

First Person Shooter

A Play by Patrick M Brennan
with Lyrics by Patrick M Brennan and Thelonius Griffin
THIRD DRAFT
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Cast of Characters
(In order of appearance)

MOM

DAD

NATALIE HAIR, *a Television Reporter*

DICK TASER, *a High School Gym Teacher*

MISS MILLSTONE, *a High School Teacher*

ANDY LUX, *a High School Student*

CLARENCE GLOCK, *an Attorney*

MICHAEL, *a High School Student*

REVEREND PHINEAS FRAGWELL, *A Famous Preacher and Activist*

THE SPACE MARINE, *a character from a computer game*

FOOTBALL PLAYERS (2)

GUN DEALER

JUDGE

LT COLONEL ABE CRASSMAN, *a Military Psychologist and Historian*

BAILIFF

The action of the play takes place in the town of Eastwood, a small town in turn of the century America.

The Set

The set of the play is to be a single piece. Locations are to be suggested rather than overtly depicted. The most important elements of the set are several video monitors, preferably of different sizes, which will alternately depict computer and television screens. If this is not possible or practical, the action should be underscored by surreal changes of lighting and appropriate computer game sound effects.

A Note On Sources

In the creation of this play, I relied on a number of outside sources. The most direct inspiration for this play comes from Dave Grossman's book, *On Killing*, a nonfiction work which builds a case against video game and movie violence; but in no way is this play based upon or derived from Grossman's book.

Grossman, Lieutenant Colonel Dave. *On Killing : The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1996.

Wolfenstein 3D, Doom, and Quake are trademarks of id Software, Inc.

If there were any factual errors in the play, they would be entirely my own, but there aren't any.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the wonderful people who made substantial contributions to the script, in the form of comments, suggestions, and/or (especially!) participation in the readings. Thanks! I couldn't have done it without you!

Clark Abt, Larry Aleshire, Kim Anton, Allison Byrne, Dean Calusdian, Sharon Camm, Giovanni Cappello, John Correll, Danielle DiDio, Paul DiDomenico, Tom Desrocher, Keith Doherty, Olivia Doran, Bob Dumpert, Liz Durkin, Annette Fielder, Margot Glockner, Trudi Goodman, Peter Gordon, Thelonus Griffin, Kate Hogan, Katie Horning, Tim Jahn, Bill Lattanzi, Linda Lowy, Will MacDonald, Laura MacFarland, Daniel Marmion, Karen Mayfield, Rob Meltzer, Randal Milholland, Dan Milstein, Angel Neuerman, John O'Brien, Dean O'Donnell, Stephanie Oxford and Parental Guidance, Matt Page, Catherine Rowe Pherson, Rob Pherson, Loreall Pooler, Mike Rapelye, Jeremy Reynolds, Phyllis Rittner, Aldea Shea, Alyssa Shutack, Rhona Silverbush, Danielle Slepian, Julia Surette, and Susan Vick.

Performance History

First Person Shooter had its first public reading on February 7, 2000, at the Massachusetts College of the Arts, at a meeting of Playwrights' Platform.

Directors: Patrick M Brennan and Kim Anton
Musical Director: Thelonius Griffin

READERS

Dick Taser: Patrick M Brennan
Dad, Football Player 2: Giovanni Cappello
Michael: Keith Doherty
Clarence Glock, Judge, Stage Directions: Olivia Doran
Phineas Fragwell, Football Player 1: Thelonius Griffin
Mom: Linda Lowy
Abe Crassman, Space Marine: Will MacDonald
Andy: Randal Milholland
Miss Millstone: Phyllis Rittner
Natalie Hair: Danielle Slepian

First Person Shooter (v2.4) had its second public reading on June 11, 2001, at the Villagers Theatre New Playwrights Series in Somerset NJ.

Mom: Allison Byrne
Dad : Larry Aleshire
Natalie Hair: Margot Glockner
Dick Taser: Mike Rapelye
Miss Millstone: Liz Durkin
Andy Lux: Daniel Marmion
Clarence Glock: Rob Pherson
Michael: Tim Jahn
Reverend Phineas Fragwell: Bob Dumpert
The Space Marine: John Correll
Football Players: Larry Aleshire, Bob Dumpert
Gun Dealer: Mike Rapelye
Judge: Rob Pherson
Lt. Colonel Abe Crassman: John Correll

Co-Directors: Catherine Rowe Pherson & Annette Fielder

First Person Shooter had its first public performance on August 24th, 2001, at the Birdcage Theatre, in a production by Parenatal Guidance, in Oroville CA.

Mom: Jessica Morse

Dad: Bill Reed

Natalie Hair: Priscilla Gonzales

Dick Taser: Janson Stonerod

Andy Lux: Jared Wilmarth

Miss Millstone: Sarina Yates

Clarence Glock: John Hironimus

Michael: Josh Gray-Sitch

Rev. Fragwell: Andrew Wellsand

The Space Marine: Timm Dunn

Jock #1: Dustin Druecker

Jock #2: Matthew Pritchett

Gun Dealer: Andrew Wellsand

Judge: Tyler Devoll

Lt. Col. Abe Crassman: Chris Root

Bailiff: Matthew Pritchett

Young Shooter: Louie Copelin

Director: Stephanie Oxford

Suggested Disclaimers for Performance
(place on placards in lobby, or in the program.)

This play has been rated **NP-17**.

May contain material which is inappropriate for **Preschoolers, Prudes, Preachers, Politicians, Parents, Puritans, Prophets, Pre-Teens, Pseudo-Patriots, Policemen, sPecial Prosecutors, Pundits, Prigs, Pirates or Profiteers**. Sorry, this play does not contain **NUDITY**. If you do not wish to expose yourself or your children to this play, you may request theatre management to install the **P-chip**.

The performance includes the use of vulgar language, ambiguous sexuality, parody, violence, satire, and gunfire. The management of this theatre, in cooperation with the playwright and the acting company, disclaims all responsibility for any and all violent acts you may commit as a result of reading or watching this play.

"There is no more need to constrain the print media than there is to control bowie knives, tomahawks, or flintlock rifles, but there might just be a justification for controlling the technology that goes beyond print media and flintlocks. The more advanced the technology, the greater the need for control. In the realm of weapons technology that means controlling explosives, artillery, and machine guns, and it may mean that the time has come to consider controlling assault rifles or pistols. In the realm of media technology, that may mean that the time has come to consider controlling TV, movies, and video games."

– Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, *On Killing*, page 326. (Grateful Acknowledgment is made to David Grossman and Little, Brown, for permission to reprint this passage, from *On Killing* by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, © 1995, 1996 by David A. Grossman.)

The High Score List

modified 05-Mar-01

Score Weighting Factors

SK=	1	Student Killed/Wounded	SW=	0.5
TK=	1	Teacher Killed/Wounded	TW=	0.5
PK=	2	Parent Killed/Wounded	PW=	1
ShK=	1	Shooter Killed/Wounded	ShW=	0.5

Date	Town	School	Shooter(s)	Killed				Wounded				Total Score	
				Students	Teachers	Parents	Shooters	Students	Teachers	Parents	Shooters		
02/02/96	Moses Lake WA		Barry Loukaitis	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	
02/19/97	Bethel Alaska	Bethel Regional High School	Evan Ramsey	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	
10/01/97	Pearl MS	Pearl High School	Luke Woodham	2	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	7	
12/01/97	West Paducah KY	Heath High School	Michael Carneal	3	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	
03/24/98	Jonesboro AK	Westside Middle School	Golden / Johnson	4	1	0	0	10	0	0	0	10	
04/24/98	Edinboro PA	Parker Middle School	Andrew Worst	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	
04/28/98	Pomona CA	Philadelphia Elementary School		2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	
05/19/98	Fayetteville TN	Lincoln County High School	Jacob Davis	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
05/21/98	Springfield OR	Thurston High School	Kip Kinkel	2	0	2	0	22	0	0	0	17	
05/21/98	Onalaska WA			0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
06/15/98	Richmond VA			0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	
04/20/99	Littleton CO	Columbine High School	Harris / Klebold	12	1	0	2	23	0	0	0	26 *	
05/20/99	Conyers GA	Heritage High School	TJ Solomon	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	3	
10/04/99	Philadelphia PA	Bartram High School		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
11/19/99	Deming NM			1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
12/06/99	Fort Gibson OK	Fort Gibson Middle School	Seth Trickey	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	
03/05/01	Santee CA	Santana High School	Charles Williams	2	0	0	0	11	2	0	0	8	
?	Eastwood	Eastwood High School	M.S. Bailey	13	1	0	0	20	1	0	0	24	
TOTALS				45	6	3	3	114	7	0	0		
Total Killed				57									* Current High Score
Total Wounded				121									

ACT ONE
SCENE 1

(The Scene : The stage is dark. We hear the sounds of a famous "first person shooter" game e.g. Quake : weapons firing, explosions, screams. Then the monitors come on. There are several monitors on stage. All of them are on at this point, each showing a horrifically violent "deathmatch" from the point of view of a different combatant. Blood spatters, limbs fly. Each of the combatants represented dies several times, then resurrects and continues the fight, exactly as the real game is played. Finally, one combatant stands out. The center monitor belongs to him. He is felling opponents, and is seemingly impervious to their attacks. As each of the other fighters dies, his monitor blacks out, till there is only one. The victor circles in an exultant rage, his enemies only dead bodies, firing his weapon for its own sake. Then the sound fades away, and the monitor slowly dims, to bring us back to a dark, silent stage.)

(MOM and DAD stand on opposite sides of the stage. Both are well-to-do white folks wearing dark business suits. MOM's hair is perfectly done. DAD doesn't have much hair. They are dismayed, shocked, appalled.)

MOM:

Oh, Michael, how *could* you?

DAD:

Yes, how *could* you?

MOM:

You had everything, absolutely everything.

DAD:

We gave you everything. Everything. And then you threw it all away.

MOM:

You threw it right back in our faces! Michael, how **COULD** you?

DAD:

Look how upset you've made us! You threw it all away. Look how upset.

MOM:

Upset? Of course we're upset!

DAD:

Of course we are. Can you imagine how we felt?

MOM:

Shocked. I can't think of a better word. Totally shocked.

DAD:

Appalled.

MOM:

And so very, very embarrassed.

DAD:

How could you embarrass us like this?

MOM:

In front of everyone. In front of the whole town. The entire town.

DAD:

This town! How could it have happened here? This isn't exactly trailer-park, gun-rack, hick country.

MOM:

Or drive-by, crack-house, inner city. We thought we were safe here.

DAD:

We thought we could protect ourselves. We thought we could protect you. We thought we were safe here.

MOM:

I'll never forget the way I felt.

DAD:

How can we? We have no choice.

MOM:

It was such an ordinary day at the office.

DAD:

Just another Thursday.

MOM:

Briefs to write. Motions to file.

DAD:

Reports to assemble. Numbers to crunch.

MOM:

Clients to impress. Cases to win.

DAD:

Markets to open. Products to move.

DAD and MOM TOGETHER:

Bills to pay!

MOM:

Mortgage payment.

DAD:

Three car payments.

MOM:

Credit card bills.

DAD:

401 (k).

MOM:

Michael's college fund!

DAD:

It's not easy to make ends meet. I only make a hundred and twenty thousand a year.

MOM:

And I'm only pulling in another eighty.

DAD:

I am really looking forward to that promotion to executive VP. I know we can use the extra money. Well, back to work. Reports to assemble. Numbers to crunch.

MOM:

Briefs to write. Motions to file.

DAD:

Just another Thursday.

MOM:

And then, a little bit after lunch, there was a bit of a commotion.

DAD:

People were rushing around the office in a very agitated state.

MOM:

A friend of mine poked her head into my office and she said, "Have you heard about the high school?" And she said, "Doesn't Michael attend that high school?"

DAD:

Well can you imagine how she felt?

MOM:

What's going on? I asked her.

DAD:

I heard some kind of a fuss going on in the conference room. And there, on the big TV, there it was.

(One or more of the monitors come alive with TV news footage, no sound. A high school, as from a helicopter. Vehicles and people scattered all about. Intercuts with a concerned-looking reporter on the scene. This is NATALIE HAIR. More intercuts with on-the-spot footage: SWAT teams work their way down high school corridors. Kids run and sob. Paramedics carry bloodied bodies out of the building.)

MOM:

Oh, my God! That's Michael's school! What's going on?

DAD:

There are how many deputies surrounding the school?

MOM:

The FBI's on the scene?

DAD and MOM TOGETHER:

Is Michael safe?

(DAD and MOM both take out their cell phones, start furiously dialing.)

MOM:

I'd better tell George.

DAD:

I'd better tell Mary.

(Short pause)

DAD and MOM TOGETHER:

Busy!

MOM:

I still don't understand. What's happening?

DAD:

They said they'd heard shooting inside the school. There might be hostages inside.

MOM:

Another high-school shooting? But, in our town?

DAD:

They're evacuating the school. They're not sure, but they think several kids were shot.

MOM:

Yes, look, they're saying now there's a single teenager, randomly shooting his classmates! Oh, God, please let Michael be safe!

DAD:

He's carrying an entire arsenal! He may have accomplices elsewhere in the school. Oh good, now they've got him surrounded.

MOM:

Those poor children. I wonder if George is off his damn phone.

(MOM takes out her cell phone and dials. DAD's phone, forgotten in his hand, rings. He answers.)

DAD:

Hello?

MOM:

George? Are you watching TV?

DAD:

Yes. I can't believe it.

MOM:

It's just so terrible.

DAD:

It's disgusting. What kind of a kid would do something like that?

MOM:

No kid I've ever known.

DAD:

What kind of a monster shoots up his high school?

MOM:

That's exactly the right word. A monster. And who raised such a monster?

DAD:

What kind of parents could raise such a terrible kid? A pair of assholes, that's who.

(Footage of deputies escorting a handcuffed figure to a waiting van.)

MOM:

We'll find out soon enough. They've just arrested him.

DAD:

Wait a minute, they're about to say who he is.

MOM:

And then they said your name.

(The monitors display MICHAEL's high-school yearbook photo, appropriately captioned.)

DAD:

They said "Michael Stewart Bailey."

MOM:

It took us both a moment to realize that they were talking about you.

DAD:

A moment before everyone else in the room realized that they were talking about you.

MOM:

It's because we don't call you "Michael Stewart Bailey."

DAD:

The TV only says your first name, middle name, and last name after you've killed someone.

MOM:

Can you imagine how we felt?

DAD:

Can you imagine? The whole town. The entire town.

MOM:

United in that moment. United in shock, united in grief.

DAD:

United against us.

MOM:

And my friend, who had worried about you, Michael, worried for your safety, worried for my state of mind, she looked at me and something changed in her. She actually took two steps back from me, as though she thought she might catch some kind of virus from me.

DAD:

Upset? Of course we're upset!

MOM:

And so very, very embarrassed. Imagine! "Michael Stewart Bailey." Our son.

DAD:

We were such *good* parents.

MOM:

And now look what's happened to us.

DAD:

I was really looking forward to that promotion to executive VP. I guess it's not gonna happen now.

MOM:

(into her phone) Are you still there?

DAD:

Yes.

MOM:

We'd better get ourselves a lawyer.

DAD:

We'd better get down to the Sheriff's.

(They hang up their phones)

MOM:

Can you imagine? The whole town. The entire town.

SCENE 2

(Lights up on NATALIE HAIR in her anchorwoman suit, clutching a microphone. She is the very image of television reporter perfection.)

NATALIE:

This is Natalie Hair, News Nineteen, at a scene of carnage unlike anything this town has ever seen. Here at Eastwood High, a teenager has gone on a rampage of death and destruction, killing at least thirteen. Six more lie in area hospitals in critical condition. Sixteen other woundings are reported.

(DICK TASER lies on the stage. He is wearing sweat pants, running shoes, a whistle around his neck, and a tee shirt. He is shot, and covered in blood.)

NATALIE:

And here's the heroic gym teacher, Dick Taser, who saved perhaps dozens of children by his actions. Mr. Taser, tell us how you did it.

DICK TASER:

I always knew that little faggot would go postal.

(DICK TASER dies.)

NATALIE:

Jesus -- are we live? Are we live? *(A moment.)* We're not live, OK. Start again. This is Natalie Hair, News Nineteen, at a truly mind-numbing scene of death and mayhem. Eastwood High School: scene of a rampage by a teenage gunman. Thirteen, sorry, fourteen are known dead. Among the victims, a heroic gym teacher who saved his entire class. His last words were, "Lord, help the children."

SCENE 3

(ENTER MISS MILLSTONE. The sound of intermittent gunfire can be heard; she is frightened and literally running for her life. MISS MILLSTONE is in her early thirties, slim and pretty. She wears a prim and modest skirt and blouse. She hesitates for a moment, not sure where to go; as soon as she makes up her mind, ANDY enters from the opposite side of the stage. He is wearing a trench coat and has his hands in his pockets. MISS MILLSTONE freezes with fear. After a beat, she stammers out:)

MISS MILLSTONE:

Oh God!

ANDY:

Miss Millstone! It's OK –

MISS MILLSTONE:

Don't shoot me, please don't shoot me!

ANDY:

I'm not the one, I'm not shooting! It's Andy. Look...

(ANDY takes his hands out of his pockets to show that he is unarmed. He indicates the direction he entered from.)

ANDY:

It's Andy. Andy Lux? C'mon, let's get out of here.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy?

ANDY:

C'mon, it's safe this way.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy Lux?

ANDY:

Come on!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy. Thank God! Andy!

ANDY:

I was looking for you. I was worried.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy! There's a maniac with a gun! Let's get out of here.

ANDY:

I know. It's safe over there. Come on!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Thank God! I'm safe!

(EXIT ANDY and MISS MILLSTONE.)

SCENE 4

(MOM and DAD sit with CLARENCE GLOCK. He has a yellow legal pad, well-used, which he consults frequently.)

MOM:

There's been a mistake. I'm just sure there's been a mistake.

DAD:

I'm not, I don't know, I'm not sure.

MOM:

Michael is my son! I know. He's not the one. It's just too horrible.

DAD:

Where is he now?

CLARENCE:

They haven't moved him. He's still in lockup, at the sheriff's office.

MOM:

They've got the wrong boy. Michael could not have done this.

DAD:

Is he all right? Have you seen him yet?

CLARENCE:

I've spoken with him. Briefly.

MOM:

Oh, him, he'll speak with.

DAD:

He's Michael's attorney now, Mary. Of course he'll speak with him.

MOM:

Oh, and we're just his parents. They gave us fifteen minutes with him. And he didn't say a word the entire time.

DAD:

It's true, Clarence. He barely acknowledged our presence.

MOM:

He just sat there, like some kind of robot.

CLARENCE:

Well, it's possible he was still in a bit of shock.

DAD:

Shock? What do you mean?

CLARENCE:

Well, there were an awful lot of cops. He got taken down pretty hard.

DAD:

Was he hurt?

CLARENCE:

Physically, not really. As you saw, he's got a few cuts and bruises. Otherwise he's fine.

DAD:

Well it could have been a lot worse.

MOM:

They could have shot him! They might have shot him!

CLARENCE:

It was a pretty tense moment, yeah. They had sharpshooters, SWAT guys, the whole works. They were ready for the worst.

DAD:

When can we see him again? Maybe actually talk to him?

CLARENCE:

They don't think that would be a good idea right now. He's on a twenty-four-hour suicide watch.

MOM:

Suicide watch? What the hell for?

CLARENCE:

You didn't hear about that?

DAD:

Hear about what?

CLARENCE:

I can't believe they didn't tell you. George, when they took him down he, uh, well, he had a shotgun in his mouth. He was trying to kill himself.

MOM:

George, tell him that our Michael is the wrong boy. He didn't do this. Suicide watch! I can understand that. I'd want to kill myself too, if they were accusing me of killing all those kids!

DAD:

Clarence, uh, you suppose they got the wrong kid?

MOM:

There are four *hundred* students in that high school. There's plenty of children who are mentally unstable there. One of *them* did it. Not Michael. One of them. He was probably trying to stop it!

DAD:

Clarence, they're executing a search warrant on the house right now. The sheriff's office.

CLARENCE:

I know.

DAD:

My house is a god damned cop convention. I've never seen so many cops in one place before in my entire life.

MOM:

What they're doing to my beautiful house. It's so horrible. I get so mad just thinking about what they're doing to our house!

CLARENCE:

George, are you OK? You're shaking like a leaf.

DAD:

I'll be OK.

CLARENCE:

Sure you will.

(CLARENCE crosses the stage and retrieves a glass, pours something into it.)

CLARENCE:

Here, George. This is for your nerves. Calm you down a bit.

DAD:

I don't need that.

CLARENCE:

George, as your attorney, I advise you to take a drink.

MOM:

It's OK.

DAD:

OK.

(DAD slams the drink.)

DAD:

OK. Now Clarence, you've spoken with Michael. Did he tell you about anything they'd find? Anything *special*? Anything?

MOM:

God damn it, George, what's the matter with you? Michael is a good boy. He wouldn't shoot up his high school, like some deranged, lunatic, uh, high-school shooter.

DAD:

Clarence?

(CLARENCE takes a sheet of paper out of his legal pad.)

CLARENCE:

Well, he did have this on him.

DAD:

(Reading the paper)

"The High Score List"?

CLARENCE:

Yeah, uh, they're also gonna find that on your son's computer.

MOM:

(Reading)

"4/20/99. Littleton, Colorado. Columbine High School. Harris and Klebold. Killed : 12 students, 1 teacher, no parents, 2 shooters. Total score : 26 points. Current High Score." This is disgusting!

CLARENCE:

They're also gonna find, uh, a sort of a map of the high school on his computer. A 3D computer model. He built the map into his Quake game.

MOM:

Quake?

CLARENCE:

It's like Doom.

MOM:

Oh no, oh God. I hate those god-damned video games.

CLARENCE:

This was more than just a video game. He had the high school mapped out in meticulous detail. Both floors, the library, the gym, the cafeteria ... it's all there. Game monsters in place of students and teachers.

DAD:

Wait. He was playing the game, but he was sort of, virtually in his high school?

CLARENCE:

Exactly. The DA's gonna make a case that he used the video game to actually plan and rehearse the assault on the school.

MOM:

I knew it! I told you, George. I knew those god-damned video games were gonna rot his brain out. He's always playing those video games. I told you, over and over again.

DAD:

Mary, calm down. He's not in jail because he plays video games.

CLARENCE:

I don't know. You ever play Quake?

DAD:

No.

MOM:

Absolutely not!

CLARENCE:

Well, we're gonna bring in a US military psychologist who has research showing that these games actually prepare the mind for exactly the sort of brain-numbing violence which your son has, uh, allegedly perpetrated.

MOM:

You see?

CLARENCE:

I really think he crossed a line here. By putting the monsters from the game into his high school, maybe he lost the ability to distinguish between the monsters and his fellow students and teachers. He may have thought that he was still playing the game when he started shooting for real. At least that's a defense I might be able to put up.

DAD:

I don't get it. What's that going to do for him? For us?

CLARENCE:

Well, it's something I'm thinking about. I've got a few ideas about a defense, but at this point that's all they are, is ideas. Look, here's the deal. There's a bunch of conservative social critics who are on the plane here even as we speak. They're from a legal foundation called FTP.

MOM:

FTP?

CLARENCE:

Yeah, it's the Family, Tradition and Property Foundation. They've been gathering steam since the Paducah shooting, and they've got their organization down pretty well. They're going to have a big press conference at the airport when they land.

DAD:

So what? What the hell does that have to do with us?

CLARENCE:

Well, it's because this might be the most complicated defense I've ever attempted. We don't have a case on the facts. There are plenty of witnesses. His face is all over video tape. Michael did it and we can't contest that. The most we can do is try to make a case that the computer game, or something, contributed to his state of mind and made him not really responsible for his own actions.

MOM:

Damn right he's not responsible. It must have been that game.

CLARENCE:

Well, we can make the case that the excessive violence in the game may have contributed to Michael's, uh, alleged violent outburst. Like I said, there's this psychologist, a Colonel Abe Crassman, who's pretty aggressively pushing on this idea. At the very least, I'll be able to use this theory to muddy the waters.

DAD:

Okay, great, we're on board with that. Well, who else can we blame, then? The Internet? He's got a computer in his bedroom.

MOM:

Pornography. I'm sure the deputies will find Michael's stash. Also George's.

DAD:

Mary!

MOM:

And guns. We can blame the guns.

DAD:

Where did he get those, anyway? I don't own a gun.

CLARENCE:

Exactly.

MOM:

Now where *did* he get those guns?

CLARENCE:

I don't know, but we're gonna find out. And whoever he is, he's gonna take his share of the blame.

DAD:

So we're not going to contest the facts, then? We're gonna just admit that he did it?

MOM:

We admit nothing. Make them prove everything.

CLARENCE:

Right.

DAD:

So what do the social critics have to do with this?

CLARENCE:

Well, since Paducah happened, every high-school shooting, the parents have banded together, with plenty of legal muscle behind them from outfits like FTP, and they've filed civil lawsuits blaming the high school shootings on the media. The video game companies, the movie studios, et cetera. They're asking for hundreds of millions of dollars in compensatory and punitive damages. You can expect them to file their first briefs in the morning.

DAD:

I still don't get it.

CLARENCE:

It means that there are really going to be two parts to this litigation. There's going to be a criminal trial, in which Michael will most likely be convicted of multiple counts of murder and attempted murder. And then there will be a civil trial, in which blame will be laid on the media and especially the video game companies.

MOM:

Wait a minute. I think I see what you're getting at.

CLARENCE:

Right. We're in a position here to do a very neat triangulation. We're going to claim *ourselves* that the games had a hand in the violence. See, the prosecution will be very keen to demolish our theory of media-instigated violence, since they feel it weakens their case. They want to lay the entire blame on Michael. They will try him as an adult and they are pressing for the death penalty.

DAD:

Of course they are.

CLARENCE:

And of course the parents of the victims are eager to cooperate with that. They want a measure of vengeance, it's a natural impulse. But, but -- they also want to sue the media corporations in civil court, and get damages.

MOM:

Right. So... if Michael's responsible for his own actions...

CLARENCE:

Exactly, then id Software and Time-Warner are off the hook, and FTP and the parents don't get a dime. But if they made him do it, then Michael can at least avoid being executed, and he may possibly even be acquitted.

MOM:

Yeah, don't hold your breath.

CLARENCE:

Well, we're just hoping to peel enough support from the prosecution's case. Just enough to put that reasonable doubt in the jury's mind. The prosecution, they'll want to have it both ways, and we can't let them do that.

MOM:

Wait a minute. I remember those people now, those FTP people. Only they aren't just suing the

media companies, right?

DAD:

What do you mean?

MOM:

They've got a pretty strict line on laying blame. They're big born-again Christians, after all. They're going to sue us, too, aren't they?

CLARENCE:

Yeah. Yeah, they will.

DAD:

I don't understand.

MOM:

They're going to sue us, George. They're going to sue us for not supervising Michael properly.

DAD:

What? That's insane! We gave Michael everything.

MOM:

Everything. Absolutely everything.

DAD:

How can we be bad parents?

MOM:

We'll probably lose the house. One way or another. Either we'll sell it to pay our legal bills, or we'll lose it to those vultures.

CLARENCE:

Mary, it's way too early to tell how it'll play out.

MOM:

So they're going to sue us. And what exactly do you plan to do about *that*, Mister Triangulation?

CLARENCE:

We -- that is, Michael and I .. we're planning to sign on as co-plaintiffs.

MOM:

Jesus Fucking Christ! I should have seen it!

DAD:

What's going on?

CLARENCE:

Hey. But I want you to know, it's not personal.

MOM:

It's not personal? You want to take my house away and it's not personal?

DAD:

What the hell is going on?

CLARENCE:

Look, Mary. George. You want me to save Michael, right? This is the only way I can see through to that. Look, we're not only going to put video games, guns, pornography, and the Internet into the dock with us in criminal court, but we're also going to sue them in civil court. For knowingly selling a product which elicits violence. And, well, we're also suing you, for being such rotten parents.

DAD:

What? You've been my attorney for over ten years!

(CLARENCE takes a form out and places it before MOM and DAD.)

CLARENCE:

That's right. That's why I'd like you to sign this release. This says you understand that I will no longer represent you. And as your attorney, my advice to you is to get another attorney. I'm representing Michael now. After they file that lawsuit, we shouldn't even talk to each other.

MOM:

You're telling us everything you plan to do. You're telling us now.

CLARENCE:

It's because we're friends. And even though you can't see it now, everything I'm going to do is because we're friends. Even suing you.

DAD:

What a fucked up world.

CLARENCE:

George, Mary, I know things look bad right now, but look on the bright side. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Can you just imagine the media circus that's gonna descend on this town? The major networks, every cable outlet and every newspaper and magazine in the country, they're all going to be here. Think of it. CBS, CNN, Fox, MSNBC... And we're all going to be in the

middle of it. Opportunity is knocking. How could I pass this up? If we play this right, we can all come out the other side, save Michael, and be famous. But only if we play the game right.

(MOM and DAD exchange looks.)

DAD:

Sure, Clarence. We'll do it.

CLARENCE:

Great.

MOM:

If it'll save Michael, we'll do it. You'd better be sure about this.

DAD:

What a fucked-up world.

SCENE 5

(MICHAEL and DICK TASER.)

DICK TASER:

Michael Bailey, right? I don't see you a lot. You've been skipping a lot of your gym classes. Isn't that right?

MICHAEL:

Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Look, Mister Taser, I came to ask you something.

DICK TASER:

Uh-huh. Bet I know what it is.

MICHAEL:

Whattya mean?

DICK TASER:

I always get some kid trying to get out of going to gym class. They always look like you, too. Can't get your head out of a book long enough to get some exercise. Ya know what I call you, Michael? N. C. Double-A. Know what that means? "No Chest At All."

MICHAEL:

Mr. Taser, I came to ask you something.

DICK TASER:

What's the problem?

MICHAEL:

It's -- it's the guys on your team, Mr. Taser.

DICK TASER:

My team? My guys?

MICHAEL:

Yeah.

DICK TASER:

Okay. What about them?

MICHAEL:

They're always hassling me.

DICK TASER:

What do you mean, they're "hassling" you? What does that mean?

MICHAEL:

It means they make fun of me, Mr. Taser.

DICK TASER:

They make fun of you? What, they call you names? So what?

MICHAEL:

It's more than just that.

DICK TASER:

What names? Wait a minute, I know who you are.

MICHAEL:

They stop me in the halls and they won't let me by. They knock my books down on the floor.

DICK TASER:

You're the kid who wrote that story, aren't you?

MICHAEL:

They throw me against lockers and spit on me.

DICK TASER:

I don't think they liked your story much.

MICHAEL:

They pushed my head into the toilet. They hit me.

DICK TASER:

I bet they're calling you a faggot, aren't they?

MICHAEL:

Yes, but...

DICK TASER:

Now why should that bother you? A scrawny little kid like you. No interest in sports. Plays with his computer, with his other friends, boys only? No girls allowed, right?

MICHAEL:

Mr. Taser, the guys on your team are hitting me.

DICK TASER:

You probably never had any pussy your entire life. Maybe “faggot” is exactly the right word for you.

MICHAEL:

I’m not gay, Mr. Taser.

DICK TASER:

That’s not what my guys think.

MICHAEL:

And even if I was, I’d rather be gay than be one of your steroid poster boys on that team.

DICK TASER:

All right! You get one warning. You don’t ever accuse me or my guys of using drugs. You got that? Now, what did you come here for?

MICHAEL:

They’re harassing me.

DICK TASER:

Maybe you should have thought about that before you started making accusations about my team. What do you think I can do about it now?

MICHAEL:

I thought you could ask them to stop it! Or *make* them stop it.

DICK TASER:

So let me get this straight. Some of my guys are teasing you a little bit and you want me to what, suspend them or something? You’re so sensitive!

MICHAEL:

They’re not teasing me, Mr Taser. They’re harassing me. They’re beating me up.

DICK TASER:

Look, Michael, let’s not blow this out of proportion, OK? We need these guys if we expect to make it to the championships this year. I need these guys. And what are you to me? Are you gonna carry the ball on my field? I don’t think so.

MICHAEL:

Mr. Taser --

DICK TASER:

You got a hell of a lot of nerve, don't you? Coming into my office, telling me that my guys are doing drugs, that I'm giving them drugs, demanding that I regulate their behavior off the field. What they do on their own time is their own business, as far as I'm concerned. And, you're skipping my class all the time. I think we should talk about that, don't you?

MICHAEL:

Uh --

DICK TASER:

That's right. You're a junior right now, but you won't go up to senior without your Phys. Ed. credit. And you won't get that unless you pass this gym class. And you won't pass this gym class unless you come to all the rest of the scheduled classes, plus you make up the ones you missed. Starting tonight. Right after school. I want to see you out on the field.

MICHAEL:

Aren't they practicing then?

DICK TASER:

Don't worry about that.

MICHAEL:

Mr. Taser, I can't, not with them there.

DICK TASER:

Why the hell not? Come on. Why not?

MICHAEL:

I just can't.

DICK TASER:

Am I not getting through to you, Bailey? Look at me closely. I -- Don't -- Care. Now get out of my office. And I want to see you on that field tonight.

(MICHAEL exits. DICK TASER calls out to him:)

DICK TASER:

You don't want my guys to give you a rough time? Then my advice to you is, stay out of their way.

SCENE 6

(The sights and sounds of Quake reappear on the monitors. The game is in full swing as the lights come up. ENTER MICHAEL and ANDY, dressed as Quake warriors, holding Quake weapons. They are fighting furiously, but they are also in discussion.)

ANDY:

Hey, Mike, I didn't see you in school today. You ditch?

MICHAEL:

I wasn't planning on ditching. Just sorta happened.

ANDY:

I figured. I got some of your homework for ya.

MICHAEL:

Thanks, Andy.

ANDY:

So what happened, anyway?

MICHAEL:

(He "dies".) Fuck! That guy's too good. *(He stands up again, continues the game.)*

ANDY:

I got him! I think I'm starting to get his pattern. My mom thinks I'm at the mall.

MICHAEL:

Yeah? So what?

ANDY:

She doesn't want me to play Quake any more. She had me wipe it from my hard drive.

MICHAEL:

So you still have the CD-ROM, right? You can just install it again.

ANDY:

Yeah. She hasn't got that part figured out yet. But she also said she doesn't want me playing Quake over here with you.

MICHAEL:

So who's been playing Quake? We've just been at the mall. It's not like your mom has any idea what you do all day anyway.

ANDY:

Yeah. She thinks I still go to confession on Saturdays.

MICHAEL:

Instead, you're committing mass murder. *(He's firing, but ANDY "dies".)* Oh shit! Sorry!

ANDY:

You shot me, man! You killed me!

MICHAEL:

I said I'm sorry.

ANDY:

Gotta watch that friendly fire. So really, what happened to you?

MICHAEL:

Nothing, OK? Nothing happened. What's your mom's problem with Quake, anyway?

ANDY:

Ah, she saw some bullshit TV piece about how all those kids who shot up their high schools played violent video games. So now she's decided to cut me off.

MICHAEL:

Jesus. That's really stupid. Hey Andy, you see him up in the tower?

ANDY:

I'll go up the stairs, you get his attention.

MICHAEL:

(Firing)

Got it. You ever notice how all those articles and news stories, the only game they ever mention is Doom?

ANDY:

Yeah, like anyone plays Doom anymore.

MICHAEL:

Hey, he's moving. And watch it, he's got the rail gun out.

ANDY:

They still think it turns you into a Nazi or something.

MICHAEL:

Lots of kids play Quake. Lots of *adults* play Quake. I mean millions of people. It doesn't make 'em into homicidal maniacs.

ANDY:

Obviously. Tell that to my mom, huh? She does whatever MSNBC tells her to do. Oh shit!

(ANDY gets into a short and furious firefight, dies.)

ANDY:

You didn't distract him very well.

MICHAEL:

I was *trying*.

ANDY:

Here, try this.

(ANDY starts firing at MICHAEL. MICHAEL returns the fire, they are now fighting each other in earnest.)

MICHAEL:

Hey, watch where you're pointing that thing!

ANDY:

Hurts, don't it!

MICHAEL:

(Dies, resurrects.) Okay -- no more Mister Nice Guy. It's Rocket Time!

ANDY:

Oh yeah? The gloves are off, buddy!

(A character on the screen explodes in a spray of blood and body parts. It is ANDY. Both boys are laughing as ANDY "dies" and "resurrects.")

MICHAEL:

Oooh, that's gotta hurt!

ANDY:

Vengeance!

MICHAEL:

Hey, we're not helping our team very much!

ANDY:

Team? What team? Gotcha!

(MICHAEL "dies" -- then the screens freeze. MICHAEL and ANDY peel off parts of their Quake armor.)

ANDY:

What happened?

MICHAEL:

Looks like the network dropped out. Eh, whatever. I'm Quaked out for today. You?

ANDY:

Yeah. Hey, Mike, you okay? What happened today?

MICHAEL:

Jesus, Andy. Nothing. Nothing at all. Here, let me show you something I made today.

(MICHAEL sits down and pulls up a keyboard. ANDY sits beside him. The Quake screens are all replaced by a Windows screen, and then an open spreadsheet.)

ANDY:

What's this?

MICHAEL:

This is my social studies homework. You know the research assignment?

ANDY:

Yeah. We're supposed to look up some sets of data and summarize them on a spreadsheet. Like population versus date for each state, something like that.

MICHAEL:

Right. Only I got a little more creative than usual. I got to thinking. These kids who shot up their high schools, all the Republicans and shit think they can't distinguish between fantasy and reality. They think they're like, still inside a video game. So there must be a high score list, right? Well, this is it.

ANDY:

You are truly a sick mother. I like it!

MICHAEL:

Thank you. I think I've got all the important elements here. Date, town, high school, name of the shooter. And you can see I've done the research.

ANDY:

Students killed, teachers killed, parents killed, shooters killed. I like that you split it up that way.

MICHAEL:

Right. Then students wounded, teachers wounded, parents wounded, and shooters wounded.

ANDY:

So how many points do you get for each?

MICHAEL:

Well, I figure it works exactly like Quake. One point for each frag. And half a point for each wounding. Except if the shooter is killed, he loses a point, and half a point for being wounded.

ANDY:

I like that. You don't get any points for wounding somebody in Quake, but I like it.

MICHAEL:

So here's Jonesboro, Arkansas. Westside Middle School. Golden and Johnson. Four students and one teacher killed, ten students wounded. Total score, ten points.

ANDY:

Right, five points for the kills, and half points for the woundings. Shouldn't you split that up for the fact that there were two shooters?

MICHAEL:

I thought about that, but we get team points in Quake, right? We share them. It's the same thing. Now here's the current high score. Littleton, Colorado. Columbine High School. Harris and Klebold. Twelve students, one teacher, and two shooters killed. Twenty three students wounded. That all adds up to twenty-two points.

ANDY:

Wait. Can I see the formula there?

MICHAEL:

Sure. *(He highlights the appropriate cell.)*

ANDY:

OK, you're taking away one point for each shooter that's killed, right?

MICHAEL:

Yeah.

ANDY:

I don't think that's right. Remember, Harris and Klebold *wanted* to die. I mean, they shot themselves, after all.

MICHAEL:

True.

ANDY:

And what about that kid who said, "Please kill me"?

MICHAEL:

Yeah, I got him right here. TJ Solomon. Heritage High School, Conyers, Georgia. Six woundings, no killings. Three points. Wimp.

ANDY:

Right. But you see? They wanted to be killed. So I think you should give them a point if they get killed, instead of taking a point away.

MICHAEL:

Okay, that's pretty easy to do.

(MICHAEL types for a moment, making the change.)

MICHAEL:

There we go. Harris and Klebold. Twenty-six points. Current High Score.

ANDY:

And two points each for parents, I think.

MICHAEL:

OK. And a full point for wounding a parent, instead of a half-point. And the big winner from that change is Kip Kinkel. Two students killed, two parents killed, and twenty-two students wounded. He had fifteen points, he goes to seventeen points, and that puts him in a solid runner's up position behind Harris and Klebold.

ANDY:

Give that man the silver medal. And the bronze clearly goes to Golden and Johnson, with ten points total. You know, you are really a sick little fucker, Bailey. At school they go apeshit over stuff like this. I wouldn't bring this into school if I were you. They'll suspend you for this.

MICHAEL:

Hey, do you know what the problem with this table is?

ANDY:

No, what's that?

MICHAEL:

Not enough teachers on it.

SCENE 7

(A podium placed down center stage, with plenty of red, white and blue bunting. REVEREND PHINEAS FRAGWELL stands beaming at the podium.)

FRAGWELL:

Jesus Christ, friends, the only hope for America! My name is Phineas Fragwell, and I have come to save some souls. Once again, Satan has seen fit to descend upon an American high school, and visit tragedy on our children.

My friends, there is a moral crisis in America. America is on the road to ruin, and this tragic event is a symptom. Isaiah says, “forget my law and I will forget your children.” And we see this is exactly what God has done. I ask you, what message is sent when it is illegal to pray in schools? Satan hears that message loud and clear. In just one stroke, Beelzebub took over the soul of one troubled child and instructed him to perform an act of shocking evil. Shocking, yes, but not surprising. This is exactly as God told us it would be.

Friends, there are some who say God does not belong in the schools. They say God does not belong on the airwaves. They say God does not belong in our lives! Michael Stewart Bailey pulled the trigger, but these people have a share of the responsibility. These people are to blame for the deaths of thirteen innocent children and that fine heroic gym teacher.

They will tell you that the problem is guns; that there is an epidemic of guns in this country. But guns have been in the hands of Americans as long as there has been an America. There isn't an epidemic of guns. There is an epidemic of godlessness!

Folks, these are dark times for America. Believers across the country are under attack as never before by an unholy alliance of homosexual perverts, evolutionist activists, and deviant abortionists, aided and abetted by their allies in the elitist liberal media. And don't you think that we don't know where their marching orders are coming from. We know, oh yes, we know. We are at war with these servants of Satan. But they cannot prevail, because there is a God in heaven. My organization, FTP, is named for the pillars of our society. Family, Tradition, and Property. The tools we will use to defeat the devil!

But the road ahead is difficult. Satan's message is spreading every day, out of the TV, out of the radio, the magazines, the newspapers, out of every oozing orifice of the popular culture. They spread a message of moral decay and spiritual degradation. But now, now, Satan has found his most powerful tool yet. A way to burrow like some vile grub into the very brains of the children made weak by their lack of spiritual training. A way to insert his propaganda programming directly into the waiting and vulnerable souls of the children. Friends, he wasn't content spewing forth movies which glorify violence and death. He wasn't content puking out rap music which celebrates drugs and gang warfare. Out of the workshops of Satan and straight onto the shelves of Toys R Us, he has brought us the video game.

We have come here to Eastwood to seek some measure of justice for the innocent victims who died because of these vile and contemptible video games. Let me tell you about one of these “games” which these people are shoving down the throats of our children. We know it was Michael Stewart Bailey’s favorite pastime.

You only have to glance at it, to see the horrific violence and godlessness which pervades every megabyte of it. There is no authority in these games. There is no morality in these games. There is no God in these games! That’s not an accident. It’s part of a plan! Friends, remember, this is a war. When children play these games they have become trainees in Satan’s army. And they will be called into battle. Just like Michael Stewart Bailey.

But we have left our children to the devil, because we have refused as a nation to put them into the hands of God. We have rejected God’s law in our land. I call on you now, to throw Satan’s filth out of your house. And embrace our Lord Jesus Christ! Gather up your violent, godless, immoral video games right now. Keep them out of your children’s heads, keep out of your children’s hearts. Throw away the video games. And come back to godliness! Burn the video games. And come back to morality! Smash the video games. And come back to righteousness! Thank you!

SCENE 8

(MISS MILLSTONE with MICHAEL.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael?

MICHAEL:

Miss Millstone?

MISS MILLSTONE:

You know why they wanted me to talk to you, don't you?

MICHAEL:

Not sure why they sent me to my English teacher.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Because I'm also the school counselor.

MICHAEL:

Don't we already have a school counselor? I thought we had one.

MISS MILLSTONE:

We used to.

MICHAEL:

So what happened to her?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Cutbacks. So – you want to talk to me about your social studies project? You know some people are pretty upset over it.

MICHAEL:

I don't understand why. I guess nobody around here seems to understand, you know, jokes.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Jokes? You call this a joke?

(MISS MILLSTONE unfolds a sheet of paper. It is the High Score List.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

There are many things we might call *this*, but “joke” is not one of them. Michael, are you aware of how serious this is?

MICHAEL:

I guess not.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, let me tell you how seriously they're taking this paper. This has gone to the assistant principal, the principal, your parents, and the sheriff.

MICHAEL:

Oh.

MISS MILLSTONE:

So, let's talk about it, and then we'll decide what we're going to do about it. Let's see now. You're a freshman, right?

MICHAEL:

I'm a junior.

MISS MILLSTONE:

A junior? You're pretty small for your age, then.

MICHAEL:

That's what they tell me.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Now, you say you wrote this paper as part of a homework assignment?

MICHAEL:

Yeah. Mister Willis can tell you that.

MISS MILLSTONE:

And you think that *this* satisfies the assignment that Mister Willis gave you?

MICHAEL:

Yeah.

MISS MILLSTONE:

I see. And what, exactly, is the point of totaling up the body count in this last column, to arrive at a score? (*A beat; MICHAEL has no answer for her.*) When we play games, or sports, we want to get a good score, don't we? And you've marked one score in particular as the "Current" High Score. Are you saying that people are just points? The goal of the game is the highest body count? Aren't you really saying that killing people is good? Michael? Do you see how this makes people upset?

MICHAEL:

It's just a joke. Jesus.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, look. You know you're not supposed to curse. OK? Please?

MICHAEL:

Yes, Miss Millstone.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Good. So. This is just a joke? Let's see, then. Last row. Date : question mark. Town : Eastwood. School : Eastwood High School. Shooter : M.S. Bailey. The rest of the row, the body count totals, are all question marks. Now Michael, is this also a joke? You don't think we should wonder if this is a threat? This shouldn't cause us some concern? (*A beat.*) Michael. Did you make the high score list so you could try to beat the high score?

MICHAEL:

No.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Good. Now what we're going to try to figure out here was just what exactly you did have in mind when you wrote this. You know, there are a lot of kids in this school, and it's our responsibility to protect each and every one of them. You understand, don't you, Michael?

MICHAEL:

Protect them -- from me?

MISS MILLSTONE:

And we have a responsibility to protect you, too. From anything you might do to harm yourself.

MICHAEL:

Like what, like kill myself or something?

MISS MILLSTONE:

That's right. Now Michael, I'd just like to ask you a few simple questions. And I'd like you to answer them as simply and as honestly as you can. Think you can do that?

MICHAEL:

Hurt the other kids? I can't believe that. You really think I could hurt the other kids? That's pretty cool.

MISS MILLSTONE:

We're just making sure, Michael. I'm sure you understand.

MICHAEL:

Yeah.

MISS MILLSTONE:

It's a sort of test. I'm just going to ask you a few questions. Don't think too much about your answers. Just answer quickly and honestly. Is that all right?

MICHAEL:

Sure. OK.

MISS MILLSTONE:

You can do that? All right. Now I want you to know that everything we say here today is completely confidential. So don't be afraid to tell me anything. Anything at all.

MICHAEL:

Okay.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Good. First question. Do you love your parents?

MICHAEL:

Sure.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Good. Do you enjoy school?

MICHAEL:

It's OK, I guess.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Good. Do you have a lot of friends in school?

MICHAEL:

I have a couple of friends.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Sure you do. Do you smoke cigarettes?

MICHAEL:

No.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Smoke anything else?

MICHAEL:

What?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Come on, Michael. Have you ever tried drugs?

MICHAEL:

No.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Illegal drugs? Heroin, cocaine, marijuana?

MICHAEL:

No.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Come on, Michael, you can tell me. You can tell me anything.

MICHAEL:

I just say no.

MISS MILLSTONE:

All right. Have you ever drunk alcohol?

MICHAEL:

I've had wine once or twice, I guess.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Beer?

MICHAEL:

Probably. I guess a couple of times.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Have you ever viewed pornography?

MICHAEL:

Pornography? Like what?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, you know what I'm talking about. I'm talking about dirty magazines and dirty movies. A boy your age, you know what I mean.

MICHAEL:

I don't look at stuff like that, Miss Millstone.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Do you love your parents?

MICHAEL:

You already asked me that.

MISS MILLSTONE:

I'm asking you again. Do you love your parents?

MICHAEL:

Yeah. Of course I do.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Do you think they love you?

MICHAEL:

Sure.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Do you now, or have you ever, played Doom?

MICHAEL:

Doom?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Yes, Doom.

MICHAEL:

I used to.

MISS MILLSTONE:

You used to?

MICHAEL:

But I don't any more.

MISS MILLSTONE:

OK, next question. Do you now, or have you ever had violent or satanic thoughts toward yourself and/or others?

MICHAEL:

Satanic?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Yes. Satanic. Meaning evil and emanating from Satan.

MICHAEL:

Miss Millstone, I don't believe in Satan.

MISS MILLSTONE:

I'm just reading the form, Michael.

MICHAEL:

Well, I don't think I have satanic thoughts.

MISS MILLSTONE:

How about violent thoughts? Violent or satanic thoughts toward yourself and/or others?

MICHAEL:

I just do whatever the voices in my head tell me.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Now see, Michael, that's just the kind of stuff that gets you into trouble!

MICHAEL:

I guess.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Just like that story you wrote in my English class.

MICHAEL:

Yeah. That story.

MISS MILLSTONE:

It was a very good piece of work, Michael. It was very creative.

MICHAEL:

I guess.

MISS MILLSTONE:

I really liked the way you cast the football coach as Doctor Frankenstein, and the team as his zombies.

MICHAEL:

Yeah. He injects 'em with steroids to bring 'em to life. And then they rampage around the school, killing everyone.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Until somebody named -- what do you know? -- Michael appears, with a bunch of weapons, and blows them all away, saving the school. Very creative, and actually pretty funny. (*Indicating the High Score List*) But after this, I don't know, Michael, it doesn't seem as funny anymore.

MICHAEL:

You know, the football players have been giving me a lot of shit since then.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, I'm not going to warn you again. You curse in this office one more time, and you're suspended, do you understand me?

MICHAEL:

I didn't show 'em the story. I didn't show anyone that story. I wish I knew how they heard about it.

MISS MILLSTONE:

It's part of my job to notify the administration when we see something like your story. Anything which might indicate a kid at risk. When they get that information, they pass it down to all the teachers.

MICHAEL:

So Coach Taser must have seen it. And he must have passed it around to his team. Great.

MISS MILLSTONE:

You've been in a few fights. We know.

MICHAEL:

Wouldn't call those fights. Pretty one-sided, you know.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, we've identified you as belonging to a special risk category.

MICHAEL:

What does that mean?

MISS MILLSTONE:

The acting-out, the stories, this high-score list, the fighting, the violent video games. It all makes a pattern.

MICHAEL:

The video games?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Yes, you know. Doom. Quake. Whatever. You're still playing the role of a killer possessed by demons.

(Enter THE SPACE MARINE, a buff blonde butch in green armor. He carries a shotgun.)

SPACE MARINE:

Did I hear her right?

MICHAEL:

Yeah. Possessed by demons. She thinks you're possessed by demons.

SPACE MARINE:

I'm not being *possessed* by demons! I'm being *attacked* by demons!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Who's he?

MICHAEL:

He's a Space Marine. He's the hero from Doom. Also Quake 2.

SPACE MARINE:

Ma'am.

MISS MILLSTONE:

You remind me of a cop I used to know.

SPACE MARINE:

Not surprised.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Well look, there are demons in the game, that's all I know.

SPACE MARINE:

But I'm really a good guy!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Then how come you're shooting everything in sight?

SPACE MARINE:

Because they're freakin' DEMONS for Christ's sake!

MISS MILLSTONE:

All right! That's it!

SPACE MARINE:

Come on! You SHOOT 'em! Who needs to be told to shoot demons!?

MISS MILLSTONE:

You're suspended, Michael Bailey. Do you understand me?

SPACE MARINE:

(Aside)

Besides, I can't help it. I was programmed to kill.

MISS MILLSTONE:

One week's suspension.

SPACE MARINE:

For what?

MISS MILLSTONE:

(To the SPACE MARINE)

You've been warned not to curse in school.

SPACE MARINE:

Aw, hell, kid. I'm sorry.

MICHAEL:

Forget it.

SPACE MARINE:

Hey, you know that high score list? Funniest fuckin' thing I ever seen.

(MISS MILLSTONE brings out a small plastic sample cup, hands it to MICHAEL.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

One week's suspension. And Michael, I want you to fill this cup before you go.

MICHAEL:

Fill this cup?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Yes. Go into the boy's room and fill it up right now.

MICHAEL:

You mean you want a urine sample?

SPACE MARINE:

There is no way I'm filling that for *you*.

MICHAEL:

No way!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, if you don't have anything to hide, you have nothing to worry about.

SPACE MARINE:

You have no right to take a sample from me.

MICHAEL:

You have no right to take a sample from me.

MISS MILLSTONE:

I'm warning you. This is all going into my report to the principal.

MICHAEL:

I thought you said this was all confidential.

SPACE MARINE:

That's what they told me, too.

MISS MILLSTONE:

We have to make sure, Michael. Now, is it going to be two weeks' suspension?

(The SPACE MARINE knocks the sample cup out of MISS MILLSTONE's hand.)

MICHAEL:

I'm not giving you a sample and that's all there is to it!

(EXIT MICHAEL and the SPACE MARINE.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

Right. Two weeks' suspension.

SCENE 9

(The monitors display footage of the triumphant return of the high schoolers to Eastwood High. NATALIE HAIR on stage supplies narration.)

NATALIE:

Classes resumed today at Eastwood High School, the first day that students returned after the horrific attack perpetrated by Michael Stewart Bailey. Grief counselors were on-hand to help the students, teachers and staff deal with their feelings about the shooting spree. In addition, concrete steps have been taken to prevent another occurrence of this sort of tragedy. Yesterday the Eastwood school board voted unanimously to ban the wearing of trenchcoats and tee-shirts promoting Marilyn Manson or Doom. School security has been beefed up, with metal detectors installed at all entrances, dozens of security cameras, and twenty-four-hour-a-day armed guards. A few extraneous art, music, and science programs have been canceled in the wake of the attack in order to free up the necessary funds to pay for the new additional protection.

Meanwhile, the investigation into the attack continues. Rumors persist that Michael Stewart Bailey held a grudge against members of the Eastwood High School football team. Ironically, though, no football players were killed or injured in the attack. Sources close to the investigation have told News Nineteen that detectives are convinced that Michael Stewart Bailey had at least one, and possibly two, accomplices during the attack. We'll resume our coverage of the Eastwood shooting spree after this.

SCENE 10

(MICHAEL crosses the stage, looking nervously about. He is suddenly intercepted by several FOOTBALL PLAYERS. They crowd around him, pushing and threatening.)

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Hey, check it out! It's Tidey Bowl.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Hey Tidey Bowl, I heard you were planning to go shooting up the high school.

MICHAEL:

No, you heard wrong.

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Yeah, I heard you were gonna kill all the football players, isn't that right?

MICHAEL:

No.

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

No? No? He's saying we're wrong.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

You saying we're wrong, Bailey? You're saying we're stupid?

MICHAEL:

No, just saying some people told you wrong.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Those were our friends. You're saying they're lying to us? Huh?

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Our friends are liars, huh, fag? Is that it?

MICHAEL:

I don't want to shoot anyone. I don't know what you're talking about.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

I think he knows exactly what we're talking about. Isn't that right? Faggot, faggot, faggot. What are we gonna do with the faggot?

MICHAEL:

Just leave me alone. Let me go, you assholes!

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Asshole? You calling me an asshole?

(FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER punches MICHAEL. MICHAEL doubles over.)

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Who's the asshole now, asshole?

(THE FOOTBALL PLAYERS lay into MICHAEL, not too hard, enough to leave him hurt and humiliated, not enough to hurt him seriously.)

FOOTBALL PLAYERS:

(Ad Lib)

Asshole...Jerk...Cocksucker...Fairy...Queer...Homo...

(They stop punching and kicking him. MICHAEL lies on the ground.)

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Hey fuck face. Remember what Coach Taser said. You don't want any trouble from us, just stay the hell out of our way. Got it? Or next time we *really* mess you up.

(EXIT the FOOTBALL PLAYERS, laughing. After a beat, enter the SPACE MARINE, toting his shotgun. He helps MICHAEL to his feet.)

SPACE MARINE:

How ya doin', kid?

MICHAEL:

I'm okay. They didn't hurt me too bad.

SPACE MARINE:

No cuts, huh? No bad bruises? They know better, don't they?

MICHAEL:

Yeah. For a bunch of ignorant fucks, they know how to stay out of serious trouble.

SPACE MARINE:

They're smarter than you that way.

MICHAEL:

Hey, who invited you anyway?

SPACE MARINE:

You know kid, it might not look like we have a lot in common, you and me. But I understand. The bullies and the preppies gettin' you down? You don't realize it, but I know just how you feel.

(Music begins to play; it is the prelude to "Have You Never Been Mellow," by Olivia Newton-John. As the music rises, MOM and MISS MILLSTONE appear to be the SPACE MARINE's backup singers, taking their place behind him. The SPACE MARINE begins to sing the tune:)

SPACE MARINE:

(Singing:)

There was a time when I was
A teenage outcast doing drugs
I was like you
There was a time when I was
Kicked and punched by high school thugs
I was like you
But don't you let them spoil your fun
You need to go and buy a gun!

Chorus:

Have you never been angry?
Have you never tried to kill some fucker who's gone snide?
Have you never heard voices scream inside your head?
Have you never helped someone else be dead?

There was a time when I was
On the high school bottom rung
I was like you
There was a time when they would
Treat me like a pile of dung
I was like you
But you don't need to take their bull
'Cause you can perforate their skull!

Chorus:

Have you never been angry?
Have you never tried to kill some fucker who's gone snide?
Have you never heard voices scream inside your head?
Have you never helped someone else be dead?

(As the song ends, the backup singers fade back into the darkness.)

MICHAEL:

You know, I could have used your help here a couple of minutes ago.

SPACE MARINE:

Well, I can't help much in that way, can I? I'm only a figment of your imagination. Sort of a hallucination.

MICHAEL:

Yeah, I guess.

SPACE MARINE:

If I were you, I'd be looking for some professional help.

MICHAEL:

You're right. I'm fucking hallucinating. Maybe I got a concussion or something. I think I need a doctor.

SPACE MARINE:

I'm not talking about *that*. You need professional help to get rid of those goons. Professional help. Like an exterminator. Like me. Those weasels been ruinin' your life for far too long, kid. But you know, we got a saying where I come from.

MICHAEL:

What's that?

SPACE MARINE:

That there's no such thing as a problem that can't be solved *(The SPACE MARINE pumps his shotgun for emphasis)* by the application of overwhelming firepower.

MICHAEL:

That's a good saying.

SPACE MARINE:

Come on, kid. Let's start makin' a plan.

(MICHAEL and the SPACE MARINE walk.)

MICHAEL:

Where are we going?

SPACE MARINE:

Where America goes when she has a problem. The place you go to find solutions. A gun show!

MICHAEL:

(Looking about him in wonderment)

Wow. This is something.

SPACE MARINE:

Isn't this amazing? Yes, sir, this is the free market at its free markiest.

MICHAEL:

What?

(A GUN DEALER emerges from behind a table.)

GUN DEALER:

Can I help you gentlemen?

SPACE MARINE:

Yes. Tell me, sir, are you a federally licensed firearms dealer?

GUN DEALER:

No, I'm not. I'm just a "private collector", and I'm selling these items out of my "private collection." Which means there are many federal and state laws and regulations we don't have to observe.

SPACE MARINE:

Great, let's see what you have, then. I'll take the 9mm semiautomatic pistol.

GUN DEALER:

That's a good gun.

SPACE MARINE:

The pump action shotgun.

GUN DEALER:

Any one of these is ideal for home defense. Anything else?

SPACE MARINE:

(Affecting an Austrian accent to sound like a well-known action-movie star)

Phased plasma rifle in the forty watt range.

GUN DEALER:

Hey, just what you see, pal.

SPACE MARINE:

I love doing that.

MICHAEL:

So are we done here?

SPACE MARINE:

Well, you could still use a rocket launcher, but you're not gonna find one here. So much for the Second Amendment.

MICHAEL:

Then we're ready.

SPACE MARINE:

Yeah. We're ready. We are ready.

(Exit MICHAEL and the SPACE MARINE.)

BLACKOUT
END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO
SCENE 1

(NATALIE appears before a series of monitors which are displaying the News Nineteen flying logo for their coverage of the high school shooting. The logo includes a photo of the high school and a crosshairs. A simple theme song plays out, and then lights full up on NATALIE.)

NATALIE:

Our coverage of the senseless shooting at Eastwood High School continues, on News Nineteen. I'm Natalie Hair. What do we know about the teenage killer whose spree has left fourteen dead and twenty-one wounded?

(Michael's high-school photo appears on the monitor behind NATALIE.)

NATALIE:

This is Michael Stewart Bailey. Friends and acquaintances describe him as a nice boy, a quiet and serious young man. He earned good grades, when he applied himself. But what dark secret was he carrying that ultimately exploded on that murderous day at Eastwood High?

We know he was a geek. A doofus. A nerd. He didn't get along well with the athletes and the good students at Eastwood High, preferring the company of a different crowd. He didn't date girls. A loser. He played ultra-violent computer games and listened to industrial goth music. A gweep. A pimply-faced, scrawny failure who never got with the program and never fit in. A dweeb. He wore the wrong clothes, he listened to the wrong music, and he hung out with the wrong people. A lamer. He wrote sci-fi stories, and he was known to smoke marijuana. A stoner. Law enforcement officials have stated that he sometimes visited sexually-oriented and neo-Nazi web sites. A wanker. A skeeve. We also have unconfirmed reports that he may have been homosexual. Could his affiliation with these groups on the fringe have been the motivating factor behind this degenerate fairy's horrific attack? We'll keep you up-to-date as information on this story becomes available. More after this.

SCENE 2

(CLARENCE and MICHAEL stand onstage. MICHAEL is shackled, in an orange prison jumpsuit.)

JUDGE:
(Offstage)

Are you ready to enter a plea?

CLARENCE:

We are, your honor.

JUDGE:
(Offstage)

On the indictment, fourteen counts of murder in the first degree and twenty-one counts of attempted murder, how do you plead?

CLARENCE:

Your honor, my client pleads not guilty.

MICHAEL:

Absolutely, one hundred percent not guilty!

JUDGE:
(Offstage)

Very well. Trial will begin in two weeks. Court is adjourned!

SCENE 3

(DICK TASER's eulogy. There is a lectern and a coffin on opposite sides of the stage. A banner is stretched overhead, upstage center: "Lord, help the children." FRAGWELL stands at the lectern. Several chairs are set up; the FOOTBALL PLAYERS sit dejectedly. MISS MILLSTONE sits apart from them.)

FRAGWELL:

We are gathered here today on a sad and solemn occasion. We have come together to lay to rest a good man, a kind man, a brave man who gave his life so that others might live. Sayeth the Lord, No greater love hath a man than this.

This is what we know about Dick Taser's last minutes. We know that he heard the shots. He knew his students and his team were in danger. He locked the gym doors and he deliberately drew the attention of the gunman. He used himself as a decoy in order to protect the boys and girls under his responsibility. He took unto his own body the bullets which were intended to cut down his charges. For that, he earns our undying respect.

Can a man's life be judged by his final acts? Not Dick Taser's life. He was a good man. His goodness shone through his entire life. You can see the range of civic organizations and activities he was involved in. High school teacher, football coach, swim team coach, Little League coach, Cub Scout master, Boy Scout master, Soap Box Derby, Junior Achievement. He was involved, deeply involved, in the lives of the children of this community. If it touched children, Dick Taser was there. He leaves behind a wife and twin daughters. They're not even two years old. They will never know their father, due to the brutal and repugnant violence of one filthy queer coward, that servant of Satan. We say with Dick Taser, his selfless, dying words : "Lord, help the children!"

(ENTER MOM and DAD. They stand a respectful distance from the assembled crowd. But not far enough.)

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

What the hell are they doing here? What the hell are you doing here?

(The FOOTBALL PLAYERS rise to challenge MOM and DAD.)

MOM:

We came to pay our respects.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

You're not welcome here, lady.

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Your little fuck is the reason he's dead.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Get the hell out of here!

*(The FOOTBALL PLAYERS hustle MOM and DAD OFFSTAGE.
After a moment, they return, smug, to their seats.)*

FRAGWELL:

Can a man's life be judged by his final acts? Can all a man's sins be washed away by heroism, by unselfishness, by a noble deed? Of course not, because God does not judge man by his works. The Bible teaches us this. I know that our Heavenly Father is well pleased with Dick Taser for saving the lives of so many of His children. Nevertheless, good works, no matter how good, even heroic, aren't good enough for the Lord, who only admits into heaven those who have believed in him. And so we say with a heavy heart, that Dick Taser never accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior, and is, therefore, condemned to spend eternity in agony in the fiery depths of Hell. Let us now pray for the soul of our dear departed friend.

SCENE 4

(MICHAEL and ANDY. A computer keyboard and chairs are downstage. MICHAEL faces the audience as he plays Quake or surfs the Web.)

ANDY:

Mike, you are definitely the perfect candidate for the guy to shoot up his high school.

MICHAEL:

I know it.

ANDY:

No really. Look, here's an article I found on some newspaper's web site. It's about the warning signs that a kid is about to crack.

MICHAEL:

What, really? Oh, this is great.

ANDY:

Yeah. Checklist Item Number One : "Had resorted to name-calling, cursing or abusive language."

MICHAEL:

Uh-HUH. Me and about only 95% of the teenage population.

ANDY:

Right. Get this: "Kip Kinkel was once disciplined at school for cursing a teacher."

MICHAEL:

Oooh. Stop him before he curses again!

ANDY:

Item Number Six : "Had a background of drug, alcohol or other substance abuse or dependency." Check out these examples. Michael Carneal had some drug-related literature in his room.

MICHAEL:

Like what?

ANDY:

That's all it says. "Some drug-related literature".

MICHAEL:

Probably one lonely copy of High Times.

ANDY:

Probably. And Mitchell Johnson reported smoking marijuana one time.

MICHAEL:

What did they label that?

ANDY:

“A background of drug dependency.” One time smoking dope.

MICHAEL:

What a bunch of bullshit. This crap has nothing to do with the real reasons these kids went berserk.

ANDY:

Oh yeah? You know something about that, huh?

MICHAEL:

Sure. You know, Klebold and Harris made a movie of themselves shooting up their high school. As a school project.

ANDY:

Yeah. I guess I heard that.

MICHAEL:

They kept a detailed diary of their plans. They made copies of school keys. The day before the attack, they actually warned a couple of students about it. They spent a lot of time building their bombs and getting their guns. I mean, fuck all this shit about “how to spot the trouble signs.” How hard can it be?

ANDY:

Not too hard, I guess. But what I can't figure out with any of these guys is, you know, why they did it. That's the part that gets me.

MICHAEL:

It's like we said before. Revenge, fame, and death.

ANDY:

I guess. Oh, say, that reminds me.

(ANDY brandishes a Zip disk.)

ANDY:

I brought you something. May I?

MICHAEL:

Sure.

(ANDY sits down in front of MICHAEL's keyboard and pops in the Zip disk. After a moment he starts a game of Quake. We see his movements on the monitors as he approaches a large, low building.)

ANDY:

Look familiar?

MICHAEL:

Not really. Oh hey, wait a minute...

ANDY:

Aha, he thinks he understands.

MICHAEL:

It's the school! Holy shit, it's the school!

(ANDY enters the building, and we see a monster.)

ANDY:

Good old Eastwood High. Let's go in the front door, shall we? Oh, look, there's a monitor, asking for my hall pass.

(ANDY "shoots" the monster several times; it dies.)

ANDY:

Here's my hall pass!

MICHAEL:

It's the admin wing. Good textures.

ANDY:

That's what I borrowed your digital camera for. I shot as many walls and floors as I could, worked the textures right back into the model. Let's take a right and head for the chemistry lab.

MICHAEL:

When did you build this?

ANDY:

I don't remember exactly when I started. Whenever I first got the level editor. I've been working on this one for a few months. I wanted to surprise you. Hello, chemistry students! You all flunked yesterday's quiz. Therefore, you must die!

(Andy guns down the “inhabitants” of the chemistry lab.)

MICHAEL:

Please don't forget to clean up the lab area at the end of the experiment!

ANDY:

And here, in the secret storage compartment ... bombs. Lots and lots of bombs. Okay, Michael, where to next?

MICHAEL:

I think we should head for the faculty lounge.

ANDY:

Excellent choice. Here we go.

MICHAEL:

You know, I think you should put a little CNN van in the parking lot with its satellite antenna up.

ANDY:

Right, like as soon as you start shooting, the cops and the news media show up. I could do that.

MICHAEL:

Oh wait! Go in there, that's my English class. I got a semiautomatic bone to pick with Miss Millstone.

ANDY:

Right, and I set it up just for you. Good morning, everybody!

(Andy showers the “inhabitants” of the room with simulated fire. Screams, blood, bullets flying.)

MICHAEL:

I pledge allegiance, to the frags, of these benighted states of America.

ANDY:

And to the repugnance, for which it stands.

MICHAEL:

PlayStation, indivisible, with delivery of pizzas for all. Amen.

(The shooting is over. All is quiet now.)

ANDY:

Next stop, faculty lounge.

MICHAEL:

No, no, no. I have a better idea.

ANDY:

Where?

MICHAEL:

The gym. I'd like to go air out some jocks.

ANDY:

That's a great idea.

MICHAEL:

And let those fuckers really have it. Really let em have it.

ANDY:

They really deserve it.

MICHAEL:

Again and again.

ANDY:

Also we'll put in the cops and the reporters.

MICHAEL:

Come on. We're gonna be on CNN.

SCENE 5

(The monitors display the action from Quake. NATALIE HAIR stands in shadow, her outline before a lit backdrop, and she comes forward after a few moments into light.)

NATALIE:

It's become clear to investigators that Michael Stewart Bailey and his friends were devotees of the computer game Quake. These are scenes of actual Quake 3 game play. In the game, the players pretend to be Space Marines, running down the hallways of a gigantic maze, killing everything in sight, including each other. They use a bewildering array of weapons : pistols, shotguns, rockets, chainsaws, and a super-gun, chillingly labeled the BFG-10,000. Blood gushes and limbs fly in this horrific world. A few days ago, Eastwood High School got the same treatment. Sources close to the investigation tell News Nineteen that this is where Bailey found his inspiration.

Michael Stewart Bailey didn't just play these action games; he was expert at creating his own "mods" for them. Mods are user-created files, such as extra maps, which owners of the game can play. Bailey allegedly made a mod for Quake depicting his high school. It seems apparent to investigators that he thought he was playing a real-life game of Quake when he rampaged through his school.

(The monitors display the image of COLONEL ABE CRASSMAN, as he lectures.)

One man has been sounding the alarm about the effects of video games on today's youth. Lieutenant Colonel Abe Crassman is a former US Marine and is now a professor of psychology at Louisiana State University. His book, *Killing Machines*, refers to the conditioning effects of movies, music and especially video games as "taking the safety catch off a generation." Now, in the wake of Michael Bailey's outburst, Colonel Crassman has come to Eastwood to serve as an expert witness in the trial.

(EXIT NATALIE HAIR. Lights up on ABE CRASSMAN.)

ABE CRASSMAN:

During World War Two, the US Army discovered that out of any group of one hundred men, presented with the means and the opportunity to kill the enemy, only fifteen to twenty of them would actually fire their weapons. If this is the first time you've ever heard that statistic, you probably don't believe me. And in the years after World War Two, we discovered that in most historical close combat situations, the majority of combatants manage to avoid killing. It seems that throughout history, soldiers have tried not to kill each other. This doesn't mean they were cowards, it just means that at that moment when a man makes a decision to kill or not to kill, he usually chooses not to. It's a strange and interesting discovery, and maybe we should be a little proud of it. Still, it presented a real problem to the military. War is all about killing, and it just doesn't do to have 80% of your men unable to do their jobs. Lucky for us, B.F. Skinner had a few ideas we could

use.

(Some of the cast appear on stage, and outfit ABE CRASSMAN with flak jacket, helmet, a full pack, and an automatic rifle, then disappear, as he continues to speak.)

A modern soldier in training is sent into the field for very realistic exercises. He wears his full complement of combat gear. Every once in a while, man-shaped targets at various ranges pop up, and the soldier must instantly aim and shoot at these targets.

(As ABE CRASSMAN speaks, cast members pop up from various locations. CRASSMAN aims, fires, and drops them.)

When he hits his target it drops down, just like a living target would. Trainees in this environment are being taught the ability to shoot instantly and reflexively. They are taking part in a precise mimicry of the act of killing on the modern battlefield.

We started using these modern training methods during the Korean War. As a result, firing rates went from twenty percent to fifty percent. We refined our methods in the fifties and sixties, and firing rates in Vietnam topped out at over ninety percent.

(ABE CRASSMAN lowers his weapon, strips off his gear. Images of Quake appear on the monitors.)

Now we're even experimenting with adapting these video games for use in our basic training. Why? I look at these video games, and this is what I see. I see target, aim, drop. Target, aim, drop. Just exactly like in our training. Repeatedly, reflexively, automatically, and rewarded, hence amplified. Here is the conditioned stimulus, here is the target behavior. When you do this for hundreds, even thousands of hours, I know as a psychologist what is going on in your mind. We call it operant conditioning, but you might as well call it programming. You're being programmed for violence. You're being taught that the correct and automatic response to every slight, every tiny provocation, is deadly violence. What are we doing to our children?

SCENE 6

(MOM and DAD share the stage with MISS MILLSTONE. DAD has a few nipper bottles in his suit, which he uses from time to time.)

MOM:

Needless to say, this comes as a complete shock to us.

DAD:

Complete shock.

MOM:

Something must have snapped inside of him.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Snapped?

DAD:

Just ... snapped.

MOM:

Something. I don't know what.

DAD:

And we have no idea how he got the guns.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Didn't you see this coming?

DAD:

See what coming? We were completely blindsided.

MOM:

Had no idea.

DAD:

What was there to see?

MOM:

Our child is perfectly normal! We never saw anything to indicate –

MISS MILLSTONE:

The warning signs were all there. When he was suspended --

MOM:

Suspended?

DAD:

Suspended? Michael? When?

MISS MILLSTONE:

You didn't know he had been suspended?

MOM:

Apparently not.

DAD:

When?

MISS MILLSTONE:

About a month before – before – well, you know.

MOM:

And what was he suspended for?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Didn't you sign the forms?

DAD:

What forms? You know, I don't know what's going on here! You're his teacher. You are his teacher, aren't you, Miss, Mrs. ...

MISS MILLSTONE:

Millstone. Diana Millstone.

MOM:

Yes. You were his English teacher. Didn't you see anything happening to him? Didn't you see any changes?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Listen. I've got seven classes every day, plus home room. There are an average of twenty-six students in each of my classes. That's over two hundred kids I see every freakin' day. You think I can track every kid's delicate mood swings?

MOM:

I think shooting up his high school is more than a mood swing!

DAD:

Hey, whoa there, ladies, let's just see if we can just figure out where the disconnect is –

MOM:

He spends most of his time in school. It's your job to monitor their development, isn't it?

MISS MILLSTONE:

That's your job. I'm not his god damned parent!

MOM:

And I'm not the child psychologist!

DAD:

Didn't you see any difficulties with him, Miss Millstone?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael was one long difficulty, sir. He was always difficult. That doesn't make him any different from any other kid I have.

DAD:

He was a good student, though.

MOM:

Wasn't he?

DAD:

Wasn't he?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Were you reading a different report card from me?

DAD:

Now that you mention it, it's been a while.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael was a middling student. Not too bad, not very good. Certainly not living up to his potential.

MOM:

Yes, we always thought he wasn't living up to his potential.

DAD:

That's what we always thought. Was there anything else you noticed that was different about Michael?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Everything about Michael was different. He was one of the few students I had who didn't seem to have any friends at all.

MOM:

Well, there was Andy. He was friends with Andy.

DAD:

Yes, that's right, there was Andy.

MOM:

Isn't he mixed up in this shooting business?

MISS MILLSTONE:

No, I don't think so.

DAD:

You sure about that?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Positive. Andy had absolutely nothing to do with it.

DAD:

So I guess you're telling us he didn't have any other friends. Is that right?

MISS MILLSTONE:

You don't know your son very well, do you?

MOM:

Look, we know our son very well. We're good parents.

DAD:

Well, it's true we, we haven't spent much time with him lately.

MOM:

No, not lately. But we're very busy people.

DAD:

Very busy.

MOM:

Briefs to write. Motions to file.

DAD:

Reports to assemble. Numbers to crunch.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Yeah, yeah, I got it! You've been drinking quite a bit there, you know.

MOM:

Oh no. George's drinking days are behind him.

DAD:

That's right. I used to have a problem, I guess, but not any more. This is just to take the edge of the uh, the events of the past few days. I'm sure you understand.

(DAD puts his bottle away.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

Of course. You know, we've never even met before now. I'm sorry it has to be under these circumstances.

MOM:

Not as sorry as you're gonna be, lady.

DAD:

Mary, don't start...

MISS MILLSTONE:

Look, this is not my fault.

MOM:

That's not the way I see it.

DAD:

Mary...

MOM:

Butt out of this, George. You say you saw the warning signs. Weren't you supposed to alert somebody? The sheriff's office? The county mental health department?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Oh, yeah? Weren't you supposed to be supervising him after school hours?

MOM:

Weren't you supposed to be teaching him social skills?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Weren't you supposed to be teaching him moral values?

MOM:

Weren't you supposed to be providing counseling?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Weren't you supposed to be spending time talking to him?

MOM:

Weren't you supposed to keep him from bringing guns to school?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Weren't you supposed to keep him from buying them?

(A beat.)

MOM:

You'll be hearing from our attorney.

MISS MILLSTONE:

I can't wait.

(EXIT MOM and DAD.)

SCENE 7

NATALIE:

As the trial of Michael Stewart Bailey moves into its sixth day, the investigation into his shooting spree at Eastwood High School continues. Police have made no progress identifying any accomplices in the rampage, but insist that evidence exists that Bailey was not alone. Rumors are circulating that his accomplice may have been Michael Stewart Bailey's homosexual lover, but opinions are bitterly divided within the ranks of the police. Confirmed or not, the news has drawn an infamous crowd of anti-gay protesters from Kansas, who are gathered outside the courthouse in a daily vigil. None of this is deterring the county prosecutor, who has successfully pressed to try Michael Stewart Bailey as an adult. She insists that she will win this trial and secure the death penalty for Bailey. From the county courthouse, this is Natalie Hair, News Nineteen.

SCENE 8

(MICHAEL sits on a chair downstage. MISS MILLSTONE stands over him, loading him up with extra papers.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

Welcome back to school, Michael. Here's the homework you missed; I'll expect you to make this up over the next month or so. I hope that the past two weeks have taught you a lesson.

MICHAEL:

You bet they have.

MISS MILLSTONE:

You know Michael, you can be a very good student, when you apply yourself. You skip class a lot, and you don't really participate even when you're here. You could have been one of the best students in the entire class. Yet you choose to turn your back on all that, and go your own way. And it's not just that, you know. I've read your writings. We've circulated them a bit among the teachers here. Some of these are very well-written, very funny. But I have to admit, some of your writings, they disturbed me.

MICHAEL:

Miss Millstone, I'm in a lot of trouble right now.

MISS MILLSTONE:

That's true.

MICHAEL:

I really wish you hadn't passed some of that stuff to Mister Taser. The jocks are totally hassling me.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, sooner or later you're just going to have to accept responsibility for your own actions.

MICHAEL:

What does that have to do with the jocks?

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, they aren't the reason you're in trouble, are they?

MICHAEL:

I just told you!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, you're going to have to stop blaming other people for problems that you yourself are

causing.

(ENTER DICK TASER and THE FOOTBALL PLAYERS.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

Now, I've been speaking to Mister Taser, and I want to put an end to this immediately.

DICK TASER:

Kid, it's like I was tryin' to tell ya. My boys don't cause any trouble. End of story.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Don't forget that we were in high school once, too, Michael. We know what it's like.

MICHAEL:

You don't know anything about what it's like! Those guys are beating on me, Miss Millstone!

DICK TASER:

I asked 'em myself. Nobody's beating on nobody.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Michael, we all have to put up with a little bit of harassment in high school. It's part of the normal process of growing up.

DICK TASER:

Now Michael, I sat down with my boys today, and we had a nice talk. Hey Deke, you want to tell me what you learned today?

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Sure, coach. I learned that no matter what a person's race, color, creed, country of origin, gender, class, handicap, sexual preference, hair color, or anything, that person is entitled to respect and politeness and fair play.

(A beat, then MISS MILLSTONE, DICK TASER, and the FOOTBALL PLAYERS burst out into laughter.)

DICK TASER:

That was great. All right, and what else did we discuss?

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

That we don't beat up on Michael.

DICK TASER:

OK?

MISS MILLSTONE:

That's good enough for me.

DICK TASER:

OK. Case closed. See ya tomorrow morning, boys.

MISS MILLSTONE:

And Michael? I don't want to hear any more about this.

(EXIT DICK TASER and MISS MILLSTONE.)

MICHAEL:

I think I'll just be going now.

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Not so fast, Quake boy!

(The FOOTBALL PLAYERS lay into MICHAEL, and pound him for a few seconds as he shrieks and cries.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Welcome back to Eastwood High, faggot!

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Now straighten up and keep in line, freak.

(EXIT the FOOTBALL PLAYERS, leaving MICHAEL in a crumpled, shaking mess on stage. After a few moments, he drags himself on to a chair downstage. MICHAEL sits, facing downstage, and sobs for a few more moments. Then, slowly at first, but with gathering momentum, he begins playing Quake. The monitors are alive with the action of the game. ENTER THE SPACE MARINE and ANDY from opposite sides of the stage. They flank MICHAEL and watch him impassively.)

MICHAEL:

You know, we could just sit around and take it. We can take it, just accept all the abuse they give us, take it and not ever do anything about it. That's not hard, that's pretty easy. I can just wait till they go away, wait till I graduate and get away from Eastwood. But I already know that nothing will ever let me forget how it feels to be pushed around by these guys. I'll never really be able to escape them. And I'll be scared my whole life. But the worst thing is, the real bitch of it is, they'll never be scared of anything. And they're the ones who should be the most scared of all. You know everything they ever taught us in school is a pack of horseshit? Because they always told us that you're supposed to be nice, and be good, and you get rewarded for that, and bad people get

punished. But that's not the way it really is. It's really just the opposite. The assholes, the evil assholes, they get the rewards, and the guys like me, we're the ones who get shafted. We're the ones who get the abuse. Even by the system that teaches us different. Especially by the system.

SPACE MARINE:

Aw, listen to you. What a whiny little turd you are, you know that? Look at you. Sure, you take it from them. Then you go home, and you cry a little, and then you play your little game. And you go right back again and take it! No wonder they call you a faggot.

MICHAEL:

Well what am I supposed to do about it?

SPACE MARINE:
(Mocking MICHAEL)

“Well what am I supposed to do about it?”

ANDY:

You should go to your parents, to your teachers, and tell them what's happening.

MICHAEL:

Were you just listening to me?

ANDY:

That's not exactly the way it happened.

MICHAEL:

You weren't there, were you?

SPACE MARINE:

He thinks you should go to your teachers? What'll that accomplish? Don't you get it? They're part of the system! It's all part of the plan!

ANDY:

And your parents? They're not part of the system. They'll do something.

SPACE MARINE:

Jesus, they're the worst ones of all. They let you down a long time ago. They let you know where you stand. They let you know what they think of you. You can't ever go back to them. No, Michael, you've got the answer to your problems right in front of you. It's right there. It's right in front of you.

ANDY:

What the hell are you telling him?

SPACE MARINE:

What do you think? The system isn't about niceness and fair play. It's about power. Take me. Do you think I have any problems? Of course I have problems!

MICHAEL:

He has bigger problems than I do. Demons from Hell are trying to kill him!

SPACE MARINE:

I got demons, you got jocks and teachers. Not so different, really.

ANDY:

And what are we supposed to do about our problems?

SPACE MARINE:

What do you suppose I do? I see a problem, I shoot it.

MICHAEL:

He shoots it!

SPACE MARINE:

No problem.

ANDY:

Yeah but, what are *we* supposed to do?

MICHAEL:

What do you suppose we're gonna do? Lock and load. We'll do it. (*To ANDY:*) We'll do it together.

SPACE MARINE:

Damn right.

ANDY:

Yeah?

MICHAEL:

Yeah, come on. We'll get those fucking jocks, and we'll air 'em out.

ANDY:

I don't know...

SPACE MARINE:

Hey! It's not just the jocks ya gotta ventilate. Don't you see? They all hate you, they all want to keep you down, humiliate you, degrade you.

ANDY:

You know, you're right.

SPACE MARINE:

They know you're smarter than they are, they know you're better than they are, they're afraid of you and they don't want you to know that. The preps, the brains, the jocks, the Jesus freaks, the stoners, the skaters, the gangstas, the Punks, the Goths... It doesn't matter who they are. Teachers, students, staff, they all hate you. They all hate you. Kill them all.

MICHAEL:

Kill them all.

(MICHAEL takes the SPACE MARINE's shotgun.)

SPACE MARINE:

You've constructed the model. You've gotten the guns. You've built the bombs. You've rehearsed it a thousand times. You know what to do. Kill them. Kill them all.

ANDY:

Kill them.

MICHAEL:

Kill them all!

SPACE MARINE:

Kill them. Kill them all!

(MICHAEL takes the SPACE MARINE's pistol. He hands it to ANDY.)

MICHAEL, ANDY, and THE SPACE MARINE:

Kill them. Kill them all! Kill them. Kill them all! Kill them. Kill them –

(Suddenly they are interrupted by a voice.)

MOM:

(Offstage)

Michael? What are you doing up there? You'd better come down, your father will be home soon.

SPACE MARINE:

Kill them, Michael. Kill them all. Kill them all!

(MICHAEL hoists the shotgun and pumps it.)

MICHAEL:

I'll be right down, Mom!

SPACE MARINE:

Yeah!

ANDY:

No, Michael.

MICHAEL:

What?

ANDY:

No. I won't do it.

(ANDY hands the pistol back to the SPACE MARINE.)

ANDY:

It's wrong, Michael. I won't do it. And you shouldn't do it either. Don't do it, Michael. It's not you.

SPACE MARINE:

Of course it's him! It's what he's wanted to do all along! *(To MICHAEL:)* It's you, it's totally you!

ANDY:

It's wrong, Michael. You go postal and you've become as low as they are, lower even. A lot lower. And you know what, you'll prove everything they ever said about you.

MOM:

(Offstage)

Michael, come on downstairs. Come on!

MICHAEL:

You know, he's right.

(MICHAEL hands the shotgun back to the SPACE MARINE.)

MICHAEL:

Sorry. Coming, Mom.

(EXIT MICHAEL.)

SPACE MARINE:

Aw, crap.

BLACKOUT
END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE
SCENE 1

(MOM and DAD. MOM's hair is askew. She is wearing jeans and a t-shirt. DAD is disheveled, boozy. He is carrying a bottle in a paper bag.)

MOM:
Oh, Michael, how *could* you?

DAD:
Yes, how *could* you?

MOM:
We were such *good* parents.

DAD:
We gave you everything. Everything.

MOM:
And you threw it back in our faces!

DAD:
Like the little shit you are.

MOM:
See how embarrassed we are?

DAD:
How could you?

MOM:
Is this your idea of revenge?

DAD:
I think it is. Is this what you wanted?

MOM:
The whole town. The entire town.

DAD:
Now they know. Now they know everything.

MOM:

They will. When we're all over the TV, they'll know everything.

DAD:

Why? To get back at us?

MOM:

To punish us? Is that why you did it?

DAD:

We were convinced that you were perfectly normal! We never saw anything to indicate –

MOM:

Never saw anything out of the ordinary.

DAD:

Not since you were little.

MOM:

Too little to remember, really.

DAD:

Those days are long behind us.

MOM:

Long behind.

DAD:

My drinking days are long behind me. *(DAD takes a swig.)*

MOM:

George.

DAD:

And I don't need it!

MOM:

He was under a lot of stress in those days. A lot of stress.

DAD:

Taking care of you. And the house.

MOM:

Give me the bottle, George.

DAD:

While you were going to law school.

MOM:

Give me the bottle.

DAD:

I was unemployed, useless, stuck at home with this brat! Your son.

MOM:

Give me the god damned bottle, George.

DAD:

I said I don't need it!

(DAD flings the bottle violently OFFSTAGE. It crashes.)

DAD:

And I don't need any shit from you, either! Or from you, Michael! God -- damn -- you!

MOM:

This isn't helping.

DAD:

I know exactly what this is all about, Michael. You spoiled little brat. So you couldn't take a little discipline from your old man, is that it? You been stewin' about that for fourteen years, haven't you? We thought you'd forgotten it. It was so long ago.

MOM:

Water under the bridge.

DAD:

What do you want from me? I'm not proud of it. It doesn't make me proud. But I thought we'd put it behind us.

MOM:

We thought it was ancient history.

DAD:

Not to be talked about.

MOM:

Not ever to be discussed again.

DAD:

And I kept my end of that bargain. Jesus Christ, I kept my end of that bargain.

MOM:

He hasn't touched a drop. Not till, well, you know. And he hasn't touched you. He hasn't hit you.

DAD:

I haven't hit you in years.

MOM:

We made a bargain that night.

DAD:

We made a deal. And I kept it! I kept my end of that bargain! I remembered.

(A beat.)

MOM:

George, it's all going to stop. It's going to stop tonight. I'm not ever bringing this child of ours to the hospital again. Not like this. Do you understand me?

DAD:

I swear I won't do it again, Mary.

MOM:

You've sworn before, George. It's not good enough. So here's the bargain. I'm only going to say it once. You're going to stop drinking. Tonight. Forever. And you're never going to hit Michael again. For that matter, you're not going to hit me ever again, either.

DAD:

Okay.

MOM:

You promise that.

DAD:

I promise.

MOM:

Because I know my rights, George. I'll take you for absolutely everything. The house, the car, Michael, everything. Then I'll bring you up on child abuse and assault charges. Do you understand me?

DAD:

I understood you. And I did it. I changed.

MOM:

You did, George. You did the right thing.

DAD:

But *this* wasn't supposed to happen! Look at what you've done to us, Michael. You've ruined everything. Everything.

MOM:

We're so sorry, Michael.

DAD:

We were such *good* parents.

MOM:

His drinking days are behind him now.

DAD:

And you threw it right back in our faces. You little bastard.

MOM:

How *could* you?

SCENE 2

(The boy's room at Eastwood High. We see the silhouette of a toilet behind a scrim. ANDY is sitting on the toilet, but he is also behind the scrim and we can only see his outline. As lights come up, he stands up, pulls up his pants, and walks out from behind the scrim. He begins to make an exit, but stops when we hear laughter OFFSTAGE.)

ANDY:

Oh, fuck.

(ANDY moves back behind the scrim, sits down and pulls up his legs, so as not to be seen. As he does so, ENTER the FOOTBALL PLAYERS.)

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Coach Taser was tellin' me about this one little prick, that Michael Bailey prick, he said he'd tell everyone that we were using drugs. He said he'd tell the principal.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

What, you mean like pot and shit? Who cares? We get tested every month for that shit. Nobody can touch us for that.

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

He's talking about the other shit.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

So what? How the hell would he know anything about that? He's just one little dumb-ass prick. With a stupid idea in his head that he can't prove anyway. Hey, man –

(The FOOTBALL PLAYER is trying to open the door to the stall, but it's locked.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

What's with this door?

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

There anyone in there? *(He gets down on his knees and peers.)* Nobody's in there. Fuck it, use the other one.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

I don't know. That's where I always go.

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

It's your lucky stall?

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Yeah. Hey, you! Come on out!

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Come on.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Come on, I wanna go! I wanna go in there!

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

(Laughing)

Oh man.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

You can come out, or I can bust this door open and throw you out!

(Pause, as the FOOTBALL PLAYERS laugh. SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER shrugs, begins to turn away. Then:)

ANDY:

Go away. Leave me alone!

(They turn back to the stall.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Come on, you little shit. That's my fucking toilet and I wanna use it. Come on. COME ON!

(ANDY emerges from the stall. SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER grabs him and whisks him past, behind him, pushing him out of his way, as he enters the stall.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

All right, then.

(ANDY flies several paces downstage, and recovers his own gait. He is happy enough to be past the gauntlet, and begins to walk rapidly OFFSTAGE.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Hey – wait a minute! The little fucker!

(The other FOOTBALL PLAYERS stop ANDY, grab him and bring him back as SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER emerges from the stall.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

The little fucker didn't even flush!

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Aw man! That's rude!

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

How the fuck am I supposed to use it when you haven't even flushed?

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Hey wait a minute, this is the same prick. That Michael Bailey prick. No, wait, I think this is his little friend.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

What, his special friend? You his special friend?

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Speak of the devil, huh?

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

What does that mean?

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

It means – it means, fuck this little shit! *(Hits ANDY.)* So you wanna rat us out, huh? Huh? Little faggot.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Hey, hey. Little faggot. I got a job for you. I want a clean toilet in here, you understand? You understand?

ANDY:

So I'll flush it.

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Not good enough. I want it clean. You're gonna clean it.

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

With your head!

(ANDY starts to struggle, but the FOOTBALL PLAYERS have him tight, and they maneuver his head into the toilet. He begins to scream, and continues his struggle, but it is pointless.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

You're gonna get that toilet sparkly clean!

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Tidey Bowl clean!

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

I think he's really enjoying this!

FIRST FOOTBALL PLAYER:

Come on faggot, you love this! Homos love to eat shit, don't they?

(The FOOTBALL PLAYERS hold ANDY down, and flush the toilet repeatedly.)

SECOND FOOTBALL PLAYER:

That's right, nice and clean.

(The lights FADE TO BLACK, and we hear ANDY's screams and the FOOTBALL PLAYERS' laughter. Then, silence. Lights up on a bare stage. MICHAEL and the SPACE MARINE stand on opposite sides of the stage.)

MICHAEL:

Don't tell me. I don't want to know.

SPACE MARINE:

He's dead, kid.

MICHAEL:

No. No. No.

SPACE MARINE:

They killed him. They fucking killed him!

MICHAEL:

NO!

SPACE MARINE:

They drowned him. They drowned him in a toilet full of shit!

MICHAEL:

I didn't even know you could do that.

SPACE MARINE:

That's what they did.

MICHAEL:

Wait a minute. Doesn't that seem a little weird to you, though?

SPACE MARINE:

Michael, listen to you!

MICHAEL:

What? It's just, I didn't know you could kill someone like that.

SPACE MARINE:

It doesn't matter *how* they killed him! Michael!

MICHAEL:

You're right.

SPACE MARINE:

They killed him. They fucking killed him!

MICHAEL:

What did he ever do to them?!

SPACE MARINE:

You could've stopped it. You had your chance.

MICHAEL:

But he talked me out of it!

SPACE MARINE:

Yeah, well, who's sorry now, huh?

MICHAEL:

Shut up!

SPACE MARINE:

But Michael – now the time has come.

MICHAEL:

For what?

SPACE MARINE:

To ask you the question.

MICHAEL:

What question?

SPACE MARINE:

The only question that matters, kid. The only question that really fucking matters.

MICHAEL:

What's that?

SPACE MARINE:

Andy's dead. Those fucking dickheads killed him. And I gotta ask ya: What are you gonna do about it?

MICHAEL:

I don't know, I don't know.

SPACE MARINE:

Oh Christ! When will you stop being such a fucking wimp already?

MICHAEL:

Leave me alone. I know what I have to do.

SPACE MARINE:

Yeah?

MICHAEL:

I just need a minute, okay?

SPACE MARINE:

A minute. Yeah. Yeah, a minute. Chew on it, Michael. Stew on it. They jammed his head in a toilet and they killed him.

MICHAEL:

Those pricks.

SPACE MARINE:

Who do they think they are?

MICHAEL:

They think they're in charge.

SPACE MARINE:

They think we have to do whatever they say.

MICHAEL:

They're bigger than me, they're stronger than me, and there are more of them.

SPACE MARINE:

It's okay. You're tough, you can take it, you can tough it out.

MICHAEL:

I can, sure. I have. All my life.

SPACE MARINE:

God knows you have.

MICHAEL:

But then they killed my friend.

SPACE MARINE:

They killed him!

MICHAEL:

And I'm gonna –

SPACE MARINE:

What?

MICHAEL:

I'm gonna –

SPACE MARINE:

What are you gonna do about it, Michael?

MICHAEL:

I'm gonna make those bastards pay!

SPACE MARINE:

Yes!

MICHAEL:

I'm finally gonna make 'em pay!

SPACE MARINE:

That's right!

MICHAEL:

They're gonna pay back for everything!

SPACE MARINE:

For every little thing.

MICHAEL:

They're gonna pay!

SPACE MARINE:

That's right! Here.

(The SPACE MARINE gives MICHAEL his shotgun. MICHAEL holds it, surveys it, caresses it.)

MICHAEL:

I'm gonna make them pay. I'm gonna make them all pay.

SPACE MARINE:

Time to stand up for yourself, Michael.

MICHAEL:

Time to send a message.

SPACE MARINE:

Time to even the score.

MICHAEL:

It's Miller time.

SPACE MARINE:

Yes!

(EXIT MICHAEL. After a beat, enter ANDY.)

ANDY:

Hey, what's going on?

SPACE MARINE:

We're about to go avenge your death.

ANDY:

What?

SPACE MARINE:

No time for talking. Time for shooting!

ANDY:

But I'm not dead.

SPACE MARINE:

Those jocks killed you! They drowned you in a toilet full of shit.

ANDY:

No they didn't!

MICHAEL:

(Offstage)

Hey come on!

(The SPACE MARINE pushes ANDY offstage.)

SPACE MARINE:

Get out of here! Go on! Coming!

(The SPACE MARINE crosses the stage and EXITS)

SCENE 3

(MISS MILLSTONE enters.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

I've had it, Michael. This is the last straw. I've been teaching you delinquents -- huh, I've been *trying* to teach you monsters -- for twelve years, and where has it gotten me? Twelve years, ever since I left grad school. Three times on strike. Where did it get me? Forty thousand dollars a year, pay freeze for the last two years, I'm eighteen thousand dollars in debt, twelve hour days, administration indifferent at best, insane at worst, I'm sitting on top of a teenage pressure cooker all day long, my feet hurt all the time. Parents always complaining to me, telling me I'm a rotten teacher. Earth to Mom and Dad : your kid's a rotten student. You brats have no respect at all. Some kids actually threaten me, physically threaten me. Administration says, we can't do anything about it. I'm in fear of my goddamn life! And then I get home! Turn on the TV, read the paper, some right-wing jerk is always screaming about how bad the teachers are. Hey, mister fat-ass think-tank million-dollars-a-year, why don't you just try to do my job for one day, huh? And now, now *you* have to go and blow away your junior class. And poor Dick, Jesus, nobody deserves to die like that. Yes, it's true that he was very demeaning to me. And he touched me inappropriately. I mean he copped a feel, if you must know. More than once. But he still didn't deserve to die like that, face down in a pool of his own blood. That could have been me. It might just as well have been me. Is that what you wanted? Is that what you really wanted?

In twelve years I've had pregnant kids, sick kids, drunk kids, stoned kids, kids fighting, kids hiding out from their parents. I even had a kid who brought a knife to school once, but never, never, a kid with a gun. Let alone a god damned arsenal. Not till you, Michael. I could cope with all that before, but now... I can't sleep, I hardly eat. I've lost twenty pounds. I'm a nervous wreck. I hope you're satisfied. It should have been me. No, it shouldn't have been.

It's because if you asked me to pick out who among my students would be the one to go on a homicidal rampage, you'd be the last kid I'd pick, well maybe not the last kid, but you'd certainly be near the bottom of the list. If you asked me for the *one*, it wouldn't have been you. So how can I judge any of them? If I can't determine who's gonna be the mass murderer, for Christ's sake, how can I decide about any of them? Of course, in hindsight, we can see all the warning signs. And hindsight's 20-20, right? Except for poor Dick. And the kids. Jesus, thirteen of them. Well, I've had it, Michael. This is the last straw. Now I need to get the hell out of here and start living like a normal person. Ladies and Gentlemen, Miss Millstone has left the building.

(EXIT MISS MILLSTONE.)

SCENE 4

(MISS MILLSTONE crosses the stage. The sound of a shotgun blast rings out and the lighting changes to transport us along with MISS MILLSTONE back to the shootings. MISS MILLSTONE crouches DOWNSTAGE in a special, hiding. ENTER MICHAEL and the SPACE MARINE. MICHAEL is dressed in camouflage pants and t-shirt, heavy black boots, a camouflage cap and a dark trenchcoat. They are shooting, but they cannot see MISS MILLSTONE.)

SPACE MARINE:

I've been to paradise, but I've never been to me!

(DICK TASER sprints across the stage. MICHAEL doesn't see him, but the SPACE MARINE does. He shouts to MICHAEL.)

SPACE MARINE:

Hey, Michael! Look! Don't let that fuck get away. Kill him, goddammit, kill him now!

MICHAEL:

Hey, Mister Taser! Yeah! Check it out.

(MICHAEL aims and fires his pistol. He casually crosses the stage, switches to his shotgun, points it to a spot on the ground, slightly offstage. He fires the shotgun at this spot.)

MICHAEL:

Oh! Man! Look at that. Look at you, Mister Taser. You've got No Chest At All. Get it?

SPACE MARINE:

Come on. Those jocks have to be around here somewhere.

(EXIT MICHAEL and the SPACE MARINE. MISS MILLSTONE has collapsed into a fetal position on stage, sobbing, as the lights return to normal. She slowly regains her composure and begins to hurry offstage. Suddenly, ANDY enters from the opposite side of the stage. He is wearing a trench coat and has his hands in his pockets.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

Oh God!

ANDY:

Miss Millstone! It's OK –

MISS MILLSTONE:

Don't shoot me, please don't shoot me!

ANDY:

I'm not the one, I'm not shooting! It's Andy. Look...

*(ANDY takes his hands out of his pockets to show that he is unarmed.
He indicates the direction he entered from.)*

ANDY:

It's Andy. Andy Lux? C'mon, let's get out of here.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy?

ANDY:

C'mon, it's safe this way.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy Lux?

ANDY:

Come on!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy. Thank God! Andy!

ANDY:

I was looking for you. I was worried.

MISS MILLSTONE:

Andy! There's a maniac with a gun! Let's get out of here.

ANDY:

I know. It's safe over there. Come on!

MISS MILLSTONE:

Thank God! I'm safe!

(EXIT ANDY and MISS MILLSTONE.)

SCENE 5

(MICHAEL in dim light. He is again shackled, and wearing an orange prison jumpsuit. The SPACE MARINE enters, sits beside him.)

SPACE MARINE:

Well, I certainly hope you're happy. Are you happy?

MICHAEL:

I'm not happy. Why should I be happy?

SPACE MARINE:

That's exactly what I'm sayin'. Why should you be happy? You don't have anything to be happy about.

MICHAEL:

So fine. I'm not happy. You're not happy. We're all not happy, okay? Can you just leave me the fuck alone now?

SPACE MARINE:

Just three more people.

MICHAEL:

What?

SPACE MARINE:

You could have had the high score.

MICHAEL:

The high score?

(The SPACE MARINE produces the High Score List, shows it to MICHAEL.)

SPACE MARINE:

Yeah, look. All you had to do was off three more stiff's, and you could have had the high score. Right now you got fourteen dead, twenty-one wounded, which gives you 24 points, which gives you second place.

MICHAEL:

So what?

SPACE MARINE:

Klebold and Harris got 26 points. So all you needed to do was get three more people.

MICHAEL:

Just three, huh?

SPACE MARINE:

Just three more civilians. Or you could've killed your parents, that would've been four points right there.

MICHAEL:

Well, I couldn't do that.

SPACE MARINE:

Well I know that. You didn't even have the guts to kill yourself. At least that would've been one more point.

MICHAEL:

It's not like in the game. It's not like it is in the game at all.

SPACE MARINE:

Well of course it isn't! Real life has better graphics!

MICHAEL:

I couldn't keep doing it. I got sick.

SPACE MARINE:

Oh brother.

MICHAEL:

You know, they don't die right away. It takes time, it takes a lot of time. And they just lie there, and they bleed, and they cough, and they puke, and they shake. And it's not funny. I did that.

SPACE MARINE:

Yeah, you did that. You gave the shit right back to them. The shit they were giving you.

MICHAEL:

I couldn't keep it up, man.

SPACE MARINE:

Were you not righteous? Were you not correct?

MICHAEL:

I guess.

SPACE MARINE:

So what's the problem?

MICHAEL:

I just couldn't keep it up. I mean, at first I was, I don't know, giddy, like I was high or something. But then I came down, and I couldn't keep it up.

SPACE MARINE:

No, no, no. You couldn't keep it up. Couldn't keep it up. You have perpetrated the second-biggest school massacre in American history, but you decided you couldn't keep it up. Hey, whatever. I'm just saying you could have had the biggest score of all time, if you'd only kept your nerve for a few more seconds. 'Course, now people will only remember Harris and Klebold. Not you, them. Right? Columbine. The reporters won't say, "Eastwood" when they talk about school shootings. They'll say "Columbine." So what was the point? It's like, all those people, their deaths were for nothing. Nothing at all. A waste.

(Suddenly a spotlight shines on MICHAEL, and on the JUDGE, towering above him.)

JUDGE:

Michael Stewart Bailey, are you ready for your verdict? Because we're rrrrrready for you!

MICHAEL:

Yeah, I'm ready.

JUDGE:

Bailiff, please show the jury in!

(Game show music plays as the jury shuffles in to the courtroom, assemble STAGE RIGHT. The jury is made up of MOM, DAD, DICK TASER, NATALIE HAIR, FRAGWELL, ABE CRASSMAN, MISS MILLSTONE)

JUDGE:

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict?

DAD:

We have, your honor.

JUDGE:

Well all right then, let's have it.

FRAGWELL:

Your honor, we find the defendant ... not guilty.

JUDGE:

You do?

DAD:

Your honor, back there in the jury room, we came to realize that he's not really at fault.

MOM:

That's right, your honor. It wasn't his fault. It was ours. All of ours. It was... Society's fault.

NATALIE HAIR:

She's right. What we were saying about the computer games warping his poor, adolescent mind? And the movies, and the music? Absolutely right. And that includes me, your honor. Oh I know, I say I'm a reporter, but my job is really to get your eyeballs locked on that screen so we can show you more ads. And what gets your attention better than murder and mayhem? Why, nothing. "If it bleeds, it leads." That's what we always say. So we want it to continue, even as we stand on-screen, wringing our hands and saying, "Oh, how can we stop this?" We're really laughing. Did we inspire copycats? I don't know, but we sure as hell hope to. I'm guilty, your honor.

ABE CRASSMAN:

As a military psychologist, I participated in a research program which learned, over the course of fifty years, to elicit violence on command from ordinary people. Our conditioning techniques have been adopted by the advertisers, by the movie makers, by everyone, really. I helped to do that. If nobody knew how to condition the kid in the first place, he couldn't have done it. I'm guilty.

FRAGWELL:

And the general climate of hatred, intolerance and the casual acceptance of violence against people who are different from you? Well, I did more than my fair share to create that by attacking gay people, Jews, school teachers, and abortion providers, and tacitly approving murder against them as a tactic of intimidation. I'm guilty, your Honor.

TASER:

He never would have picked up a gun and slaughtered everyone, myself included, I must add, he never would have slaughtered those kids if I hadn't taunted him mercilessly, called him a faggot, and turned a blind eye all the times the kids on my team beat him up. No, your Honor, I'm definitely guilty. I say, give me the death penalty.

JUDGE:

Well, I'd call that unanimous. All right. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I thank you for your time. Michael Stewart Bailey! You have been judged by a jury of your peers and found Not Guilty. On the basis of their decision, I hereby sentence you to death.

MICHAEL:

Wait a minute! Didn't they just say I was innocent?

JUDGE AND JURY TOGETHER:

Surprise!

JUDGE:

I love that. I just love it when we do that. No, no, I'm sorry. You're guilty, boy, guilty as a dog with three legs.

TASER:

What the hell does that mean?

JUDGE:

And these fine people, well, sure, they may have participated in a society which dehumanizes, degrades, and demoralizes. And maybe a little more of the burden of that society fell on you than on most others in your peer group. And arguably, if any one of these people had done differently, we wouldn't be here. But dammit, boy, nobody made you pick up a gun and shoot people. No, that moral choice rested strictly with you, and you made it. We don't accept the Twinkie Defense any more, that's a relic of history, it's as dead as the leisure suit, and good riddance. Did you do it? Yes. Did you mean to do it? Yes. Did you know it was wrong when you did it? Oh, yes. That's all there is to it. It was your responsibility. It was always your responsibility. And now it's our responsibility to restore order and make sure you don't threaten our comfortable status quo. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, what say you? Guilty or Not Guilty?

JURY:

GUILTY!

JUDGE:

There you go. Now where's my gavel? *(pounding the gavel.)* Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! And you will hang, hang, hang! How's that?

MISS MILLSTONE:

That's fine, your Honor, but we do lethal injection in this state.

(MISS MILLSTONE, grinning wildly, holds up an enormous syringe filled with glowing green liquid. The JURY members pour out of the jury box and approach MICHAEL.)

JUDGE:

Right you are. In that case, I sentence you to death by lethal injection. Let's get it over with.

(The JURY members grab MICHAEL, hold him down, surrounding him. MISS MILLSTONE descends upon the crowd and disappears with her syringe. When she reappears, the syringe is empty.)

MISS MILLSTONE:

All done! Now, that wasn't so bad, was it?

(MICHAEL jumps out of the crowd. He is brandishing a ridiculously large gun. The JUDGE disappears)

MICHAEL:

You can't do anything to me! I know the cheat codes! And I pressed God Mode before you injected me!

FRAGWELL:

Sacrilege!

CRASSMAN:

That's a big fucking gun.

MICHAEL:

And I got it with the "big fucking gun" code, ha ha! Now die! Die!

(MICHAEL opens fire on the JURY, spraying bullets into them, killing them all.)

MICHAEL:

And now for the judge... Where is that judge?

(The JUDGE appears. His robe is open, the sleeves ripped off, and we see that he is otherwise stripped to the waist. He wears a bandana and is now brandishing a ridiculously large gun under each arm. If Rambo were a judge, he might look like this.)

JUDGE:

I'm the boss! You wanna win this game, you gotta go through me!

MICHAEL:

Right through you! I'm comin' right through you!

JUDGE:

Hasta la vista, baby!

(The stage turns a lurid red. The two adversaries circle each other, firing relentlessly. They each shake with the violence of the shots, sparks fly, but neither seems to be doing any harm to the other. Suddenly, the red light is gone, the firing stops. Smoke swirls around them. MICHAEL and the JUDGE look at each other quizzically.)

MICHAEL:

What happened?

JUDGE:

I'm outta ammo.

MICHAEL:

Me too.

JUDGE:

Okay, what the hell. I pronounce you guilty and sentence you to time served. How's that?

MICHAEL:

Fine with me.

JUDGE:

You're famous, kid. You know that?

(EXIT the JUDGE. As MICHAEL is left alone, the music rises behind him; it is the tune for the "Fame" theme music. MICHAEL begins to sing:)

MICHAEL:

(Singing:)

Baby, look at me
And tell me what you see
I'm no faggot, I'm not a wimp
Got my guns, I'm a heavily-armed shrimp

Now I'm packing heat
And shooting assholes is sweet
Primped-up preppies with perfect hair
Steroid junkies beware! Remember my name!

(The rest of the cast come out to dance:)

Chorus:

Fame!

I'm gonna shoot up my high school

I'm gonna empty this gun

Fame!

You told me I couldn't be cool

People will see me and run

Fame!

I'm gonna get my revenge now

Just like a video game

Fame!

I'm gonna shoot up my high school

Then you'll remember my name

MICHAEL:

(Singing:)

Now the time has come

To pay back what's been done

Kicked me, punched me, called me a nerd

Got a gun now I get the final word

Now you'll know the fear

The high school Quake mod is here!

Grind your gibs up right in my hand

And eat 'em like Spam! Remember my name!

Chorus:

Fame!

I'm gonna shoot up my high school

I'm gonna empty this gun

Fame!

You told me I couldn't be cool

People will see me and run

Fame!

I'm gonna get my revenge now

Just like a video game

Fame!

I'm gonna shoot up my high school

Then you'll remember my name

(The cast EXITS, and MICHAEL is left alone in fading light. Another light comes on from the direction the judge has exited, bringing the glow of the real world on to MICHAEL. We hear the pounding of the gavel, and the JUDGE's voice:)

JUDGE:

(Offstage)

Michael Stewart Bailey, you have been found guilty on each count of the indictment by a jury of your peers. In light of the testimony offered by the defense, considering your youth and other mitigating circumstances, the court has decided to show leniency. The state's request for the death penalty in this case is denied. On each of the twenty-one counts of attempted murder of which you have been convicted, you are hereby sentenced to serve a term of not less than fifteen years. On each of the fourteen counts of murder of which you have been convicted, you are hereby sentenced to serve a term not less than the length of your remaining natural life, without possibility for parole. Each term of imprisonment is to be served consecutively. Sentence to begin immediately. Court is adjourned!

SCENE 6

(The monitors are alive with shots of a school building, as from a helicopter. Vehicles and people scattered all about. SWAT teams work their way down corridors. Very small kids run and sob. Paramedics carry little bloodied bodies out of the building. Lights up on NATALIE HAIR. Her hair and suit are better than ever as she gives her best concerned news reporter look.)

NATALIE:

We're here live at the scene of a school shooting where another deranged youngster has taken the lives of teachers and fellow students. Only last week, a high school student was sentenced to life in prison for the deaths of thirteen students and a teacher, but tragedy has repeated itself yet again, in yet another Columbine-style shooting. Here at John Wayne Elementary School, four are confirmed dead and six wounded. The alleged shooter, said to be only eight years old, gave up without a struggle and is currently in police custody. His classmates say that he was distraught over a recent breakup with a girlfriend. The chief of police will be holding a news conference on the situation at twelve noon; we'll be covering that news conference live. This is Natalie Hair, CNN reporting.

**BLACKOUT
CURTAIN**

THE END