

BANG BANG YOU'RE DEAD

von William Mastrosimone

1.

(ABSOLUTE DARKNESS. A voice in the dark. After a moment, a flashlight explores the stage, moves along the bottom length, then up, finding Josh asleep on the jail bed. Josh jumps to his feet.)

JOSH Who's there? Who is it? Who's there?

(Michael holds the flashlight under his chin illuminating only his face.)

MICHAEL Why me?

JOSH What is this? What is this?

MICHAEL We played ball together. You were awesome on the field. You were unstoppable.

JOSH Survival of the fittest, baby.

MICHAEL And you were only a freshman. You could've been team captain in your senior year. Why'd you kill me? I never hurt you.

JOSH It was more fun than droppin' dudes in a video game.

(Michael's flashlight goes out. Katie holds her flashlight under her chin.)

KATIE Why me, Josh?

JOSH Why not? World's overpopulated. I wanted to do my part.

KATIE You liked me.

JOSH Once upon a time.

KATIE Why'd you have to kill me?

JOSH Felt like it, okay? Happy now?

2._

(Katie's flashlight goes out. Matt holds his flashlight under his chin.)

MATT Why me?

JOSH What is this?

MATT Why me? I don't even know you.

JOSH You were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

(Matt's flashlight goes out. Jessie holds her flashlight under her chin.)

JESSIE Why me?

JOSH Why not you? Everybody's gotta die sometime. Might as well get it over with.

(Jessie's flashlight goes out. Josh lays back on the bed. Emily leans over him, holds her flashlight under her chin. Josh springs up, surprised.)

EMILY Why me, Josh? We live on the same street. We used to make mud pies together when we were little kids. I taught you how to blow bubbles with chewing gum. I came to your birthdays, you came to mine. When we were eleven you let me play war with you and the other boys because you liked how I died.

(Let the five deceased improvise pre-teen kids playing war, using their fingers for guns and making shooting sounds. They run around in the dark, their flashlights sweeping the floor, looking for the enemy, the lights criss-crossing. Let them shout "bam, bam you're dead")

("pow, pow" and other variants). Eventually Emily "kills" Katie and Matt who drop dead. Michael shoots Jessie who falls dead. Michael and Emily shoot each other at the same time. Michael drops dead at once. Emily dies very dramatically with all the appropriate sounds. Beat.)

EMILY (LYING ON FLOOR)

Hope I didn't disappoint you in the cafeteria this morning. Hope I died just right for you, Josh.

JOSH You didn't have to fall on me and get me all bloody.

3._

EMILY Want to see it again? --Go on. Shoot me again.

(Josh pretends to shoot her. She dies again very dramatically.)

JOSH Love that feeling.

ACTOR 2 Love it.

ACTOR 4 Crave it.

ACTOR 5 Need it.

ACTOR 2 Gotta have a gun grip in your hand.

(Chorus echoes the word "hand.")

JOSH Always wanted to be an Army Ranger parachuting behind enemy lines, ever since I could hold a-

ACTOR 4 Cap gun.

ACTOR 5 Water gun.

ACTOR 2 Air gun.

ACTOR 4 Pop gun.

ACTOR 5 B.B. gun

JOSH Twelve gauge.

ACTOR 2 22.

ACTOR 4 38.

ACTOR 5 45.

JOSH A gun makes you feel alive.

4._

(Chorus echoes "alive.")

ACTOR 2 Respect.

ACTOR 4 Watch out!

ACTOR 5 Move aside!

JOSH Nobody can touch you.

ACTOR 2 When you have a gun--

JOSH Nobody mocks you.

ACTOR 4 When you have a gun--

JOSH You can take on anybody.

ACTOR 5 Anybody.

ACTOR 2 The champ wrestler.

ACTOR 4 The whole wrestling team.

ACTOR 5 The bad dudes.

ACTOR 2 Gang bangers.
JOSH When you have a gun, people talk nice.
ACTOR 4 When you have a gun--

JOSH People look at you like a V.I.P.
(Chorus echoes "V.I.P.")
ACTOR 5 Somebody bumps you, they say, Excuse me.

5._

JOSH You walk different--
ACTOR 2 When you have a gun.
JOSH You talk different--
ACTOR 4 When you have a gun.
JOSH You think different--
ACTOR 5 When you have a gun.
JOSH It's so cool--
ACTOR 2 When you have a gun.
(Chorus loudly echoes "gun.")
ACTOR 4 It's an A-plus.
ACTOR 5 Slam dunk.
ACTOR 2 Touchdown.
ACTOR 4 Put down.
ACTOR 5 All in one.
(Chorus echoes "one.")
JOSH Love that military stance!
ACTOR 2 You ain't got a chance--
ACTOR 4 Respect!
ACTOR 5 Watch out!

6._

ACTOR 2 Move aside!
ACTOR 4 You can be whatever you wanna be--
JOSH 'Cause a gun in your hand is a Ph.D.
(Lights on Actor 1 and Actor 3 as Josh's parents. The deceased train their flashlight beams on the parents as they enter.)
ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Josh, there's no way we're buying you a rifle.
JOSH Mom, will you listen to me?
ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) First you had to have a p.c., then every video game ever made, then a laptop--

JOSH For school, dad.
ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Then a cell phone, a beeper and the newest style Nikes every three months--

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) You have to have every CD you hear on the radio.
ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) An expensive mountain bike you rode three times.
ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) A snowboard you never used. And now a rifle? Please.
JOSH Grandpa wants to take me hunting.

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM)

I'm absolutely against it.

JOSH Grandpa hunts. Are you rejecting what your own father thinks?

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) Of course not.

JOSH Then I should have the rifle, right?

7._

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) I wish you felt as passionate about your grades as you do about a rifle.

JOSH You're changing the subject.

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) You've got a high I.Q. Your B's and C's could be all A's.

JOSH Will you get off my back about my I.Q.?

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) We might feel differently if you were living up to your full potential.

JOSH Okay, you get me the rifle and I'll bring home all A's on my next report card. Deal?

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) We'll talk about a rifle when we see all A's.

JOSH You don't even trust me.

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Josh, you know that's not true.

JOSH If you trust me, then get me the rifle now.

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) When you get all A's, we'll discuss it.

JOSH Hunting season will be over before grades come out. Then I have to wait a whole year!

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) You have to learn patience.

JOSH Hunting teaches patience. Grandpa said. But what's he know? He's only your father. All I want is to spend some time with grandpa and hear his stories about when he grew up. Learn some responsibility. Learn respect for firearms. How is all that bad?

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD)

It's not bad, Josh. It's just that we're not comfortable with guns.

8._

JOSH If I wanted to, I could get a gun in school for fifty bucks.

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) How?

JOSH Easy. I know a kid who stole a gun from his father. But I wouldn't buy it because that would be wrong. Is this what I get for being honest?

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Maybe his honesty deserves the rifle for a reward.

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) Maybe you shouldn't cave in every time Josh throws a tantrum.

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) What about the electric guitar you got him when he threw himself on the floor?

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) At least that showed an interest in music.

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Yeah, and now it's collecting dust in the closet.

(Actors 1 and 3 walk off arguing.)

JOSH Divide and conquer. Works every time. So don't blame me. Blame my folks, okay? They didn't have to buy me a rifle.

EMILY You still didn't answer my question. Why me? Why did you kill me?
JOSH It's simple math. My rifle holds five bullets. Five bullets, five people. Perfect.

MICHAEL The bullet that killed me pierced my parents' hearts, too.
KATIE Pierced my brothers' and sisters' hearts.
MATT Pierced my friends hearts.

9._

JESSIE Pierced the hearts of parents who send their kids to school.
EMILY Just five bullets wounded hundreds.
MICHAEL Thousands.
KATIE Wounds that bleed.
MATT Wounds that weep.
JESSIE Wounds that never heal.
EMILY Wounds that are very real.
ALL Thousands!
JOSH Get lost.

(Josh lies down to sleep again. Emily pulls off his blanket.)

EMILY That's not a good enough answer, Josh.
MICHAEL And that's not fair.
KATIE Not fair.
MATT Not fair at all.
JESSIE That our bodies lie in coffins.
EMILY While you still breathe the air.
JOSH Look at it this way: you got yourselves a cozy little place, and you can't beat the rent.
MICHAEL It's not fair.

10._

KATIE Not fair.
MATT Not fair at all.
JESSIE That we're under the earth--
EMILY And you don't even care.
JOSH Know what's not fair? Some dude jumped me before I had a chance to reload. I could've dropped a lot more bodies and made history.
MICHAEL We demand an honest answer, Josh. Why? Why'd you kill us?
JOSH It was fun.
(The deceased stand in a circle and push Josh around like a ball.)
KATIE You don't have the proper frame of mind.
MATT We'll be all over you.
JESSIE Up one side.
EMILY Down the other.
MICHAEL In your face.
KATIE Under your skin.
MATT Till you tell us why.
JESSIE Why?

EMILY Why'd you kill us?
JOSH Lay off me.

11._

MICHAEL We're gonna open you up.
KATIE Dissect you like a frog.
MATT Pluck out your heart.
JESSIE Just for a start.
MICHAEL Till you tell us why.
EMILY Why?
MICHAEL Why me?
KATIE Why anybody?
MATT Why?
JESSIE Why?
EMILY Why'd you kill us?
JOSH 'Cause there was nothing good on t.v.
MICHAEL We'll do whatever it takes tonight.
KATIE Whatever it takes.
MATT To crack you open.
JESSIE Till then you'll live in hell.
EMILY Without love.
MICHAEL Without decency.
KATIE Without comfort.

12._

MATT A kid in a cage.
JESSIE In a zoo of misfits.
EMILY Even until your release.
MICHAEL When you're a stooped--
KATIE Broken--
MATT Bitter, old man.
JESSIE Full of scars.
MICHAEL Scars on body and mind.
KATIE Friendless.
MATT Hopeless.
JESSIE Mindless.
EMILY Soul-less.
JOSH (LAUGHING) Some lawyer'll get me off.
MICHAEL If you survive.
JOSH Survive what?
DRUMMER (AS CON) Yo, bad boy.
JOSH You talking to me? My name's Josh. What's yours?
DRUMMER (AS CON) You the new dude that offed seven people?

13._

JOSH If that dude didn't jump me I had enough ammo on me to take out a hundred more.
 I'd've made history.

DRUMMER (AS CON) Tomorr' we gonna see just how bad you are.

JOSH What do you mean?

DRUMMER (AS CON) You'll see what we mean, bad boy.

JOSH (to himself) Whoa.

MICHAEL Feel your cell start to shrink?

KATIE Feel the walls closing in?

MATT Compressing your thoughts?

JESSIE Cramming your brain?

EMILY Driving you insane?

MICHAEL You'll wish you were dead every so often.

KATIE Your six by eight will be your coffin.

MATT Nobody will hear.

JESSIE When you scream and cry.

EMILY Why? Why? Why'd you kill us?

JOSH You can't hurt me. You're all dead.

MICHAEL We need some answers, Josh.

KATIE We want some answers tonight, Josh.

14._

MATT We want the truth.

JESSIE The whole truth.

EMILY And nothing but the truth.

JOSH As the cop said, I have the right to remain silent. Anything I say can be held
 against me in a court of law.

(Quick drum rhythm. The deceased up-end the box converting it to a judge's bench by opening the lid so that it's up vertically. Actor 2 stands behind box and bangs the gavel. [Because the courtroom scene is just a fantasy, it should be played speeded up, without pause, so that Josh's nightmare trial is over in a matter of seconds.])

ACTOR 2 (AS JUDGE) The court will hear the prosecutor's opening statement.

ACTOR 4 (AS PROSECUTOR) Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury: seven dead
 bodies. Dozens of witnesses. What's to think about?

ACTOR 2 (AS JUDGE) The court will now hear from the public defender.

ACTOR 1 (AS PUBLIC DEFENDER) Josh was a good student, a popular student, a good
 son. There's only one explanation—temporary insanity.

ACTOR 4 (AS PROSECUTOR) I call witnesses for the prosecution!

ACTOR 3 (AS WITNESS) Josh pulled the wings off a butterfly when he was five and he
 plagiarized on a paper for English class.

ACTOR 2 (AS JUDGE) The court will now hear closing statements.

ACTOR 4 (AS PROSECUTOR) As I see it, you the jury have a very difficult choice between
 the electric chair and lethal injection.

15._

ACTOR 1 (AS PUBLIC DEFENDER) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, he's just a child. I urge you to put Josh in a psychiatric ward.

JOSH I'm not psycho just because my parents forced me to see a shrink. I knew what I was doing!

ACTOR 2 (AS JUDGE) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict?

ACTOR 5 (AS JURY FOREWOMAN) We have Your Honor. Life imprisonment without possibility.

JOSH Possibility of what?

ACTOR 5 (AS JURY FOREWOMAN) Without possibility of anything good.

(Beat. Lights fade. Chorus exits. Deceased and Josh remain.)

MICHAEL You'll never achieve your dreams.

KATIE Never skydive.

MATT Never scuba off Australia.

JESSIE Never explore the caldera of a volcano.

EMILY Never fly a helicopter.

MICHAEL Never be a sportscaster.

KATIE Never ski again.

MATT Never body surf.

JESSIE Never meet people on the internet.

EMILY Never know what you could've been--

16._

MICHAEL Done--

KATIE Seen--

MATT Had--

JESSIE Known--

EMILY Loved in your lifetime.

MICHAEL Now you'll never know all the happiness that was yours.

KATIE But you'll wonder.

MATT And the wonderment will eat you alive.

JESSIE Eat you for breakfast.

EMILY Eat you for lunch.

MICHAEL Eat you for dinner.

KATIE While all your dreams mock you--

MATT Mock you--

JESSIE Mock you--

EMILY Mock you through the bars.

(The box is restored to a bed. Josh lies down to sleep on the blanket.)

JOSH Who cares? The whole thing will be off my record when I'm eighteen anyway.

Maybe I'll be out of here when I'm twenty-one. You're all just a bad dream.

EMILY Sometimes bad dreams come true.

17._

(The deceased wrap Josh in the blanket, pick him up, making the box a coffin. They drop him in, close the lid. We hear Josh kicking and screaming inside. They turn the box on its side, open the lid. Josh tumbles out screaming and thrashing around. He begins to look at the deceased with new respect.)

MICHAEL That's how it is under the earth.

KATIE In the dark.

MATT Alone.

JESSIE In silence.

EMILY We really need some answers, Josh.

JOSH Answers to what?

MICHAEL What were you thinking?

KATIE What was in your heart?

MATT Why'd you smile when you killed us?

JOSH I'm just a friendly guy.

JESSIE Didn't you feel badly?

EMILY Did you think of the buck when you shot me?

(Josh is astonished they know about his hunting experience. The tone changes. Josh is feeling vulnerable that they know his mind.)

JOSH What buck?

(The deceased pick up the box and move it to another location.)

MICHAEL You know what buck.

18._

KATIE Your first time hunting.

MATT With your grandpa.

JOSH How do you know that?

JESSIE We know everything about you.

EMILY All your thoughts.

MICHAEL Feelings.

KATIE Memories.

MATT Dreams.

JESSIE We know all your deep, dark secrets.

JOSH How? How can you know all that?

EMILY We're all in your head.

JOSH Psych! Tell me one fact about that day. Tell me one thing grandpa said.

MICHAEL Just you and grandpa in his old, red truck.

(Actor 1, as Grandpa, sits next to Josh on the box that now becomes a truck.)

ACTOR 1 (AS GRANDPA) Respect the animals. Don't take a shot unless you know it's sure. Do it quick and clean. Otherwise the animal suffers.

JOSH Wow.

KATIE That old logging road is full of ruts.

19._

JESSIE You both bounce on the seat. You can't wait to shoot your new rifle.
 JOSH I'm pumped.
 MICHAEL Grandpa parks the truck. You both sit there. Waiting for six a.m.
 KATIE Waiting to shoot your new rifle.
 ACTOR 1 (AS GRANDPA) Let's go, Josh.
 MATT You both get out of the truck. It's cold. You can see your breath.
 JESSIE Grandpa watches you load the rifle's magazine.
 EMILY Five shiny bullets.
 MICHAEL You show him the safety is on.
 ACTOR 1 (AS GRANDPA) Atta boy. You'll be a man by the end of the day.
 KATIE Grandpa pats your back.
 MATT You both head for the forest.
 JESSIE You see other hunters.
 EMILY All grown men with rifles.
 ACTOR 1 (AS GRANDPA) Now you wait here. Keep still. I'll drive the game towards you.
 MICHAEL You sit on a log for two hours.
 (Josh sits on the floor.)
 KATIE Hours on a cold, wet log covered with moss.

20._

MATT Wishing you were still in a warm bed.

JESSIE Wishing you ate the oatmeal your mother begged you to eat.
 EMILY Nose goes numb.
 MICHAEL Fingers go numb.
 KATIE Toes go numb.
 MATT And you have a profound thought:
 JOSH Hunting sucks.
 JESSIE You doze off.
 EMILY Doze for five, ten, fifteen minutes.
 MICHAEL Something wakes you up.
 KATIE Rustling of dry leaves.
 MATT You don't move.
 JESSIE The rustling leaves sound comes closer.
 EMILY And then you see it.
 MICHAEL A buck.
 KATIE Eight pointer.
 JOSH Like in a dream. Amazing.
 MATT Magnificent.

21._

JESSIE Strong.
 EMILY Proud.
 MICHAEL Keen.
 KATIE You forget you're hunting.

MATT You're taken by its beauty.
 JESSIE Utterly taken by its feral beauty.
 EMILY Its hot breath making weird ghosts in the cold air.
 MICHAEL And then you notice the rifle in your hand.
 KATIE You remember why you're there.
 MATT To kill.
 JESSIE Kill the magnificent--
 EMILY Kill the strong--
 MICHAEL Kill the proud--
 KATIE Kill the keen buck.
 MATT The time has come.
 JESSIE Time to be a man.
 EMILY But deep inside you don't know if you can really pull the trigger.
 MICHAEL But you must go home a man by the end of the day.

22._

KATIE Or stay a boy who plays bang, bang, you're dead.
 JOSH The buck sees me. Freezes.
 MATT You hear your heartbeat.
 JESSIE You raise your rifle.
 (Josh mimes a rifle. GUNS IN ANY FORM MUST NEVER BE PART OF THIS PLAY.)
 EMILY Can't find the buck in the scope--
 MICHAEL Because your hands are shaking.
 KATIE Hold your breath.
 MATT Crosshairs under the buck's shoulder.
 JESSIE The moment of truth has come.
 EMILY But this buck's too beautiful to kill.
 MICHAEL So you make your face a mask.
 KATIE A mask that hides your face.
 MATT A face that hides the pain.
 JESSIE A pain that eats your heart.
 EMILY A heart nobody knows.
 MICHAEL You pull the trigger! Nothing happens!
 KATIE The safety's still on!
 MATT You panic!

23._

JESSIE You click the safety off.
 EMILY The buck turns and runs like the wind.
 MICHAEL You take aim--
 ALL DECEASED Bam!
 (On each "Bam," one loud drumbeat.)
 KATIE First shot misses!
 ALL DECEASED Bam!
 MATT Second shot misses.
 ALL DECEASED Bam!

JESSIE Third shot misses!
 ALL DECEASED Bam!
 EMILY Fourth shot misses!
 MICHAEL Down on one knee.
 KATIE Find the buck in the crosshairs.
 MATT It is so beautiful.
 JESSIE Magnificent.
 EMILY Proud.
 MICHAEL Strong.
 KATIE All you want to be.

24._

MATT But the buck has to die so you can be a man--
 JESSIE Has to bleed.
 EMILY Has to fall.
 MICHAEL Has to die.
 KATIE So you can be a man.
 ALL DECEASED Bam!
 (Final drumbeat.)
 MATT Buck goes down!
 JOSH Cool!
 JESSIE You tear across the field.
 EMILY Your eyes meet the buck's.
 MICHAEL You see who you used to be--
 (Slight beat.)
 KATIE Full of fear--
 MATT Helpless.
 JESSIE Its chest heaves as blood pulses out like catsup--
 EMILY Its legs kick as if to run on the air.
 MICHAEL And it makes a pitiful sound that makes you hurt inside--
 KATIE A cry that could be human.

25._

JOSH Awww, man.
 MATT You wish it was all a game.
 JESSIE A game.
 EMILY A video game.
 MICHAEL Just hit reset.
 KATIE And start again.
 MATT Start again.
 JESSIE Start all over again.
 EMILY Because it hurts to see a--
 MICHAEL Beautiful--
 KATIE Magnificent--
 MATT Proud--
 JESSIE Keen buck dying on the ground.

EMILY You watch its life run out.
 MICHAEL Blood thick as catsup.
 KATIE And wish you could take it all back.
 MATT Take back the bullet.
 JESSIE Put back the blood.
 EMILY Restore the buck to its majesty.

26._

MICHAEL Give back its pride.
 KATIE Return its strength.
 MATT Make it keen once more.
 JESSIE Let it be what it is and run like the wind.
 JOSH I thought it would be fun. I didn't know it would be like this. Please don't die.
 EMILY Your buck takes its last breath...You almost let yourself weep.
 MICHAEL But you hear boots on dead leaves.
 KATIE Grandpa comes out of breath.
 MATT He sees your dying buck.
 JESSIE He looks at you like no one's ever looked at you before.
 EMILY Like a man.
 MICHAEL As promised.
 KATIE A man by the end of the day.
 MATT Grandpa takes out a camera.
 ACTOR 1 (AS GRANDPA) C'mon, Josh. Can't you smile in your moment of glory?
 JESSIE You stop your tears.
 EMILY And you pose for the camera.

27._

MICHAEL You make your face a mask.
 KATIE A mask that hides your face.
 MATT A face that hides the pain.
 JESSIE A pain that eats your heart.
 EMILY A heart nobody knows.
 (Actor 1, as Grandpa, takes a polaroid picture, hands it to Josh.)
 MICHAEL Now you have proof of who you are.
 JESSIE You carry the snapshot everywhere.
 (Deceased carry the box back to original place.)
 EMILY You want the world to see you and your buck.
 KATIE You're dying to tell the story.
 MATT The story of how you took it down.
 JESSIE How you took its magnificence.
 EMILY Took its pride.
 KATIE Took its strength.
 MATT Made it part of you.
 JESSIE Part of your mask.
 EMILY The kid that nobody knows.

28._

(Lights on Katie writing in a notebook. Enter Josh.)

JOSH Hey, Katie.
KATIE Hi.
JOSH Writing your thing for speech class? (she goes back to her work) Guess what I wrote about. (hands her the snapshot) The buck I killed last weekend. Man, it was so cool. What's yours on?
KATIE How to dump somebody.
JOSH How's it go?
KATIE Say for example your boyfriend says he's gonna meet you at the mall and take you to a movie but instead he goes hunting.
JOSH C'mon, Katie. We could go out this coming weekend.
KATIE I don't think we should see each other anymore.
JOSH Can't you give me another chance?
KATIE I like somebody else now.
JOSH Who?
KATIE What's it matter?
JOSH Just tell me who.
KATIE Doesn't matter.
JOSH Matters to me.

29._

KATIE Believe it or not there are some people who don't take me for granted.
(Enter Michael.)
MICHAEL Sorry I'm late. Hey, Josh.
JOSH Him? It's him? I thought we're friends?
MICHAEL We are.
JOSH Some friend who sneaks around with my girl.
KATIE I'm not yours.
MICHAEL Nobody's sneaking around, Josh.
KATIE Can we just go please?
(Josh pushes Michael who pushes him back and knocks Josh to the ground. HUGE LAUGH FROM THE RUMORS. Exit Katie and Michael hand in hand. Lights on Josh. Voices in the dark. Constant rhythm from the drum under all rumors.)
ACTOR 1/RUMOR Hear about Josh?
ACTOR 2/RUMOR No, what about him?
ACTOR 3/RUMOR Killed a buck.
ACTOR 4/RUMOR No wonder he walks around all big and bad.
ACTOR 5/RUMOR Not anymore.
ACTOR 1/RUMOR What happened?
ACTOR 2/RUMOR Katie dumped him for Michael.
ACTOR 3/RUMOR Whoa! How'd Josh take it?

30._

ACTOR 4/RUMOR Like he doesn't care.

(Let the following rumor lines overlap in succession: Actor 5 begins, "I wonder..." Cue Actor 1 with, "What? Josh..." Cue Actor 2, "What? The..." And so on till the line, "What a dork," which should stick out.)

ACTOR 5/RUMOR I wonder if he really killed the buck.

ACTOR 1/RUMOR What? Josh didn't shoot the buck?

ACTOR 2/RUMOR What? The snapshot's a fake?

ACTOR 3/RUMOR What's a fake?

ACTOR 4/RUMOR The snapshot!

ACTOR 5/RUMOR Josh never shot a buck?

ACTOR 1/RUMOR I think he shot the bull.

ACTOR 2/RUMOR What a dork!

(The voices in the dark laugh mockingly.)

JOSH Every kid in school is laughing at me.

MICHAEL So you make your face a mask.

KATIE A mask that hides your face.

MATT A face that hides the pain.

JESSIE A pain that eats your heart.

EMILY A heart nobody knows.

(Voices in the dark laugh.)

JOSH Someday, somebody's gonna laugh once too many times.

31._

(All laugh. Josh mimes loading a rifle, aims at the laughter, fires three times, each shot highlighted with a loud drumbeat outside the rhythm. The laughter stops abruptly after the third shot. Deceased shine flashlights at Josh. Drum out.)

MICHAEL Who are you killing, Josh?

JOSH You see anybody bleeding?

KATIE Who are you killing in your mind?

JOSH Nobody. Anybody. Everybody.

MATT Are you stuck in the movie again?

JOSH What movie?

JESSIE Your favorite movie.

JOSH How would you know my favorite movie?

EMILY The movie that makes the pain go away.

JOSH How's it go?

MICHAEL The kid goes back to school with a shotgun.

JOSH And?

KATIE Blows away all the kids who mocked him the day before.

JOSH Shut up.

MATT Blows away the teacher too.

JOSH Get out of my face.

32._

JESSIE Why are you cutting gym class?

JOSH Maybe I got something better to do.

EMILY Like sneak down the empty hallway?

MICHAEL Like sneak in an empty classroom?

(Josh uses the fourth wall as a blackboard, mimes writing on it with a piece of chalk.)

KATIE What are you writing on the blackboard?

JOSH (speaking words as he writes them:) "Everybody...in...this...class...is...dead...meat."

MATT Do you enjoy making everyone afraid?

JOSH It's just for laughs.

JESSIE Except nobody's laughing.

JOSH I am! And they're not laughing anymore.

EMILY You enjoy police coming to investigate?

JOSH More than I can say!

(Short drum rhythm. A police siren blares as a red flasher sweeps the stage. Josh laughs.)

ACTOR 5 (AS COP) Alright, I want everyone to stand by his or her locker. This your locker?

JOSH Yes, officer.

ACTOR 5 (AS COP) You know anything about the words on the blackboard?

JOSH No, officer.

33._

ACTOR 5 (AS COP) You sure?

JOSH Positive.

ACTOR 5 (AS COP) You see anybody go in or come out of the classroom?

JOSH No.

ACTOR 5 (AS COP) Where were you when the words were written on the blackboard?

JOSH I'd have to know when the words were written, wouldn't I, officer?

ACTOR 5 (AS COP) Let us know if you hear anything.

(Lights on Josh laughing. Voices in the dark. Drum rhythm under rumors.)

ACTOR 1/RUMOR The principal's calling an assembly.

ACTOR 2/RUMOR What for?

ACTOR 3/RUMOR Maybe they found out who did it.

ACTOR 5/RUMOR That's what I heard.

ACTOR 1/RUMOR Don't know--but he's gonna be hauled up on stage in front of the whole school and suspended on the spot.

JOSH (laughing) Gotta find him first.

ACTOR 2/RUMOR They should take away all the guns.

(Lines begin overlapping again.)

ACTOR 3/RUMOR Ever hear of the Constitution and the right to bear arms?

34._

ACTOR 4/RUMOR How are we supposed to get an education dodging bullets?

ACTOR 5/RUMOR It's all a hoax.
 ACTOR 1/RUMOR Ever hear of Paducah?
 ACTOR 2/RUMOR What about Jonesboro and Springfield?
 ACTOR 3/RUMOR It could happen anywhere.
 ACTOR 4/RUMOR There's a killer in every school.
 ACTOR 5/RUMOR Teachers should carry guns.
 ACTOR 1/RUMOR Yeah, and we should all wear bulletproof vests.
 (Josh stands amid the actors 1-4 and the deceased who make idle chatter like kids gathering in the auditorium. Deceased shine flashlight on Principal as she enters. New drum rhythm at entrance, then drum out.)
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL)(Repeat) Alright people, let's settle down...
 ACTOR 2 You're sweating, Josh.
 JOSH It's hot in here, okay?
 (Flashlights out.)
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL)Someone in this auditorium wrote some very threatening words on the blackboard. Perhaps the blackboard phantom wrote those words in jest, perhaps in anger. Whatever the case...
 JOSH Blackboard phantom! Love that!
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL)...If the guilty party surrenders in my office sometime today, the punishment will be minimal...
 35._

ACTOR 3 Maybe she knows it's you, Josh.
 JOSH If she knew it was me, she wouldn't say it like that.
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL)But if we discover who he or she is...The punishment will be severe.
 If you know who the blackboard phantom is and don't tell us, you will be just as guilty.
 ACTOR 4 She's looking at you, Josh.
 JOSH And I poker-face her right back.
 MICHAEL So you make your face a mask.
 KATIE A mask that hides your face.
 MATT A face that hides the pain.
 JESSIE A pain that eats your heart.
 EMILY A heart nobody knows.
 (Lights on Josh. Drum rhythm under rumor lines. Voices in the dark. Deceased gather behind Josh.)
 ACTOR 1/RUMOR Who could it be?
 ACTOR 2/RUMOR I think it's Randy.
 ACTOR 3/RUMOR How do you know?
 ACTOR 4/RUMOR The look in his eye.
 DECEASED Paducah, Jonesboro, Springfield.
 (Josh, uneasy, crosses away, but still enjoys the rumors. Deceased follow.)
 ACTOR 5/RUMOR They don't have a clue!

36._

ACTOR 1/RUMOR Who could it be?
 ACTOR 2/RUMOR Anybody in this school.

ACTOR 3/RUMOR My parents want me to stay home till the killer's found.
 ACTOR 4/RUMOR What killer? Nobody's dead.
 DECEASED Paducah, Jonesboro, Springfield.
 (Josh moves away from them again. Deceased follow again, but not so closely, perhaps upstage.)
 ACTOR 5/RUMOR You lucked out. Wish my parents felt that way.
 (Lines begin to overlap again, building in intensity. Josh enjoys them thinking he's finally escaped the deceased.)
 ACTOR 1/RUMOR We're all just waiting for a massacre to happen.
 ACTOR 2/RUMOR We shouldn't talk about it.
 ACTOR 3/RUMOR Why not?
 ACTOR 4/RUMOR Maybe we could make it happen if we keep talking about it.
 ACTOR 5/RUMOR We need some excitement around here.
 ACTOR 1/RUMOR That's stupid.
 ACTOR 2/RUMOR For all I know, you're the killer.
 ACTOR 3/RUMOR Yeah, and maybe it's you.
 ACTOR 4/RUMOR Who knows? This could be the last day of my life.
 ACTOR 5/RUMOR I think it's Melissa.

37._

ACTOR 1/RUMOR Why do you say that?
 ACTOR 2/RUMOR Her locker is right next to the classroom.
 ACTOR 3/RUMOR I was with Melissa all day.
 ACTOR 4/RUMOR Then maybe you and Melissa did it together.
 DECEASED Paducah, Jonesboro, Springfield.
 (From behind Josh, they startle him.)
 JOSH Love to see 'em squirm! It's killing me not to tell.
 (Deceased, except Katie, step back as area lights go up on Katie reading a book. Josh turns to see her there.)
 JOSH Hey, Katie.
 (Katie looks at Josh, beat, goes back to her book.)
 JOSH Can't you say hi?
 KATIE Hi.
 JOSH Wha'cha doin'?
 KATIE Duh.
 JOSH Wanna go for a pizza after school?
 KATIE Michael wouldn't like that.
 JOSH Tell you the truth, I wasn't thinking of bringing him along.
 KATIE Excuse me. I'm busy.
 JOSH Who do you think it is?

38._

KATIE Who?
 JOSH The blackboard phantom.
 KATIE I have no idea, but he did me a favor.
 JOSH How?
 KATIE Calculus class was cancelled for the assembly. I wasn't ready for the test.

JOSH I know who it is.
 KATIE Give him my regards.
 JOSH I will.
 KATIE Who is it?
 JOSH Promised I wouldn't tell.
 KATIE You're just a lot of talk.
 JOSH Think so?
 KATIE Know so. Who's he mad at? Who's gonna be dead meat?
 JOSH He didn't say but he's like Santa Claus--making a list, checking it twice.
 KATIE List of what?
 JOSH Names to write on the bullets. Every bullet has somebody's name on it.
 KATIE Why would the blackboard phantom confide in you?
 JOSH We're buds.

39._

KATIE You're full of it.
 JOSH Think so?
 KATIE Know so.
 JOSH You're wrong.
 KATIE Who is it?
 JOSH I promised.
 KATIE You don't know.
 JOSH You won't tell?
 KATIE No.
 JOSH Promise?
 KATIE Yes.
 JOSH Cross your heart and hope to die?
 KATIE Yes.
 JOSH You'll be the only person who knows besides me.
 KATIE Who is it?
 JOSH You're lookin' at him.

(Katie laughs and exits. The chorus laughs mockingly. Josh confronts them.)

JOSH Anybody wanna laugh in my face?

(Chorus goes silent)

That's what I thought. There's a potential killer on the loose! Wonder who he or she is?

40._

(Josh turns to find the school principal in his face.)

ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) Can I speak with you in my office, Josh? Come in. Have a seat.
 JOSH Thanks.

ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) Anything you want to say to me?
 JOSH Not really.
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) You sure?
 JOSH Oh, yeah. Great hair.
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) Anything else?
 JOSH Well, yes, there is something.
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) Good. What's that?
 JOSH We all really hope you catch that nut who wrote on the blackboard.
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) You do?
 JOSH We'll all feel better knowing we're safe.
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) We know for a fact that you're the blackboard phantom, Josh.
 (Josh laughs)
 You want to confess?
 JOSH I was in gym class.
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) The instructor said you took a very long bathroom break.
 JOSH You can't prove a thing.

41._

ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) We have a snitch.
 JOSH Who?
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) You.
 JOSH What?
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) We compared the writing on the blackboard to your last essay in English class. It's a perfect match.
 JOSH Katie, right? Wasn't it Katie?
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) Do you want to make it easy and confess?
 JOSH Why confess when I didn't do anything?
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) It's tragic when a gifted young man throws away an education--for what? A childish prank. You know about our zero tolerance policy of violence or even the threat of violence. I have no choice but to expell you for the rest of the year.
 JOSH Because of some stupid words on the blackboard I have to repeat the grade?
 ACTOR 5 (AS PRINCIPAL) Not if you make it up in summer school.

(Josh backs away screaming "I won't go" as Chorus laughs mockingly. Lights off Actor 5. Lights on Actor 1 and 3 as Josh's parents.)

JOSH I won't go! I won't go!
 ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Josh, you will go to summer school no matter what.
 JOSH Sit in hot class all day while other kids can do what they want? And study on summer nights?
 ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) You should've thought about that before you wrote on the blackboard.

42._

ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) And you're grounded, Josh.
 JOSH For how long?
 ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) All summer.
 JOSH I can't go hunting with grandpa?
 ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) You broke your promise. We've taken your rifle away.
 JOSH I'd rather be dead!
 ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Oh, Josh, you don't really mean that.
 JOSH You'll see if I mean it! You'll all see! I can take only so much! Expelled! Summer school! Off the football team! Kids laughing at me! No hunting! I'm pushed to my limits!
 ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) I think you should calm down.
 JOSH I want my rifle back. You gave it to me.
 ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) We're sorry. You'll get it back when we see a real change in your attitude.
 JOSH It was a gift. At least you said it was. Guess I can't believe a word you say.
 ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) You're in enough trouble, Josh. Don't make it any worse.
 JOSH I hate you both. I wish you would just die so I wouldn't have to look at you anymore.

(Josh mimes a pistol with his hand, shoots them both.)

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) You can't talk that way to us anymore. Go to your room!

43._

JOSH No! Why do you have to take away the thing that means the most to me?
 ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) Because we've raised you wrong. We tried to give you a good life but all we did was feed your appetites.
 JOSH Where is it? Where's my rifle?
 ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) It's locked up. And if your attitude doesn't improve, we'll sell it.
 ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) And starting tomorrow morning you have an appointment with a psychotherapist.
 JOSH Summer school. No rifle. No friends. No phone. Psycho torture. Dis of dises. It's over. My life is over. It's over.

(Josh throws a tantrum pounding on the floor shouting "It's over." Lights on Actor 4 as Psychotherapist.)

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) How are you, Josh?
 JOSH How good could I be if I'm forced to see a psychotherapist?
 ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Don't you want to get to the bottom of your problems?
 JOSH I have nothing to say to you.
 ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Why not?
 JOSH If I told you then I would have something to say, wouldn't I? Duh.
 ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) I've talked to some people at your school.
 JOSH Talked to who?

44._

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Your football coach praised your team spirit. Despite your need to be the class clown, your teachers say you're very bright and pleasant. You have had amazing grades in the past. There's a rumor that you're a big hit with the girls.

JOSH I broke a few hearts.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) With all of that going for you, why did you make a threat on the blackboard?

JOSH Why'd the chicken cross the road?

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) I give up.

JOSH To prove it wasn't chicken.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Why'd the monkey fall out of the tree?

JOSH Don't know?

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) It died. Why'd the second monkey fall out of the tree?

JOSH Don't know.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) It died. Why'd the third monkey fall out of the tree?

JOSH It died.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) No. Peer pressure.

JOSH Ha, ha, ha.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Why did you write on the blackboard, Josh?

JOSH Maybe it's my childhood. Maybe it's my genes. Maybe it's my zodiac. Maybe the Devil made me do it.

45._

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Maybe you just chose to do it and it's nobody's fault but your own.

JOSH I don't like you.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) That's not required. But it is required you tell the truth. Did you mean what you wrote on the blackboard? Is there somebody you want to turn into dead meat?

JOSH Why'd the chicken cross the road?

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) To avoid answering questions.

JOSH I'm outta here.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) You need psychotherapy sessions to get back into school.

JOSH Maybe I'm not going back to school.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Oh? What will you do?

JOSH Maybe I'll join a gang.

ACTOR 4 (AS PSYCHOTHERAPIST) Don't you think that's self-destructive?

ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK) What a loser.

ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Principal made 'em see a shrink.

ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Boom.

ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	No more pain...
JOSH Who said that?	
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	You.
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Your life is over, Josh.

48._

ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Over.
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Over.
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Over.
JOSH Who's there?	
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	You.
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	You.
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	You.
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Do it in the living room for your parents to see.
(Drum returns softly.)	
JOSH What do you mean?	
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Leave your brains on the wall.
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Make 'em feel bad.
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	The rifle's locked in the closet.
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Break the lock.
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Boom.
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	No more pain.
JOSH That's dumb.	
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Josh the joke will be a year behind all his friends.
(Voices laugh mockingly.)	

49._

ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	While everybody's having fun in the sun, Josh is reading gobble-de-gook in a book!
(Voices laugh mockingly.)	
JOSH Shut up! Stop it!	
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Only you can make them stop, Josh.
JOSH How?	
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	You know.
JOSH What do you mean?	
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Boom.
JOSH Whoa.	
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	One bullet would quiet them forever.
(Voices laugh mockingly. Drum returns.)	
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	You'd end your pain and stop the voices in your head.
JOSH I don't want to be thinking this!	
(Voices laugh mockingly.)	
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK)	Show 'em who you are. The whole school would stand in awe of you. You'd be a legend for years to come.

ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Kill the voices, Josh.
 JOSH Does it hurt?
 ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Bullet in the head? You'll never feel a thing.
 JOSH I'm scared.

50._

(Voices laugh mockingly.)
 JOSH How do I do this?
 (Drum out.)
 MICHAEL Make your face a mask.
 KATIE A mask that hides your face.
 MATT A face that hides the pain.
 JESSIE A pain that eats your heart.
 EMILY A heart nobody knows.
 JOSH Here goes...But suppose I botch it?
 (Voices laugh mockingly.)
 ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) You'll be a joke.
 ACTOR 1 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Hear about Josh? Tried to off himself but he blew it!
 (Voices laugh mockingly.)
 ACTOR 3 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Now he's a pathetic wannabe forever!
 ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Josh the joke!
 (Voices laugh mockingly.)
 JOSH I can't do this! I'll be Josh the joke forever!
 ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Then you have to stop the voices another way, Josh.
 JOSH How?
 ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Two boxes of bullets should do it. It's almost lunchtime.

51._

JOSH Whoa...They'll all be in the cafeteria now.
 ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Imagine their faces when the hunter walks in. They see you in camo holding your rifle. Instant respect. Judgment day.
 JOSH Like the movie.
 ACTOR 1 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Paducah.
 ACTOR 3 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Jonesboro.
 ACTOR 5 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Springfield.
 ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Take 'em with you.
 ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK) With you.
 ACTOR 5 (VOICE IN THE DARK) With you.
 JOSH Whoa. Nobody could top that.
 ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) You don't hear the voices laughing anymore, do you, Josh?
 ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD, VOICE IN DARK) Josh? You home?
 (Drum returns. Voices laugh mockingly in a rising crescendo with the drum.)
 JOSH Who's that?

ACTOR 2 (AS JOSH'S DAD, VOICE IN DARK) Josh? You home?
ACTOR 1 (VOICE IN THE DARK) They'll take you to the looney bin!
(Lights on Actor 1 as Josh's dad.)

52._

ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) Josh, the doctor called me at work and asked your mother and I to drive you to the hospital...How'd you get the rifle?
ACTOR 2 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Don't chicken out now!
ACTOR 4 (VOICE IN THE DARK) Unless you wanna be Josh the joke.
ACTOR 1 (AS JOSH'S DAD) Put that down!
(Actor 1 advances. The drum rises to a crescendo.)
DECEASED AND CHORUS DEAD! DEAD! DEAD!
(Lights out on Actor 1. He turns back to the audience and stands still.)
JOSH What did I do?
ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM, VOICE IN DARK) Josh? What was that noise?
JOSH Mom?
(Lights on Actor 3 as Josh's mom.)
ACTOR 3 (AS JOSH'S MOM) Josh, what have you done?
MICHAEL Make your face a mask.
KATIE A mask that hides your face.
MATT A face that hides the pain.
(Actor 3 as Josh's mom kneels and gestures to the body we can't see.)
JESSIE A pain that eats your heart.
EMILY A heart nobody knows.
JOSH I love you, mom.

53._

(Josh flicks the flashlight twice.)
DECEASED AND CHORUS DEAD! DEAD!
(Actor 3 turns her back to the audience. All lights off. Josh holds the flashlight under his chin as he speaks to the turned backs of his parents.)
JOSH Mom?
(A female voice in the dark starts to hum and then sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" under the monologue)

Dad? You made me do this. I wanted to kill you but I didn't want you dead. How else could I tell you what's on my mind without you interrupting? Mom? How are you singing now if you're dead? Stop it. You used to sing that to me when I couldn't sleep. Stop it, please? Don't I have enough pain? Isn't it hard enough being nobody? Isn't it tough enough that everybody looks at me like I'm a broken trashbag? Where do I fit in? Where can I go and not have anybody on my back? At school the teachers are giving this test and that paper and don't do this and don't do that. Then I come home and you always find something that I didn't do and I'm never good enough. I guess I'm just sick of you being disappointed in me all the time. Remember when you taught me the outfielders glove, dad, and I caught a high-fly in the Little League championship game and you carried me off the field?

Why can't it be like that? Why's it so easy to talk to you now? Anyway, thanks for listening.

(Chorus exits. The five deceased enter one by one, now each wearing white; Matt in a white dress shirt, Katie in a white blouse, Jessie in a white t-shirt, Michael in a white sweatshirt and white baseball cap turned backwards, Emily in a white sweatshirt. Matt enters first, carries a bottle of catsup, sits, pours some on some imaginary fries, begins to eat, then starts on some homework. Katie enters, sits next to Matt and asks to borrow a homework assignment, Matt agrees, but asks her to wait till he finishes the problem he's working on. Michael enters asking Katie to go with him to get some food, Jessie rushes in to tell Matt she's been accepted to college. Emily stops by to tell Katie she'll be late, etc. Improvise casual dialogue but don't allow anything to affect plot or character. As the dialogue builds to a crescendo, Matt, desperately trying to concentrate on his homework, finally raises his voice and asks them to be quiet so he can do his work. Silence, then together everyone continues at the same volume and pace. Matt slumps in defeat.

54._

Lights up on Josh only, in a military stance. Silence. Beat. Katie takes her flashlight, turns it on under her chin.)

KATIE Why me? You liked me.

JOSH You snitched on me.

KATIE Why do you have to shoot me through the heart?

(Michael squeezes catsup into Katie's hand. She smears it on her heart.)

JOSH Where do you think you shot me? Why do you pretend I'm not there? My parents don't see me. Kid's in school don't see me. You don't see me. I'm invisible sometimes.

(Michael steps forward, flashlight under chin.)

MICHAEL Why me? I had a football scholarship.

JOSH You were everything I wanted to be.

(Jessie squeezes catsup into Michael's hand. He slaps it on his hat, on the side of his head.)

MICHAEL Why do you have to shoot me through the head?

JOSH You should have figured that when you pushed me.

(Jessie steps forward, flashlight under her chin.)

JESSIE Why me? I don't even know you.

(Matt squeezes catsup into her hand)

I never even spoke to you. Why me? What right do you have to take all the life I could've lived?

(slaps catsup on her abdomen)

Feel like a man when you shot me in the stomach?

(Matt and Emily squeeze catsup in their own hands during Jessie's line.)

JOSH You have no idea what it's like to be somebody one day, and nobody the next.

55._

(Matt steps forward, flashlight under his chin.)

MATT Why me? I had my whole life before me.

JOSH So did I.

MATT (Matt squeezes catsup on his shirt collar) How'd it feel to shoot me through the neck?

JOSH Don't know.
(Emily steps forward, flashlight under her chin.)

EMILY All my life I've been taught to forgive. That forgiveness is for the forgiver. But I just can't. Not until I know what's really in your heart. I need to know, Josh. Why me? (slaps it on her chest) Why me?

JOSH If you know all my thoughts, why don't you know that?

EMILY We want to hear you say it to yourself...Why, Josh?

MICHAEL Why her?

KATIE Why him?

MATT Why them?

JESSIE Why me?

EMILY Why anybody, Josh?

JOSH Sometimes I hate being alive, but I'm afraid to be dead.

KATIE Know what I hate about being dead? You can't call up and order a pizza.
(Deceased gather around the box casually.)

56._

MICHAEL Pepperoni.

JESSIE Extra cheese.

EMILY Garlic.

ALL Hold the anchovies!

MICHAEL Cheeseburgers.

KATIE With bacon.

MATT And fries.

JESSIE Drenched in ranch dressing.

EMILY Triple chocolate milkshakes.

MATT Chocolate chip cookies.

KATIE With milk.

MATT Cold milk.

JESSIE So many things to miss.

EMILY You could never name them all.

ALL Never.

(With background music. The tone is sad joy--sad that it's gone, joyful in remembrance. Sometimes they are oblivious of Josh, other times they direct the lines at him. At the director's discretion, cut one or two of the following sections (5 or 10 lines) and let the Actors improvise. Let each actor personalize things they now have that they miss. Let each line begin with, "I miss--". Let none of it interfere with plot, character or tone.)

57._

MICHAEL I miss cruising, windows down, radio up.

KATIE I miss lying on my bed in the dark falling asleep to a CD.

MATT I miss getting shot down by girls.

JESSIE I miss when a guy gets that look in his eye! And you know he's gonna ask you out!

EMILY And then he says, Can I borrow your math book?

(These lines begin to overlap.)

MICHAEL I miss when she answers before you even finish asking--
KATIE I'd love to!
MATT I miss when you go in for the kiss and then it happens and it's much, much better than you dreamed it would be.
JESSIE I miss bowling.
EMILY I miss seeing Jody when she has that look on her face that she's got another stupid joke to tell me.
MICHAEL I miss mom's rock-hard brownies.
KATIE I miss my dog when I come home from school.
MATT I miss how my dog jumps all over me and barks for a treat.
JESSIE I miss caffeine.
EMILY I miss when you take a new pair of jeans in the dressing room and put them on and they fit perfect.

58._

MICHAEL I miss cheese puffs.
KATIE I miss soda fizz tickling my nose.
MATT I miss loving someone.
(Emily gets everyone's attention. They listen.)
JESSIE I miss fixing my hair in the morning.
EMILY I miss going to the mailbox and getting a letter that I didn't expect.
MICHAEL A hand written letter.
(Katie moves DC. The others follow one by one on their lines. This is addressed to the audience.)
KATIE I miss jumping into a cool pool on a hot day.
MATT I miss sneezing.
JESSIE I miss sleeping.
EMILY I miss good times in Louisiana.
MICHAEL I miss rollerblading.
KATIE I miss when you start the school year and you open a book for the first time and the spine cracks.
MATT I miss going into the cafeteria and deciding who I want to sit with.
JESSIE I miss laughing so hard I start to cry.
EMILY I miss waterskiing in Georgia.
MICHAEL I miss being home alone with a microwave bag of popcorn and the remote in my hand channel surfing.

59._

KATIE I miss giving my dog a bath and she shakes and gives me a shower.
MATT I miss mom's cooking.
JESSIE I miss mom's cooking wafting through the house and trying to guess what it is.
EMILY I miss picking a college.
MICHAEL I miss talking with friends on the phone after midnight.
KATIE I miss going in a grocery store and being able to buy anything I want.
MATT I miss hanging out.
JESSIE I miss the end of a race when I'm out of breath and I feel so good about myself.

EMILY I miss screaming at the football games.
 MICHAEL I miss the end of the day school bell, the feeling in the air when you can go home.
 (Katie crosses to a new position to look at Josh. The others follow on their lines.)
 KATIE I miss my bed.
 MATT I miss singing in the shower.
 JESSIE I miss getting into a fight with my brother and acting like nothing happened five minutes later.
 EMILY I miss making mom laugh so hard she can't hardly breathe.
 MICHAEL I miss watching the sky go from light to dark.

60._

KATIE And dark to light.
 MATT I miss, even at my age, not being able to sleep on Christmas Eve.
 JESSIE I miss learning new songs on the piano.
 EMILY (TO DECEASED) I miss singing to the radio in front of the mirror.
 MICHAEL (JOINING IN) And pretending I'm in concert.
 KATIE AND ALL SRO!
 MATT (DECEASED, XC, LINES OVERLAP) I miss Sunday brunch.
 JESSIE I miss Krispy Kreme donuts.
 EMILY I miss opening a door on a winter's day and feeling the cool rush of cold air on my face.
 MICHAEL I miss hitting on girls.
 KATIE I miss jumping on the trampoline with six people at a time.
 MATT I miss swimming in the fountain at midnight.
 JESSIE I miss people watching.
 EMILY I miss the look in my brother's eye just before he pulls his newest wrestling move on me.
 (Music fades out. Josh interrupts.)
 JOSH I never thought I was taking away all that! Never!
 MICHAEL Never? What do you know about never? I'll never do all I wanted to do.

61._

ALL Never.
 KATIE I'll never achieve my dreams.
 ALL Never.
 MATT I'll never see all I wanted to see.
 ALL Never.
 JESSIE I'll never know all I wanted to know.
 ALL Never.
 EMILY Not ever.

(At the director's discretion, cut one or two of the following sections (5 or 10 lines) and let the actors improvise. Let the actors personalize those things they never had. Let each line begin with, "I'll never--". Let none of it interfere with plot, character, or tone.)

KATIE I'll never be an aunt.

(Music continues. Characters listen respectfully to each other.)

MICHAEL I'll never know what it is to live on my own and be independent.

MATT I'll never have the chance to be a better person.
 JESSIE I'll never go to college and have a double major.
 EMILY I'll never find the right person to spend my life with.
 MICHAEL And make a marriage work.
 (Josh, on the outside, moves in, hoping for an invitation. They ignore him.)

62._

JOSH I miss--
 (They drown him out.)
 KATIE And give love.
 MATT And get love.
 JESSIE I'll never meet a beautiful, intelligent, caring fraternity boy who will look at me and see perfection.
 EMILY I'll never be married in a white dress and have a huge wedding.
 MICHAEL I'll never make new friends.
 KATIE I'll never be a psychologist.
 MATT I'll never play catch with my son.
 JESSIE I'll never have long talks at a candle lit table in the corner of a little restaurant.
 EMILY I'll never be nineteen the way I always dreamed about.
 MICHAEL I'll never know what it is to come home from work and open the door and all my kids run to me and pull me down on the floor and smother me with hugs and kisses.
 KATIE I'll never find out if the psychic was right—will I get what I want or sell used cars?
 MATT I'll never know what it is to own my own car.
 (Moving DC, to the audience. One by one the rest join him.)

63._

JESSIE I'll never have my beautiful frat boy hold my hand in the delivery room of the maternity ward telling me to push, push, push while I tell him to shut up.
 EMILY I'll never own a red convertible.
 MICHAEL I'll never fly a plane.
 KATIE Or sail a boat.
 MATT Or see the Dead Sea.
 JESSIE I'll never have three children who look just like my frat boy so that when I kiss them I'm kissing him.
 EMILY I'll never see my limits.
 MICHAEL Or really know myself.
 KATIE I'll never learn all mom's recipes.
 MATT I'll never have a chance to make dad proud of me.
 JESSIE I'll never cry at my children's graduation.
 EMILY I'll never see Paris.
 (Turning to Josh. One by one, each turn on their own lines.)
 MICHAEL Or Tokyo.
 KATIE Or learn to fly fish.
 MATT Or get washboard abs.

JESSIE I'll never have an epitaph that reads "Beloved mother, grandmother, and wife. Died at 17."

64._

JOSH What do you want from me? I can't bring you back to life! If I could, I would!
Don't you see that? It's over! It's over!

MICHAEL Over for us, Josh.

KATIE But it's just beginning for you.

MATT For the rest of your life.

JESSIE You'll have us in your head until you're dead.

EMILY And you'll see us over--

MICHAEL And over--

KATIE And over--

MATT Again and--

JESSIE Again--

EMILY As you saw us yesterday in the school cafeteria.

CHORUS DEAD!

(Katie drops dead)

DEAD!

(Michael drops)

DEAD!

(Jessie drops)

DEAD!

(Matt drops)

DEAD!

(Emily throws her arms around Josh, drops. Josh touches her blood and cries out. One light on Josh.)

JOSH I didn't know it would be forever. I thought it was "bang bang you're dead" again. I thought I could just hit the reset button and start over. Why can't I have another chance? When I killed you I killed all my possibilities, too.

(more)

65._

JOSH (cont'd) I'll never have anything to look forward to. Never.

(One by one the deceased rise dream-like and begin to exit slowly turning out their lights.)

Is this the rest of my life?

(Josh goes to his knees, devastated)

Oh God.

(Emily turns out her light on Josh. Darkness.)

END

