

DECLARATION

By Jonathan Dorf

Cast of Characters

MONICA (or MARTIN)
TALIA, female.
DANCING TEEN, any gender.
SAM, male, a guitarist.
LOU, female, short for Louise (or LOUIS and male).
VOICE OF LOU'S MOM
TIM, male
SCIENCE KID, any gender.
RABBITS KID, any gender.
STUDENT IN BED, any gender.
BETH, just trying to hold her life together.
GWEN, the resident mean girl.
ZANDER (or DRINA), any gender, a student who can cook.
VOICE OF ZANDER'S MOM.
INTERCOM, a voice that periodically announces updates for the shooting.
STUDENT TEACHER, any gender, a college grad student teaching math.
ARIADNE, student reporter for the school's TV news.
FIRST THROUGH FIFTH FADE TO RED KIDS, any genders.
HIDING STUDENT, any gender.
FIRST SKY DIVER, any gender.
SECOND SKY DIVER, any gender.
NOBEL PRIZE WINNER, female.
FIRST BOXES AND BARRICADES KID, probably male.
SECOND BOXES AND BARRICADES KID, any gender.
THIRD BOXES AND BARRICADES KID, any gender.
ELLIE
JERI
FIRST WHEN YOU GOTTA GO KID
SECOND WHEN YOU GOTTA GO KID
DREW
ANTHONY
CORA, Sam's ex girlfriend.
THEATER KID, any gender.
SLING TEEN, any gender.
TEACHER'S VOICE
FIRST THROUGH SIXTH RALLY KIDS, any genders.
LEXI, a teen who goes to a different school.
MAURA, a teen who goes to a different school.
JULIET, a teen who goes to a different school.
KEVIN, a teen who goes to a different school.
CHRISTIAN (or CHRISTINA), a teen who goes to a different school.
ENSEMBLE

Declaration is meant to be performed by an ensemble of students, each playing multiple roles. If it were single cast, it could easily accommodate 50 or more performers. The minimum cast is probably 10-12 performers, and the ideal cast is probably somewhere in between.

Production Notes

There are a number of scenes in the play that use projection--in particular **The Cafeteria** and **Ghosts**. Projection also potentially factors into Monica's presentation (**The Pursuit of Happiness**, **Liberty** and **Life**). If you don't have that capability, find a creative--and preferably visual--workaround.

Feel free to change the room numbers to actual rooms that exist in your school, as well as to change the lunch period from fourth period to whatever period best fits your school's schedule.

For the projection of the names of students who have died in school shootings, Wikipedia's list is a good jumping-off point. It's up to your individual production to decide how far to go back. That might be Columbine, or even earlier to such tragedies as the ones that happened in Pearl High School (MS), Heath High School (West Paducah, KY), Thurston High School (Springfield, OR) or Westside Middle School (Jonesboro, AR).

[Bracketed text] signals either text that may be substituted for the original text as appropriate for your production (i.e. to fit your community standards), or a place where your production is asked to fill in the details (e.g. the name of your school) so that the script is specific to you.

List of Scenes

Just Like Any Other Morning
The Pursuit of Happiness
The Cafeteria
Fade to Red
Bargaining
Student Teaching
The News
The Fantasy Round
Liberty
Boxes and Barricades
Fava Beans and a Nice Chianti
When You Gotta Go
Stalled
Play It Again, Sam
Ghosts
Rally in the Shadow of the Valley of...
Thoughts and Prayers
Where There's a Will...
Life

JUST LIKE ANY OTHER MORNING

Morning. The TEENS of the ensemble are in various stages of getting ready for school in their bedrooms.

AN ENSEMBLE MEMBER

It's another glorious morning in [name of your town].

SCIENCE KID

School in T minus 30.

STUDENT IN A BED

I'm up.

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

(Variously:)

Make every day your best day.

What is the difference between partly cloudy and partly sunny?

SAM, a teen guitarist, plays a few notes.

SAM

I'd rather eat snot than see Cora holding hands with Brian today.

STUDENT IN A BED

(Shoving the pillow back over their head:)

I'm not up.

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

(Variously:)

I love rabbits!

I don't care what I look like today.

I can do my stat homework in bio, study for the AP gov test in drama and print my homework in the library during lunch.

Only 95[use whatever number is appropriate] days until graduation.

GWEN, already looking perfect and well aware of it:

GWEN

Early morning selfie!

LOU, short for Louise, yells to an offstage mom:

LOU

I think I'm sick.

HER MOM'S VOICE

(Off:)

What's due?

LOU

Seriously, I think--

HER MOM'S VOICE

(Off:)

You're not staying home. You can't miss any more days.

TALIA fights with her hair.

TALIA

(To her hair:)

Stay down, or I swear I will shear you like a sheep.

TIM, her boyfriend, texts her:

TIM

Hey.

TALIA

(Texting:)

Hey.

TIM

(Texting:)

Wyd.

TALIA

(Texting:)

Hair.

TIM

Luv u.

TALIA

Luv u more.

The DANCING TEEN dances in front of a mirror. They can be as good or bad as you'd like.

ZANDER

Mom, my [name of a graphic tee] tee is like pink now. It's freakin' ruined.

HIS MOM'S VOICE

(Off:)

Zander, I did it the same way I always do it.

ZANDER

Well, you ruined it.

(Changing into a new shirt:)

So eff your birthday dinner, 'cause now I gotta buy a new shirt.

RABBITS KID

I freakin' love rabbits!

DANCING TEEN

(Still dancing:)

Nobody's watching!

MONICA practices in a mirror with note cards.

MONICA

The Declaration of Independence was written in--

BETH, trying to keep things together:

BETH

(To a younger sibling offstage or in a bed:)

Paulie, your pancakes are on the table and your lunch bag is on top of your backpack, and I washed your Batman tee and it's on your dresser. Your checklist is on the fridge. And make sure you count to 50 in your head while you brush your teeth. Try not to wake Mom. Love you.

Sam plays a few plaintive notes on the guitar, perhaps underscoring the next few lines until the Dancing Teen takes over.

AN ENSEMBLE MEMBER

You are an awesome person. Everyone else just needs to realize this fact.

SCIENCE KID

Houston, prepare for boredom. Escape pod ready to launch at 15:00 hours.

RABBITS KID

Rabbits, rabbits, rabbits!

BETH

You got this.

DANA, a theater kid.

DANA

I love my life!

DANCING TEEN

(Dancing and singing to the
tune of KC and the Sunshine
Band's "Get Down Tonight" or
similar:)

Do a little dance...

The Dancing Teen has forgotten
the rest of the lyrics, so they
just grunt the melody and
continue to dance.

ANTHONY

Oh. Now you wanna' go out with me? Beg. Yeah, that's it. Beg
for mercy.

(Pretending to blast
imaginary people:)

AR-15, biatch.

A bell rings, and the lights fade
on the ensemble, coming up on
Monica, who delivers a report.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

A history classroom. Sometime before fourth period. Monica presents her report. Among the students is the Science Kid.

MONICA

On July 4, 1776 in Philadelphia, the thirteen united States of America--that's lowercase "united," capital "States" and capital "America"--this:

She brings up "thirteen united States of America" on a PowerPoint, or for a more low tech version, a whiteboard or even a poster.

MONICA

...ratified the Declaration of Independence. It's pretty long, and a lot of it is talking about their grievances against King George the Third. But in my oral report, I'll be talking about the most famous part.

As she speaks, the quoted section should be projected. Other things, like pictures of Jefferson or other Founding Fathers, could project but don't have to.

MONICA

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

(Beat.)

Not gonna' touch "their Creator," 'cause this is public school [private school productions: "'cause this isn't *that* class"]. And "men"--well, when they said "men are created equal," they kinda' meant white men who owned land. So...I'm gonna stick to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

(Beat.)

This phrase was written by Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States and considered one of the "founding fathers." I will be talking about it in reverse order.

(Beat.)

So...nobody's a hundred percent sure what Jefferson meant by the pursuit of happiness. Nowadays, when we think happiness we're like

(Overly happy:)

"I'm happy. Yay. I'm happy."

(Back to normal:)

MONICA (CONT'D)

But back in the day, it meant something else. And maybe even something else...else. Some people defined happiness as "property," aka individual prosperity, aka having a lot of stuff. In fact, it's claimed--source's in my bibliography--that George Mason originally wanted the word "property," but that Thomas Jefferson substituted "the pursuit of happiness" on the advice of Benjamin Franklin.

(Beat.)

Ben Franklin--not just for flying kites and inventing bifocals. Boom.

(Beat.)

But here's the other thing: "pursuit" at the time didn't mean chasing after something like a car chase--well, there weren't cars, duh--but "practicing" it. So you weren't entitled to chase happiness, but to practice happiness. That brings us back to "what is happiness?"

(Beat.)

It's not just being rich, but, according to Professor Brent Strawn from Emory University--primary source, yeah--it's about "flourishing." Flourishing means having access to food, health and safety, and maybe helping other people get those things too. Maybe.

Lights transition to the cafeteria. Monica and the Science Kid, playing with his calculator, might walk into it discreetly during the transition as the ensemble enters, but she shouldn't obviously be there.

THE CAFETERIA

It's the typical chaos of lunch, with STUDENTS coming and going, greeting each other, eating, etc. A soundscape can create the bustle of this world while the ensemble creates the visuals. Beat.

All freeze, and the stage should go absolutely silent. Ensemble members unfurl red fabric. Some students could be wrapped in it, fall and have their bodies covered by it, or it could otherwise drape them and the stage in some way.

As the fabric is being unfurled, a series of text messages project- -this could be done via PowerPoint or video. There should be a sense of chaos, with multiple messages appearing at different places on the screen at the same time. Messages separated by a slash (/) come from the same source, so take that into account when it comes to the timeline of making them appear.

TEXT MESSAGES

somethings happening / we re in lockdown
lockdown
lot of noise coming from lunch / people running / im freaking out
i think somebody got shot
i dont know whats going on / people say theres a shooter
lockdown something bads going down in the caf
im freaking out / i dunno where mrs simpson is / people are barricoding the door / barricading
theres blood everywhere / we re hiding / please hurry
im so scared please call dad

INTERCOM

Active shooter in the cafeteria area. This is not a drill. Emergency response team is on its way. Please shelter in place and send all information through the emergency messaging system.

TEXT MESSAGES

shooter
ACTIVE SHOOTER!!!

TEXT MESSAGES (CONT'D)

I luv you / dont tell grams / bad heart :-(
active Shooter
help!!! / we need SWAT
please dont worry / we are in the theater / mrs dean is with
us
shooter 4 real / i think people are dead / i'm scared af
i am ok / hiding in classroom
shooter / sorry i yelled this morning / i will never yell at
u again i promise
its really bad / im ok but we can hear him shooting / i don't
want to die/ my battery is almost dead and we re putting
stuff in front of the door / g2g i luv you ttyl i hope
this is so #!#!!!!! / where are the police?!!!!
make sure you feed george if i don't come home / he gets sick
if you give him too much at once / only do half a bowl at a
time and the other half when he finishes / but wait 15
minutes / this is really important ok?
t where are you? / text me as soon as you get this / luv u
baby please text
pray for us /i love you
i luv u
love u

FADE TO RED

A group of STUDENTS pull TALIA, half-covered in the red fabric of the cafeteria, into a classroom. Some stay with her, while others barricade the door. Throughout the scene, two students, wearing masks, imperceptibly pull the fabric up, so that it covers more and more of Talia's body.

FIRST KID

Talia, hang in there.

SECOND KID

Yeah. They'll be here soon and this'll be over.

A Third Kid tries to dial out.

THIRD KID

All circuits busy.

SECOND KID

I'm sure they know already.

FOURTH KID

(Indicating Talia:)

Somebody keeps texting her.

SECOND KID

(Sotto to the Fourth Kid:)

It's probably Tim.

FOURTH KID

Should we text him?

The Second Kid shakes their head.

THIRD KID

I texted my mom.

FOURTH KID

Me too, but she hasn't texted back yet.

FIRST KID

Everybody put on your story where we are and that we need an ambulance.

SECOND KID

I'm sure they're sending lots of them.

FIRST KID

Yeah, but they don't know we need one *here*.

FIRST, SECOND, THIRD & FOURTH KIDS
(Recording their stories,
variously:)

We're in room 104.
This girl got hit.
Talia got hit. We need an ambulance.
There's a lot of blood.
Room 104. We need help.
Hurry.
There's so much blood.
Luv u.
Love you.
I love you.

FIRST KID

Talia, you got this.

SECOND KID

We're all here.

A FIFTH KID, who has been hanging
back throughout the first part of
the scene, steps out of the
moment.

FIFTH KID

What do you say to someone who's bleeding a crap ton of blood
all over the floor? I really wish I had a hero switch,
because unhero me is so scared if I open my mouth she's gonna
hear my fear and that I don't think she's gonna make it, and
maybe that would kill her. I also think keeping it closed may
be the only thing holding the vomit down.

FIRST KID

Talia, it's [actor's name].

SECOND KID

What do we do?

THIRD KID

Anybody know CPR?

FOURTH KID

What's CPR gonna do for a bullet hole?

THIRD KID

Sorry. That was stupid.

FOURTH KID

Ya think?

FIRST KID
(Gently scolding:)

Hey.

FOURTH KID

Sorry.

FIRST KID

I think maybe put pressure on it.

SECOND KID

(Searching:)

How can there be no first aid kit?

THIRD KID

(Helping:)

It's gotta be here somewhere.

The Fifth Kid takes Talia's hand.
The red fabric is getting really
high, up to Talia's neck.

FIFTH KID

Hey Talia, it's [actor's name]. You sit in front of me in English, and I don't know if you know that I look over your shoulder--more like peek--but the characters you draw are kind of amazing. At first I thought you were taking notes, and after that I think you're just doodling, but then it's like, wow, she's doing all these anime versions of the characters from whatever books we're reading: Medusa in *The Odyssey*, the creepy, half-naked boys from *Lord of the Flies*, the way you worked the red A into your Hester Prynne--I had to pretend I was choking on my gum to keep you from finding out I was spying. I just didn't want you to stop. When you get better, I swear first thing I'm gonna do is tell you how much I love them.

The red fabric completely covers
Talia. She's gone.

BARGAINING

The ensemble is scattered across the stage, each in their own thoughts.

INTERCOM

Shooter last seen leaving the cafeteria and may be near the gymnasium. Do not engage unless necessary. Emergency response team arriving imminently. Continue to shelter in place and send all updates through the emergency messaging system.

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

(Variously:)

Please let me get out of this.

Please let me make it.

Please don't let me die.

Please.

Please.

Please.

If I live I will never talk back to my mom again.

I promise not to get detention.

I will laugh at my grandpa's jokes, even if I don't understand them.

I'll get all A's and B's.

I'll do my chores without being asked.

I'll volunteer at the soup kitchen downtown.

I'll make sure they stop making fun of that kid with the stutter. Or anybody.

I will never pretend I'm too busy for family dinner.

ANOTHER ENSEMBLE MEMBER

I will never put dog food in Bobby's cereal. Or pee in a cup and tell him it's apple juice. I'm not proud of that, or of short-sheeting his bed or kidnapping Sydney. Even if he ratted me out to mom for breaking curfew. And even if nine is way too old for stuffed koala bears, cleverly named after a major Australian city or not. I will never be that sister [brother] again--just give me a break here, OK?

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

I will try to be nicer.

I'll be a better son.

I'll be a better daughter.

I'll be somebody you can be proud of.

Just let me make it out of today alive.

STUDENT TEACHING

A STUDENT TEACHER, barely older than the high school kids clustered around her as they all hide, steps into her own light.

STUDENT TEACHER

After Parkland, no matter what channel you were on, you kept seeing stories about those teachers who were total heroes. They literally died for their students, and that's amazing.

(Beat.)

I came here to student teach math--for nine weeks. I need it for my certification. I started yesterday. And now I'm supposed to die for you?

(Beat.)

No offense, but I think I know like three of your names so far.

(Pointing at one student:)

You got a five out of five on the pop quiz, so I guess I'd die for you, and

(Pointing at another student:)

you had a really good answer for that question about the angles of an isosceles triangle, so maybe you too, but you--

(Pointing at another student:)

and maybe you're totally great--so far you haven't participated at all, and I could see you drawing a dog peeing [peeing] on a fire hydrant while that girl with purple hair was explaining sine and cosine at the whiteboard. I've seen better peeing dogs. But it's only been two days--not even two days--and maybe in nine weeks you'll be my favorite student. Probably not, though.

(Beat.)

I kinda' just thought I'd see how I liked teaching, worst case scenario maybe get food poisoning once or twice from what appears to be your less than stellar cafeteria food. I didn't expect to have to consider whether I'd take your bullet today. Maybe I should have.

(Beat.)

Seriously, though, I'm five years older than you. I've got almost as much life ahead of me--probably more than some of you with all that fast food you pump in your bodies. I guess what I'm saying is please don't think any less of me if I don't go your way on this one.

(Beat.)

Let's just hope it doesn't get there.

THE NEWS

Room 328. More students in hiding. ARIADNE records into her phone.

ARIADNE

This is Ariadne Williams from Tiger [update with your school's mascot] TV News, and I'm in room 328. This was the nearest doorway when I heard shots fired, and I am here with ten other students. I think.

She looks around.

ARIADNE

Yes--ten. There are no teachers. This is Ms. Haber's room, but she was at lunch.

(Beat.)

I don't have a definite number of how many people have been shot, but I've seen stories that are saying over a dozen. I want to repeat that these numbers are not confirmed. The shooter is a teenage male, but that's all I can confirm at this time.

LOU, short for Louise, sees Ariadne recording.

LOU

What are you recording?

ARIADNE

I'm doing a story for Tiger TV.

(Beat. Back to recording:)

The last official announcement said the emergency response team is arriving imminently, but right now we're waiting for further updates.

Beat.

LOU

I knew this was going to happen.

ARIADNE

How did you-- Do you know who the shooter is?

LOU

Nah. Nothing like that.

ARIADNE

Then how did you know it was going to happen?

LOU

I just did.

ARIADNE

Did someone post something on-- Did you hear something from--

LOU

It's happening everywhere else and nobody's doing anything.
So why wouldn't it happen here?

(Beat.)

I didn't want to come today. Or most days. Better odds, ya
know? But my mom made me. Guess she's gonna feel like crap
now.

Silence.

ARIADNE

This is Ariadne Williams...uh, for Tiger TV News.

THE FANTASY ROUND

Sam, the teen guitarist, hides with a number of other students. Sam's shirt has a red smear on it, but he doesn't seem to be actively bleeding. He clutches his guitar like a safety blanket but doesn't play on it. Somewhere on the other side of the room is CORA, his ex. No sign of "Brian."

SAM

Do you think every classroom is just like this?

HIDING STUDENT

Like what?

SAM

Waiting.

(Beat.)

I almost wish he'd come in and just get it over with.

HIDING STUDENT

No you don't.

(Beat.)

Try to think of something else. Something else.

SAM

I'm trying, but my brain keeps imagining the door opening, over and over again...

HIDING STUDENT

Maybe if you say it out loud.

(Beat.)

Try.

SAM

(Beat.)

It's ten years from now, maybe fifteen--twenty tops. I'm a musical legend.

HIDING STUDENT

Nice.

SAM

Well, maybe not a legend, but I'm a pretty big deal. Having eight number-one albums in a row will do that to you.

The lights shift as students emerge from their areas, gathering in front of Sam, who climbs onto a makeshift stage with an acoustic guitar. We're out of real time.

SAM

So this is the part of the show where I thank you all for coming out tonight, and for always giving my music love, even when I was playing high school cafeterias.

(Playing guitar softly underneath:)

Speaking of high school...back when I was actually in it, the only time I could practice at my house was right before I left for school. It was this perfect moment when my dad was still at work and my mom was awake. So every day I'd get up at 5:30 so I'm done my shower and breakfast by the time Mom's alarm goes off at 6:21. Have to play acoustic, because the one time I tried electric she threw a rotten banana at my head. Half a rotten banana.

(Beat.)

As much as I love ten thousand people screaming in an arena, tonight I want to tip my invisible hat to those high school days... And, of course, this song is dedicated to my high school sweetheart and the world's most amazing wife, Cora.

Sam plays a few more bars as the crowd cheers, waves their cell phones, etc. Two other students get on stage, as if they're going to stage dive. The lights shift, and they're on a plane, about to jump.

FIRST SKY DIVER

Bucket list, baby!

SECOND SKY DIVER

There's a bucket? Where? I need to hurl.

FIRST SKY DIVER

Stop being such a drama queen. You'll be fine.

SECOND SKY DIVER

We're 15,000 feet in the air. How do you know I'll be fine?

FIRST SKY DIVER

We've been through worse than this.

SECOND SKY DIVER

True story.

FIRST SKY DIVER

If you really don't want to jump...

SECOND SKY DIVER

I don't want to.

(Beat.)

But we promised.

FIRST SKY DIVER

Here's to twelfth grade promises.

SECOND SKY DIVER

To twelfth grade promises, no matter how stupid they are and how little we were paying attention when we made them.

FIRST SKY DIVER

That's the spirit!

They join hands and "jump" into the audience that's watching a TEEN GIRL at a podium: she's accepting a Nobel prize.

NOBEL PRIZE WINNER

My high school biology teacher, Mrs. Dorothea Rubin, was literally the only woman in our entire science department, and until I had her, I thought science was just something men did. But then I discovered it wasn't, and that girls could play with mitochondria and protoplasm and chromosomes too. Cancer, your days are numbered, and for that, thank you, Mrs. Rubin.

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

(Variously:)

My turn: I'd like to announce my candidacy for President of the United States.

I'm gonna be a civil rights attorney.

Fire fighter.

CEO of my own amazing company.

A DIFFERENT ENSEMBLE KID

What will it do?

AMAZING COMPANY KID

I don't know yet, but it'll be amazing!

ENSEMBLE MEMBERS

(Variously:)

I just want 2.2 kids and 2.5 houses!

I'm gonna walk on Mars.

I'm gonna mentor at-risk kids. Do what you know, right?

The Dancing Teen starts to dance in front of everyone.

DANCING TEEN

I'm gonna dance, and everyone will be watching.

The Dancing Teen dances offstage,
and all exit, perhaps dancing
offstage. The lights come up
on...

LIBERTY

Monica continues her presentation.

MONICA

Liberty. Well, we all know what liberty means, but ya kinda had to wonder what Jefferson was thinking when he wrote "liberty" back in 1776. Jefferson had slaves. In fact, every colony had slaves. Some--like Virginia or South Carolina--had more, and some--like Massachusetts or Rhode Island--had less--fewer--but they all had them. Not a lot of liberty for those people, and by 1776, they were around twenty percent of the population. That's one out of every five people.

(Beat.)

I was going to do one of those cool demo things where I tell people to stand up and move to different sides of the room, but I was worried I'd go over time. So...since there's 25 people in this class, five of us would've been slaves. You guys in the back--slaves.

(Beat.)

There was also a kind of person called an indentured servant. And there were a lot of them in the Thirteen Colonies--almost half of everybody who came over from Europe by the time of the American Revolution. Yeah, I had no idea about that either. An indentured servant wasn't a slave--not exactly--but they were basically a slave for a while until they worked off their trip to America. It might be a year, or it might be a lot longer--maybe as long as seven years. That's like middle school and high school put together, though the average was more like three years. That's still a long time. You get food and somewhere to sleep, but otherwise, no liberty for you. And women. Let's not forget about women and liberty. You couldn't vote, and if you were married, which you were expected to be, well, you had only as much liberty as your husband gave you.

(Beat.)

So I think we have to take the whole liberty thing with a grain of salt. Or maybe it's what we call "ironic." But not like in that Alanis Morissette song our parents listen to where nothing is actually ironic. *Real* ironic.

BOXES AND BARRICADES

The students in the room have
their door pretty well
barricaded.

THIRD KID

Anybody see anything we can use, in case...?

FIRST KID

(Picking it up:)

Paperweight.

SECOND KID

Better than nothing.

THIRD KID

I wish we were in Dornley's room. He keeps the bats in his closet.

SECOND KID

Yeah, but we're not, and Schwimm's got nada.

FIRST KID

I wish there was a lock box with a gun in it.

SECOND KID

Yeah, but if it's locked.

FIRST KID

Well, you could break the lock for emergencies.

SECOND KID

Like we could break it?

FIRST KID

Yeah. For times like this.

THIRD KID

There's no lock box.

SECOND KID

How would we break the lock?

THIRD KID

Does it matter right now?

FIRST KID

I don't know--they'd send out a code on the emergency system.

THIRD KID

I wish we'd get another announcement.

SECOND KID
So if you got the code, you
could open it right up.

THIRD KID
A couple people say there's
gunshots near where they are,

FIRST KID
I know how to use a gun.

THIRD KID
but I don't know where that
is,

SECOND KID
How about everybody else?

THIRD KID
and that was a few minutes
ago.

THIRD KID
We should stay quiet and listen.

SECOND KID
(Continuing the thought:)
Do they?

THIRD KID
I just want to make it out of this room today.

SECOND KID
So the lockbox opens, you grab the gun--

SECOND KID
--and what if somebody else wants it too?

FIRST KID
We'd work it out.

THIRD KID
Please...stop.

SECOND KID
Sure--what could go wrong?

FIRST KID
If I had a gun, your ass would be [you'd be] a lot safer
right now.

SECOND KID
Well, ya don't, we're trapped in here, and--

The Third Kid holds up a hand for
silence: There's the sound of
footsteps, perhaps something
tapping against hallway walls.
Something like a gun. They
listen.

SECOND KID
Is it--?

Long silence as they listen.
 Whatever it is, it's getting
 really close. The First Kid
 positions himself by the door.

THIRD KID

(Quietly:)

Oh crap oh crap oh crap...

SECOND KID

There's a lot of stuff in front of the door. He'll probably
 go to an easier one.

FIRST KID

If he's got armor-piercing bullets, they'll go right through
 the cabinet.

THIRD KID

Oh crap oh crap oh crap...

FIRST KID

If he gets through, I'm gonna tackle 'im. Hey--if it doesn't
 work, least there'll be one less dumb redneck.

SECOND KID

You're not a dumb--

FIRST KID

I was just gonna end up in the army anyway--protecting your
 right to say crap I don't agree with. Might as well start
 now.

FAVA BEANS AND A NICE CHIANTI

Zander, the boy who yelled at his mother about his stained shirt at the top of the play.

ZANDER

"I ate his liver with fava beans and a nice chianti." That's from *Silence of the Lambs*. Hannibal Lecter, played by Anthony Hopkins. Sir Anthony Hopkins.

(Beat.)

You probably know that fava beans come in pods. Or maybe you don't. Maybe you have no idea what a fava bean is. It's not like we've ever had them at home. I would use visual aids, but while it's bright enough in my head, in real life I'm hiding in a janitor's closet in the dark. Fava pods look a little like longer, puffier pea pods. And green, but not quite the same green as peas. But then again, I'm color deficient, so what do I know.

(Beat.)

You have to take the beans out of the pods, again sort of like peas. But what a lot of people don't know is that they have a second skin. It's supposed to come right off after you boil it. The woman at the farmers market says boil it for 10 minutes, but a lot of the recipes online say 2 or 3 minutes. She says the difference is because those are for people who are going to cook them again after that. I don't know if this is true, but I will peel these beans for you, even if it's not easy.

(Beat.)

For the pièce de résistance--a fancy dinner should always be described in French--I'll be preparing seared scallops with king oyster mushrooms. Crazy thing about king oyster mushrooms: if you slice them and sauté them in a bit of butter, they taste exactly like scallops. So I'll be calling this dish "Scallops and 'Scallops'." And then of course there will be the fava beans, which, after I boil them and put them in the ice bath and remove the second skin, will be sautéed with a little garlic and butter. You can have a chianti with it if you want, though I think most experts would recommend a white wine. I'm gonna leave that one up to you. I'm also gonna chop some parsley to sprinkle over the Scallops and "Scallops"--every plate should have some color. I kind of want to try tarragon with the fava beans, but sometimes it's better to keep it simple.

(Beat.)

So...if I don't come home, Mom, this is the dinner I would've made you. I'm really sorry, and happy birthday.

WHEN YOU GOTTA GO

ELLIE and JERI are among the students in another room that's barricaded. It looks like science is taught here.

INTERCOM

Emergency response team is on the premises. Shooter's current location is unknown. Continue to shelter in place and send all updates through the emergency messaging system.

ELLIE
Jer...?

JERI
What?

ELLIE
I have to go.

JERI
I know. We all want to go.

ELLIE
No. I have to go.

JERI
(Beat.)
Now?

ELLIE
I was gonna ask if I could go before, but then...
(Beat.)
What do I do?

JERI
Can you hold it?
(Beat.)
OK. OK--we got this.
(Beat.)
Is there any way you can hold it--like for a couple minutes?

ELLIE
A couple?

JERI
Maybe ten. Or twenty.

ELLIE
Jeri.

OK. JERI
 (Beat.)
 One or two?

What? ELLIE

Do you have to go one or two? JERI

One. ELLIE

What if you go in the corner? JERI
 (Sighing in relief:)

OMG--no! ELLIE

Can you hold it? JERI

I told you I can't. ELLIE

Those are the choices. JERI

What about the closet? ELLIE

I don't think the people hiding in there are gonna like that much. JERI
 (Beat.)
 Nobody is gonna say anything.

But-- ELLIE

I got this. JERI
 (Getting the attention of the other students hiding:)
 Listen up, everybody.

Shhh... FIRST KID

If anybody has to pee, go to that corner. JERI

SECOND KID

Thank God.

JERI

Mrs. Rubin's got a zillion beakers...so just borrow one.

ELLIE

Maybe we can label 'em and run tests on them.

JERI

Just stay low. As long as we don't hear anything in the hallway...

(Beat.)

And anybody who looks, I will so call you out as a perv.

(Beat.)

Who needs to go?

A trio of hands shoot up,
including Ellie's.

JERI

Ellie, you first.

STALLED

A boys' bathroom. DREW and Anthony are in separate stalls, crouching on top of their respective toilets. There's the sound of sniffing coming from Anthony's stall.

Hey. DREW

Silence. Then more sniffing.

Hey. Who's that? DREW

Beat.

Anthony. ANTHONY

Wade? DREW

Johnson. ANTHONY

Sorry. It's Drew. Hart. DREW

More silence, except for occasional sniffing.

I got locked out of 207. DREW

Anthony is sobbing softly.

DREW
I don't know why they tell us to come here if we get locked out. We can't lock the door, and you can't hear the PA and I have one bar.

(Beat.)
How many you have?

I dunno. ANTHONY

(Beat.)
Two.

DREW
(Not about the bars:)
You've gotta be freakin' kidding.

ANTHONY

No. It's two.

DREW

No--somebody didn't flush. How does somebody drop a giant turd and not flush? Crap--now it's all I can smell. Today just keeps getting better.

Anthony goes back to crying quietly.

DREW

I'm scared too. OK?

(Beat.)

A few minutes we're gonna be outta here. Can you see anyone's stories?

ANTHONY

This is my fault.

DREW

It's not-- You're-- What?

ANTHONY

I caused this.

DREW

Anthony, are you the...? Oh crap.

Beat.

ANTHONY

This morning I was getting ready and I...I didn't mean any of the stuff I said. Not really. I mean maybe some little part of me, but the smallest little part. I'd never do it. But now it's happened.

DREW

(Beat.)

Wait--so you didn't... You didn't hurt anybody.

(Beat.)

Right?

ANTHONY

I wish I never said it.

DREW

Dude, this isn't your fault.

ANTHONY

What if it is? Like karma.

Anthony can't hold back the occasional sob.

DREW

We're gonna be OK. You're gonna be OK. Just hold on.

Long silence. At some point, Drew might put his hand against the wall between his stall and Anthony's. Anthony might do the same. Neither necessarily knows the other's hand is there.

ANTHONY

OK.

DREW

If he comes in, I'm flippin' the turd at him. Use what you got, right?

PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM

We're back in the room we visited earlier. Cora and Sam, the teen guitarist, who clutches his axe nervously, have ended up next to each other.

Hey. CORA

Hey. SAM

You OK? CORA

It's not my blood. I'm not really sure whose it is. SAM

CORA
(Beat.)
Sorry, that was a stupid question.

SAM
No--thanks for asking.
(Beat.)
In case, you know... I just want to say sorry.

CORA
For what?

SAM
For all the texts.

CORA
Yeah.

SAM
I'm surprised you didn't block me.

CORA
I did. Thirty-eight in one day was kinda my limit.

SAM
That's hilarious--well, not hilarious, but funny--not funny ha ha but funny weird--'cause that's exactly when I stopped. After the 38th. Anyway, I'm sorry for everything. My new therapist says I should write you a letter, so if we get out of here--

CORA
You don't have to write me a letter. I mean, you can, but you don't have to--not for me.

SAM

I'm going to. I'm sorry it took this for me to say I'm sorry.

(Beat.)

I bet Brian doesn't send you 38 texts in a day.

CORA

Seriously?

SAM

Sorry. I'm just a little freaked out right now, so I'm more manic than usual.

CORA

I usually text him.

SAM

But he texts you back, right?

CORA

That's really not your--

SAM

Sorry. You're right. I'll shut up. We're probably supposed to be quiet anyway, wait for the next announcement.

CORA

(Beat.)

He doesn't really text a lot.

SAM

Oh.

(Beat.)

But he texted you today, right?

CORA

He texted me back. He's in history. In 117. They're all OK so far.

SAM

That's good.

(Beat.)

I'd have texted you first.

CORA

I know.

SAM

I'd take your bullet.

CORA

Please don't say that.

SAM

OK.

Beat. She kisses him on the
cheek.

GHOSTS

The THEATER KID, hiding in the dark.

THEATER KID

I am in the theater. The doors are locked, and it's dark. I can see my friends, the people I've been in classes with and done shows with and done stupid fun and occasionally embarrassing stuff with--my theater family. And my drama mom Mrs. Dean is an outline at the main door, which we blocked with pieces of our set. These are my peeps, and I wouldn't want to be with anyone else right now, but I am. I'm surrounded...by ghosts. The ghosts of all the kids who didn't get to grow up to be rock stars or poets or teachers, to dance like nobody's watching or to tick off items on their bucket list or to come home. By ghosts with backpacks and math books and half-eaten grilled cheese sandwiches, still clutching their iPhones with cracked screens, the jackets they wore no matter how hot it was, and the baseball gloves that never got broken in. Every moment it gets thicker and thicker, and it's getting hard to breathe. They're all around me, one after another, crowding into this row and the next one and the one after that. I wonder if soon they'll be standing on each other's shoulders, and will the floor support all that weight, or will the rest of us sink into the ground and be swallowed?

(Beat.)

So many faces and names from so many places, and I think it's up to me to name angels like astronomers name stars.

The names of victims of school shootings should project in the theater like they are stars in the sky, perhaps clustered like constellations, with a "legend" for each constellation telling the audience where it was and when. For example, "Columbine High School--April 20, 1999." This needs to go very quickly, but not so quickly that we don't get the sense of the space filling up.

THEATER KID

So if I make it out of my school today, I promise I'm gonna learn every name of every person who never did.

Want to read the entire script? Hit the back button and follow the instructions for requesting a perusal!