

The Waiting Room

By John Cosper, Jr.

The Waiting Room

Main Characters

DANIELLE WAYNE ADAMS

Junior, 16. Danielle is the star of the school theater. She started dance class at age three and has studied ballet, tap, jazz, swing, salsa, you name it. Her parents are still together, and she has a younger sister, Kayla, who is 14. Emily Hochman is a good friend and fellow thespian. She is a B and C student mostly.

KIM HARPER

Sophomore, 16. All state soccer player in her freshman and sophomore years. She is very soft spoken, but when she speaks, it's usually very thoughtful. Her parents are still together, and she has one younger brother, Kyle, who is a trophy winning soccer player in 6th grade. She is very shy, and has few close friends. Her best friend is out-spoken, trash talking team mate Brandi Andrews.

JASON HENRY TANNER

Senior, 18. He was a very happy kid until his 13th year, when his Dad left to marry his mistress, a 19 year old legal intern. His mom took his dad to the cleaners in divorce court. Dad lost his mistress, and his job when the money went. His dad now practices law in a suburb of Houston. His many attempts to contact his son have been blocked by his ex-wife. Tanner's mom went back to school, got her law degree. She works 70 hours a week, throws money at her child, but no attention. Tanner has withered without her. He is an alcoholic and straight C student. His best friends are Campbell Brown and Alex Ayers. Used to be close friends with Joey. Has a rep as a ladies man, but in truth is a virgin. No girl wants any part of him once they discover his hidden side.

AMY JO PARKER

A true eccentric, Amy's goal in life is to defy being labeled as a member of any particular social grouping. Amy's parents met at Woodstock, and their open-minded, free-spirited nature makes them very popular with other kids. Amy dresses the part of a flower child, but that's as close as she comes to following her parents' footsteps. She writes poetry, but hates to read. She loves old and black and white movies because the older films are a "more pure form of art." She lifts weights, and used to play basketball. She is the lone female member of the school chess club (much to the delight of the boys in the club). She loves classical music, and music of the 1980's. She HATES coffee, cappuccino, and espresso. Rather than hang out with any particular group, Amy sits with whom she pleases, and loves interacting with misfits and minorities. She has even had lunch with Wes a time or two. The great tragedy of her life was losing her best friend Joey to a hate crime murder, a story she tells in the play. It was through this tragedy that her soulmate, Cara, led her to Christ. But being her usual anti-conformity self, Amy attends a Spanish mission church (as she speaks Spanish fluently) and shuns the clique that is the school Christian club.

LESLIE ELIZABETH MILLS

Junior, 16. A leader in Christian Student Fellowship, and best friends with Emily. She is very conservative minded, and not terribly outreaching. Tends to judge others. Her parents are together, and she has a younger brother David, 12. She's a fairly good student, and involved in student council and choir. She also plays tennis, and is the manager of the softball team. She wants to go into occupational therapy in college.

EMILY ELAINE HOCHMAN

Junior, 17. Emily is a thespian, and member of the Christian Student Fellowship. She is also a recovering bulimic. She is very devoted to her boyfriend Brian. Her parents are still together. Her siblings include one older brother Robbie (18), younger sister Sam (15), and younger brother Toby (12). Leslie Mills is her best friend, and Wes is an ex-boyfriend. She excels in all academic subjects. She especially loves Spanish, and plans to become a teacher, specializing in teaching English as a second language to hispanic students. She loves playing around on the internet, and runs her own discussion site for people who trade and collect Disney memorabilia. She likes to read science fiction and Disney books

CARA RENEE PRINCE

Senior, 17. Raised by a drug addicted mother, Cara is a miracle. Her mom was heavily into drugs before her birth, and Cara was born addicted to pot and crack.. Mom had a series of boyfriends, more than Cara can even recall. Cara's mom had an old friend, Marla, who took Cara to church with her. Cara was unruly as a small child, but through Marla's influence, became a Christian at age 8. Cara's mom grew to resent her daughter's faith, but Cara never responds in anger, only love for her mom. She finally moved out and moved in with Marla after an incident with her mother. She prays that one day her mother will accept Christ. She is largely a "misfit" at school with few close friends. She even shuns the school's Christian club because she disapproves of the exclusionary attitude among its leadership. Her best friends are Marla's daughter, Natalie, and Joey, one of the other victims. Cara loves Biology, and wants to become a doctor. Her hope is to serve as a missionary doctor for 5 years minimum, then return home to get married and raise a family. She is into literature, classic rock music, and professional wrestling.

WESLEY SCOTT RITTER

Sophomore, 15. Wes is an only child. His parents both work, and they attend church together. They made Wes go until he was 13, when he decided he didn't want to go. He was constantly picked on at school. He and Emily dated for a short while, but it broke off. Wes was crushed. He had set Emily up in his mind as the only woman he would ever love. His parents never listened to him. When he was down, they threw a video game or some other material item his way. He internalized his feelings, which finally grew to the breaking point. The last straw: a day when Tanner humiliated him by making him wipe his car clean with his shirt. That night, he watched Emily sit and talk to her boyfriend on the porch for two hours. After that, he stole a couple guns from a neighbor and plotted his shooting spree.

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Supporting Characters (In Order of Appearance)

ANGEL/ DANCER

KELLY – Danielle’s 7 year old sister

GINA - A soccer team mate of Kim's.

CAMPBELL BROWN - Tanner's best friend.

KIM'S GRANDMA

BRIAN BREWER - Emily's boyfriend

TANNER'S MOM

EMILY'S GRANDMA

CARA'S MOM

DR. MARTIN - Attending physician to Wes in the hospital

JESUS

The Waiting Room

Set and Costumes

The Set

The stage is completely bare. A white, sterile is up stage. At stage left and right are two white projection screens that can be lit from behind. The supporting characters will appear in shadow upon these screens.

Costumes

Danielle - White T-shirt, jeans, and sandals.

Kim - Jeans and a soccer T-shirt, either a school team or generic soccer shirt, and sneakers.

Tanner - Colored button up shirt with white T-shirt underneath tucked into khakis, brown shoes.

Joey - Rugby shirt untucked, khakis, nice shoes.

Leslie - Long sleeve solid colored shirt, khakis, slip on shoes.

Emily - Colored short sleeve shirt, denim overalls, sneakers.

Cara - Black tank top and a colorful patchwork skirt. Sandals. A small choker necklace made of beads and a dog-tag style necklace.

Wes - Jeans, polo shirt, lightweight windbreaker, and sneakers.

The Waiting Room

Back Story

Setting

The time is March 15 of the present school year. After a shooting takes place at Central High School, eight students find themselves in the mysterious waiting room, a place where souls hanging between life and death go to await their fate. There are two doors in the room. One leads back to life on Earth. The other leads to the afterlife. (The eternal destinies of the characters, Heaven or Hell, are not; introducing such issues into the story would distract from the purpose of the play: addressing the plague of school violence.) From here, they can relive moments of their lives with the help of shadows of the past. They will also hear their loved ones calling them back to life, or onward into the after life.

The Victims

Seven people are shot in the hallway in addition to the shooter: three seniors, three juniors, and one sophomore.

The sophomore is an all-state soccer player named Kim. Though her name is well known throughout the school and community, she is not well known as a person. Extremely shy and introverted, she is not well acquainted with any of the other victims.

The seniors are old pals from years back. Cara is a misfit, not really having a particular group to which she belongs. She is known to everyone and well respected for her opinions and advice. Joey is one of her few close friends. He has a strong circle of friends, and is a stellar student and athlete. Tanner is a long time classmate of both Joey and Cara, going back all the way to the third grade. He puts on a front as being cool and all together, but those who have known him all his life know there is hidden pain beneath the cool exterior.

Danielle, Leslie, and Emily are the three juniors. Leslie is vice president of the Christian club in school, devout in her faith but a bit judgmental of others. Danielle is the school's theater star, having recently made his name famous in a performance of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Leslie and Danielle barely know each other, but share a common close friend in Emily. Emily and Leslie have been best friends since Kindergarten. Danielle and Emily have been close since Emily made her stage debut in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Emily is also the ex-girlfriend of Wes Ritter...the sophomore responsible for the shooting at Central High School.

The Killer

A year and a half before the shooting, Wes Ritter (then a 14 year old freshman) started dating 15 year old sophomore Emily Hochman. Their relationship lasted three months, when Emily dumped Wes at a basketball game for senior Brian Brewer. Wes and his family had moved to town when Wes was in the fifth grade. Since that time he had struggled to be accepted. The guys were constantly harrassing him. Girls either made fun

of him or pitied him, seeing him as a poor guy getting pushed around. He saw Emily as his one ray of light, his one chance at true love. Losing her was a serious blow.

Wes tried repeatedly to reestablish a relationship with Emily. She did her best to open the door for a friendship, and would always listen when he needed a friend. Still, Wes insisted on more, which she couldn't give him. As his struggles for acceptance grew more and more painful, Wes began to seek an outlet for his frustration. He begins to write poetry laced with violent themes and images. One story he writes for English class tells of a boy named Gabe who seeks out and murders a love who jilted him. With his only male friend, Greg, he began taking shooting lessons. Greg's father has some serious gun weaponry, to which Wes and Greg were given full access. Seeing other shootings take place across the country, the seeds for Wes' violence are sewn.

The final straw for Wes occurred the day Tanner made him wipe his car clean with his shirt. Everyone in school laughed about the incident the whole day. That night, he went to Emily's house to talk to her. Instead he found her sitting in the car with her Brian. He sat there in the dark for an hour and a half, realizing that she was lost to him forever.

Over the weekend, Wes stole a hand gun and shotgun from Greg's father, and began plotting his murderous assault.

The Shooting

On March 15, Wes skips his first period class. He leaves home around 8:05 am, riding his bike to school. He carries a gym bag stuffed with sweats to conceal his deadly cargo: a loaded shotgun and handgun. Arriving at school at 8:25, he tucks the handgun into the wind breaker he wears and walks into class. He hides out into the bathroom on the second floor of the school in the Social Studies hall. He walks into the hall at 8:33, and waits outside Mr. Woodson's class, where Danielle, Emily, and Leslie are in US History first period. Next door, Joey and Tanner are in Economics. Across the hall, Cara is in AP Government. Next door, Kim is in first year French class. The bell rings. Six other classmates exit before Leslie emerges from Woodson's class. Behind Leslie, Danielle and Emily follow. At the same moment, Joey and Tanner walk out of their class. Tanner sees the gun come out of the bag. Wes fires the shotgun.

Emily is shot in the back and neck.

Danielle is shot in the neck.

Leslie is shot in the side (through the arm, into the ribcage) and shoulder.

Another student, Gwen Pfeiffer, is grazed on the arm, but is still able to flee the scene.

Wes drops the shotgun and pulls out the hand gun. He aims in the same direction he has been shooting. Tanner and Amy grab him and he is twisted around. Wes fires five times as he falls.

Cara takes a bullet in the chest.

Kim is shot in the right leg, chest, and head.

Tanner tries to wrench the handgun from Wes' hands. Wes shoots him in the chest.

The kickback jolts Amy enough that Wes shakes free. He hits Amy in the head with the gun.

Wes changes clips and shoots Amy in the head.

Wes hears Cara praying. He walks over to her and asks if she believes in God.

Cara says yes.

Wes shoots Cara in the head.

Wes turns and sees Emily. He walks over and kneels by her side. He lifts her body into his arms, suddenly overwhelmed by what he has done, wishing he could undo it. Realizing there's nothing he can't do, he puts the gun to the side of his head and fires.

Dedication

In memory of those who died at Columbine...

To Cassie, Corey, Dan, Kelly, Steven, Rachel, Matthew, Lauren, Danielle, Isaiah, John, Kyle, and Dave, whose names are so easily forgotten;

To Dylan and Eric, whose names we may never forget.

In honor of the Dramamaniacs...

To Addie, Brittney, Cheryl, Christina, Crystal, Gabe, Jill, Karen, Kasie, Lauren, Lolly, Megan, Neil, Nick, Sarah, and Steve. May you be the ones who make a difference by dying daily to Christ.

THE WAITING ROOM

(The stage is bare, with a black curtain in back. As down stage right and left are two white curtains which can be lit from behind so as to show people in shadows. At rise, there is black. Then, suddenly, a light falls on Danielle at center.)

DANIELLE- *(quoting from Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act III, Scene ii)* "I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play have by the very cunning of the scene been strook so to the soul, that presently they have proclaim'd their malefactions: for murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ." Just as Hamlet chose a play to prick the heart of his murderous uncle, so we intend to prick the heart of the guilty. Hear now the tale of another murderer, fifteen years of age, who threatened the lives of seven other students. And hear the tales of his fallen classmates. For within these students, and those like them, lies the power to stop a killer.

(Kim enters from stage right.)

KIM- I was born 16 years ago July 9. My parents, my childhood, my world was chosen for me. Everything I was taught or exposed to was predetermined. I can't say I've lived a bad life. I love my parents, and I love my friends. And I have no real regrets about my life. But had I been given a chance before I was born, I'm not so sure I would have chosen to enter this world at all.

(Tanner enters from stage left.)

TANNER- We entered an environment that seems totally out of control. Our world changes constantly, and more often than not, it changes for the worst. Through it all, we're imprinted with the expectations of the generations that came before us. We inherit goals and standards too lofty for anyone to achieve. Ideals are thrust upon us by people who violate them every day. Our parents and teachers demand so much of us, and then get disgusted when we fail...when the truth is, by failing, we're just following in their footsteps.

(Amy enters from stage right.)

AMY- We live in a world full of prejudices centuries old. We're told to fight against the hatred and separation, to break down the walls that divide us. Yet even as we rail against the wall, the ones who command us to tear it down continue to lay bricks. Eventually, we wear ourselves out. We succumb to the current of time and join in perpetuating the prejudices handed down to us. And finally, we join with our ancestors in building higher the walls of hate.

(Leslie enters from stage left.)

LESLIE- No one wants to see violence happen. Certainly I don't. But what can we do?

Murder and violence are as old as humankind. From the moment Cain gave into his hatred and murdered his brother Abel, the fire of violence has only grown, leading to two world wars and even the threat of nuclear annihilation. Next to that, a kid walking into school with a gun seems rather insignificant. Besides, as long as it's in some one else's neighborhood, why should we lose any sleep over it? Why fight a fire that's not in my backyard?

(Emily enters, stage right.)

EMILY- We're told to be originals. Then we're led to be followers. We become conformists in our pursuit of non-conformity. We are torn between our desire to be ourselves and the ideal image fed to us by our satellites and modems. "This is the good life," they say. "This is the way to live." So we lay our dreams to rest and work ourselves to death to achieve a perfect life that doesn't exist. We trade our hopes and desires for designer clothes. We paint ourselves up and dye our hair so many times, we eventually forget who we are underneath.

(Cara enters, stage left.)

CARA- We are reminded constantly of our place. We are the trophies of our parents. We are the students of the world, and never the teachers. We are the followers and not the leaders. We speak when we are spoken to. We do as we are told. We conform, give in, and perpetuate the cycle handed down to us from generations before. We are one voice out of billions. *(pause, then turns the tables)* Well, one voice brought communism to Russia. One voice led the Nazis to power. One voice took prayer out of schools.

(Wes enters, stage right. He stands at center.)

CARA- I don't believe that my voice can't do the same thing. And neither should you. This is the story of eight high school students, and how one of them changed the world for all of us.

BLACKOUT.

Sound Effects CD Trk. 1

Phantom Menace CD Trk. 10, 45 sec then fade.

(Stage lights come up slowly. The cast lies as if dead in the hall. Tanner is stage right. Amy is down center. Kim is down stage right. Cara is up stage right. Leslie is up center. Danielle is down stage beside her. Emily is center center on her back. Wes lies with his head on her stomach. The Angel enters, searching for Danielle. She finds Danielle and holds out her hand for her.)

KELLY- *(off)* Danielle? Danielle?

(Pause.)

KELLY- Danielle, it's time to play.

(Danielle sits up. Leslie sits up as well.)

DANIELLE- Kelly?

KELLY- Danielle, I wanna show you the river. It's so beautiful. Come on!

LESLIE- Danielle?

DANIELLE- It's my sister, Kelly. I haven't seen her since...

KELLY- Come on, Danielle! You gotta see the river!

DANIELLE- She died of Leukemia when she was 7.

(Danielle stands.)

DANIELLE- Kelly? Is that you?

KELLY- I've been waiting for so long. It's about time you came to play with me.

DANIELLE- *(takes the Angel's hand)* Where are we going?

(The Angel starts to lead Danielle off stage. Emily, Cara, and Tanner sit up slowly.)

KELLY- You're coming home Danielle. You're coming home with me. Come on.

(Dan moves towards Kelly.)

LESLIE- *(reaches for Danielle)* Danielle, don't.

DANIELLE- Where are you, Kelly?

KELLY- This way, Danielle. Follow me.

(The Angel and Danielle exit.)

EMILY- Leslie, what's going on? Where's Danielle? Where are we?

(Tanner walks over to Cara. Amy begins to rise. Wes sits up, looks around during the following dialogue, then slides himself toward stage right.)

TANNER- Are you okay?

CARA- I'm fine. *(looks at Amy)* Amy?

AMY- I'm here.

CARA- Kim?

KIM- Where are we, Cara?

TANNER- *(looks at Wes, confrontationally)* I have a feeling some one among us might be able to shed some light on that question.

CARA- Who's he? *(to Wes)* Have we met before?

WES- *(turns his head)* I don't think so.

EMILY- His name is Wes. He's an...old friend.

TANNER- If I'm not mistaken... *(walks over to Wes)* Wes is the one responsible for leading us here.

EMILY- Wes? What is he talking about?

WES- Emily, I...

TANNER- *(squats beside Wes)* Why don't you tell them, what you and I already know.

AMY- Tanner, is this necessary?

TANNER- I think so. You remember what happened, don't you, Amy?

AMY- Yeah.

TANNER- But I don't think our friends here can possibly have recollection. Except of course my pal, Wes.

EMILY- Leave him alone, Tanner.

TANNER- Leave him alone? Do you have any idea where you are? Do you know why?

EMILY- Obviously not.

TANNER- And I'll tell you why. Because you never saw it coming. *(points at Emily)* You... and Leslie, and Danielle, you were the first to go down. Hit in the back with a shotgun. Then he pulled out a handgun. He shot Cara and Kim. Amy grabbed Wes, and we both tried to wrench the gun out of his hands. Wes wriggled free and shot me. Then I assume he must have shot Amy.

AMY- As best as I can recall.

TANNER- Then the little scared boy must have realized what he'd done, put the gun to his own head, and popped himself.

LESLIE- No. That's not possible. Not here!

AMY- Why not, Leslie? Because we live in white suburbia?

LESLIE- Race has nothing to do with it. This is a nice neighborhood, not the mean streets of New York.

AMY- We live in a violent world. A world where any one, *(condescending)* even a kid like Wes, can become a notorious killer.

EMILY- Is that true, Wes?

(Everyone looks at Wes. Wes hesitates, then starts to laugh.)

WES- Well, isn't this a turn of events? Suddenly the guy who was always looked on with sympathy and disdain is looked upon with fear.

LESLIE- I don't believe this is happening.

EMILY- Wes, what have you done?

(Wes stands up.)

WES- Don't feel sorry for me, Emily. I knew exactly what I was doing. I've been planning this for weeks. I stole the guns from my neighbor's house. I decided the ideal time to strike was right after first period, so I came into school late. I waited outside Mr. Woodson's class, to be sure to take down my primary target. The bell rang, and the class began to file out. *(points)* I saw Leslie. *(points, indicating Emily to be his target)* I saw Emily.

(Emily begins to cry. Leslie moves over to comfort her. Kim cries, but silently.)

WES- From there it was pretty much like Tanner tells it. Emily, Leslie, and Danielle went down first. Then I changed guns and hit Cara and Kim. Amy and Tanner jumped on me together. Some how I wrestled away from Amy's grip to shoot Tanner and then Amy. I saw Cara still alive and crying. (*coldly*) I couldn't stand to see her suffer, so I shot her one more time. At that point I had intended to wait and surrender to the police, but I... I saw Emily lying in her own blood, and...

(Wes and Emily look straight at each other. Tanner stands.)

EMILY- Wes...

TANNER- Is this what you wanted? What was the point here? To kill Emily? To rack up a body count? Did you want to be famous?

(Pause. Then Tanner shoves Wes to the ground.)

TANNER- Talk to me, Wes! What were you thinking? Why did you take a gun to school and blow us all away? Huh? (*grabs Wes preparing to hit him*) Answer me--

AMY- Tanner, stop!! You strike him, and you're no better than he is.

WES- You wanna know why I did it? And yet until this moment when I've brought you to the brink of eternity, you never cared if I even existed. I don't owe you an explanation. I don't owe you anything.

AMY- You took our lives. You can't tell us why?

WES- If you really want to know why this happened, why don't you look inside yourselves? What causes a nerdy little freak like me lash out against his ex-girlfriend and six other people?

TANNER- Ex-girlfriend? (*looks at Emily*)

EMILY- We went out for a while a little over a year ago. (*pause, searching for words*) Is that what this is about?

LESLIE- Oh come on. I think it's obvious where he got the idea. The same thing happened in Washington state. The kid walked into class, handed a note to his best friend, then killed his ex and one of her friends. Obviously, Wes here was looking for the same kind of glory.

WES- You think I killed because I saw some one else do the same thing on TV?

LESLIE- I certainly do. Remember what happened after Columbine? Exactly one month later, there was a copy cat.

WES- I'm not a copy cat.

LESLIE- You're not an original.

WES- I did what I had to do.

LESLIE- You did what you saw a character in a movie do. You're a copy cat who doesn't know how to think for himself.

WES- You don't know anything about me.

LESLIE- Oh yes I do. All of these school killers are the same. The think alike, act alike; they even look alike. You probably write poems and stories about death and revenge. You've probably fantasized about killing your classmates time and time again. I'll bet you planned it down to the minute detail, didn't you?

(Pause. Wes does not respond.)

LESLIE- Well, you didn't exactly plan it, I guess. Just copied it out of your favorite movie. Change the location, change the faces, and it becomes your story, primed and ready for the six o'clock news.

AMY- I think you're giving the media more credit than it deserves.

LESLIE- Am I? Amy, have you seen the garbage playing at the movies?

AMY- Yes I have.

LESLIE- Look at the world we live in! Look at what the media feeds us. Look at the movies we watch and the music we listen to. It's all about violence and hate.

AMY- And yet we all haven't become cold blooded killers.

LESLIE- No, and I'll tell you why. Because people like you and me don't allow ourselves to be consumed by it. We don't bury ourselves in comic books, PlayStation, and Dungeons and Dragons. We don't memorize movies like *Reservoir Dogs* and *The Basketball Diaries* that glorify murder and mayhem.

AMY- Hey, Wes, you seen *The Basketball Diaries*?

WES- I hate Leonardo DiCaprio. What do you think?

LESLIE- It's not just movies. It's music, too.

AMY- Marilyn Manson?

LESLIE- Yeah.

AMY- Wes, you listen to Marilyn Manson?

WES- No.

AMY- What about Rammstein, or KMFDM?

WES- Never even heard of them.

AMY- I think you're striking out here, Leslie. Then again, maybe Wes owns a black trenchcoat?

WES- No.

AMY- What about a back pack? Or baggy jeans?

WES- No.

LESLIE- What's the point, Amy?

AMY- Just that the idea of blaming music, clothes, and movies is flat out stupid. By blaming the media, you're creating a scapegoat and dodging your own responsibility. You're saying, "It's not my fault. It's the music and the movies and the clothes." Meanwhile we miss the point and more people are going to die.

LESLIE- Then maybe you can explain why this has happened here so all of a sudden?

AMY- You mean here in your safe, suburban high school as opposed to the gang filled inner city? I don't know if you realize this, but Columbine happens every week in the inner city. In Chicago alone, two kids a day die on the streets. Fourteen a week. That's one better than Klebold and Harris. And I'll tell you, they've done it for years without Leonardo's movie, and without Marilyn Manson.

LESLIE- What about ganster rap? What about songs like "Cop Killer"?

CARA- What came first, Leslie? The music or the environment? Art reflects culture, it does not dictate it.

AMY- I have no doubt that TV and movies and music play a part in influencing how an

act of violence is carried out. But I also know that my best friend was not murdered by a movie. He wasn't murdered by a song, or a TV show. He wasn't murdered by the gun that fired six bullets into his body. Cold blooded hatred took the life of the one person I loved more than anyone else in this world!

(Amy kneels, at center, with a very heavy heart.)

TANNER- Who was he?

AMY- His name was Joey. *(stands)* He was an African-American, as were 90% of the people who lived in the neighborhood where I grew up. *(smiles)* I still remember the day we met. I was four years old, and I went out to take a spin around the block on my Big Wheel. Joey was shooting baskets in his driveway as I pedaled by. I stopped pedaling. He stopped dribbling. He asked me if I wanted to play, and that was it. From then on, we rarely spent time apart. We played together, we sat together in school, we ate lunch together, we shared each other's secrets. When I was 15, my family moved here. I missed Joey terribly. We stayed in touch, writing letters and talking on the phone, but we never got to see each other. That is, not until last spring break. My parents took me on a surprise vacation to Myrtle Beach, and when we arrived, Joey was waiting for me at the hotel. It felt as if we had never been apart. That first night, we stayed up all night talking, and planned out our entire week. It was the happiest week of my life. Until... *(her happiness changes to sadness)* Thursday night. Joey were in a club, dancing the night away, having a blast... when a couple of fraternity boys decided they didn't like seeing the black guy dance with the white girl. They approached Joey and I, intending to pick a fight, but the bouncer intervened just in time. I was pretty shaken by what happened, but Joey laughed it off, and he did his best to help me forget anything had happened. I had just about forgotten anything had happened when we left the club. Two blocks away, I remember hearing the squeal of tires. I heard several loud pops... *(sinks to her knees)* I felt Joey collapse on top of me... *(crying hard)* I saw... he was bleeding...

(Cara rushes to Amy, puts her arm around her. Everyone is silent as Amy composes herself.)

TANNER- Was is the guys from the bar?

AMY- I think so... But no one was ever arrested. Who ever it was... got away clean. *(pause, as she cries a bit more)* You can tell yourself that Marilyn Manson killed us. Or that guns did it. But I know the truth. You can take away the music, but it won't erase the hate. You can take away the guns. He'd just find another weapon. Knives, bombs. You want to put seven day waiting periods on cutlery and pipe and propane? Go ahead. It won't make a bit of difference. He'll find another way to act out his hatred.

LESLIE- And where does that hatred come from? From the world around us. From the media and from our parents. Their generation is the one that took prayer out of schools. They're the ones that took away the definition of right and wrong. Now we're reaping what they have sown.

AMY- Hatred and violence go back a lot farther than a Supreme Court decision to take prayer out of schools. There was just as much hate when our parents grew up as there is now. It was expressed in different ways. Men in white cloaks and hoods burning crosses. Men wearing swastikas sending an entire race of people to their deaths! No, we didn't create the world we live in. No we weren't the ones who let the Holocaust happen. But we are the ones accepting the cycle of hate from our parents and perpetuating it. Hate comes from the selfish desires within every one of us.

(Amy pauses.)

AMY- How am I doing, Wes?

WES- You know the truth is that there are movies and there is music that speaks of violence and striking back. But they never really influenced me. It was after I had decided that I couldn't take it any more that I let them get to me. I was ready to kill long before I ever saw a movie or heard a song telling me I was justified.

AMY- *(raises his voice)* There is no justification for what you did!

WES- There's no justification for what you all did, either. In this whole school, in this world, do you know how many people I could turn to? I'm not an athlete. I have no talents in music or the arts. I'm not smart, and my grades aren't anything to be proud of. From the first day of school, my lot was cast. I was to be the outsider. I'm nothing but a misfit in a world of somebody's. I didn't fit in any where and consequently, I was treated as such.

TANNER- Maybe you never tried to fit in.

WES- Maybe I was never given the chance. You recall a day when I accidentally brushed your car with my notebooks? Huh? Remember making me wipe it clean with my shirt? In front of a whole crowd of people?

TANNER- There were 3 other people with us. It was not a crowd.

WES- It was humiliating. From then on you went out of your way to remind me that I was subservient to you. But it wasn't just you. Everyone took their shots at me. I took a lot of abuse in the locker room and in gym. I had my CD's stolen right in front of me. I've been called gay in front of my entire class. The most humiliating moments were the times I was harassed in front of girls. Guys like Brock Garrison and Andrew Burke would treat me like a child in front of the more popular girls. I guess by degrading me, they made themselves look bigger in the girl's eyes. At first that wasn't so bad, because the girls would tell them to leave me alone and get me out of the scrape. Then I realized, it wasn't because they liked me. They just had pity on me, like a wounded animal.

EMILY- Wes, I hope you don't think that's how I felt about you.

WES- You tell me. You know you were the only person who really seemed to care about my problems. Not even my parents cared about me that much.

EMILY- That's not true. Your parents love you.

WES- They don't know anything about love. Their idea of expressing love is buying me another video game, when what I really need is some one to listen. I was never happier than when I was with you. But I guess I should have known it was too good to be true. You never really loved me, did you?

EMILY- I did, Wes. Just not in the way you wanted me to.

WES- What is that supposed to mean? Not the way I wanted you to? Either you loved me or you didn't!

EMILY- Wes, we weren't right for each other. I had a good time being with you, but there were so many problems. We both had so much growing up to do.

WES- You mean I had so much growing up to do?

EMILY- No, I mean... Wes, we weren't happy together. Don't you remember? I always tried to get you to go to church with me? You weren't ready for church and religion, and that was always so frustrating to me.

WES- You weren't in love with who I was. You couldn't accept me for who I was.

EMILY- And you couldn't accept who I was! You hated when I spent time with Leslie, or any of my friends.

WES- I hated it when you were with Leslie because she never liked you and me being together. She didn't think I was "Christian" enough to date. Wasn't that right Leslie? *(pause)* Whatever her reason, you chose her over me. And then after that, You never spoke a word to me. It was like your went out of your way to avoid contact with me.

EMILY- I made the best decision for both of us.

WES- How do you know what the best decision was for me?

EMILY- Because it was the best decision for me, too!

WES- I loved you!

EMILY- No you didn't!

(Pause.)

WES- How can you say that?

EMILY- You never knew what love was. If you did, you would have let me go in peace. But after we broke up, you were constantly hounding me. Every where I went. You showed up at my house on nights when I was going out. You called late at night. You couldn't let me go. If you truly loved me, you would have let me go to find my own happiness. Love is patient. Love is kind. It is slow to anger, it is never rude. Love not selfish or easily provoked, and it is not self seeking. Love is not jealous. You were none of those things to me. I never held it against you. Because at the time we were together, I didn't know any more about true love than you did. But I wished that you could put your hurt behind you and learn to be happy without me.

WES- No one wished for that more than I did. But it's not easy to find happiness when it feels like the whole world is out to destroy it. *(confronting Leslie)* Yes, Leslie, I wrote poems about death and sadness. I wrote stories of teenage boys striking out against everyone around them. I hate my life. I hate being called gay. I hate never having friends. I hate that my parents can't spare five minutes to just listen to me. You want to know how a guy like me gets turned into a killer? Walk a mile in my shoes. Try getting picked on and pushed around, pitied and called names, neglected and rejected as often and as cruelly as I have. Then, maybe you can come close to knowing how I feel.

KIM- I know how you feel.

(Everyone turns to look at Kim. She stands up.)

KIM- I know how lonely you must have felt. I was a freshman still in junior high school when I was placed on the varsity soccer team last year. I bumped another girl, a senior, out what would have been her place in the starting line up. I earned my place on that team by setting a school record for scoring, and by making the second team all-state. I helped our team win all the way to the regional tournament, but along the way, I didn't win one friend.

(Stage right screen lights up. Gina appears, talking on a phone.)

KIM- From the very beginning, I was hazed and knocked around and ridiculed. And in spite of all my achievements, they could only focus on my failures. I'll never forget coming out of the shower, and hearing my room mate on the phone talking to her father...

GINA- She blew the shoot out. Coach's little darling cost us a trip to semi-state... This was supposed to be our year. We were a senior led team, until she came along and got thrown into the front... Of course she scored more goals than the rest of us. Coach set her up that way! But when it came down to it, the freshman choked and cost us our last shot at state. My entire athletic career ended on her foot...

(Gina disappears.)

KIM- It wasn't until this year when Brandi Andrews made varsity that I had any one I could talk to. We're complete opposites in a lot of ways. She's so talkative and I'm much more introverted. The other girls on the team gave us the nicknames Fire and Ice after our personalities and the way we played together. But the one name they never called us, was "friend".

TANNER- Why didn't you just quit?

KIM- Because I knew I had the talent to play with them. I had the desire to be the best, and no one was going to discourage me. They made me cry more than once, but never, never did I cry in front of them. I had to show them I was better than them. That's how my game day ritual came about.

TANNER- What ritual?

KIM- My first game starting varsity they...soaked my sports bra in Gatorade.

(Everyone reacts in laughter and disgust.)

AMY- What did you do?

KIM- It was my only one I had with me, and none of the other players would loan me a spare. So I put it on, went out on the field and scored my first hat trick.

TANNER- I remember that game.

CARA- Tanner? At a girls soccer game?

TANNER- Same reason I go to the volleyball games. Girls in shorts.

AMY- So Kim, you're telling us that before every game you...

KIM- Yeah.

(Pause.)

KIM- Oh come on, I know I'm not the only one with weird quirks. I've heard Emily order a Big Mac before.

EMILY- What?

KIM- Tell them how you order a Big Mac. I'll bet Leslie knows.

WES- She orders it without the middle bun because it's too large to fit in her mouth.

TANNER- Oh that's funny.

EMILY- It's too hard to eat.

TANNER- An actress with a big singing voice like yours can't fit a Big Mac into her mouth?

EMILY- *(embarrassed)* No.

TANNER- So why not order a double cheese burger?

EMILY- It doesn't come with lettuce and special sauce.

AMY- That's got to be the strangest thing I ever heard.

CARA- No stranger than the music selection I've seen in your car.

LESLIE- Let me guess: country music!

CARA- Amy listens to the three B's of classical music: Brahms, Beethoven, and Boy George.

AMY- Oh yeah? How about the hippy-chick Christian girl's secret obsession? I've seen the posters on your wall. I know your darkest fantasy.

TANNER- Oooh, this sounds good. Who is it, Cara? Leonardo DiCrapio? James Van Der Beek?

AMY- Nope, even better. Hulk Hogan, Randy Macho Man Savage, Kevin Nash, Goldberg...

TANNER- No way.

AMY- Long as I've known her, she's been the biggest WWF fan in the world.

CARA- WCW, Amy. WWF's gone way down hill. It's so stupid now.

LESLIE- It's all stupid, Cara.

TANNER- So tell us, Leslie, what's your dirty little secret?

LESLIE- Wouldn't you like to know?

TANNER- I would, and I bet if you won't tell us...Emily will.

LESLIE- I have nothing to hide.

EMILY- Not even Lovely Linda?

LESLIE- Oh no.

EMILY- Oh yeah.

WES- I've heard about Lovely Linda.

LESLIE- You told Wes?

(Emily nods.)

LESLIE- Tell it, and you can find a new best friend.

EMILY- Come on, Leslie. Be a good sport.

TANNER- Who's Lovely Linda? Spill it!

EMILY- Lovely Linda is Leslie's oldest friend in the world. To hear her tell it, Lovely Linda is a--
LESLIE- Sweet, beautiful doll who's been through every major up and down in my life. She is lovely and beautiful, and I love her to death.
EMILY- Yet if you were to actually see Lovely Linda, you would never know it was her. Most of her hair's been loved off, as well as an eyeball and all her clothes and half an arm.
LESLIE- If she looks terrible, it's yours and Crystal's fault, and you know it.
EMILY- What Crystal and I did was give Lovely Linda a new lease on life, and a new attitude. We were staying the night one time and we gave Linda a makeover.
LESLIE- With permanent marker!
EMILY- Yes, but now she looks good. For a trampy doll, any way.
LESLIE- They renamed her Skanky Susan. Which they wrote on her butt!
CARA- Too funny.
LESLIE- Not to me it isn't. That doll's been a major part of my life, and I didn't appreciate the way she was desecrated.
TANNER- Poor dear.
LESLIE- Yeah, boo hoo.
CARA- It's your turn, Tanner. Only fair that you share your darkest secret.
TANNER- My secret?
CARA- It's only fair.
TANNER- Okay then. I still collect Star Wars toys. I am also a fan of old fashioned radio programs and Marx brothers movies.
AMY- Weak. Come on, Tanner. Something no one else but maybe Cam and Alex would know.
TANNER- Something only my best friends would know. Okay. Would you believe me if I told you that...I'm a virgin?

(Pause.)

CARA- You're serious?
TANNER- I'm serious.
CARA- You, Jason Tanner, self appointed school stud, are a virgin?
TANNER- I've never even been close to having sex.
AMY- How is that possible?
TANNER- Mostly due to another well-kept secret. All though this one's sort of become obvious to the ones who know me best.

(Stage right screen is lit. Cam appears in silhouette.)

CAM- So, Tanner, what's up? I hear you're not going tonight.
TANNER- Of course I'm going.
CAM- That's not what Alex told me. He said you're staying in? *(pause for reaction)* Have we changed plans?
TANNER- No.
CAM- So why did you say that to Alex?

TANNER- Alex wanted to come with us.

CAM- What's wrong with that?

TANNER- Everything's wrong with that.

CAM- How come?

TANNER- I'm not taking Alex to that party.

CAM- What is your problem, man?

TANNER- Do you know what will happen there?

CAM- Yeah. We're going to have a good time. We could be having a good time with one of our best friends, except you told him we're not doing anything.

TANNER- Because I don't want Alex to become like us.

CAM- What are you talking about?

TANNER- Cam, it's different for you and me. We're already lost. I can't go a day without having something to drink. But Alex...he's never touched the stuff in his life. He grew up in a house hold without it, never had the desire. And if he went to that party with you and me...

CAM- Oh, please, Tanner. Just because we go to a party and get wasted, doesn't mean he has to get wasted along with us. He has the free will to say no.

TANNER- That doesn't mean he will.

CAM- What makes you think he won't?

TANNER- Remember the first time you went to a party with me? Why did you drink? Something you always wanted to do? Or was it to fit in?

(Short pause. Cam exits.)

TANNER- I will not allow Alex to become like me. I would never wish my life on any one. *(turns to Wes)* You think you have a hard life? Look at me. My parents divorced when I was in the eighth grade. I haven't heard from my Dad in two years. My mom gives me anything and everything in the world except the one thing I want most...her attention. I'm an alcoholic. I have few friends other than the people who hang around me because I have the money to buy beer. I spend untold time and energy hiding my secrets from my one true friend Alex. I hate my life, Wes. I thought about taking it myself long before you took it from me. I'm sure most of you are hoping for a chance to go back, but not me. I'd rather die than resume the life I'm living.

(Pause.)

CARA- Maybe if you went back, you could change the direction you were heading.

TANNER- If I could walk away from my life... If I could tell my mom and her money to take a hike... If I could walk away from my alcohol addiction, I'd do it in a heart beat. Being popular is just too much work. I want to get a job, and get good grades. And get a nice girl, like Kim.

KIM- Me?

TANNER- Yeah, you. I come to the soccer games to watch all the girls in shorts, but I do have a favorite. I've always wondered what it would be like to pierce that game face and meet the girl inside.

KIM- What do you mean pierce my game face?

TANNER- You hide behind that scowl all the time. I don't think I've ever seen you smile.

(Kim smiles shyly as he talks.)

TANNER- And you have a beautiful smile.

KIM- Thanks.

TANNER- I'd give anything if we could forget about all the things that divide us and, and just...go for a walk, hold hands, and talk.

(Tanner gently leans in to kiss Kim.)

Phantom Menace CD Trk. 10, 45 sec then fade.

(The Angel enters. Kim pulls Tanner by her side. The others except Wes huddle in fear. The Angel looks at the group huddled together, then walks to Tanner and Kim. She holds out her hand to Kim.)

KIM'S GRANDMA- *(off)* Kimberly? Kimberly, is that you? I hardly recognized you.

KIM- It's my grandma. I haven't seen her in three years since she...

KIM'S GRANDMA- You've grown up so much. Let me look at you.

KIM- *(starts to walk with the Angel)* What are you doing here?

KIM'S GRANDMA- It's time for you to go. You're coming to stay with me now.

TANNER- What does she mean?

KIM- I guess it means I...won't be going back.

TANNER- *(runs to block the Angel)* No. You can't take her now. It's not her time.

CARA- No. It is her time. It just came early.

KIM- I would have loved to take that walk with you, Tanner.

TANNER- Jason.

KIM- Jason. *(kisses him on the cheek)* Maybe some day we will.

(Kim walks toward stage left. The Angel turns to Amy.)

KIM'S GRANDMA- Kim, bring your friend Amy along with you.

AMY- Me? Why me?

KIM'S GRANDMA- Tell her her friend Joey is here, waiting for her.

(Amy looks up. She gets tearful.)

AMY- Joey...

(Amy stands up. He hesitates, then walks over to Wes.)

AMY- For what it's worth... I know how you feel. After watching Joey's life slip right out of my hands, I was full of more rage and hatred than you can possibly imagine. I wanted to murder the men who took away my best friend. But thank

God that he put Cara in my life. She showed me a better way to live. Hatred is an emotion that can completely consume you. But love can douse even the hottest rage.

WES- What are you trying to say?

AMY- Wes... I forgive you.

(Wes is stunned. Amy turns back to Cara and hugs her goodbye. She gives Tanner a playful punch on the arm as she passes him. Then Amy walks to Kim. They join hands and exit, followed by the Angel.)

TANNER- I guess there's no changing the way things are. I can't escape my fate any more than Kim can escape hers.

(Tanner solemnly sits down with the others.)

EMILY- It's not because you can't. It's because you won't.

TANNER- What do you mean?

EMILY- You spend all of your time trying to fool people into believing you have it all together, when you're dying on the inside. You've forgotten that this was a life you chose to live. You could have taken another road, and you still could. But not without a price.

TANNER- What price?

EMILY- Losing the mask. Dropping this cool guy front and being honest about who you are. Letting everyone from your best friends to Wes know that you're a struggling hurting person just like everyone else.

TANNER- Man...you think people would be so sympathetic when they found out I can't make it through a day without a drink? I'd be a joke.

EMILY- You're a joke now. It's only a matter of time before people find out that Tanner the big man on campus is really Jason the alcoholic.

TANNER- That's impossible! I've worn this mask for so long, no one will ever know the real me.

EMILY- And look how happy you are. Tell me, Tanner, how happy does it make you to drive that shiny new car? And what about those friends of yours. If you did need some one to talk to, how many of those who love riding in your car and emptying your mother's liquor cabinet would listen to your problems?

TANNER- You don't understand. Without my reputation, without all of my stuff, I don't have friends. If I admit to a weakness, for alcohol or with girls, or whatever, I risk losing it all. Without them, I'd be--

CARA- Just like Wes?

(Pause.)

TANNER- Maybe so.

EMILY- Wes, there's another reason why I say you never loved me. And it has nothing to do with your image of love. It has to do with my image of me. I said I had a lot to learn when you and I were together, and I meant it. The fact is...you couldn't have

loved me, because I wouldn't allow you.

WES- How could you do that? You can't affect my feelings.

EMILY- I kept you from loving me because I kept you from getting to know the real me. I'm just like every other teenager on the planet when it comes to wanting to be loved and accepted. I was such a follower. As soon as I was allowed, I wore makeup to school every day. I shopped Express, Gap, and American Eagle because that's where the cool people shopped. I read *Seventeen* and all the magazines on how to be cool. Like most girls, I was self-conscious about my appearance. I dieted and exercised three times a week, but that wasn't enough for me. By the time I was 14, I was purging.

TANNER- You were anorexic?

CARA- Bulimic. Anorexics starve themselves. Bulimia is when you eat normally, and then throw it up.

LESLIE- You never told me that.

EMILY- Tanner's not the only one who knows how to wear a mask. Why do you think I tried out for *Fiddler on the Roof*? No one thought I would get a role, but with the secrets I hid for the last two years, I knew there was no better actress in this school than me. I never had a boyfriend until Wes asked me out a year and a half ago. It made me feel so good that someone cared about me and did nice things for me. I had a wonderful time.

WES- You mean you only went out with me, because I was the only person who asked you out?

EMILY- No, I...well, at first, yeah. It was such a boost for my ego, to think I was attractive to some one. As we got to know each other, I really did grow to like you. But my insecurities were far bigger than any attraction I had for you. So when big senior Brian Brewer came along...I chose Brian. *(pause)* I'm not proud of that. But I wouldn't trade my relationship with Brian for anything. We started out a lot like you and I did. I put on my best face and my best front for Brian. I hid every blemish, physical, emotional, and mental. Brian on the other hand was always open and honest. He was so real, and so strong, and that became his most attractive quality. But as I grew to like him more and more, I became less and less secure about our relationship. I played all kinds of mind games with him to test his loyalty and see if I could push him away. Then came the day I almost lost him. He was playing on his church's coed softball team. And one of the coeds on the team was his ex-girlfriend with whom he had been... sexually active. There was absolutely nothing between them any more, but that night, my insecurities led me to say the most horrible things I could ever think of...to the one guy I loved more than anyone else on Earth...

(The stage right screen lights up. Brian appears in silhouette.)

BRIAN- Emily, if you really want us to spend time together, why don't you come watch the game?

EMILY- Because I'm tired and I don't feel like watching a softball game.

BRIAN- I came to your play.

EMILY- Yeah, and I came to your game last week. You didn't come to every

performance of the play.

BRIAN- Would you like me to come over after the game?

EMILY- If you want. But you should probably call first. In case I'm not here.

BRIAN- What do you mean, in case you're not here?

EMILY- I don't know. Maybe I'll find something to do.

BRIAN- That's fine. If I don't see you tonight, I'll talk to you later.

EMILY- You don't care if you see me at all, do you?

BRIAN- I didn't say that.

EMILY- You don't seem upset about the prospect of not seeing me.

BRIAN- What is it with you?

EMILY- I just thought maybe we could spend some time together tonight.

BRIAN- I told you I could come over after the game.

EMILY- Look, don't do it because you think I want you to. Do whatever you want.

BRIAN- I want to come over, but if you end up going out I'll find something else to do.

EMILY- Like what?

BRIAN- Maybe I'll go out with some friends.

EMILY- With Rachel?

BRIAN- *(slight pause)* Maybe. It wouldn't be just her if we did go out.

EMILY- Why not?

BRIAN- Because I don't think it would be right.

EMILY- Good. I don't either.

BRIAN- Emily, that ended two years ago.

EMILY- I can't believe you even still hang around with her.

BRIAN- Look, Rachel and I made our mistakes. We've admitted them, and we've moved on. Our parents have forgiven us. God has forgiven us. Long before you and I got together our slate was wiped clean. I can't change the past, or the things I've done.

EMILY- So why are you still living there?

BRIAN- *(frustrated)* Emily, I love you. Not Rachel. But Rachel and I are still friends. And I'm not going to forsake an old friend just because of my jealous girlfriend.

(Brian turns to exit.)

EMILY- Yeah. You never know when you're going to need a warm body to lie down with.

(Brian stops.)

BRIAN- I hope you don't mean that.

EMILY- It's really none of my business.

BRIAN- You're right. It really isn't any of your business. I never had to tell you about my past, but because I loved you, and really wanted us to have a relationship that might last, I shared it with you. I have been open and honest from day one about my successes and failures. When I screw up, I admit it and apologize, because the key to a good relationship is honesty and communication. Unfortunately, in this relationship, it's a one way street.

(Brian exits. Emily is tearful as she continues.)

EMILY- I was devastated. I couldn't believe I had just accused Brian of something so terrible. As I sat for the next three hours alone in my room, I realized it was the culmination of something that had been brewing for years. My self-esteem was so low, I never believed Brian would stay with a loser like me. Now, that fear was about to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I prayed so hard that night for a second chance. Brian called at nine, and came over straight from the game. He sat me down in the living room and prayed with me. Then he said, "If you really believe that I love you, you'll stop putting up a front and show me who you really are. I want to know your imperfections and your secrets. I'm not asking this for my own benefit, but for yours, because you'll never overcome your failures until you can admit them." For the next two hours, I poured out my heart to him. I told him about my battles with self esteem and bulimia. I told Brian how I had doubted his love for me, and how I feared he would eventually leave me. I cried a lot. And he cried with me. That night we agreed to slow things down between us as a couple, but he made a new commitment to me as a friend. He encouraged me to talk to my parents about my bulimia. They helped me get into counseling. Brian remained my strongest supporter, and took me to counseling every week. He has become my best friend, and I can honestly say for the first time in my life, I am in love. But I almost threw it all away because of my own precious pride.

MOM- *(off)* Jason? Jason, can you hear me?

TANNER- It's my Mom. *(pause)* Does this mean I...I'm going back?

MOM- Jason, honey, wake up. Please.

TANNER- I'm not going.

CARA- I don't think you have a choice.

TANNER- I can't go back to that life.

CARA- Then don't. Emily's right. You can start over. You can become a different person.

TANNER- It's so hard.

CARA- Harder than pretending to be someone you're not?

TANNER- I've been living the lie for so long, I don't know who the real me is any more.

CARA- Maybe it's time you found out.

MOM- Jason? Jason, can you hear me?

TANNER- Here goes nothing.

(Tanner walks off stage right.)

Phantom Menace CD Trk. 10, 45 sec then fade.

The Angel enters, holds out her hand for Emily.)

EMILY'S GRANDMA- *(off)* Emily?

WES- Who is that?

EMILY- That's my grandmother. I guess it's my turn to go.

WES- *(stands up, alarmed)* No.

EMILY- I don't think it's an option, Wes. It's okay. This is the way God wants it.

WES- *(crying, he touches her cheek)* Emily...I'm so sorry.

EMILY- I forgive you, Wes.

WES- How can you?

EMILY- There's no use in not forgiving you. Besides, you're going to have a much tougher challenge forgiving yourself.

(Emily hugs Wes, placing her hand on the back of his head, comforting him. She turns, and Emily and Leslie exchange a tearful hug at center. Emily pulls away, and walks off stage right with the Angel.)

WES- Will Tanner...I mean, do you think Tanner has a chance? To change?

CARA- Everyone has the power to change. *(looks at Leslie)* But change is never easy. It means laying down your pride, setting your priorities straight, and going against the flow. Tanner will lose friends, and probably his popularity. But if he gains self-respect and some real friends, the few losses will hardly matter.

WES- How do you know all this.

CARA- Because I have suffered much more pain than any of you. You have no idea what Hell is like. And you have no idea what it means to have really bad parenting. Let me put it this way...I am the black sheep of my family because I refuse to use alcohol or drugs. I'm proud to say that I have never, of my own free will, consumed any of these substances. As far as I see it, I had enough of them when I was a fetus. According to my mother's best friend Marla, I was in the hospital the first six months of my life, while my mom did time in rehab. When I was healthy enough to leave the hospital, they allowed my mom to take me home. My father was never in the picture. But mom did her best to fill his shoes with a string of dead beat boyfriends. Marla was much more of a mother to me. She sheltered me as much as she could, and she made sure my mother's occupation remained a secret. She took me to church with her daughter Natalie, who was just a few months older than me. I became a Christian at an early enough age, and my relationship with God became a stabilizing force in my life. Mom didn't really seem to care. She thought it was cute the way I lugged my Bible around and sang "Jesus Loves Me." That changed when I joined the youth group in junior high. Mom began to express her displeasure with my faith. Some times she would rage at me, accusing me of thinking I was better than she was because I was a Christian. She and her boyfriend shoved their drugs in my face. "You're an f-ing teenager," she said. "Start acting like it!" I would run to Marla's and hide out until she cooled off. *(short pause)* Then one afternoon when I was fifteen, I came home from school and discovered what my mother did for a living. I found my mom and a man I had never seen before... *(deep sigh)* in my bedroom. On my bed. *(pained pause, then continuing tearfully)* All those years, my mother had been selling her body... *(trembling)* I was so angry with her. I tried to go on with life as if nothing had happened... but over time, my mother's occupation became more obvious... I had to confront her. *(pause to regroup, then continues)* I stopped her one night as she was headed out the door. I told her I knew what she was doing, and I wouldn't let her go. *(pained pause)* It was the one and only time she ever

struck me. She yelled a few minutes more and then went back into the bathroom. That was when I grabbed a chair and lodged the door shut.

(Stage right screen lights up. Cara's Mom appears in silhouette, banging on a door.)

CARA'S MOM- Cara! Cara open this door!

CARA- I'm not letting you out!

CARA'S MOM- Cara if you don't open this door, I swear I'll beat you so hard--

CARA- Better than seeing you beaten by a strange man!

(Cara begins to cry.)

CARA'S MOM- I'm earning money to put food in our mouths and clothes on our backs in the only way I can. I know you hate me, but you can't change who I am. Or who you are. You'll end up just like me, you watch! No one's going to give a break to the child of a prostitute.

CARA- No! *(slumps to her knees)* I don't have to be like you.

CARA'S MOM- *(frightening pause, then pounding on the door)* Cara, open this DOOR!!

CARA- NO!!!!

(The light on the stage right screen goes out. Cara walks over to Wes.)

CARA- I ran away that night to Marla's. And I never looked back. Never went back for my clothes, or my books, or my toys. I left it all behind. Marla had some friends in the courts who helped her wrest custody away from my mom, who did nothing to stop it. I haven't seen my mother since then, but I've never quit praying for my mother. She was right when she said I couldn't change her. But she was wrong to think I couldn't change myself. My walk with Christ has given me a new life.

WES- Do you remember what I asked you, right before I...

CARA- Yes.

WES- I heard you muttering under your breath, and I walked over. You were repeating the name Jesus over and over. I put my gun to your head and asked...if you believed in God. And you said, "Yes."

(Leslie hears this, looks up at Cara in surprise.)

WES- I was so angry with you at that moment. I wanted you to balk. I wanted you to be so fearful of me, that you would deny your faith to save your own life. I've never known or believed in anything that I would die for. I couldn't understand why...

CARA- There was no other answer I could give. Christ left his throne in Heaven to become a man and die for me - for all of us - upon a cross. He was the ultimate example of how we should be: loving each other ahead of ourselves.

WES- I wonder if that's possible.

CARA- Do you believe in God?

WES- Before today, no. But now that I've seen him in your eyes...I do believe. And I'm terrified of him.

MARTIN- *(off stage)* His pulse is quickening. I think he's pulling out of the coma.

CARA- Looks like you're gonna get a second chance.

WES- I'm going to prison.

CARA- You can't escape the consequences of your actions. But you can start over.

Maybe, by sharing your story, you'll be able to stop another angry teenager from lashing out against his classmates.

MARTIN- Let his mother know he's coming out.

CARA- You better get going.

WES- I'm scared, Cara.

CARA- You won't be alone, Wes. God will go with you.

(Cara hugs Wes. Wes exits stage right.)

LESLIE- You know what's bad? Had he put that gun to my head, and asked me that question, I'm not so sure I would have answered the same way.

CARA- It's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I couldn't have done it if I hadn't already surrendered my life to God every day for all those years.

LESLIE- You really believe one person can change the world?

CARA- You're not going to stop this violence with gun control. Or censorship, or dress codes. And you can't defeat it using the same thinking that caused the problem. It's time some one takes the initiative and lives their life to serve other people, and not themselves. The guns didn't drive Wes to kill; hatred did. Movies didn't fill him with hatred; we did with our indifference and prejudice. The power to stop the violence lies with in us. We can either love each other and turn the world around, or stick to our guns and kill each other.

LESLIE- You think Wes and Tanner will change?

CARA- You can't dictate the decisions they will make. Whether Tanner confronts his demons, or Wes learns how to deal with his problems. The real question is, will you change? You can become a person who puts others first; a person who anyone, even a loner like Wes, can call a friend.

LESLIE- One person can't solve all the world's problems alone.

CARA- True. But if that attitude of love caught on... who knows how many lives would be changed?

Phantom Menace CD Trk. 10, 45 sec then fade.

(The Angel enters, holds out her hand for Cara.)

AMY- Cara? It's time to come home.

(Cara looks and smiles.)

CARA- It's Amy. I guess this is my cue.

LESLIE- I wish I was going with you. I've messed things up so bad...

CARA- As long as you're alive, there is no such thing as a last chance with God. No matter how far off track you may be, every breath you take is an opportunity to

change.

TANNER- *(off)* Leslie? Leslie, it's Jason. Can you hear me?

LESLIE- It's Tanner.

CARA- Leslie...

(Leslie looks at Cara.)

CARA- Don't throw away your chance.

(Cara exits with the Angel. stage left.)

TANNER- Come on, Leslie, wake up.

(Leslie walks off stage right.)

Michael W. Smith *This Is Your Time* CD, Trk. 13

(The Angel enters to dance, and places crosses in the places where Danielle, Kim, Amy, Emily, and Cara stood during the monologues. The five girls enter and stand behind the crosses in their opening spots.)

DANIELLE- So now it comes to you. Where our story ends, your story begins anew. Perhaps you know the hatred that consumed Wes and Amy, or the loneliness of Kim. Maybe you suffer the same self-loathing as Tanner and Emily, or the deep sorrow of Cara. Maybe you, like Leslie, prefer to point fingers rather than offer a hand in love. Whoever you are, if we shadows have pricked your heart, don't dismiss it. Just as Leslie and Tanner took up their crosses in the waiting room, you can take up your cross and carry it from this theater. How many more people have to die before we learn to look out for each other? This is your time to carry on the work of Christ.

(Blackout)