the power in the world. I can talk to more people in five minutes than any of you will in your lifetimes and you knew what this boy was capable of and you said nothing to anyone. How can we stop this if you all stay silent? Why didn't you stop him?

**LORETTA:**

We didn't know.

**GEORGE:**

Of course we knew. This past year. Darker and darker. We knew.

**LORETTA:**

Not that he would do this.

**GEORGE:**

We tried to get him to go back to Dr. Wallace but he wouldn't listen.

**NOELLE:**

He wanted help! He'd come home after you were asleep and sneak up into our room and just draw until he fell asleep. He wanted to be home.

**NIKKI:**

He wanted to be taken care of. He just wanted to be a little boy again. That's what he was drawing--pictures of when he was little. When he was happy. That's what his whole last sketchbook was about. Pictures of him playing in the woods. Climbing trees. Playing hide and seek with Noelle and me. Just a little boy.

**LORETTA:**

We never knew that.

**NIKKI:**

You never bothered to find out, did you?

**WILLIE:**

He got them at the gun show.

**JENNIE:**

You knew?

**NIKKI:**

God, Willie, why didn't you tell someone?

**WILLIE:**

You're kidding, right? He only had three friends in this world, us. Everyone else in his life had turned him in--I wasn't about to.

## MAX AND RICHARD JOIN WILLIE ON 1

**MAX:**

Me neither.

**RICHARD:**

Or me. And maybe I should have, but I wasn't about to then.

**MELODY:**

How the hell did he get guns if he was only 16?

**WILLIE:**

Adults are so stupid. The same way we get beer and cigarettes, you idiot.

**GEORGE:**

Who bought them for him? Who? That's the guy that should be arrested.

**WILLIE:**

Nobody bought them for him. He had his own id. It's not brain surgery. Those guys want to sell their stuff, Marty had the cash.

**MELODY:**

You see. A background check.

**MAX:**

NO. Jeez. It wouldn't have stopped him. He'd have used an ax, or a knife or dynamite. Marty was my friend but by the time you all got through with him, he had no idea what friendship was.

**WILLIE:**

I stayed by him--but every day I watched as he became less and less part of this life and more and more outside of it. Tell someone about it? What would I say that you didn't already know? What good was telling anyone going to do? These last few months? There was nothing we could do.

**RICHARD:**

Nothing.

**PASTOR:**

Of course there was!

**GEORGE:**

Pastor...

**PASTOR:**

I saw it. I saw the evil. You gave up on him.

**GEORGE:**

You live with someone like Marty and see how you deal with it.

**PASTOR:**

You don't give up on him.

**NIKKI:**

And where the hell were you? Hiding out in your church like a good little clergyman.

**LORETTA:**

Nicole!

**NIKKI:**

Marty dropped out of church the same as he dropped out of life. What did you do help him?

**PASTOR:**

I tried. He wouldn't come back.

**NOELLE:**

Not after he came back from Northridge. Why?

**PASTOR:**

It wasn't my place. God will lead him back if he chooses.

**NIKKI:**

Bullshit. He was too dangerous. He scared you.

**PASTOR:**

That's not true.

**NIKKI:**

You were afraid of what he might do one Sunday morning in your congregation.

**PASTOR:**

NO!

**GEORGE:**

Is that why?

**PASTOR:**

You didn't see what I saw in him. I couldn't save the boy. Not from here. He was already gone. Lost. But you were his family. Family has an obligation to family.

**NOELLE:**

Goddamn you.

**LORETTA:**

I didn't give up on him. I didn't! Every night I prayed that that boy would be healed. Every day I prayed that I could find some way to help him. I tried to reach out to him, I did. I tried. Even after we kicked him out I'd go looking for him--downtown at Starbucks or out in the woods. I tried to find him, to make sure he was eating. I tried.

**NIKKI:**

That was very...charitable of you, Mommy.

**LORETTA:**

You could have helped.

**NIKKI:**

I did. I gave him a place to sleep. Noelle and I snuck him sandwiches. We tried to keep him alive. More than you did.

**LENA:**

I quit. That's it. I don't think I can do this anymore. It's just too hard pretending that it doesn't matter. I never should have come back.

**BILLIE:**

Of course you should have.

**LENA:**

There should be a cause and effect, shouldn't there? It's not fair. I report a car wreck and it's somebody's fault. A murder case and it's right out there. A murdered B. A bad divorce, or insurance money, or the guy loses his temper, but it's cut and dried. Here's the reason, here's what happened, here's the verdict. This had no cause. Everything in this kid's life led to this. So who do you blame?

**BILLIE:**

The shooter.

**NIKKI:**

Click. Click. Click

**NIKKI:**

And the pulleys are turning again. Somewhere. And somewhere else the restraints are growing tighter and tighter. And the gears on the wheels are falling into place. Click.

**LENA:**

Who do we stop? I'm up here with an audience of millions and I can't stop it.

**NIKKI:**

Click.

**SHERIFF:**

I can't close my eyes. I can't sleep. All I see is those little dolls laying there in the blood. I can't. I can't get past this.

**NIKKI:**

Click

(Lena's cell phone goes off, Lena quickly answers it, turning away from the audience in a prolonged conversation)

**GEORGE:**

Don't point your finger at me. Don't you dare. I was a good father to that child. I was. I still have two other children to take care of. Don't think this will have any effect on how I raise them. I was a good father. I sleep fine at night.

**NIKKI:**

Click

**WILLIE:**

I'll miss him. No matter what he did I'll still miss him. Is that wrong of me? I'll never go back in the woods. I can't do that.

**NIKKI:**

Click. Still, it just keeps going. Click. Click.

**JENNIE:**

I'm not sure I can live with this. I'm not. He died because of me, I know he did.

**WALLACE:**

No, dear, he didn't. Put that thought out of your head.

**NIKKI:**

Click. And those pulleys keep turning in all of us. And life gets harder, and the little stresses get bigger and bigger until they get enormous and the gears drop into place and things begin to tear and pop and inside, inside some of us will begin to scream. "Make it stop. Make it stop."

**LENA:**

Christ. I've got to go. Some kid just blew away his professor and a whole classroom at NYU.

(silence as the others look to each other. Nobody reacts. Some silently tear up)

**NIKKI:**

Click. Click.

**BILLIE:**

Wait, I think I'll come with you.



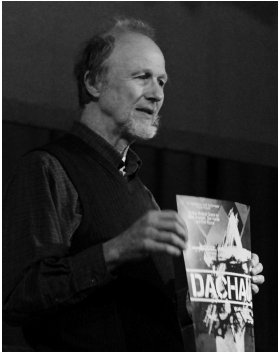
**NIKKI:**

Click.

END OF PLAY

**NOTES**

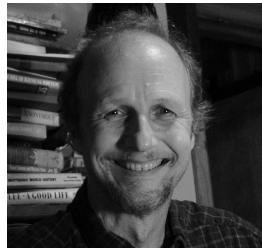
## About the Author



Dan Kehde is a Charleston, WV- based playwright, librettist and director who, for the past 25 years, has served as co-founder and managing director for the The Contemporary Youth Arts Company of Charleston, WV, an organization dedicated to giving young artists hands on opportunities to bring new

works to the American stage. A nearly unfunded, for profit theater company, CYAC has produced over 60 new works in the past 20 years including 17 new Scarpelli-Kehde musicals , more than thirty new plays and ten touring social action one-acts.

Together with his perservering wife, Penny, Dan continues to work with the young people of CYAC while constantly striving to challenge the ever changing lists of new actors that come into the company. Dan is currently working on new pieces of musical theater with composer/collaborator Mark Scarpelli, as well as continuing to create and produce three or four new plays of his own each year.



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