

**SHARDS – THE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE**

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ACT ONE

Scene 1 School hallway

Scene 2 Hospital

Scene 3 School hallway

Scene 4 Street

Scene 5 Courtroom

Scene 6 Street

Scene 7 The Lewis home

Scene 8 Jim's space

Scene 9 Street

Scene 10 Laura's space

Scene 11 Classroom

Scene 12 School auditorium

Scene 13 Street

ACT TWO

Scene 1 Joe's space

Scene 2 Courtroom

Scene 3 John's space

Scene 4 Doctor's office

Scene 5 Sue's space

Scene 6 Courtroom

Scene 7 The parents' space

N.B. All locations are only suggested, most with no set pieces at all.

CHARACTERS 8 actors: 4 male, 4 female, all playing multiple roles

<p>FEMALE #1 Black age range: teens – late 20s</p>	<p>Sarah Jessup, 15, victim Nurse Beverly Wendrow, TV Reporter Whitney, high school student Narrator#3</p>
<p>FEMALE #2 White age range: teens – late 20s</p>	<p>Amy Dadoro, 17, victim Narrator #2 Janet, high school student Mary Louise Jackson, town resident Psychiatrist Carol Peterson, teacher</p>
<p>FEMALE #3 White age range: 40s – 50s</p>	<p>Ann Reilly, victim’s mother Sue Walker, town resident Marsha Bergen, school principal</p>
<p>FEMALE #4 White age range: 30s – 40s</p>	<p>Laura Dadoro, victim’s mother Connie Lewis, shooter’s mother Gail, co-counsel for plaintiffs</p>
<p>MALE #1 White age range: teens – late 20s</p>	<p>Tommy Lewis, shooter, 15 Jason Reilly, victim, 14 Narrator #1 Defense Lawyer for Tommy Lewis Chris, high school student Brian Dedderly, video game producer</p>
<p>MALE #2 White age range: teens – early 30s</p>	<p>Mike Rutkowski, victim, 16 Sheriff Dan Willett Jim, Tommy’s friend Adam, high school student Charles Evans, counsel for plaintiffs</p>
<p>MALE #3 White age range: 40s</p>	<p>Joe Rutkowski, victim’s father Dave Lewis, shooter’s father Dominic Luce, film producer</p>
<p>MALE #4 Black age range: 30s - 40s</p>	<p>Policeman John Jessup, victim’s father Goeff Sendek, TV reporter Reverend Stark, pastor Ron, dot-com company president</p>

ACT ONEScene One

School hallway

Lights up. SARAH enters with backpack.

SARAH

God, is there anything worse than a Monday morning with rain? Okay, okay, how about a Monday morning with rain, with a project due? I mean, it's bad enough just trying to get out of bed on Monday, and then we've got this major project due in world cultures and mine's not really done. I mean it's almost done. I have the pictures glued on the poster board and everything but I found out we were supposed to label all the countries and put in the major crops. I have just got to get this thing finished before third period.

JASON enters with backpack.

JASON

So I go to put stuff in my locker, and there's never enough room and shit is falling all over the place and Lenz goes by and he's always on me about something, and he says, "Hey, Jason, what you got in there, raccoons?" Lenz thinks he's Jerry Seinfeld or somebody. Geez, here I am soakin' wet 'cause we got caught in the rain comin' in. Who needs this?

AMY enters with books, etc.

AMY

I'm running kind of late, but who cares? Guess I overslept and my mother is like, "Amy, you absolutely must eat your breakfast!" She is on me all the time to drink orange juice or take vitamins or something. It's like all she ever talks about. She is so incredibly worried that I'm going to turn out anorexic or something, and I am just like, "Mom, will you please chill?"

MIKE enters with backpack.

MIKE

So I get inside the door and there she is. Dynamic Diane in all her glory. I practically run right into her. Three inches more and my size tens would have landed right on her dainty little shoes. And she's just standing there in the hall, kind of doing this thing looking at her fingernails. So what do I do? What does Mike Rutkowski, the dork of the year, do? I drop my friggin' lunch at her feet!

## SARAH

All my markers except for red-orange are now totally dried up. I can see it now. Next report card, my world cultures mark will be in the toilet. I can just hear my dad. "Sarah, if you want the privileges of a grownup, you must learn to handle the responsibilities of a grownup." How can I do this whole thing in red-orange? What am I going to do?

## JASON

We were only a couple of blocks from school and there was this instant rainstorm and I said to Joe, "Why don't we run, man?" And he says, "What's the big deal with a little rain? We're runnin' track this afternoon, rain or no rain." And I said, "That's different!" Now there's water just drippin' down the back of my neck.

## AMY

And Vicki says, "Look at my hair! It's a disaster!" So I say to her, "Your hair looks the way your hair looks every other day of the week. Lighten up!" And she stalks off down the hall like she's really angry. What is with everybody? It is like so tense around here ever since Mrs. Bergen said the seniors can't have the after-prom party at the Sportspace. Like, what is the big deal?

## MIKE

So my lunch bag falls onto the floor, and the juice box breaks and now there's purple fruit stuff running over everything. And Diane is just standing there looking at the bag and looking at me and looking at the bag and looking at me. Jesus, I want to crawl into the floor.

## SARAH

The bell is about to ring. I am going to be toast! This is so pointless. I am almost at the door of my homeroom when I hear ---

SARAH looks pointedly offstage.

## JASON

The locker's a disaster, but I get my hand on my French book. I have French first period. Then I turn around and see on the other side of the hall ---

JASON turns, looks in the same direction.

## AMY

I'm checking my hair in my locker mirror and I see behind me Pete Shaffly sort of like, jumping backward, and I turn around to say, "Hey, Pete, what are you ---"

MIKE

Diane is looking at me like “drop dead, freak” and all I can see is her eyes, so I don’t even see when it all starts.

SARAH

There’s a commotion in the hall and somebody is yelling something and ---

JASON

I see him and he’s puttin’ in earplugs, and I’m thinkin’, what the ---

AMY

And Shaffly’s yelling, “His backpack, his backpack, he’s got a ---” and I can’t hear the rest and ---

MIKE

I think he was off to the side.

SARAH

And the way he’s holding this ---I thought it was a toy, but it looks like it’s heavy, the way he’s holding it and ---

JASON

It’s really weird, just like in a movie. He just starts---

JASON drops his book.

AMY

These loud, popping sounds that are---

SARAH drops her stuff.

SARAH

Echoing off the walls and the lockers and the noise is---

MIKE

It’s deafening, and he’s firing and firing and firing and---

MIKE’S backpack falls to the floor.

JASON

And just pulling it off really fast, one after---

Each clutches at his/her throat, arms,  
middle. All now speak in detached tones.

MIKE

The other, just letting a whole bunch of them go, like, bam, bam---

SARAH

Over and over and it feels hot and---

AMY

Wet and there's a kind of---

MIKE

Burning that is taking over and---

JASON

Making everything fall away and it's---

AMY

Turning everything---

JASON

Inside out until---

SARAH

I can't breathe and---

AMY

It feels like I'm---

MIKE

Losing more and more---

SARAH

Until there's nothing---

Absolutely nothing---

AMY

Nothing, nothing . . .left.

JASON

All stop their contortions. Pause.

And then it was over.

MIKE

Lights down. All exit.



Scene Two

Hospital

Lights up. NURSE enters. LAURA enters.

LAURA

Where's my daughter? Her name's Amy Dadoro. She was brought in from the high school. She's---

NURSE

Dadoro? Yes. She's--- the doctors are with her. I'm afraid I can't tell you more than that.

LAURA

Can I see her? She's only seventeen.

NURSE

Not right now. Please take a seat.

JOE enters.

JOE

My boy's here somewhere. I want to know---

NURSE

His name?

JOE

Mike. Mike Rutkowski. Do you know how bad he's hurt?

NURSE

I'm afraid I can't tell you anything. The doctors are doing the very best they can. If you'll just have a seat. You too, Miss, please, if you'll just sit down.

LAURA

All right, but I need to know something. I can't just---

JOHN enters.

JOHN

Where is she? Where's my daughter?

NURSE

Your daughter's name?

JOHN

Sarah. Sarah Jessup. She's fifteen years old.

NURSE

Oh, yes. But you're going to have to wait, sir.

JOHN

I just want to know where she---

NURSE

We're doing the best we can. You must understand that---

JOHN

Someone must tell me how she is. Somebody must be able to---

NURSE

Now, if you'll just take a seat, we'll be with you in a ---

ANN enters.

ANN

Where is he? Where's my son?

NURSE

Ahh, I'm sorry. Your son---

ANN

Jason, Jason Reilly. They called me. Told me to come.

NURSE  
(Checking her clipboard)

Oh, yes. Reilly.

ANN

I've got to know. I want to know how he is.

NURSE

I'm afraid I can't tell you anything right now, Mrs.---

ANN

You don't understand. They said on the phone it was serious. Is he---

NURSE

Mrs. Reilly, if you'll just take a seat over here, I'm sure that very soon we'll be able to have some answers for---

JOHN

But what about my daughter? How is she doing? Do you know any---

NURSE

I'm sorry, sir, I'm afraid I can't tell you anything just yet. I'm afraid that---

JOHN

Do you know if Sarah was conscious when they brought her in?

NURSE

If all of you will try to stay calm, I'm sure---

ANN

How can I? What kind of a place is this?

LAURA

How long will it be? How long before I know whether she's---

JOE

This is crazy! Do you have any idea what it feels like to---

NURSE

Sir, I'm sorry but you're just going to have to---

JOHN

We must have some answers. We can't just sit here.

JOE

How the hell can I do that when I don't know what's going on in there?

LAURA

This is a nightmare! Do you understand? A nightmare!

Pause. JASON & AMY enter as narrators.

JASON AS NARRATOR #1

All told, fifteen kids were shot in the school hallway that morning. For eleven of them, the injuries were minor.

AMY AS NARRATOR #2

There was blood, there were bandages, but those eleven got to go home. For the rest, it was a different story.

JASON AS NARRATOR

Fifty-five minutes after the shooting, Sarah Jessup was dead.

AMY AS NARRATOR

Sixteen-year-old Mike Rutkowski died in surgery.

JASON AS NARRATOR

Amy Dadoro died later that night.

AMY AS NARRATOR

Fourteen-year-old Jason succumbed to his wounds the next morning.

Pause. JOHN, ANN, NURSE, LAURA  
& JOE exit.

Scene Three

School hallway

JASON AS NARRATOR

Of course, there were others.

AMY AS NARRATOR

A mother, a father. Not all that different from the parents at the hospital.

JASON AS NARRATOR

They sat on the same side of the auditorium at the last PTA meeting.

AMY AS NARRATOR

They worked on the bake sale to raise money to buy equipment for the computer lab.

JASON AS NARRATOR

These parents were like the others in a lot of ways.

AMY AS NARRATOR

But there was one major difference.

JASON AS NARRATOR

Connie and Dave Lewis didn't get called to the hospital.

AMY AS NARRATOR

Connie heard about the trouble on the radio.

JASON & AMY exit. CONNIE enters.

CONNIE

I just caught the end of it. Something about a shooting at the high school. Kids hurt. I took a few minutes to gather some blankets. I thought maybe they'd be needed, if there were a lot of them hurt, or even just scared. Teenagers can get so panicked. I was thinking about Tommy, of course. He's just fifteen. Somehow though, I felt sure he was okay. I don't know why, but I just knew. Before I left, I called Dave at work. He said he was on his way.

DAVE enters.

DAVE

I had this...fear, this terrible...fear as I drove to the school. It seemed to me, I was going to get bad news, hear that something awful had happened. I couldn't shake the feeling. Every red light I came to seemed to convince me of the fact that I was going to be told something horrible.

CONNIE

I remember just feeling numb when I got there. I sat for a minute before I got out of the car. I had to shake myself, make myself get out. I took the blankets and went inside the building. The school secretary looked at me funny as I walked in the door.

DAVE

The principal was at the door when I drove up. Her face was twisted, and she gave me this forced smile. I didn't know what to make of it. She touched me on the shoulder. "Come down the hall," she said. "Come to my office," something like that. I said, "Ms. Bergen, whatever it is, I can take it. Whatever you have to tell me, I can hear it. You don't have to hold it back."

CONNIE

I stood there in the hall for a minute, holding the blankets, not knowing what to do, where to go with them. Sharon, the secretary, said, "Ms. Bergen wants to see you in her office. It's just down the hall." I thought, I know where her office is. We've been coming here for years. My daughter graduated last May. My son's a sophomore.

DAVE

Ms. Bergen told me to sit down and asked if I wanted coffee. Just tell me, I said. Tell me what's wrong. Finally, she said, "It's Tommy." I said, "How badly is he hurt?" "No, no," she said, "he's not hurt." I thought about the way she emphasized the "he." She looked down at the floor. And then she told me.

CONNIE

Dave was already there when I got to Ms. Bergen's office.

DAVE

It's Tommy. They say it was Tommy who did the shooting.

CONNIE turns to DAVE.

CONNIE

Tommy? Our Tommy?

DAVE

Yes. That's what they say.

CONNIE

That doesn't make sense. How can---

DAVE

Ms. Bergen told me. She says it was Tommy who---

CONNIE

No. No. They must be---

DAVE

Connie, Connie, listen. They saw him. He had a gun. And...more in his backpack.

CONNIE

But there must be a mistake. There must be---

DAVE

No. She said there's no mistake.

Pause.

What do you say when somebody tells you your son has shot somebody? Maybe killed somebody? How do you respond to that?

CONNIE

We are members of the church. We go regularly. We believe in God. How can this be?

DAVE

Do you say "sorry?" Is that the right word? I'm sorry he did this?

CONNIE

I've raised my children, I thought I raised my children to be good people, to be kind, to be---how could this have happened?

DAVE

What life experience could possibly prepare you to hear such a thing about a son?

Lights down. CONNIE & DAVE exit.



Scene Four

Street

Lights up on GOEFF holding a microphone.

GOEFF

I'm standing outside sprawling Central City High School where gunfire erupted yesterday morning. When the shooting stopped, four teenagers were mortally wounded, eleven others were injured, and one teenager was taken into custody. It's still not clear why the youth opened fire in a crowded hallway as students poured into the building for the start of another week of classes.

Eyewitnesses say there appeared to be no provocation for the attack. The gunman is believed to be a fifteen-year-old sophomore with no reported history of any kind of trouble. No expulsion, no suspension, in fact, as far as we've been able to determine, the teenage gunman's record shows that he never even got a detention. One teacher described the boy as "average," a kid who pretty much blended into the background...at least until yesterday... Meanwhile, four families in this troubled community have begun the agonizing task of preparing to bury a son or a daughter. This is Goeff Sendek for KQAV.

GOEFF exits.

SUE enters, talking on her cell.

SUE

All right, now we've got to have everything ready by the time they get back from each of these funerals. You and Milly will be at the Jessup's, Corinne and that new girl will go to the Rutkowski's, Janice and me will be at Ann Reilly's and Gwen and Rosalie will go to the Dadoro's. And it's going to be raisin-nut bread, butterscotch pecan rolls and banana ambrosia ring .... I know, I know, Patti, but we can't have people going off in all different directions. If you are determined to make Blueberry Buckle, Corinne will say she's got to make double-apple fantans, and then Rosalie will do ..... exactly. And who wants to come in from a funeral and eat green-chile corn bread? I don't know about anybody else, but in my opinion, green-chile corn bread is totally inappropriate for a wake. I mean, people in mourning, people overcome with grief, they don't want to chow down on chile peppers and bacon .... I know it's her heritage, Patti, but suppose Gwen walked in with golumpkis and chruscikis? It's not a bleedin' international foods exhibit, it's coffee and cake after a funeral. I remember Elvira Burbage coming up to me after we did the spread for Jerry Coyne's funeral. Sue, she said to me, that was about the most elegant wake I have ever had the pleasure of attending. Do you think Mrs. Burbage would have said the same thing about green-chile corn bread?

SUE exits.  
Lights down.

Scene Five

Courtroom

Lights up on AMY.

## AMY AS NARRATOR

It started with one little bunch of carnations on the front steps of the school. Classes were cancelled, of course, but the mounds of flowers grew and grew. Soon there were teddy bears, balloons and candles as well, all piled high in front of the school sign that was mostly used to announce upcoming basketball games. The notes and prayers pretty much all said the same thing. We miss you, we love you, we're sorry.

Then came the funerals. People got dressed up on weekday afternoons and walked into overcrowded funeral homes. Mourners lined up next to caskets holding kids who weren't quite out of braces. Eulogies that told about boy scouts and soccer playoffs, babysitting and camp counselling were written and rewritten. And then, long lines of cars wound their way up and down the roads to places where the earth was freshly-turned at the cemetery. It seemed as if it would never stop raining that whole long week in March.

Eventually though, April came and soon enough, it was time for the arraignment.

DEFENSE LAWYER enters, begins taking papers from a briefcase.

Tommy Lewis was charged as an adult with four counts of murder. His parents were there, but they sat apart from the others in the crowded courtroom. Dozens of witnesses told how they saw him put earplugs in his ears, pull a gun from his bag and open fire on a hallway filled with students. Sheriff Dan Willett described the weapons.

WILLETT enters.

## WILLETT

All fifteen victims were shot with a 9-millimeter Glock semi-automatic pistol that had been concealed in a sports equipment bag. Also in the subject's possession were a Ruger 10-22 with a collapsible stock and a 30-30 rifle, 200 rounds of 22 caliber cartridges, and four boxes of 9-millimeter cartridges. The pistol belonged to the subject's father, the other weapons were apparently taken from an uncle's basement. The suspect admits firing at the students.

Pause.

He states he doesn't know why this happened...

WILLETT (Cont'd.)

Pause.

The suspect is .... fifteen years old.

WILLETT exits. LAWYER addresses an  
unseen judge.

LAWYER

Your honor, this case is somewhat of a unique situation. It is not our intent at this arraignment to deny the events that occurred at Central City High School on the eleventh of March. But at this time we decline to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty.

Pause.

Yes, your honor. A routine plea of not guilty would be acceptable. We do, however, wish to shed some light on what we believe to be a critical factor in this case, namely, the mental status of the accused. We therefore request a complete psychiatric evaluation.

Pause.

Thank you for granting our request.

Pause.

Yes, your honor. A trial date of October 16th is acceptable.

AMY AS NARRATOR

With that, the arraignment was over. Tommy's parents spoke to no one and left immediately. Other parents had plenty to say.

AMY exits. ANN & JOHN enter.

ANN

I don't understand what happened.

JOHN

Oh, the legal wheels have just begun to grind.

ANN

They're saying he's crazy?

JOHN

Sure. Mental incompetence, incapacitation, whatever. I can hear it now.

LAURA & JOE enter.

JOE

Right. And he'll get off scot-free.

LAWYER

Actually, that is a fairly common misconception. It's really not true that a large number of defendants plead insanity and get away with murder.

JOHN

I seriously doubt that. We can all see where this is going.

LAURA

Absolutely. We know how this is going to work out.

JOE

It'll all be cut and dried. He'll walk. And my son is...gone.

LAWYER

I'm very sorry, sir.

JOE

Well, what good does that do? You lawyers are all alike!

ANN

My son was only fourteen, mister. In May, his next birthday, he'd be...would have been fifteen.

LAWYER

Look, I'm...I'm very sorry. My client is...a troubled young man. He has a lot of problems. I'm very sorry about your loss.

LAWYER exits.

JOE

Yeah, he's got problems all right. It's all hogwash. Did you see how he just stood there? Wouldn't even look over here. The whole thing makes me sick.

LAURA

We're going to have to make our own case. That's all.

JOHN

You're right. I haven't been able to think of it in legal terms until now. But I think I'm finally ready to.

ANN

Oh, I don't know.

JOE

I had a fellow call me the other night. Said we've got an excellent case. That's the word he used. Excellent.

ANN

Whatever we do, whatever anybody does, it's not going to bring my Jason back.

JOHN

It won't bring any of them back, but we've got to try. We must pursue the legal avenues.

ANN

Oh, who cares about the legal avenues? I don't even know why I came here today.

LAURA

You came for the same reason the rest of us did. You want something from this kid.

JOE

An eye for an eye, I say. That kid for mine. That's how I feel about it.

ANN

I don't want this boy dead. What would that do? Another funeral? More business for the undertaker? Haven't we had enough?

JOHN

But what about the rest of them?

ANN

What do you mean? He was the only one who---

JOHN

The teachers, the principal. Somebody must have seen something in this boy. Somebody must have known.

LAURA

What about his parents? How could he sleep in their house, eat dinner at their table, without them knowing what was going on in his mind?

JOHN

Sarah's friends tell me they heard his favorite movie was about some kid who takes a gun to school and kills other students. "Bloodfest," I think it's called. They say he and a couple of other kids talked about it all the time.

LAURA

And what about those computer games? You know, the graphic ones that are all blood and gore? Not to mention the pornographic stuff you can access these days. A kid this age watching all that obscene stuff, role-playing violent games, it had to have had some influence on him. I just don't understand why nobody saw it. Why didn't his teachers pick up on it?

JOE

Oh, everybody's the same, nobody wants to get involved. Teachers, the principal, they're like everybody else. All they want is more money, more days off. A kid like this running around on the loose. They knew. They just didn't care.

JOHN

The way I see it, there are a lot of people who shirked their responsibility here. If we can only find---

ANN

Oh, what difference does it make? What good will it do?

JOE

I'll tell you what good it'll do. My boy would want me to go after this kid. He'd sure as hell want me to go after somebody. All right, maybe not to kill...but to get, to get...

JOHN

To get an answer. To find justice. A resolution. I'll tell you this, Ann, if you give up on this, if you just say you don't care what happens, that's almost like saying your son doesn't matter.

ANN

That's a horrible thing to say! Of course he matters.

JOHN

Then prove to the world that he matters enough to go after the people who stood by and allowed this to happen. Somebody is responsible. We've got to find out who it is. Take them to court. It's the only thing that makes sense.

JOE

He's right!

ANN

Why? What are we going to get out of it?

LAURA

Well, if we win the case---

JOE

We can't lose! The guy said---

JOHN

We can't simply turn our backs on this. Just walk away without even trying to get---

ANN

What? Money?

JOHN

The satisfaction of knowing that we did all we could, that we exhausted every avenue. We must find the answer.

ANN

But what if there is no answer? What if it takes forever and there is no answer? What if we have to stop?



LAURA

Let it take forever. I'll never stop. As long as we chase this, my Amy lives. She breathes with every move I make on this. I'll never stop. I'll never give up. As long as I fight this, my Amy is alive. Your son can be too.

ANN

Jason, alive? What are you talk---

LAURA

You gave him life! Don't let somebody just take it away, not without---

ANN

Stop! Stop! You don't know what you're talking about! None of you know what you're talking about!

LAURA

But we all feel the same way. Our kids are gone, too.

JOE

And if we all stick together we can fight this together.

JOHN

Listen to us. Try to under---

ANN

No, I won't listen! I won't listen another minute! You people and your talk of answers and justice and finding resolution. Don't you get it? Don't any of you get it? My Jason is dead and buried. He's lying in a hole in the ground. They put him in his only suit, a suit with the pants too short 'cause he shot up so much this year. But what did it matter? He's never going to stand up again. Never going to run again. Never going to fly down that track, doing his hundred meters, so fast, like lightning .... I think now that's what his whole life was like. Bright. Brilliant ... and gone in a flash, like a bolt of lightning. You want answers? His father's looking for answers in the bottom of a beer can. Me, there's only one answer I want. Just one. I want to know why my boy is lying under a mound of dirt with me still walking around? I want to know why they didn't just shovel me in there with him and have done with it?

Lights down. All exit.

Scene Six

Street

Lights up on GOEFF holding microphone.

GOEFF

The investigation into the shootings at Central City High continues. The young man at the center of the story, fifteen-year-old Tommy Lewis, is being held at a facility for juvenile offenders upstate as he awaits trial.

WILLETT enters.

Sheriff Dan Willett has taken a moment to talk with us this morning. Sheriff, it's been reported that you believe there was some sort of conspiracy behind the shootings.

WILLETT

Oh, I don't know that I'd exactly call it a conspiracy.

GOEFF

But you do believe that Tommy Lewis did not act alone?

WILLETT

He was the only one pulling the trigger, that's for sure. But there's a bit more to it than that. My question is---why did he need all that firepower? He took the pistol that he used out of his own house. But why did he go to the trouble to take two more guns from his uncle's place? I think this boy figured he was going to have some help. I think somebody else was in on the game plan but backed out of it that morning. Naturally enough, people don't want to think about such a thing, but I say, what if we've got more than one kid running around out there with this kind of thing on his mind?

GOEFF

Is there any evidence that would link anyone else to the shootings?

WILLETT

No, no evidence.

GOEFF

Then what makes you think---

WILLETT

Look . . . it's just this. This boy is not exactly an aggressive type, he's not a belligerent kind of youngster at all. He's polite, well-mannered, almost soft-spoken. It's difficult to believe that he . . . oh, I guess just about everybody's got an idea on this thing. Everybody's looking for answers. There's got to be some kind of answer. Just got to be.

GOEFF

Was there anything that turned up in the search of the Lewis home? Anything that struck you as out of the ordinary?

WILLETT

Well, of course, the idea that a boy his age would have in his possession boxes of ammunition underneath his bed is pretty out of the ordinary. Aside from that, there was the standard stuff you might find in any kid's room. You know, candy wrappers, school books, CD's, movie ticket stubs, oh, and a certificate from his confirmation.

GOEFF

Confirmation?

WILLETT

You know, a paper saying he made his confirmation, professed his faith at St. Luke's Church on so and such day. You reporters may want to talk to the Reverend Stark about that. I've probably said more than I should already.

GOEFF & WILLETT exit.  
Lights down.

Scene Seven

The Lewis home.

Lights up on DAVE. CONNIE enters.

DAVE

So ... what was it like?

CONNIE

It was ... nice. Really, quite nice. The driveway is lined with poplars and it looks kind of like a mansion, almost. It has that feel to it. There are these big windows all across the front, hung with long, formal drapes, all satin and fringed.

DAVE

Were they pleasant to you? I was afraid they might be a little, a little rough.

CONNIE

Oh, they were very nice. Very nice indeed. There's a young woman who sits in a little booth at the door---

DAVE

A guard?

CONNIE

I guess.

DAVE

She's in a uniform?

CONNIE

Yes, she---

DAVE

With a gun?

CONNIE

I ... don't remember. Anyway, she controls the ... who comes and goes and she was very kind about making sure I had a comfortable chair and that the heat was up in the room while I waited for him. She was very nice. And then they brought him down.

DAVE

So what did he say? Did he say anything?

CONNIE

Of course. We talked---

DAVE

I mean, about...what he did.

CONNIE

Well, we didn't talk about that.

DAVE

Did you ask him?

CONNIE

No, not actually. I thought...if he didn't say anything, I wouldn't bring it up. And he didn't. Remember the doctor said that would be best?

DAVE

I guess.

CONNIE

She said it's probably a good thing to just...wait until he's ready to...talk about it.

DAVE

So what did you talk about?

CONNIE

Food, mostly.

DAVE

Food?

CONNIE

He looks okay. I mean, he looks like he's sleeping, like all of that's okay, but he said that the food, it's not what we eat here.

DAVE

Of course, it's not what we eat here. It's a facility for juvenile offenders.

CONNIE

I'm just telling you what he said. You want to know, don't you?

DAVE

Yes. I want to know.

CONNIE

Anyway, he says all they have for breakfast is cheerios and raisin bran. You know he likes Lucky Charms. So I went down to the office to ask the supervisor.

DAVE

You left him alone? You're not supposed to---

CONNIE

I didn't leave him alone. On my way out, I stopped at the office and asked for the supervisor. He was off somewhere so I talked with his assistant, a nice young man. I asked him if Tommy could have---

DAVE

Oh, Connie.

CONNIE

What?

DAVE

I don't think that...what he's eating for breakfast is hardly important.

CONNIE

Well, it's important to him. I've always stressed that breakfast is---

DAVE

You can't expect these people to cater to his, his whims. It's not summer camp, for pete's sake. What he wants for breakfast...it doesn't matter. It just doesn't matter.

CONNIE

It matters to him. Besides, it's just a little favor. You make it sound as if I asked for a king-size bed and a giant TV.

DAVE

Isn't all this bad enough? We don't want to be seen as people asking for special privileges. Don't you understand what's happened? What he's done?

CONNIE

Of course, I understand. But he's a fifteen-year-old kid and---

DAVE

A fifteen-year-old kid who's killed four people!

CONNIE

All right! But he's still a kid. Maybe he just wants something...something normal in his life. Something to remind him of home, and the way things used to be.

DAVE

Nothing is the way things used to be! Can't you get that?

CONNIE

Oh, it's no use talking to you. You don't understand him.

DAVE

Then maybe you better try and explain him to me. And while you're at it, maybe you better try explaining him to everybody else in this town, because I guarantee you they don't understand him either.

CONNIE

Dave. I know what everybody thinks. Believe me, I know. I know what he's done. I know where he is. But he's my son. Our son.

Pause.

So when do you think you might go?

DAVE

I...I'd rather wait. I don't think it's the right time for me to---

CONNIE

When will be the right time? He's locked up. Our fifteen-year-old son is under lock and key. When will---

DAVE

Will you please stop telling me how old he is?

CONNIE

Then---

DAVE

I won't know what to say. I won't be able to...besides, he was always closer to you anyway.

CONNIE

Well, maybe it's time for you two to get closer.

DAVE

Oh, right. We'll build a warm father-son relationship on the garbage dump he's made of our lives.

CONNIE

Dave, please---

DAVE

Please what? I can't go to see him, I can't go to see anybody. I can't talk to anybody. I can barely bring myself to walk out the front door and pick up the morning paper off the lawn. Connie, I see it in everybody's eyes. I see it everywhere I go. There he is, they say to themselves. There he is. The father of the monster.

CONNIE

They don't think that. And you know we didn't raise him this way. You know we didn't bring him up to---

DAVE

Then who did? A father gives his son morality. Teaches him right from wrong. What have I taught our son, Connie? What have I taught him? If I could walk off the edge of the earth right now, I would do it.

CONNIE & DAVE exit.  
Lights down.



Scene Eight

Jim's space

Lights up on JIM.

JIM

Me and Tommy hung out a lot together. We used to go around all the time. We mostly liked the same music. And we didn't go in for sports stuff. That's not for Tommy and me. Kids in uniforms with numbers on the back, practicing all the time, sweatin' every day, running around that same patch of grass. Tommy'd say, "Hey, man, we'd rather smoke it than run on it. Right, Jim?" He'd say stuff like that. He's the funniest guy. We crack one another up all the time. Some of the super-dudes at school, they try to put us down, but we never let it get to us. I mean, once in a while, you know, it kind of does, but, you got to let it roll off you. We figured as soon as the high school thing was over, soon as we could we'd head to California. I mean we wouldn't need much money to live in California. It's hot and all, I mean it never snows. Him and me, we play guitar pretty good. And you know, we'd like practice and get really good? I bet we'd get gigs and stuff. Out in California. I bet we would.

Right now, well, I think he's made a big mistake. Okay. It's a really big mistake. But it's over with. You can't change it. I think it was a bad decision on his part. A seriously bad decision. But I think people have to put things behind them. Just move on, you know? Hey, I'm sure if I could talk to him, he'd say he was sorry. You know, I bet he is.

I wish him and me could just hang out together. Like we used to, just hang out. Hanging around and stuff. I mean, when's it going to be that way again?

JIM exits.

Scene Nine

Street

BEVERLY enters with microphone.  
STARK enters.

BEVERLY

Reverend Stark? Beverly Wendrow of KMAT. We're here trying to learn more about Tommy Lewis.

STARK

Yes, Miss, I know. I've seen you around with your camera and your microphone.

BEVERLY

You know the Lewis family?

STARK

Yes, indeed, I've known the boy ever since, ever since the family moved here, oh, I guess, ten, eleven years ago. He was a little guy then, and his parents, Connie and Dave, brought him and his sister to services on a regular, a very regular basis. Mrs. Lewis, she is a fine, fine woman, always taking part in church activities, very involved. Same thing with the boy's dad. They are church-going people, good people, a fine family all around.

BEVERLY

Reverend, how do you explain what's happened here?

STARK

Miss, it's not my place to explain such a thing. All we can do is pray. We pray for the Lewis family. We are praying for all the families involved. That the parents of the deceased can find solace in the hope of eternal life for their loved ones. To ask me to explain it, to account for it, I'm afraid that's impossible. All I can say is, this boy comes from a decent, god-fearing family. He himself is a decent, god-fearing---

BEVERLY

You know him well, Reverend Stark?

STARK

I...of course, I know him. Thomas is a member of my flock, one of the gifts of God's holy creation. He made his confirmation at St. Luke's last June and professed his belief in our savior as a Christian.

BEVERLY

And is he still a Christian?

STARK

Without a doubt, miss, without a doubt. This act... this... incident...tragic as it is, it's the act of a sinner, a sinner like you and me. I am convinced that in his heart, Thomas remains a Christian, a believer.

BEVERLY

But would you agree with a guilty verdict, Reverend Stark?

STARK

Oh, that's not for me to say. Vengeance is mine saith the Lord. Now, I really must be going.

BEVERLY

But if he's not guilty, then, who is to blame?

STARK

You mean...besides you and me?

Lights down.

STARK & BEVERLY exit.

Scene Ten

Laura's space

Lights up on LAURA.

LAURA

Amy's father and I tried very hard, after the divorce, to keep things on an even keel for her. One or the other of us was always there for her track meets and her choir concerts. Matt always was a good father. He just wasn't much of a husband. But he and I would talk regularly, so I could keep him up to date on her schedule. He still calls, but, sometimes one of us starts to cry and .... we just hang up.

Every second of that last morning is stuck in my mind, like a tape that keeps playing over and over again. She had a cold that week. A runny nose, a little cough. I could have let her stay home that day, let her sleep in, watch TV, listen to her stereo. But I didn't. She was running late that morning and I was on her the whole time, trying to get her to eat her breakfast, move along.

I dropped her off on my way to work, like I always do, and watched her get out of the car. "Don't forget your lunch," I said. She turned back and grabbed the bag. "Bye," she said, and shut the door. I didn't even wait until she got inside. I just drove away.

The last time we went shopping, she wanted this one sweater set, and I said, "You've got enough in your closet right now. Let's wait until spring. We'll get some new stuff then." How was I to know she'd never have another spring?

Lights down. LAURA exits.

Scene Eleven

Classroom

Lights up on JANET, CHRIS, ADAM & WHITNEY seated, writing.

JANET

Dear Tommy . . . we are in language arts class and Mrs. Ellis has come up with...

CHRIS

... this stupid-ass idea.

ADAM

. . . a rather bizarre assignment . . .

WHITNEY

...a brainstorm so that we can practice our...

JANET

.... letter-writing skills ... hello?

ADAM

Now that you're at that juvenile detention center, she wants us to communicate with you to share our thoughts and questions about what happened.

CHRIS

The whole idea of writing to you, you friggin' murderer, totally freaks me out, because of what you did to those guys ...

WHITNEY

But because we've got a couple of minutes to go before the bell rings, I'm supposed to put down on paper exactly how I feel... so here goes.

JANET

We here at Central City High do not entirely understand your...mind...but I just want you to know...

CHRIS

That having faggots like you walking around really sucks.

WHITNEY

I try to be tolerant of people who hold different views and ideas...but it's not easy to understand the fact that...

ADAM

You apparently planned this shooting spree with little or no regard for the consequences. I'd really like to know why. Does the idea of killing seem rewarding to you? Did the moral implications even enter into it?

CHRIS

You were a weirdo from the first, but I had no clue you were so screwed up. Somebody said you were getting off on the publicity. What a crappy reason to blow away four kids, you scum bag.

ADAM

Was it a spur-of-the-moment thing? I mean, did you get out of bed and say to yourself, I think I'll waste some people today? What was the thought process?

JANET

All I can figure is...you must have been in a really lousy mood that morning. You know, when I'm bummed out, I just go to the mall.

WHITNEY

I personally know of several people who are still having nightmares over what happened that day. Clearly, you could use some professional help so that some of the hostility you obviously have can be turned into something more positive.

ADAM

The trajectory of the bullets was very interesting. Did you know that one of the cartridges hit the display case that holds the basketball trophies? Now the PTA has to decide whether to replace the door with a bulletproof material or just regular glass.

CHRIS

Look, I do not give a shit why you did it. I'm getting on with my life, you hear that? You, mother-fucker, are gonna be nothing but a bad memory to me, hell, I won't even remember your name. Maybe I've forgotten it already.

JANET

I don't know if you thought of this, Tommy, but it's pretty creepy to go around killing people. And girls are not going to want to go out with a guy who does this kind of thing.

WHITNEY

Personally, I have found that putting my thoughts down on paper is a great way to deal with negative feelings. Writing poetry may not work for everyone, but you could begin with a simple haiku and then move on to the longer forms.

ADAM

You might want to consider anger management classes. Of course, if that option is not open to you, I've heard that self-hypnosis can be a powerful tool. As I understand it, you sit in a quiet place, empty your mind of everything and then begin to breathe deeply...

CHRIS

Just quit breathing, you bastard. I know a lot of guys who'd really like to help you do that, you son of a bitch.

JANET

Of course, there are always extra-curricular activities. I mean, maybe if you joined the glee club or the future farmers of America, then, by...singing or ...growing things ...you might be... well... happier, maybe?

WHITNEY

I will tell you this. I do see some people being a little nicer to other people since it happened. There's a little less name-calling, a little more trying to see the other side of things. That's definitely a positive thing.

ADAM

If I could say just one thing to you, it would be this. Growing up means taking responsibility for one's actions. I advise you to think very seriously before you act again . . . signed . . . Adam.

WHITNEY

I think it would be good if you could find some new friends, someone who might give you a different slant on life . . . looking forward to a better tomorrow . . . Whitney.

CHRIS

I hope some big dude beats your sorry ass to a pulp every day of your miserable life, you fucked-up faggot. Your enemy . . . Chris.

JANET

My mom bought me a new dress and it's really cute with a handkerchief hem. I know guys don't care about stuff like that but the thing is, she bought it for no apparent reason. I mean the fact is, she's sort of spoiling me a little bit since you did what you did. So, I...

JANET (Cont'd.)

...guess I have to say thanks. So ... thanks! Your friend ...

(Crosses out)

your fellow student....

(Crosses out)

your fellow human being... Janet.

Lights down. All exit.



Scene Twelve

School auditorium

Lights up on BERGEN.

BERGEN

Good evening. I believe most of you know me. I'm Marsha Bergen, principal. I've asked for a few minutes on the agenda at tonight's PTA meeting to address the concerns many of you have expressed . . . about the tragic incident at our school.

Pause.

What happened here at Central City High is tragic and terrible. It is also extremely unusual. The fact of the matter is, there are more than fifty-five million children right now in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States. And they are safer in those schools than anywhere else.

Pause, as if there were negative reactions.

No, really... Fact of the matter is, terrible things can happen anywhere. In our schools, in our workplaces, where we shop, at the movies, even where we worship.

Pause, as above.

I understand your concerns, I really do. But metal detectors at every door, extra security guards, weapons to arm our teachers, these all cost money. Do we buy fewer books for our classrooms, hire fewer teachers, bypass new computers so we can afford these things? Do we turn Central City High into a prison with bars at every window and guards at every door? Is that the kind of atmosphere in which your children will thrive and learn?

Pause, as above.

You're right, I don't have the answers. I wish I did, but I don't. I've just got questions, like everybody else. To me, the most important one is...what made this awful thing happen? I've been a high school principal now for fifteen years, and I can tell you one thing I see. Kids nowadays have more time on their own than kids used to have. They spend fewer hours every week with responsible adults who care about them. Another thing is, a lot of kids feel disrespected and today's culture says when that happens, you...

BERGEN (Cont'd.)

...react, you retaliate. I'm not saying it's the right thing to do. I'm just saying this is what our culture seems to call for.

Pause.

Like I said, I don't have the answers. But maybe these are things we need to think about. Maybe these are things we need to try and change. Somehow.

Lights down.

Scene Thirteen

Street

Lights up on BEVERLY with microphone.

BEVERLY

This is Beverly Wendrow for KMAT, live once again in Central City. Ten months have passed since March the eleventh, the day when a high school sophomore opened fire on his fellow students, wounding eleven of them and killing four. The start date of these proceedings was pushed back by several delays, but tomorrow, Tommy Lewis, who just turned sixteen, is due to go on trial. He's being driven here today from the juvenile detention center upstate where he has been held since the shootings occurred. We're told he will walk directly in front of us on his way into the basement of this building where he'll spend the night before being brought into court tomorrow across the street.

MARY enters.

We've been here much of the morning as the residents of this troubled community once again focus on this tragedy. The events of last March have forever scarred this town, changing the way the rest of the country views it and the people who---

MARY

Excuse me, excuse me.

BEVERLY

Yes?

MARY

Can I say something? I'd really like to say something.

BEVERLY

Of course. You are...?

MARY

Mary Louise Jackson, lifelong Central City resident. I'd just like to say, well, I really resent your calling us that, you know "a troubled community -- forever scarred?" You people come here with your cameras and your microphones and say all kinds of things about Central City that simply are not true. May I go on?

BEVERLY

Please do.

MARY

Well...like I say, I've lived here all my life. I grew up and went to high school here. I graduated from Marbury Community College just up the road. Me and my husband got married and now we're raising our children here and it really gets to me that you news people come from all over the place and act like you know what's going on here.

BEVERLY

We're just trying to get the story, Mrs.---

MARY

I know exactly what you're trying to do. You're trying to make us out to be some kind of backwater, redneck, no-wheres-ville with shotguns lying around all over the place and no-good kids who are too dumb to make anything of themselves. I just want you to know that this is a good community, a good place to live with good people. This ... this...thing that happened here is not the whole story of Central City. There's a lot more to it than that and if you people would take the time to talk to the people who live here, you might understand the way things are. Well ... that's all I'm going to say. I was just passing by and...that's all I'm going to say.

MARY retreats. JOE & EVANS enter.

BEVERLY

Well...thank you. Central City resident Mary Jackson. Oh, I believe I see the parent of one of the victims. Sir?

JOE

Yeah?

BEVERLY

Aren't you the father of---

JOE

Mike, Mike Rutkowski.

BEVERLY

Isn't he one of the boys who was ....

JOE

Yeah. I'm his dad. Joe Rutkowski.

BEVERLY

And you're here today to...

JOE

Well...I've taken time off from work for the trial. They're bringing him in. I guess I...I just wanted to be here.

BEVERLY

Could you share your feelings with us this morning, sir?

JOE

It's an awful thing to lose a child, to lose a child this way. And it doesn't get any easier to take. Some people think you ought to just get over it, get on with other things. It's mighty hard to do that.

BEVERLY

Do you think the trial will bring you some closure?

JOE

I guess. I...I don't know. I want, I want justice for my boy, for Mike. The lawyer here is...well, maybe he's got another answer.

BEVERLY

You're Mr. Rutkowski's attorney?

EVANS

Actually, I'm representing the families of three of the victims of this tragedy. Charles Wyatt Evans. Naturally, we are closely monitoring events here. Obviously, Mr. Rutkowski and the other families involved are extremely interested in any court action against Mr. Lewis.

BEVERLY

Mr. Evans, in the aftermath of these legal proceedings which are about to get underway, are you putting together a lawsuit for the victim's families?

EVANS

I'm sure you understand that I'm not at liberty to comment on any legal action that might be taken. At the moment, we're simply here to observe, to view the events of the trial as this case goes to court. After that, well, we'll see. Thank you very much.

EVANS & JOE retreat. ANN enters.

BEVERLY

And I believe I see another parent. Excuse me, Mrs. Reilly, isn't it?

ANN

Yes .... I'm Ann Reilly.

BEVERLY

Mrs. Reilly, would you share with us your feelings as the accused killer of your son is---

ANN

Please, please. I'm sorry but I really don't want to ... I can't talk right now, please.

BEVERLY

We understand this must be very difficult for you, Mrs. Reilly. If you could just tell us how you feel about---

ANN

You don't understand. I can't, I can't talk about this. It's just impossible for me to say anything, anything at all about...him.

BEVERLY

Certainly. But obviously you felt you had to be here today?

ANN

This is...very painful. It hurts more than anyone can imagine. But I had to come. I just had to. Please leave me alone. Just...please go away and leave me alone.

ANN retreats. CONNIE enters.

BEVERLY

Yes, thank you. Very strong emotions this morning for the families of the victims who have waited for months for this court case to come to trial. Oh, I believe it's ... yes....

BEVERLY (Cont'd.)

...Mrs. ... please, aren't you, Mrs. Lewis?

CONNIE

Yes.

BEVERLY

Mother of...Tommy Lewis?

CONNIE

Yes. I'm Thomas Lewis' mother.

BEVERLY

Mrs. Lewis, I can just imagine how very difficult this must be for you.

CONNIE

Can you? Can you really?

BEVERLY

Well, I meant---

CONNIE

It's all right. I know you don't mean to be... everyone is trying to be very kind to me. And to my husband. Most people, anyway. I know that some of these people here, these parents, are living a nightmare. The loss of a child is a terrible thing... terrible. You see... I've lost a child, too. Can you understand that?

BEVERLY

Yes, of course.

CONNIE

One thing, I'd like to say. I guess it doesn't make much difference now but I'd like people to know that my son was not brought up to do... these terrible things. He wasn't raised to...harm other people. Something happened to him and he changed. This isn't ...it's not how he was brought up. I'd like people to know that.

BEVERLY

I see. So you came here today to ...

CONNIE

He's my son. I have to be here. For him. So that when they bring him... well, in case any of these other people say anything, in case anything happens, I just want him to know I'm here. I want him to know I love him. No matter what.

CONNIE retreats.

BEVERLY

Oh, I think... I think they're here. An officer is getting him out of the vehicle now, and ... in just a moment, Tommy Lewis will be walking directly in front of us. We're told he'll spend the night in a holding cell here and then be brought across the street for the start of his trial before Judge Samuel Fellner tomorrow. Oh ... here he comes now.

POLICEMAN & TOMMY enter. TOMMY is handcuffed. Pause. POLICEMAN leads TOMMY away.

Beverly Wendrow for KMAT. We'll be right back.

Lights slowly down.

END ACT ONE



ACT TWOScene One

Joe's space

Lights up on JOE.

JOE

My dad was a fireman. All his life. I don't think he'd have known how to be anything else. I joined right out of high school myself. Been at it now twenty-three years.

When Mike came along, Georgia said to me ... Just because you and your father want to eat smoke is no reason to think our son will want to. Don't be dreaming about that.

I tried. But you can't help but dream when you have a son. Sure, you know it's his life. But you hold that baby in your arms the first time, feel your blood flowing in that little body and you can't help but think that every dream you ever had has come to life. You look at that little hand and you know it's going to take the prize. Every prize, all the ones you didn't get.

Last week the chief says to me ... Hey, Rutkowski, new fish coming in Monday. You okay to start them off? ... Don't I always? I said .... We get new recruits twice a year. Crazy thing was, I didn't see it coming. I just didn't see it.

So Monday morning I walk into that room. Eight kids sitting there. Some tall, some skinny, sweet Jesus, one of 'em built just like him. I couldn't move. It was like my feet were nailed to the floor. All I could think was ... any one of these kids could be Mike. Any one of them.

But they're all somebody else's. Somebody else's sons living somebody else's dreams. Not my dreams. Never going to be my dreams again.

Lights down, JOE exits.

Scene Two

## Courtroom

Lights up on AMY.

## AMY AS NARRATOR

Did you ever wait for something really big to happen and then right when it was supposed to, it was all over? That's what the trial was like. One minute, reporters were un-packing suitcases and booking hotel rooms, trading guesses on how long it would last. The next minute, they were on the phone re-arranging travel plans. So, what happened? Tommy Lewis went into that courtroom and pleaded guilty but mentally ill. Afterwards, his attorney did most of the talking.

DEFENSE LAWYER enters.

## LAWYER

With his plea of guilty but mentally ill to all charges, Tommy Lewis accepts full responsibility for his actions. He deeply regrets those actions, he is contrite and he greatly mourns the loss of life. The prosecution is recommending the maximum sentence. Life in prison without the possibility of parole for twenty-five years. If the judge issues that sentence, my client will remain at the detention home for juvenile offenders until he is eighteen. At that time, a determination will be made as to where he will serve the remaining years. Let me stress, it is our sincere hope that the authorities will make provision to see that this young man gets the psychiatric help he so desperately needs. Thank you.

LAWYER exits.

## AMY AS NARRATOR

Since everyone had been expecting a long-drawn-out ordeal, a lot of folks were surprised at the way things turned out.

BERGEN enters.

Surprised and relieved. High school Principal Marsha Bergen.

## BERGEN

I can tell you that the reaction of everyone on the faculty right now is pretty much one of relief. Relief and satisfaction, that we can put this much behind us. Some of our students were lined up to testify at the trial, had it gone ahead. Now, those kids, all the kids in fact, can concentrate on their studies and not have to worry about dredging up the memories of what happened that day. It's as if this great load has been lifted from all of our shoulders.

BERGEN exits. STARK enters.

## AMY AS NARRATOR

Reverend Stark saw it as an opportunity for the town to heal.

## STARK

Praise God that this community can continue to bind up its wounds, to make itself whole again. Our prayers go on, of course, for the victims, for their families, for the students of Central City High as they go forward with their education. And yes, we continue to pray as well for this boy, the young man at the center of this tragedy, that he can find hope and bask in the loving gaze of the Lord who knows all our iniquities.

STARK exits. WILLETT enters.

## AMY AS NARRATOR

Sheriff Dan Willett talked about lessons learned.

## WILLETT

This entire episode has taught us many things. Our whole department just attended a crisis seminar, to consider the appropriate reaction as well as the preventive measures that might be put in place, to prevent such a thing from occurring again. Of course, it's my hope that nothing like this ever happens again, not in this community, not anywhere. But, it's the job of the sheriff's department to be in a state of readiness for whatever tomorrow brings. I'd be lying, though, if I didn't say I was gratified at the surprising turn of events we witnessed today.

WILLETT exits.

## AMY AS NARRATOR

Apparently, the only person who wasn't surprised was longtime resident Sue Walker.

AMY exits. SUE enters.

SUE

Oh, I knew it was going to turn out this way. Maureen, down at the beauty shop, she said that boy was going to fight it all the way. You know, just deny everything, like maybe he had no recollection? Maureen, I said, where do you get your legal expertise? Judge Judy? Listen, I said, that kid is going to walk into that courtroom and say he did it, just admit the whole thing. Then, he'll simply say he was completely and totally out of his mind. I mean, they all saw him. Everybody down at the school watched him do the deed. What would be the point in denying it? So then, Maureen says to me, okay, miss know-it-all, what's going to happen next? Well ... not that anybody but her asked my opinion, but if you want to know what I think ... well, I think it's time to let this whole thing just come to an end. Seems to me every time we have one of these big tragedies, one of these awful things, like what happened here, every single time there's one of these terrible events, it just doesn't seem to ever end. Some people don't seem to want to let it end, if you know what I mean. Now, I think of myself as a reasonable person. I certainly have ... compassion in my heart for those poor people who lost a son or a daughter that day. I mean, I feel for them. I truly feel for them. But somebody tell me what earthly good it's going to do to drag this whole thing on and on? They're not going to find out anything more about that boy. We know what we know and that's that. He's ... well, he's nuts, that's all. Anybody can tell that. Somebody who carries guns into a school and starts shooting at kids for no reason at all, I mean, that's just nuts.

Lights down. SUE exits.

Scene Three

John's space

Lights up on JOHN.

JOHN

I've always thought there must be reasons for things. Causes, explanations, nothing happens without a reason. But what would make this boy do such a thing?

I was fifteen once. I remember feeling angry, being ticked off at my parents, teachers, other kids. But to take this much weaponry, guns that can take a person's life away, carry all that in there and just start shooting. It had to be heavy for him. Lugging all this stuff around in a bag and nobody even looks to see what's inside. Then he gets there in the hall and puts earplugs in. Takes his time, stops to take care of his ears before he opens fire on Sarah and the others. They say he didn't even know her well. But she got the worst of it. She only lived fifty-five minutes, less than an hour, before she died at the hospital.

Back in the day, H. Rap Brown said violence is as American as cherry pie. I never saw it that way. I always thought those were just angry words from an angry man. But then something like this happens to a beautiful girl who never hurt anybody in her life and I have to wonder. Is that what we've come to? Is that what this country's about?

Her mother ... takes it all, accepts it somehow. She has that rock of faith to hold her up, that religion to sustain her. "Remember, John," she says to me, "his eye is on the sparrow." Well, I just want to know why his eye wasn't on my little girl?

Lights down. JOHN exits.

Scene Four

Doctor's office

Lights up on CONNIE & DAVE, seated.  
Pause.

CONNIE  
She'll probably be here in a minute.

DAVE  
Yeah.

CONNIE  
What time's your meeting?

DAVE  
Whenever I get there. They're giving me a lot of leeway these days. I guess you get cut a lot of slack when your son's . . . Jack said they'll just go ahead and I can pick up on it later.

CONNIE  
Good.

DAVE  
I just hope all this is going to help.

CONNIE  
Of course it's going to help.

PSYCHIATRIST enters.

PSYCH  
My apologies for keeping you waiting.

CONNIE  
It's perfectly all right.

PSYCH  
So. Let me share with you the results of my assessment.

DAVE

Is this pretty much going to be a complete picture? I mean, are you finished?

PSYCH

That's a word we seldom use in psychiatry, Mr. Lewis.

DAVE

Well, why don't we wait until you're done and then we could get the whole picture?

CONNIE

Dave, Doctor Plummer knows - - -

DAVE

I just mean instead of running in here every couple of weeks, why not wait until everything is---

PSYCH

Mr. Lewis, with an adolescent like Tommy, it's really best to share what we've learned as we learn it. Okay?

DAVE

I guess. So what have you learned?

PSYCH

Well, your son suffers from depression coupled with very low self-esteem. It appears to be a severe personality disorder. His view of life is radically different from that of other kids his age. Simply put, he doesn't think and react like your typical just-turned-sixteen-year-old.

Pause.

CONNIE

How did . . . why would . . . what has made him this way?

PSYCH

Oh, Mrs. Lewis, I would have to spend much more time with Tommy before I would even attempt to consider that question. I take it you had no inkling of his problems?

CONNIE

No. He's always been quiet. He was never like his sister. We didn't know.

PSYCH

Frankly, it's my belief that Central City High School had become a very hostile environment for Tommy.

DAVE

Hostile? How?

PSYCH

Most probably, your son was bullied in that building on a daily basis. He was continually harassed by his peers.

DAVE

I guess I figured things were said about his height. I didn't know...

PSYCH

Size was a large part of it. There was a good deal of teasing about that. Sometimes the teasing extended to pushing or even hitting by other boys. There are studies that show that a significant amount of bullying goes on and boys, more than girls, are heavily involved in these incidents on both sides. By that I mean, boys are both the perpetrators and the targets of bullying.

DAVE

When you say that, don't you mean the kind of teasing we all went through as kids?

PSYCH

To some degree, yes.

DAVE

Well, why didn't he---you just shrug it off. Why couldn't he do that? I remember the time they---hell, I didn't go grab a gun, I didn't start shooting kids. Why did he do this?

PSYCH

It may be that in Tommy's case, it went further than that. Please remember that I'm evaluating your son after the fact. There's only so much I can state for certain at this point in time.

DAVE

Yes, I'm sorry. Go on.



PSYCH

The teasing, the name-calling, the derogatory remarks about his size, his hair, his clothing, sometimes the insults extended to his sexual orientation.

DAVE

You mean they said---

PSYCH

Remarks were made that he liked boys, that he was gay.

DAVE

(To CONNIE)

Did he tell you that? That they said that stuff to him?

CONNIE

I found... in his backpack...I used to go through his backpack sometimes. You get so frustrated with kids when they don't talk to you, don't open up. Every once in a while I couldn't stand it, so I'd root around in his stuff when he was out. Once, I found a paper. It listed some names, I don't know any of them but him, and around the names was a big purple circle and, you know, one of those awful names for...homosexual people.

DAVE

You never told me.

CONNIE

I thought you would...I thought it would upset you.

DAVE

So you think all this made him---

PSYCH

The problems I've described, the experiences he had, I believe that gradually the attacks became so unrelenting that he became fixed on the idea of getting back at his tormentors, and he made a plan. As he moved closer to a retaliation phase, the specific targets became blurred. He shifted from "these kids make me feel bad" to..."I want to make somebody else feel bad" to..."I will hurt somebody and then I won't feel bad anymore." Everyone has fantasies, but in Tommy's case, the fantasies played a larger and larger role in his mental outlook.

DAVE

Was this all some kind of dream?

PSYCH

Oh, no, quite the contrary. It was real. Very real. Let me illustrate the breadth of the fantasy life your son was living. Tommy thought that after he did this, he would find respect among his peers. He thought he would walk back into that school the next day and the waves would part in front of him, that the older, bigger kids would look up to him. That's about as close as I can come to explaining why he did what he did that morning.

Pause.

Naturally, we are continuing to work with your son to assess his needs, determine a plan for treatment.

PSYCHIATRIST stands, prepares to exit.

Of course, we'll be in touch.

CONNIE

Thank you, Dr. Plummer.

DAVE

Yes, thanks.

PSYCH exits. Pause.

CONNIE

Lauren called last night.

DAVE

What?

CONNIE

Lauren called. After you went to bed.

DAVE

Is she all right?

CONNIE

She's fine.

DAVE

Good. The way you said it, I thought something was wrong at school.

CONNIE

No, no. I'd just like to...go up there and visit her. I thought I might stay...for a while.

DAVE

Up at college? How long a while?

CONNIE

There's that residence hotel right down the road. I thought I'd stay there. If it's all right with you.

DAVE

When did you decide all this?

CONNIE

I've been thinking about it...on and off. I'm glad she's up there away from all this. I guess I thought with her at school and...and Tommy...away, it seems like...like there's nobody . . .

DAVE

Nobody home? Thanks.

CONNIE

Dave, I'm sorry. I've tried but...these months have been...it's just not the same.

DAVE

Damn right, it's not the same. At least we agree on that. So you're going off, running away---

CONNIE

To visit our daughter.

DAVE

Stop it, Connie. You didn't answer my question. How long?

CONNIE

A while.

DAVE

How long a while?

CONNIE

There's...an opening up there at the library. They said I can have it and...

DAVE

So this is permanent? Well, is it?

CONNIE

I don't know what it is. All I know is, I can't walk around that house anymore. It's gotten so I hate every inch of it.

DAVE

And every inch includes me?

CONNIE

Dave, please.

Pause.

We don't see eye to eye anymore. Not on this. And there doesn't seem to be anything besides this. It's...it's changed you, made you...it's as if you won't forgive yourself.

DAVE

I can't.

CONNIE

But you haven't done anything---we haven't done anything, it's not our fault---

DAVE puts his hand up to stop her. Pause.

DAVE

Go ahead, then. Go.

CONNIE

Thank you.

Pause.

DAVE

Parents are the bones on which children sharpen their teeth.

CONNIE

What?

DAVE

I read that the other day. Parents are the bones on which children sharpen their teeth.

CONNIE

What does it mean? I don't understand it.

DAVE

I don't understand anything anymore.

Lights down. CONNIE & DAVE exit.

Scene Five

Sue's space

Lights up on SUE.

SUE

Well, there's just no surprises on earth, not the way I see it. Sixty days after the trial that wasn't, the judge did what everybody knew he was going to do. He sentenced that boy to the maximum. Twenty-five years in prison. It's sad, him being a kid and everything, but it kind of makes sense. So there you have it, case closed. But guess what? That rumor we heard about how the parents were going to sue everybody under the sun? Well, they are. Now I want to know how that's going to help anything. What's the use of a great big trial and all that stuff in the papers and on TV and everything. My golly, those reporters'll never go home. Why not just leave it be? Time heals all wounds. What's that word everybody says all the time? Closure. We can all have a little closure. There's nothing to be gotten out of a trial. Nothing except maybe . . . money. Oh, nobody wants to say it, but you can't help think it. Is that what they're after? Is that what those people want? Millions of dollars to replace their lost kids? How's that going to help? Oh, sure, you can go take a trip to Hawaii or somewhere, but that's not going to bring back your son or your daughter. Going to Hawaii's not going to bring back anybody's kid.

SUE exits.

Scene Six

Courtroom

Seven chairs are placed on stage.  
SARAH enters.

## SARAH AS NARRATOR #3

The lawsuit was filed. The Reilly family was not part of it, but the parents of Sarah Jessup, Mike Rutkowski and Amy Dadoro claimed that their children's deaths were preventable. Monetary damages were sought from a long list of defendants. Tommy Lewis' name was at the top of the list. Also named were his parents, his teachers, the school principal, and his friends, along with the companies that made the video games he played, the movies he watched, and the websites he visited. Motions to dismiss the charges were filed but the judge denied them. So, the attorney for the families, Charles Evans, and his co-counsel, Gail Hemmert, began to take depositions.

SARAH exits. EVANS, GAIL &  
DOMINIC enter. DOMINIC sits.

EVANS

Would you state your name, sir, and title?

DOMINIC

Dominic Luce. I'm chief operating officer of Academy Films.

EVANS

And as such you are producer of the movie, BLOODFEST. Correct?

DOMINIC

Yeah.

EVANS

Would you describe for us the plot of that particular film?

DOMINIC

Well, it's ah...it's about a fellow who—

EVANS

How old is he?

DOMINIC

How old? Ahh...I guess he's...

EVANS

He's fifteen, is he not?

DOMINIC

Well, I guess he's...yeah, I guess he's fifteen.

EVANS

And what happens in the movie BLOODFEST?

DOMINIC

He's a young man who---

EVANS

Since we've established that he is fifteen, wouldn't it be appropriate to call him a teenager?

DOMINIC

Okay. Yeah, he's a teenager and he has some, well he doesn't get along with people at his...ahh...where he goes to school. It's made up, you know. The whole thing's made up. I just want to point out to everybody that the whole story is just something somebody made up.

EVANS

And your company purchased the rights to turn the story into a film, correct?

DOMINIC

Yeah. That's how it works. We buy the story and we make changes.

EVANS

Wasn't the title one of the first things you changed?

DOMINIC

Sure, we changed the title. Once we own the property, it's our right to do anything we want to it. Nothing in the lawbooks against that, is it?



EVANS

Not that I know of, sir. Now, would you mind telling us, please, what was the original title?

DOMINIC

Let me think, it was, it was “Lenny’s Tale.” That’s what it was.

EVANS

Lenny’s Tale, I see. And why did you change it?

DOMINIC

Well... a name like that, that’s not exactly going to get people excited, make them want to see it, now, is it? I mean, who cares about something called “Lenny’s Tale?”

EVANS

So you gave it a new name?

DOMINIC

Right. We sit around, toss out ideas and somebody says...ahh...“Bloodfest?” And a bunch of us said, hey, yeah.

EVANS

What kind of film is BLOODFEST?

DOMINIC

It’s an action movie.

EVANS

And what is the main action in the movie?

DOMINIC

Well, it’s...it’s kind of...he... ahh...he...

EVANS

Have you seen the movie, sir?

DOMINIC

Of course, I’ve seen it. I see every one of my films.

EVANS

I asked the question, sir, because you seem reluctant to answer my question as to what happens in the film. And I wondered whether you knew.

DOMINIC

Of course, I know. He...kills people.

EVANS

How many?

DOMINIC

How many? Oh...maybe...

EVANS

More than one?

DOMINIC

Ahh, yeah, it's---

EVANS

More than two?

DOMINIC

I guess it's---

EVANS

More than three? More than six? Eight? Ten?

DOMINIC

Look, I don't know that I---

EVANS

Twenty-three. Isn't that the number? Twenty-three?

DOMINIC

Like I said before, it's made up, you know. I mean, it's not real. It's just a story.

EVANS

Do you like the movie, Mr. Luce?

DOMINIC

Me? Well, I, yeah, I think it's good. It's mainly meant for kids.

EVANS

Kids?

DOMINIC

Teenagers.

EVANS

And there's a lot of blood in it?

DOMINIC

Yeah, I guess you could say it's...pretty realistic.

EVANS

Is it sir? So you would describe the film BLOODFEST as a realistic telling of a story about a fifteen year old boy who walks into his high school, starts shooting and when he's finished, twenty-three people are dead. Is that about it?

DOMINIC

It's real popular, I can tell you that.

EVANS

Is it, Mr. Luce?

DOMINIC

It's what the kids want to see these days. Don't you know that?

BRIAN enters & sits.

GAIL

Brian Dedderly, is that correct?

BRIAN

That's right.

GAIL

And you represent Creon Entertainment?

BRIAN

I'm half the producing team at Creon. We specialize in state-of-the-art interactive graphics. Our games have been taking increasingly larger shares of the market. I might add, it's an extremely competitive playing field.

GAIL

Would you describe for us the Guerilla Game line?

BRIAN

It's our top seller. To start with, the first-person shooter gets to craft his very own guerilla persona.

GAIL

His...?

BRIAN

Guerilla persona. The player gets a whole range of options on that alone. Height, weight, hair color and skin tone are the obvious ones, of course, but we add in muscle definition, biceps, triceps development---

GAIL

So the player can look as well-muscled as he chooses?

BRIAN

Absolutely. Then, of course, there are facial hair options, and to finish it off, a whole range of guerilla-type, ranger clothes.

GAIL

What about sex?

BRIAN

Well, all our games are coded and rated, naturally---

GAIL

I meant does the player get to choose the sex of his persona?

BRIAN

Oh, no. All guerilla warriors are male.

GAIL

Why is that?

BRIAN

Well, the demographic is male, totally male, as in, girls don't usually play these games. Guerilla games, as I've said, feature innovations in physical description, but when we get to weapons, the range in options goes right off the map. We go from all manner of handguns, rifles, shotguns, gatling guns, machine guns, automatic and semiautomatic, of course, to grenade launchers, lasers, rocket launchers, incendiary bombs, plastic explosives, and dynamite. Naturally, the blade options include everything from switchblades to cutlasses and machetes. And then, of course, there are the non-weapon weapons.

GAIL

Non-weapon weapons?

BRIAN

Gaffs and hooks, hammers, nail guns, chainsaws, ice picks, drills with varying-size drill bits. I'm probably forgetting a few things. I mean, we pretty much cover the spectrum of items with which to maim, decapitate, kill or entomb.

GAIL

And what's the reaction?

BRIAN

Oh, the kids love---

GAIL

No. I meant what happens when a game player---

BRIAN

When a first-person shooter wields one of these things? Well, as he encounters the enemy---

GAIL

And that means any living thing, correct?

BRIAN

Pretty much. In some of our games, the only thing moving in the frame is the bad guy, so I guess if you put it that way, it's every living thing. As our shooter makes his way through the terrain, wielding, let's say...a flame-thrower, he trains that weapon on the enemy and his target is immediately incinerated.

GAIL

How long does it take?

BRIAN

Oh, it's about a two-second body drop in most cases. The flame-thrower turns the enemy into a patch of bright flame which instantly disintegrates into a pile of ashes.

GAIL

All that happens in two seconds?

BRIAN

Could be a little more, a little less. Most important to our first-person shooter is that he gets to move on, ready to meet his next enemy.

GAIL

So there's no dealing with the actuality of death, is there?

BRIAN

Excuse me?

GAIL

Confronting the body, viewing the remains of someone who's just been---

BRIAN

Annihilated? Well, no. Who would want to do that?

GAIL exits. CAROL enters & sits.

EVANS

Carol Peterson, correct?

CAROL

Yes.

EVANS

And how long have you been a teacher, Ms. Peterson?

CAROL

Three years.

EVANS

Do you like it?

CAROL

Well...teaching English is what I always wanted to do. Of course, there are some students who make it a bit of challenge. If you know what I mean.

EVANS

I think I know what you mean. Was Tommy Lewis one of those students?

CAROL

Tommy? Oh, no. He was...Tommy was always well-behaved. In fact...

EVANS

Go on, please.

CAROL

Well, most of the time, you didn't even know Tommy was there. He was one of the quiet ones. He always sat in the back.

EVANS

Would you say it was likely that a quiet student like that, one who always sat in the back, might be ignored?

CAROL

I didn't mean that. I just meant...well, when you've got all these other kids.

EVANS

The difficult ones, you mean?

CAROL

Yes, the ones who give you a fit all the time, the ones who make it their job to challenge your authority every day of the week, then the kid who makes no ripples at all, who never misbehaves, never draws any attention to himself tends to...

EVANS

Disappear into the woodwork?

CAROL

You're putting words in my mouth! I have twenty-eight students in his class and four more sophomore English classes the same size, and I pay attention to every single one of them!

EVANS

I'm sure you do, Ms. Peterson, I'm sure you do. As the English teacher for well over a hundred sophomores, it was your job to routinely give creative writing assignments?

CAROL

Of course. It's part of the county curriculum.

EVANS

And did you find the subject matter of his writing assignments disturbing?

CAROL

Disturbing? What do you---

EVANS

Well, you must have noticed that every assignment this boy handed in focused on death?

CAROL

Well, I ...

EVANS

You don't mean to say you didn't notice?

CAROL

Of course I...noticed.



EVANS

And you saw nothing troubling about a fifteen-year-old student who continually wrote about death?

CAROL

Many students his age frequently fix on death and dying.

EVANS

To the exclusion of all other topics?

CAROL

I don't know that he---

EVANS

Do you remember a paper he wrote in which he described shootings in a crowded place? Shootings in a school hallway? Dead bodies on the floor?

CAROL

You can't expect me to remember every single assignment---

EVANS

You read papers like that with Tommy Lewis' name on them and it never occurred to you to perhaps, mention it to somebody? Your supervisor? The principal? The boy's parents?

CAROL

Look...I get handed dozens and dozens of assignments every night of the week. In addition to that I monitor peer mediation groups and I'm on duty for lunch patrol and bus line supervision. I also moderate the Odyssey of the Mind Club and I'm a teacher representative on the site-based management team. How many hours do you think I have to take a magnifying glass to every single paper that every single kid writes? A boy like Tommy, a quiet student, sometimes you lose track, that's all, you just lose track.

SARAH enters. EVANS exits. BERGEN enters & sits.

SARAH AS NARRATOR

School principal Marsha Bergen was questioned.

## BERGEN

The faculty, the administrators, we try to address the needs of every single student, but it's a very large school. Naturally, in a high school, you're going to find a certain amount of teasing or bullying. I wish I could say that it didn't happen at Central City High, but ... of course, if I see it, if I'm confronted with it, I will certainly deal with it. Truthfully, though, it's not the kind of thing that goes on in front of a principal or a teacher.

RON enters & sits.

## SARAH AS NARRATOR

Ron Milsaw, head of a graphic website, gave his deposition.

## RON

Well sure, there's a fair amount...I guess you could say quite a lot of ahh...erotic material on our website, but it's not specifically targeted to teens. Hundreds of millions of Americans access the internet every day. We simply offer what people are looking for. The virtual sex activity is used, or...enjoyed, I would say, by people of all ages. Okay, sure, there are teenagers hitting our site. Ninety-nine out of a hundred kids are online right this minute. Does anybody on earth know what they're looking at? People like me, we're just responding to the wants and needs of...average people. You can't expect us to knock on everybody's door and say "Hey, is it okay with you folks if we put this on the web?" It's a free country, isn't it?

JIM enters & sits.

## SARAH AS NARRATOR

Tommy's friend Jim was called in.

## JIM

Sure, we talked about doing stuff to the school sometimes. I mean, that's kind of what you do, isn't it? We talked about plantin' a bomb under the whole building and just standin' there watching the whole thing blow up. We used to joke about what that would look like, you know, desks and stuff, books flyin' out the window. "We don't need no...education" like the song, you know? When he said he could get his dad's gun, get stuff from his uncle's house, sure I said, "I'm with you, man." I didn't really think he was going to go through with it. I mean, would anybody think he was going to go through with it? Something like that? I mean, I thought it was just, you know, talk. Like when you talk about stuff, you know?

CONNIE enters & sits.

## SARAH AS NARRATOR

Connie Lewis, the shooter's mother, was questioned, of course.

## CONNIE

We've tried to be good parents. We've tried to teach our kids to be responsible, to raise them right. We certainly never thought that our son was filled with such...anger. I know sometimes things happened at the school, things that were hard for him. I know he was hurt...very badly hurt. I guess...I should have realized he was hurt so badly that he might...strike back. Retaliate in some way. You just don't think, when you're a parent, you just can't imagine that your child would...do anything like this.

CONNIE stands.

He wasn't raised this way. How were we to know? How were we to know?

DOMINIC stands.

## DOMINIC

Look, we make action flicks. If kids want to see action movies, is that my fault?

BRIAN stands.

## BRIAN

We're not the only company making violent games. The fact is, adolescent boys really like to play them.

CAROL stands.

## CAROL

Teachers only have so many hours in the day. I can't possibly get inside the head of every kid in every class.

BERGEN stands.

## BERGEN

Ours is a very large school. Keeping tabs on each individual student, it's not an easy job.

RON stands.

RON

Sure, kids have access to erotic stuff on the web. We're talking about the first amendment here.

JIM stands.

JIM

Was I supposed to rat on him, just 'cause he talked about shootin' up the school?

DOMINIC

You can't blame the whole film industry because one kid goes off.

CAROL

How can you spot every teenager's warning signs?

BRIAN

Violence is just part of our culture.

BERGEN

We try to make the school a nurturing atmosphere, but---

RON

If it's not on my website, they'll just find it someplace else.

CONNIE

It's not easy to be a parent in today's society. It's just not easy.

Pause.

SARAH AS NARRATOR

The judge read the depositions. And then he ruled that in all likelihood, tens of thousands of people had viewed the violent movie, "BLOODFEST," and played the action-intense "Guerilla Games." Reasonable people would not conclude that one boy who watched the same movie and played the same games, would, as a consequence, murder his classmates. So the case against them was thrown out.

BRIAN & DOMINIC exit.

SARAH AS NARRATOR

In a similar vein, insofar as the case against the internet website, the judge questioned whether reasonable people could predict that as a result of disseminating their material, a fifteen-year-old boy would steal guns, take those guns to a school and mortally wound four students? They could not, he wrote. So the case against them was dismissed.

RON exits.

As for the teachers and the principal, the judge ruled that it was their job to see that children got an education. They could not be expected, he said, to function as doctors, psychologists or psychiatrists. The case against them was dropped.

CAROL & BERGEN exit.

Law enforcement authorities had long suspected that the teenage friends of Tommy Lewis played a role in the shooting. Still, in the end, only one boy pulled the trigger. It was well nigh impossible to prove that talked-about plans to “blow up the school” were anything but the adolescent ramblings of bored teenagers. Suit dismissed.

JIM exits.

As for the boy’s parents, their lawyer made it clear that they had seen no evidence of his problems, nothing that would lead them to envision the scope of his planned retaliation. Tommy never did anything in front of them that would indicate he had the capacity for such violence. And so, the case against them was thrown out.

CONNIE exits.

In the end, there was just one defendant.

TOMMY enters.

The judge ruled that only the shooter, Thomas Lewis, could be held liable for the deaths of four students at Central City High School. Of course, through all the legal wrangling, Tommy stayed where he had been since the shooting. At the juvenile detention center upstate...

TOMMY exits.

SARAH AS NARRATOR

...where he will remain until his eighteenth birthday.

SARAH exits.

Scene Seven

The parents' space

JOE enters.

JOE

When he reaches the age of eighteen, he'll be transferred to an adult prison. There he'll stay for the balance of the twenty-five years he must serve before he's eligible for parole. After that, well...

JOHN enters.

JOHN

He did, of course, acknowledge responsibility for the deaths. And the families accepted settlement of their claims against him. Damages were set at forty-four-point-two million dollars.

LAURA enters.

LAURA

But...since Tommy has no assets and the insurance company that covers him is battling the claims, it's unlikely the families will ever see a dime of the money. So the victory becomes a symbolic one.

JOE

It was never about the money, anyway.

JOHN

And he has, finally, taken responsibility for what he did.

LAURA

Naturally, we'll go forward with the appeals.

JOE

You bet.

JOHN

That only makes sense. It's the right thing to do.

LAURA

And I'll never stop. It's just that the whole legal system has turned its back on us.

ANN enters.

ANN

And you were expecting something else, maybe?

JOHN

Well, if we'd have won against all those defendants, it might have made a difference. People's lives might have changed. But, with what we got...

JOE

They think what happened at that school is just somebody else's problem.

ANN

It didn't affect them. It never affected them. They close their doors, turn off the news, fold up the papers, put it all behind them...

LAURA

And bury their heads in the sand.

LAURA sits.

JOHN

They don't understand.

ANN

They never did. They never will.

LAURA

It didn't happen to their kids, so---

ANN

It's not a problem for them. That's all.

ANN sits.



JOE

All we wanted was for somebody to be responsible.

JOHN

No. That's not what we really wanted.

JOHN sits.

JOE

Right. It's just all we could hope to get.

JOE sits. Slowly, SARAH, AMY,  
JASON & MIKE enter.  
Each stands behind his/her parent's chair.

ANN

Sometimes I think I'm getting over it.

LAURA

Do you really?

ANN

I look back and it all seems like...like a dream. And then I wake up and...and then I feel guilty.

JOHN

I feel guilty just being alive sometimes.

JOE

Only sometimes?

LAURA

You know, it's been more than two and a half years.

JOHN

Right. Just over thirty-two months.

ANN

It's less than a thousand days.

JOE

Yeah. It just feels like a lifetime.

Lights slowly down.

END OF PLAY