

FADE IN:

EXT. UPPER INCOME SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

A 1994 lime green Hyundai winds its way down an affluent suburban street, passing large Tudor homes and ambling Colonials competing with one another for attention.

INT. HYUNDAI - DUSK

JEFF BEDNARZ (17) drives with his right hand draped over the steering wheel, dressed in a black tuxedo, white rose protruding from his boutonniere, bow tie slightly askew.

EXT. UPPER INCOME SUBURBAN HOUSE - DUSK

Jeff parks at the curb, grabs a small box from the passenger seat, starts up the walkway. As he reaches the front porch, the door opens, and he is greeted by a beaming MRS. PATRICIA HALPIN (49), who enthusiastically ushers him into the foyer.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Jeff is then welcomed by DR. TOM HALPIN (49), newspaper in one hand, the other extended for a hearty shake.

All eyes turn up the stairs in unison as MARY HALPIN (17), descends. She has auburn hair, blue eyes, wears a stunning white lace gown. The very picture of grace and style.

She gives Jeff a kiss on the cheek. He hands her the box, from which she removes a corsage of violets. Jeff slides it onto her wrist. The young couple turn as Dr. Halpin snaps a photo, his wife standing proudly behind him.

The quintessential American portrait.

EXT. UPPER INCOME SUBURBAN HOUSE - DUSK

Jeff and Mary make their way to the car. Jeff holds the door open for his date, walks around, gets into the driver's seat, and they drive off.

Mary's parents look on. As soon as the car is out of sight, the smiles slip from their faces. Without a look toward one another, they walk back into their house.

INT. HYUNDAI - DUSK

Likewise, Jeff and Mary have stopped smiling, as if they were only going through the motions to please Mary's parents.

INT. HYUNDAI - DUSK

Jeff and Mary stop at some indistinguishable location, presumably the dance hall, and climb out of the car.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

A group of about 100 smartly dressed PROM-GOERS, all juniors and seniors, stand outside the front gate of a large brick building.

Above the entrance are the words ST. PETER-MARION HIGH SCHOOL. Jeff and Mary quietly approach as DAVE (18), takes the yellow rose from his lapel and lays it on the ground in front of the closed gate.

Three photographs of STUDENTS who are conspicuously absent are taped near the bottom of the gate, already flanked by dozens of floral arrangements and stuffed animals.

A beat later, MIKE (17) removes his flower and lays it next to Dave's. Soon, all the GUYS follow suit.

Then the GIRLS take their wrist corsages or hand-held bouquets, their most precious symbols of this night, and place them on top of the boys' flowers.

The kids stand there for a few quiet moments. One by one, they join hands, eyes still fixed on the gate.

It begins to rain. Lightly at first, then very hard.

Nobody moves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DARCONI FUNERAL HOME (EST. SHOT) - NIGHT

A few cars are parked in the lot.

INT. DARCONI FUNERAL HOME

A white casket is framed by two vases filled with blood red roses. Otherwise, the room is conspicuously empty. Only a few chairs are occupied by MOURNERS, most noticeably, MARK and LINDA GILREIN, late 30s, who sit nearest the casket but look out of place, too young for such solemn proceedings.

A lone PRIEST enters to lead those gathered in prayer. As the attendants stand and bow their heads, Mark walks out.

INT. PROM DANCE HALL - NIGHT

The prom-goers are now gathered at their respective tables. A LOCAL BAND is playing some cover tune, but nobody is dancing. It's like they all showed up, but nobody knows what to do.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Mark and Linda drive away from the funeral home in silence. Until--

LINDA
We need milk.

No response.

LINDA
We ran out of 2%. And you won't
drink skim.

MARK
Since when?

LINDA
Just drop me at Price Chopper.

They drive for a few more seconds.

LINDA
Why did you get up?

MARK
When?

LINDA
After the priest came in.

MARK
I had to pee.

LINDA
Both times?

He shrugs.

LINDA
Mark, you won't just walk away from
it.

MARK
Handle it your own way.

Linda looks out her window.

LINDA
Can we talk about this?

Mark doesn't even turn to acknowledge her question.

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS HOUSE - NIGHT

Mark and Linda pull into the driveway. Their car headlights
reveal orange spray paint on the garage door. Mark puts on
the high beams to get a better look. It reads, "MURDERER."

With barely a flinch, he routinely presses a button that
hangs from his visor to open the garage, pulls in.

INT. GILREIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Mark enters and heads upstairs. Linda makes for the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Linda fixes herself a pot of coffee, trying to force back some semblance of routine.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mark has changed into jeans and a tee shirt, walks out.

EXT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mark walks past a closed door toward the stairs. He doubles back, stares at the door. It has a bunch of racing car stickers on it. He opens it and tentatively steps inside.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Linda sips a cup of coffee, stares at the wall. Tears begin to stream down her face, but her body remains completely still.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mark is sitting on the edge of a bed in what is clearly a boy's bedroom: baseball and Supermodel posters line the walls, messy desk strewn with school papers and a few text books, clothes on the floor. A frozen image that may have remained unchanged for weeks.

He stands, walks to the desk, leafs through a few papers, looking for nothing in particular, maybe just trying to give his hands something to do.

He looks at the computer. Flying toasters drift across the screen like some surrealistic absurdity.

Mark toys with the mouse, and the screen illuminates. He begins to browse through the files. Most are for school. Projects, homework, a folder of makeshift designs.

He enters a folder marked "Personal." But it's empty.

More as an afterthought, he opens the Systems Folder. There is a file labeled "The Real Deal." He opens it.

EXT. GILREIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Two neighborhood KIDS, mid teens, stand outside Mark and Linda's house. One cups his hands to his mouth.

KID #1

Hey Gilrein, you raised a fucking
killer! How does it feel?

The second kid chimes in.

KID #2
Yeah, better move away before
somebody kills you!

Kid #1 grabs a rock from the ground and hurls it through the upstairs window. As if laws no longer apply at this house.

The glass shatters, and Mark is momentarily startled. But he goes right back to the computer. We can see by wooden panes near the fresh break that this was not the first intrusion.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mark enters, sits opposite Linda, his first look of concern snapping her awake. She looks up.

LINDA
What?

MARK
They missed something.

LINDA
Who?

MARK
The police.

Mark reaches for Linda's hand.

MARK (CONT'D)
Come upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Linda sits in front of the computer, the glow of the screen illuminating her wide eyes. Mark stands directly behind, hand on her shoulder.

LINDA
How many pages are there?

MARK
132.

LINDA
My God. Who are they from?

MARK
No name. Just one of those e-mail
addresses. Stork1829 at AOL.

Now we see THE SCREEN as Linda scrolls down the many pages.

LINDA
Did you read them?

MARK
They're mostly in Spanish. I didn't realize Seth was so fluent.

LINDA
It's the only class he liked.

Linda picks up the desk phone and dials.

MARK
Who are you calling?

LINDA
The police. They should know about this.

Mark takes the phone out of her hand.

MARK
Are the cops keeping the fucking vandals away from our house? Did...did even one of them show the least degree of sympathy during that farce of an investigation? Is it gonna bring Seth back to us?

Linda doesn't respond. Mark hangs up the phone, walks out. After he is out of earshot, she presses "print" and the pages begin to churn out.

INT. LINDA AND MARK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark is already sleeping when Linda enters. He is facing the wall. Linda doesn't bother to change clothes. She simply climbs in bed and faces the opposite direction.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mark and Linda sit at the table, dressed in black. Morning brings no greater measure of comfort. Mark sips coffee. Linda eats a bowl of cereal. An unopened newspaper sits between them.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

It is sunny, like even the sky is unwilling to mourn. The priest from the wake mouths prayers, as Linda, Mark and a few steadfast relatives look on.

Finally, unceremoniously, they disperse.

INT. ST. PETER-MARION HIGH SCHOOL - THE NEXT DAY

The school halls are empty.

INT. CLASSROOM

Erasers line the clean chalk boards. The desks are clear.

EXT. LOCKER ROW

All the lockers are scrubbed clean and closed.

EXT. LOCKER #265

A hand opens the locker. But it's empty.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL--

Mark, staring into the black space.

VOICE (O.C.)

They took it all.

Mark turns.

MARK

Huh?

VOICE (O.C.)

Right after it happened. Evidence,
I guess. You're supposed to get it
later.

MARK

Oh. Right.

The voice belongs to DR. WESLEY ANGUILA, (49), thinning hair
and a pony tail, who dresses younger than his age. As with
everyone else he's met since the death of his son, Mark eyes
him with some suspicion.

WESLEY

Wesley Anguila...Wes...the guidance
counsellor. I believe we met once
when you brought Seth for freshman
orientation. Course, I don't expect
you to remember.

MARK

No, no I do. Of course.

They shake hands.

WESLEY

What are you doing here?

(backpedaling)

Not that you can't be. Take all the
time you need.

MARK

I got no idea what I was expecting

to find. I'm on my way to work,
till it hits me that I don't really
have any clients left. Then my car
just brought me here.

WESLEY

You don't have to explain. It's
really not my business.

MARK

I sell insurance. Sold insurance, I
should say. You believe that?

WESLEY

You'll get through. Give it time.

MARK

Sure. Practically no time at all,
right? Isn't that what they say?

(softening)

They make you work this late in the
year?

WESLEY

Kids got out early. We always come
through June. Although none of us is
really sure what to do.

MARK

I know the feeling.

Wesley regrets the faux pas, has no response. Mark closes the
locker, starts out, then turns back and grabs the only thing
the police didn't take-- Seth's name tag.

WESLEY

Look, I'm sure you've heard this
plenty, but if there's anything I
can do in the way of, y'know,
emotional support, or just to talk--

MARK

(as he walks off)

Thanks.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Linda checks her watch as Mark walks through the front door.

MARK

Hey.

LINDA

How was work?

MARK

Fine.

(beat)
I'm gonna take a nap.

LINDA
You didn't go to work.

Mark stops, but doesn't turn.

MARK
Where'd you get that idea?

LINDA
I called. Then I drove by.

Nonplussed, Mark continues upstairs to the bedroom. Linda grabs a piece of paper from the coffee table and follows.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

LINDA
So where were you?

MARK
Nowhere.

LINDA
Did you go to that bar?

MARK
No.

LINDA
Yeah, you did. I can smell it from here.

MARK
Then why do you keep asking me?

LINDA
I wanted to give you a chance to be honest.

MARK
Bullshit.

He begins to undress. Linda holds out the piece of paper.

LINDA
They're taking us to court.

MARK
What? Who? Who's taking us to court?

LINDA
Guess that got your attention.

MARK

The school? Are they suing us?

LINDA

No, the parents.

MARK

Can they do that?

Linda hands Mark the letter, tries to find the sense.

LINDA

Why hold us accountable? Do they think we raised him to do something like this?

MARK

Who the fuck knows?

LINDA

We should talk to them.

MARK

Talk to them. And say what exactly? Don't you get it, Linda? They're killing us, too. They can't go after the monster, so they come after his parents.

LINDA

Seth was not a monster!

Mark climbs under the covers.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Is that what you think?

Mark doesn't answer.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(at the end of her rope)
He was our baby, Mark.

MARK

(sitting up)
Our baby? Well Linda, our baby shot three defenseless kids! They keep calling him evil in the papers, on the news. The fuck are we supposed to call him?

LINDA

Call him your son.

Mark looks straight at her.

MARK

I can't.

This cuts Linda to the quick. She sits at the foot of the bed, lost in her own thoughts, alone in her grief.

LINDA
I'll get a lawyer.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK #1:

(This is the first of several intermittent flashbacks from school. Each is shot MOS and reduced motion.)

INT. ST. PETER-MARION (MAIN HALL) - DAY

The doors of various classrooms open, and about 100 STUDENTS come flooding out, chattering, racing for their respective lockers.

Among them is SETH GILREIN, a short, chubby 17-year-old with conspicuously less hip clothes (worn out corduroys, polyester shirt, tasseled penny loafers, glasses). He carries an armful of books, preferring to avoid the locker scene altogether.

The CAMERA FOLLOWS Seth through the gauntlet of students, passing several classrooms. He appears to be home free, at least for this period. He walks along the wall, as if trying to blend in with the woodwork, as a tall, good-looking KID approaches from the opposite direction. One last obstacle.

He seems to ignore Seth until they are level with one another, then sidesteps across the floor and knocks all his books to the ground.

The familiar noise is enough to get the attention of the many students he managed to pass. Some laugh, some applaud, some just ignore it. Seth stoops to pick up his books.

END OF FLASHBACK #1.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

Linda sits in the lobby of BLUMENTHAL AND DAVIS, legs crossed, looking very small.

The RECEPTIONIST keeps glancing up at her. Professionalism is out the window on this one.

LINDA
Do I know you?

RECEPTIONIST
No. But I know you.

Linda looks down, unwilling or perhaps unable to respond.

PETER BLUMENTHAL, (47), gray suit, salt and pepper hair, enters through the double glass doors that lead to the main offices and walks up to her.

MR. BLUMENTHAL
Mrs. Gilrein?

LINDA
Yes.

MR. BLUMENTHAL
Would you come back to the office
with me?

LINDA
(looking to the
receptionist)
Thank you, Mr. Blumenthal.

As they walk, Linda rambles, anxious for a sympathetic ear.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You're the first kind face I've seen
in three months. I can't tell you how
much it means. Nobody else would even
talk to me. We didn't think we'd be
needing a lawyer after all this, but
now I suppose that was naive--

As they enter a small conference room, Mr. Blumenthal shuts
the door and turns.

MR. BLUMENTHAL
Mrs. Gilrein, first let me say that
I have absolutely no intention of
taking this case.

LINDA
But, please Mr. Blumenthal, can I
just say--

MR. BLUMENTHAL
No, you can't. I have zero interest
in hearing what sordid confessions
you might offer. My oldest niece is
a sophomore at St. Peter-Marion.
Had she not been changing up from
gym class that terrible morning,
she would've been walking those
halls smack in the line of fire.

Linda motions to leave, but she simply hasn't the strength.

MR. BLUMENTHAL (CONT'D)
Frankly, I can't imagine anyone
moronic enough to defend what your
son did, no matter how unscrupulous

that attorney might be. I can only
hope that you get exactly what your
son gave.

Mr. Blumenthal exits, leaving Linda frozen in place.

INT. GILREIN LIVING ROOM - DAY

Linda walks in, emotionally spent. Mark is lying on the
couch, eyes open, holding the phone on his stomach.

MARK
Any luck?

LINDA
No.

MARK
You surprised?

The phone RINGS. Mark takes it off the receiver and
immediately hangs up, as if it's routine.

LINDA
Why didn't you answer?

MARK
Oh, I did, the first time they
called. And the second. That was
three hours ago. It's reporters
wondering who's representing us.
Opposition must've filled them in
about the law suit.
(flip)
On a lighter note, we're gonna be
famous again.

Linda doesn't respond, walks into the kitchen, stands in the
middle of it. She is lost in her own house, literally doesn't
know what to do next. The phone RINGS again as we...

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A phone is answered by AUGUST GORSKY, (38), dark features and
fit, the very definition of well-groomed. Everything he says
is punctuated by an innate confidence. Law books line the
back wall. A nearby television is ON.

AUGUST
(into phone)
This is August...Yup, I'm watching
it, too.

CUT TO:

THE TELEVISION

Several somber-looking COUPLES in their mid to late 40s are gathered around a microphone, as a well-dressed and officious JERRY VORHEES (45), makes his announcement.

JERRY

There is, of course, no true way to compensate these fine, law-abiding people for their terrible losses.

(he holds up pictures of
the dead kids)

For Tim King, Patrick Wellburn, and Joey Nagle, victims of the March Massacre. But some form of vindication is mandated.

(looking back at couples,
then to camera)

And I won't stop until vindication is achieved.

ANGLE ON--

an empathetic AUGUST, continuing his phone conversation.

AUGUST

What do I think? More power to 'em. Vorhees may be a creep, but if that happened to my kids, doubt I'd wait for the courts to work it out...No, forget it. We talked about this. It's career suicide.

INT. ANOTHER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

PAUL CORNACINNI, (53), overweight and boisterous, not the type to back down from a fight. He fiddles with a coffee machine on a nearby oak vanity as he talks.

PAUL

Not when you're being groomed for the state senate. And not when you got possibly the world's best campaign manager just waiting for a chance to prove it.

AUGUST

(through filter)

I got a good reputation. I've won my share.

PAUL

You need statewide recognition, pal, eventually national exposure. This kills both birds with one stone. It's win-win. You get 'em off, everybody hails you king of

all counsellors. You lose, and nobody's surprised. Because you're expected to tank.

AUGUST
(through filter)
I loathe what this kid did. I could never get behind it.

Paul continues to fiddle with the coffee filter, pushing it in and out, finally just forcing it and pressing "start."

PAUL
And that's the beauty of it. Nobody's gonna hold you up to a microscope. You wanna blow it on purpose, go right ahead. You got my blessing. Just take the damn case.

AUGUST
(through filter)
Great advice, Paul. Such a shame you flunked out of law school.

PAUL
Would you get serious? This dovetails into a campaign, right down to the fact that you went to the same damned high school.

AUGUST
(through filter)
Sure, 20 years ago.

PAUL
I got a picture developing in my mind. You declare your candidacy on the front steps of St. Pete's, right after the case is over. "If I could find it in my heart to defend Seth Gil-what's-his-face, imagine how hard I'll fight for you."

AUGUST
(through filter)
I'll think about it, okay?

PAUL
Think fast. Nomination papers gotta be filed in less than a month. This window won't stay open much longer.

Paul hangs up. A beat later, coffee spews out the top of the jammed in filter. He narrowly avoids the spray.

PAUL
(pushing intercom)

Eve, get me Frank Kessler at the
Democratic National Committee. And
a fuckin' cup of coffee.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Linda is shopping, head down and focussed on the task at hand. Her cart contains only a few essential items. But slowly, PEOPLE start to whisper as she walks by. Newly infamous, she's been recognized.

Though she hasn't finished, Linda makes a beeline for the checkout. More CUSTOMERS start to BUZZ as she waits in line.

Now the CHECKOUT LADY notices what the fuss is about. As Linda begins to place her items on the conveyor belt, the lady turns off the checkout light and folds her arms.

Rather than fight it out, Linda collects her stuff and moves to another line. This time the CHECKOUT GUY turns off his light. The entire store is now motionless, watching.

As Linda gets out of line to find another queue, the lights go out in succession. Everyone is waiting for her to leave.

Almost unemotional, she backs away from her carriage and walks out.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Linda walks to her car. As she unlocks the door, August Gorsky exits his BMW, which is parked next to her. Linda jumps back.

AUGUST

Whoa, whoa. Stay calm. I'm not a
mugger or anything. I was just
hoping to talk.

LINDA

So you're a reporter, that it? Or
did you just wanna give me a piece
of your narrow little mind? Well go
right ahead, if that's what gets
you off. I'm immune.

AUGUST

Jesus, you've really been through a
meat grinder, haven't you?

Linda looks at him quizzically.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

I tried you at your house, but your
husband wasn't so big on talking.
He said I might find you here.

(beat)

Mrs. Gilrein, I want to defend you.

INT. LINDA'S PARKED CAR - DAY

August sits in the passenger seat. Linda listens intently.

AUGUST

I think you have a stronger case than anybody would admit. See, they want you to just sit back and take it. Out of guilt? Sure, maybe. These personal injury lawyers are scumbags. For them, it's not about the principle. It's always about the money. All I want is expenses.

LINDA

My husband, he doesn't think we deserve to be defended.

AUGUST

Really?

LINDA

He's ashamed of Seth. I think he hates him for what he did.

AUGUST

And you?

LINDA

Seth was my heart. But what he did, my God, it's impossible to justify.

August can relate. He leans forward.

AUGUST

What in hell happened?

LINDA

He needed us, and we weren't there.

She starts to cry. But this is different from any time before. She is really letting go, the guilt, the shame, the anger. Because finally, someone is listening.

AUGUST

It's okay. Take your time.

LINDA (CONT'D)

When he was a baby, we were always together, the three of us. It was wonderful. But then, when Seth was about 11, just before junior high, my husband lost his job in graphic design. The economy flew south for the winter. That's what we used to say, like it was actually funny.

Mark knew a guy at Eastern Mutual who helped him switch to selling insurance. From then on, it seemed like we were always struggling to get on our feet. I went back to the jewelry store. We'd both get home after six, work a lot of weekends. Seth was alone most of the time. Our marriage suffered for it. We tried to keep that hidden. Fought behind closed doors.

AUGUST

But the kid figured it out.

LINDA

Yes.

Drained, Linda rests her head on his Armani suit. August isn't sure what to do with this. She is hurting, and at this point, any shoulder will do. Still, he shows little emotion.

AUGUST

I can understand the regret you feel about your boy, but you have to separate yourself from it. The jury needs to perceive you as victims. Otherwise, they'll go for the jugular, award whatever you've got and then some to make these bereaved parents feel better.

LINDA

His name was Seth.

AUGUST

What?

LINDA

You keep saying the kid, the boy. You haven't once used his name. It was Seth Michael Gilrein.

AUGUST

Right. I'm sorry. Guess I'm trying to get you accustomed to seeing this more objectively.

LINDA

Mr. Gorsky, better you get accustomed to the fact I could never do that.

August sits back, regroup. He doesn't want to alienate her, and yet he has no stomach for this incident.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Do you remember what it was like?

AUGUST
What what was like?

LINDA
The big transition. The awkward
years at school. Times you were
unpopular, picked on.

AUGUST
I suppose.

LINDA
Didn't you ever have trouble?

AUGUST
Not that I can recall.

LINDA
Never?

AUGUST
Oh, there was some hazing on the
sports teams, I guess. But it was all
in fun. Y'know, bonding.

Linda takes a hard look at August. He is attractive and
self-assured, probably successful in every pursuit, the polar
opposite of her son in a grown-up body.

LINDA
It's a start.

CUT TO:

A 5x7 GLOSSY PHOTO OF A TINY, BLUE-EYED BABY IN BUNTING.

AUGUST'S VOICE
This is Seth Michael Gilrein.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

August is holding the photo to CAMERA, standing in front of
microphones and miniature tape recorders held by REPORTERS.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
As you all know by now, Seth shot and
killed three people. He acted alone.

August flips the picture to a smiling TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY,
beaming as he opens a brightly wrapped birthday present.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
Somehow, he went from this cheery,
well-adjusted kid...

August again switches pictures. This time, it's the newspaper's depiction of his round, blond body, resting in a pool of blood, a 9-millimeter handgun resting in his open palm.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
...to this violent criminal.

He points back to Mark and Linda, who stand, timidly, behind.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
But he wasn't raised by these two fine people to kill, ladies and gentlemen.

Suddenly, this scene is viewed through a television set.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

that we are now in August's living room. He leans forward on an easy chair. His wife, VAL, (38), watches passively from an adjoining couch as her husband mouths his last dramatic words from the taped press conference.

AUGUST'S VOICE
And I can prove it.

Linda shakes her head. August smiles to himself.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
Right now, Vorhees is quakin' in his boots.

VAL
(flip)
Probably cowering under his bed.

AUGUST
What did'ya think?

VAL
Yeah. It should cut well.

AUGUST
Now what the hell is that supposed to mean?

VAL
I'm saying you were very articulate. Should make a tidy little sound bite for the political ads.

AUGUST
That's not fair. I haven't decided if I'm running yet. We'd talk about it first.

VAL
Right.

(pointedly)
Paul Cornaccini called.

August knows what that means, looks like the cat who ate several canaries.

AUGUST
Val, this case, it's a career-maker.

VAL
Did you look at their faces?

AUGUST
Weren't you watching? Course I did.
Looked those reporters straight in
their beady little eyes. That's
rule one.

VAL
I mean your clients, for Chrissake.
They got more than careers riding on
this, wouldn't you say?

AUGUST
Sure. Unfortunately their kid emptied
a 9-millimeter clip into three other
boys. Plenty more lives were ruined
because of that.

VAL
So what's their side of it?

AUGUST
I'm not sure yet. That whole bully
thing doesn't hold water for me.
And the father's a real flake.

VAL
Auggie, you're their lawyer. Don't
you even believe in them?

AUGUST
I believe in the process, babe. So
I'll do my damndest, like always.
Let the courts work it out.

VAL
That's real encouraging. Babe.

AUGUST
Val, do you know how many other
attorneys were willing to represent
them? Big goose egg. Not even the
bottom feeders. Those two woulda
got stuck with some court-appointed
hack. That's like no lawyer at all.

VAL
Still sounds a damn sight better
than what they got.

She gets up. August is unmoved.

AUGUST
C'mon, get behind me on this one.

VAL
That's what the Gilreins are doing.

Val walks into the bedroom.

VAL (CONT'D)
Doesn't seem a very safe place to
be.

She closes the door. August knows better than to follow.

INT. SETH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Linda is sitting at Seth's computer. She runs her hand over the top, almost as if she is caressing her lost son. She starts toying with the keys. Then, more deliberately, logs on to the SERVER.

She finds the friend's address on his I.M.-list, STORK1829, shoots off an INSTANT MESSAGE.

LINDA'S E-MAIL
"Are you there?"

She waits, figures he's not, starts out. Then she hears the INSTANT MESSAGE SOUND, returns to the terminal.

STORK'S E-MAIL
"Who are you?"

She types.

LINDA'S E-MAIL
"I'm Seth's mother. We have your
e-mails. What's your name?"

STORK'S E-MAIL
"Can't say."

LINDA'S E-MAIL
"Why not?"

STORK'S E-MAIL
"Because I can't."

LINDA'S E-MAIL
(another angle)
"Was all of this our fault?"

STORK'S E-MAIL

"How should I know? I didn't live at your house."

LINDA'S E-MAIL

"Did he hate us?"

STORK'S E-MAIL

"He hated everyone."

LINDA'S E-MAIL

"We need your help. Will you testify for us?"

STORK'S E-MAIL

"No way. If people found out who I was, I'd be dead."

Linda considers this.

LINDA'S E-MAIL

"I understand."

There is a pause.

STORK'S E-MAIL

"No you don't."

LINDA'S E-MAIL

"We miss him. We let him down."

STORK'S E-MAIL

"Me, too."

LINDA'S E-MAIL

"Which? You miss him, or you let him down?"

STORK'S E-MAIL

"Both."

The server signifies he LOGGED OFF.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

A series of WIDE SHOTS that portray the bucolic setting of St. Peter-Marion High School in early Fall. There are three academic buildings, a gymnasium and a theater, all encircling a newly replanted green. August walks the campus, almost saunters. He takes in a breath of air, perhaps drifting back to his own carefree days as an academic.

A distant bell RINGS, and moments later, STUDENTS come flooding out of the buildings. August stands in the middle of the green as the kids cruise by on either side of him. It is a sea of young faces, and he tries to take them all in. The

students, on the other hand, don't even notice that he is there, too focussed on their own affairs. Once the kids have passed, August makes his way to Foster Hall, the main academic building.

AUGUST'S VOICE
Y'know, I almost became a
psychologist myself.

INT. WESLEY ANGUILA'S OFFICE - DAY

August sits across from Wesley in a well-appointed and immaculately clean office. Tchaikovsky PLAYS on a surround sound system. Their demeanor is cordial, almost friendly.

WESLEY
What stopped you?

AUGUST
Not smart enough, I guess. Couldn't
handle the curriculum.

WESLEY
C'mon, law school takes just as
much effort.

AUGUST
I'm gonna let you in on a trade
secret, Wes. It's just a bunch of
memorization. Barger versus Redman,
U.S. versus Charleston Mining and
Refineries, blah blah blah.
(pointing to his head)
I got a photographic memory, so I
cruised.

WESLEY
Do you at least enjoy what you do?

AUGUST
Oh yeah. Very much.

WESLEY
Well, again, I'm willing to do
whatever I can to help.

AUGUST
And it's appreciated. Main thing is
to keep this whole deal from
getting sensationalized, least in
court. Tabloids can do what they
like. This was an unpopular kid who
snapped. End of story. His parents
had no clue what was coming.

WESLEY
None of us did.

AUGUST

That's what I'm talking about.
Validation. Battles like this are a
slam dunk when the message is
delivered by a pro. And I hope I'm
looking at him.

WESLEY

(flattered)
I'll do it because it's the right
thing to do. These people have been
punished enough already.

AUGUST

Music to my ears.
(pointing to the air)
Tchaikovsky couldn't say it better.

WESLEY

You know Tchaikovsky?

AUGUST

(tapping his head)
Told you, walking Rolodex.

WESLEY

Oh right. I forgot.

August stands, starts out, turns like its an afterthought.

AUGUST

By the by, is it true what I read,
that you were some kind of hero?

WESLEY

(uncomfortable)
That was blown out of proportion in
the papers.

AUGUST

You stood in front of a kid to keep
her from getting shot.

WESLEY

Seth had run out of bullets by then.

AUGUST

Yeah, but you didn't know. That
plays well in front of a jury.

WESLEY

I guess.

AUGUST

Pretty damn brave. Somebody oughta
give you a medal or something.

WESLEY

I got to have lunch with the Mayor
of Worcester.

AUGUST

Wow, pinch me.
(catching himself)
You deserved better.

WESLEY

I lived.

August nods. Point taken. As he starts out of the office, he nearly knocks over Mary Halpin, the girl from the opening prom scene, who is waiting to enter. There is an emptiness in her expression, as if all emotion has been sucked away.

MARY

S'cuse me.

AUGUST

No problem. I was just on my way
out.

WESLEY

Actually, this is convenient
timing, Mary. You two were destined
to meet.

(quietly to August)
Ms. Halpin was close with one of
the boys we lost, Patrick Wellburn.

AUGUST

I'm sorry to hear it. How've you
been doin'?

MARY

(flatly)
Okay.

WESLEY

(trying to be tactful)
Mary, Mr.Gorsky is representing the
Gilreins in that law suit.

MARY

(more aware)
Oh.

AUGUST

But hey, I'm not defending what
Seth did. Just protecting his
folks. Can you understand that?

MARY

I got a class.

August shifts uncomfortably. Wesley breaks the tension.

WESLEY

Mary, did you need to see me?

MARY

(eyeing August)

It can wait.

She marches off.

WESLEY

Sorry.

August watches Mary walk away, past the BOYS BATHROOM.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BOYS BATHROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK #2

(Again, MOS and reduced motion)

Seth is sitting on a toilet in the far stall.

The door to the bathroom opens, and Seth instinctively lifts his feet to avoid notice.

He waits, waits, until the bathroom door opens and closes again. Feeling safe, he returns his feet to the floor.

That's when the stall door flies open. Tim and Joey, two of the aforementioned boys who were shot, are standing there.

Joey wags his finger, as if to say "you should've known better than to go to the bathroom here."

Seth struggles as they methodically lift him off the seat and plunge him head first into the bowl.

Tim repeatedly flushes the toilet with his foot, creating a massive swirl of water and refuse. Seth does all he can to keep his head from getting crammed all the way in by holding the toilet seat on either side.

Satisfied, the boys retreat, and we see Seth from behind as he removes his drenched head from the bowl. He just kneels there, as if praying for strength.

END OF FLASHBACK #2

INT. AUGUST'S OFFICE - DAY

August speaks with Linda and Mark, who sit solemnly at a small conference table. A full wet bar is visible in the B.G.

AUGUST

While we're in this room, I want you to be completely honest with me. I'm only gonna use what I can use. Anything that's incriminating will remain our secret.

LINDA

Mr. Gorsky, we don't want you to conceal anything. If we're guilty, we'll accept punishment.

AUGUST

That's very brave, of course, but you might wanna re-think that strategy. Doesn't really lend itself to a productive defense.

(thumbing through papers)

I appreciate the depositions you filled out covering the past few years. I'm not sure I understand Seth any better, but in fairness, maybe we never really will.

Mark is distracted by the wet bar.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Can I fix you a drink, Mr. Gilrein?

LINDA

(answering for both)

No thanks.

MARK

Tell you what, I'll fix you one.

Mark walks over to the bar.

MARK (CONT'D)

Name your poison.

AUGUST

(sensing Linda's discomfort)

Club soda would be nice.

MARK

Coming up. One regular club soda...

Mark pours ice and club soda into two glasses. He then picks up a bottle of scotch.

MARK (CONT'D)

And one flavored.

Linda shifts in her chair. Mark sits, sips his drink.

AUGUST

I'm gonna start with the obvious question. Why was there a gun in your house?

LINDA

There shouldn't have been--

MARK

I'll answer this. I got the license and bought the firearm. We had a prowler last year. I didn't wanna get caught with my pants down again.

LINDA

We heard a noise. Saw a shadow against the window. Could've been anything.

MARK

Yeah, but who asked me to get up and check? Who pulled the blanket over her head?

LINDA

That has nothing to do with buying a gun, for God's sake! Seth would never have shot those kids if you hadn't gotten it--

MARK

Oh, would you shut that. He was gonna do it somehow. It was just a matter of when. Haven't you figured that out yet--

August interjects.

AUGUST

Look, stop. This isn't getting us anywhere. Maybe we oughta have a gag order in this room. When one talks, the other listens. 'kay?

Linda slumps in her seat, embarrassed. Mark gulps his drink.

CUT TO:

EXT. VORHEES, FITZIMMONS AND PROWLEY (EST. SHOT) - CONTINUOUS

A three-story brick building with marble signage.

INT. VORHEES, FITZIMMONS AND PROWLEY - CONTINUOUS

A large conference room, oak table capable of accommodating twenty people. At least thirty well-dressed ATTORNEYS, PARALEGALS and SECRETARIES stand around the table.

Jerry Vorhees sits with his five CLIENTS at the table. They are ELEANOR NAGLE, (47), lots of jewelry, hard features; ROB and LESLIE WELLBURN, (early 40s), a bit overweight, blue collar; and MIKE and KRISTIN KING, (late 30s), meek and overwrought, like they've been wrung dry.

JERRY

August Gorsky works alone. Thinks it makes things more personal between him and the jury. So I'll be at the prosecutor's table by myself. He won't expect it. But I wanted you all to see how many competent legal minds we've got working on your case. They've explored all avenues, interviewed every potential witness, material and immaterial. Much as I want to win this case, they want it more.

(to the lawyers)

Thank you.

The office people file out.

ROB WELLBURN

Mr. Vorhees, we get together a lot, y'know, just to talk. But also to plan. We're focussed, just like you people. But we can't figure what you're getting out of all this. They aren't rich, y'know.

JERRY

Don't worry about us. The publicity alone will attract clients with far wealthier targets.

Jerry realizes he has been a bit too honest.

ROB

I see.

JERRY

That's for my partners, of course. For me, it's the moral battle. Punishing an injustice. When I'm through, the Gilreins will officially be blamed and branded for what happened. Locked out of society without need for jail, forever.

ELEANOR

We want them hurt, Mr. Vorhees. Bleeding like our boys. Suffering like we are, torn apart.

JERRY

Go home and get some rest, much as you can. And rest assured.

BACK TO:

INT. AUGUST'S OFFICE - DAY

AUGUST

And where did you keep the bullets?

MARK

Under the mattress, in the clip.

AUGUST

Any special reason you felt the need to get such a powerful gun?

MARK

I didn't put a lot of thought into it. The guy at the counter, he knew his weapons. Made me feel like it was the best bang for my buck.

Linda says nothing. Lets August keep pressing.

AUGUST

How long have you been drinking, Mr. Gilrein?

MARK

About five minutes.

LINDA

Answer his question, Mark.

MARK

No more than most. After what happened, wouldn't you?

AUGUST

Maybe.

(changing course)

Did you have any idea, even the slightest hint at all that Seth was planning this?

LINDA

If we had any clue, we wouldn't be here now. Okay, we don't have what you'd call the perfect marriage, but we never wavered when it came to our son. You get in this routine, y'know? Things got bad, but not overnight. We knew Seth wasn't having a great time at school, just by his grades. But he

spent a lot of time on his computer, had a few friends. We figured he'd find himself in college.

AUGUST

Sounds like an easy excuse.

LINDA

Do you have children, Mr. Gorsky?

AUGUST

Not yet. We plan to, soon.

LINDA

The thing about kids, they have this secret world. When my husband or I asked him what was wrong, he wouldn't say. We tried searching his room once, but stopped in the middle. Whatever else, we weren't going to deny him his privacy.

(with feeling)

I always thought life was supposed to get hard after school.

Mark looks at Linda with some sympathy. August is all business.

AUGUST

I'm not gonna lie to you. We don't have a lot going in our favor. There's plenty of stuff that went on behind the scenes, and most of it might never come out in trial.

(shifting his weight)

People can conceal whatever they like. It's easy to half-answer questions and get away with it. Believe me, I've coached a fair number of clients to do just that.

LINDA

We expect people to be honest.

AUGUST

Then you're expecting too much. Think of it like a game. Winning is the only goal. And you're allowed to do whatever it takes.

LINDA

We'll tell you what we know. But only what's true.

Linda pulls the e-mails out of a manila envelope.

LINDA (CONT'D)

What we didn't know, these might explain.

AUGUST

What's this?

LINDA

Turns out Seth had a friend on the Internet. I wrote to him, but he didn't say much.

August starts to thumb through the pages, skim for content.

AUGUST

It's all in Spanish.

LINDA

Mostly, yes.

AUGUST

We'll have to get them translated. Shouldn't be a problem.

LINDA

Whatever you can do.

August continues scanning the pages.

AUGUST

What's his friend's name? How did they meet?

LINDA

He didn't say.

AUGUST

Then I'll write to him, as well, see what he has to say.

LINDA

No. I promised him that we wouldn't ask.

AUGUST

Mrs. Gilrein--

LINDA

If word got out, we'd be putting this boy in jeopardy for what he knew. And I won't see that happen to another child.

AUGUST

You realize, then, that I can't introduce any of this as evidence.

LINDA

Why not? It's all there in black and white. The bullying. The humiliation.

AUGUST

Yes, but it's rendered irrelevant without the presence and support of the person who wrote it. They could assume you made it up.

LINDA

I can't budge on this.

August puts the e-mails aside.

AUGUST

Then I won't ask again.

CUT TO:

INT. LIME GREEN HYUNDAI - NIGHT

Jeff and Mary are parked on a ravine overlooking campus. They are making out. Jeff is more into it than Mary. She pulls away.

JEFF

What?

MARY

It doesn't feel right.

Jeff leans in and tries to kiss her again. She pushes him away more forcefully.

MARY

Get off!

JEFF

I thought this was helping.

MARY

It feels like I'm cheating on him.

JEFF

Mary, he was my best friend. But he's gone. This makes sense. It's the way he would've wanted it.

MARY

Look, Jeff, it's hard for both of us. And I'm not abandoning you. We can talk whenever you like. I'm still glad we went to the prom. But we should stop now.

JEFF

Why? I mean, at some point, I just think you let go of the past and move on. I need you, Mary. Real bad.

He leans in, and she responds. They kiss for a few seconds. Then she pushes him off, more angry at herself.

MARY

No!

Jeff looks forward, hands on the steering wheel.

JEFF

Patrick always said you were frigid.

MARY

(taken aback)
What did you say?

JEFF

Forget it.

He starts the car, peels out.

CUT TO:

INT. GILREIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Linda is fixing dinner. She pounds chicken patties with a wooden hammer to make cutlets. And pounds vigorously.

MARK

Linda, what the hell are you doing?

LINDA

Fixing supper.

MARK

Don't you think that poor chicken is dead enough already?

She looks at her hand, almost as if it is separate from the rest of her body. Mark feels genuinely sorry for his wife. She looks so small and confused.

He walks over to embrace her, but she only bristles and backs herself into the counter.

MARK

What, so now I'm out of line for trying to be affectionate?

LINDA

It's not you.

MARK
(soberly)
This is gonna break us, isn't it?

Linda softens, snapped to reality.

LINDA
Mark, do you remember that time we
thought Seth had been kidnapped?

MARK
(off guard)
Course I do.

LINDA
We got separated at that movie, and
I thought he was with you, and you
thought he was with me. We looked
everywhere, and all the time he was
waiting in the car.

MARK
Yeah.

Linda looks into his eyes.

LINDA
I was never more scared, but I never
felt closer to you. There was a
seamlessness to what we were doing.
We may as well have been one person.

MARK
(moved)
We were one person.

LINDA
If we could be that way when he
were afraid he was gone, why can't
we do it now that he really is?

The point has been driven home with the tenderizing hammer
she still holds. Linda lets him get closer. They embrace.

LINDA (CONT'D)
We didn't think we'd get a lawyer,
right? Then one shows up, like a
miracle. He's smart, and he'll make
sure it turns out right. I can feel
it.

INT. AUGUST'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Paul and August are huddled over a rectangular coffee table,
poring over strategies.

AUGUST

Gotta admit, you've really done
your homework on this one.

PAUL
That's because I believe in you.

AUGUST
Are these all legitimate?

PAUL
Every damn one. More than 5000
signatures and counting.

AUGUST
I'd call that a mandate.

PAUL
Told you. The minute you got press
from this, your name recognition
shot up like a bottle rocket.

Paul gets up, goes to pour himself a cup of coffee, notices
it's the same type of coffee pot that gave him trouble in his
own office.

PAUL (CONT'D)
This thing okay?

AUGUST
Course. Why wouldn't it be?

PAUL
No reason.

He carefully pulls out the pot and pours, lets out a quiet
sigh.

AUGUST
(checking his watch)
Oh Jesus, I'm supposed to be
interviewing a witness.

PAUL
Get on it, man. These people are
counting on you.
(winks)
Come back quick as you can.

August rushes out, comes back in to grab his valise, rushes
out again.

INT. SCHOOL THEATER - DAY

Several KIDS are on-stage, rehearsing a play. August sits way
back in the next-to-last row, talks to Mary, who occupies the
seat behind him. He takes notes on a legal pad.

MARY

Mr. Gorsky, I agreed to talk, but that doesn't mean I have to say anything.

AUGUST

I'm sorry Mary, but yes, it does. I can subpoena you and make you tell what you know under oath to God.

MARY

What God?

Mary clutches a Cross, which is draped around her neck on an 18kt. gold chain. This does not escape August's notice.

AUGUST

Look, the thing of it is, as angry as you are, you're not on the prosecution's witness list, either.

MARY

So?

AUGUST

Of all people, you're probably the most impactful one they could put on the stand. I'm sure they came after you tooth and nail.

MARY

Yeah, they did. Bunch of 'em.

AUGUST

But you were tougher. I'm impressed.

MARY

Cut the crap.

AUGUST

(genuinely impressed)
Okay, I will.

August folds his arms on the back of his chair.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

Why wouldn't you help them?

Mary doesn't respond.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

It's a simple question, Mary.

MARY

(reluctant)
I felt bad for Seth.

AUGUST

Seth? He killed your boyfriend! Why
the hell would you care about him?

Mary is very uncomfortable with the conversation.

MARY

I loved Patrick. He treated me real
good. I'd never say anything
against him.

AUGUST

(going for broke)
So it had something to do with
Patrick? Did he instigate something?
Would you testify for us?

MARY

(no sucker)
Shove it, Mr. Gorsky!

Mary stands, walks out of the theater.

AUGUST

(a little jazzed)
Okay, I will.

As he shoves the notepad into his valise, WE HEAR:

BAILIFF'S VOICE

O yay, o yay. The 5th Circuit Court
of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
will now come to order. Judge Kelvin
Carter presiding. Come forth, and ye
shall be heard.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

It is a packed house. SPECTATORS fill the seats.

Opposing counsels are in place at their respective tables.

JUDGE KELVIN CARTER enters and sits behind the bench. He is a
short man, late 50s, but nothing else about him is small. His
voice is BOOMING, and he instantly asserts himself.

JUDGE CARTER

Please be seated.

Judge Carter sizes up the legal counsels. He's seen them both
many times before.

JUDGE CARTER

Let me start right off by saying
that this case will not become a

media circus. Mr. Gorsky, knowing your public reputation, I'm advising you against calling any press conferences or talking to reporters in the midst of this trial. The accused are no longer being judged in the court of public opinion, but a court of law.

August stands.

AUGUST

Your Honor, will you be offering the same warning to my esteemed opponent--

JUDGE CARTER

I don't remember asking you to speak, Mr. Gorsky. This is my time. So let's make this an official warning. Hold your tongue, or I'll hold you in contempt before opening statements. Which I'm sure would be a record.

August sits.

JUDGE CARTER

We're going to treat these people with the dignity and decorum they deserve. Four teenage children are dead. Let's be mindful of that.

(beat)

Mr. Vorhees, are you ready with your opening statement?

JERRY

I am, Your Honor.

JUDGE CARTER

Then please proceed.

Jerry gets up, walks to the jury. He looks them in the eye, tries to make some silent connection before uttering a word.

JERRY

I did a lot of soul-searching over these last few months. It's natural to be angry for what happened. For all of us to feel some sense of rage.

He motions to his clients.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Not just for these devastated parents or students, but for society in general. Yes, it's our right to feel violated. We fear the

rising incidence of crime in our inner cities, the random acts of violence that greet us in our morning papers. We even drive our children to school to make sure no harm comes to them. But my friends, we simply cannot protect them once those school doors slam shut.

He walks over to August's table, points to Mark and Linda.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Now the Gilreins are in a pain most of us could never relate to. Probably just as much as those whose children were brutally executed by their son. So why do we expect them to pay, when they're already paying dearly?

He turns back to the jury, still standing near the Gilreins.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Because three defenseless children died without choice, without mercy. Seth Gilrein did exactly what he wanted, precisely according to plan. He used the very gun his father owned. One easily accessible within the Gilrein household.

(hostile, pointing)

It was their job to keep any weapons away from that child. It was their job to monitor his daily activities and problems. It was their job, as parents, to raise a model citizen.

He lets that filter. Then--

JERRY (CONT'D)

The young man who lived in their house, who ate at their table, who slept in a bed which they provided, was Mark and Linda Gilreins' moral and legal responsibility until the age of 18. Seth died a month short of that.

Jerry is now at a fever pitch, shaking like a gospel preacher.

JERRY (CONT'D)

The three innocents targeted with malice aforethought will also never see 18. So when Mr. Gorsky asks for your compassion for these two people, I want you to visualize

your own 18th birthday. That first
embarkation into adulthood. Then
picture Tim King, Patrick Wellburn,
and Joey Nagle, who were denied
that simple pleasure and countless
more. The joy of getting married.
The wonder of raising a family.
Denied by Seth Michael Gilrein.
(pointing)
Their son!

A few spectators applaud. Jerry adjusts his coat, returns to
his seat. Judge Carter waits for absolute silence. Then--

JUDGE CARTER
Mr. Gorsky, are you ready with your
opening statement?

AUGUST
I am, Your Honor.

August doesn't rise. He just looks over to the jury, waits
for their undivided attention.

AUGUST
The guilty people are dead.

The crowd MURMURS. Judge Carter BANGS his gavel. Linda looks
to the judge, pleadingly. What kind of defense is this?

JUDGE CARTER
Is that all, Mr. Gorsky?

AUGUST
Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE CARTER
(thrown)
Very well. I...uh...Mr. Vorhees, is
the prosecution ready to call its
first witness?

Jerry is still fired up from his opening, ready to pounce.

JERRY
We are, Your Honor. Prosecution
calls Police Officer Arthur Robo.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

A tall, heavy-set OFFICER ROBO (46), wearing dress blues, is
sitting behind the witness stand, mid-testimony.

OFFICER ROBO
We got the call at 12:38. Shots

fired at St. Pete's. I thought maybe a kid set off firecrackers and some teacher freaked. But we took it serious right off. Too much precedent from other schools. We got there just a few minutes later. I was the first one in.

He pauses for effect.

OFFICER ROBO (CONT'D)
It was quiet already. I swear to God, I couldn't hear a thing. A school of 500 people, and not a fuckin' sound.

Robo demurs.

OFFICER ROBO (CONT'D)
S'cuse me. Anyway, my gun was drawn when I walked toward the cafeteria. I followed procedure, had plenty of back-up. At that point it was me, with Officer Bennett and Officer Blake pulling up the rear. As I entered the cafeteria, all the kids' lunch trays were sitting there. But no kids. I got scared. Or, nervous. So I walk down the main hall, off the cafeteria, where all the lockers are.

He pauses, as if reliving the scene at that moment.

OFFICER ROBO (CONT'D)
There were three kids already on the ground, arms and legs splayed outward, all bloody. Timmy was lying in front of his locker, like he was asleep or something. Pat was half-way down the stairs, face down. Joey was lying next to him.

JERRY
And Seth? Where was he?

OFFICER ROBO
That shit coward was just standing there--

AUGUST
Your Honor.

JUDGE CARTER
Officer Robo, kindly refer to him as "Seth" or "the perpetrator."

OFFICER ROBO

Yeah, well, the perp was standing there, gun pointed at some teacher who was protecting another student, Mary Halpin.

JERRY

Let the record show that the teacher in question was Dr. Wesley Anguila, the school's guidance counsellor.

OFFICER ROBO

Yeah, right. Dr. Anguila. And we shot the perp.

JERRY

But first you warned him, correct?

OFFICER ROBO

(as if he'd been coached)
Right, right. We told him to drop the weapon. But he kept pulling the trigger over and over. Luckily, there weren't any bullets left.

JERRY

If the gun was empty, then why did you feel the need to shoot?

OFFICER ROBO

Three kids were dead. We didn't want to see anyone else go down. Except the perp. Who knows if there were any bullets left? At the time, we had no angle to see what type of gun he was holding. It was all adrenaline at that point. We had point blank range. None of us hesitated.

(looking at Mark and
Linda)
Not one of us.

Jerry walks over to the jury box, as if posing questions on their behalf.

JERRY

Officer Robo, now that you do know the type of gun, how many bullets are contained in a single clip of the 9-millimeter pistol?

OFFICER ROBO

Seventeen.

JERRY

Seventeen? Wow. That's a lot of firepower. Meaning it wouldn't even take a reload to do serious damage.

OFFICER ROBO

That's correct. As a cop, we fear that gun as much as any.

JERRY

And exactly how hard would it be for a kid like Seth to get ahold of such a weapon? On his own, I mean.

AUGUST

(standing)

Objection, Your Honor. "Exactly how hard?" Calls for speculation.

JUDGE CARTER

He's a policeman, Mr. Gorsky. He's allowed to speculate on such matters.

August stays standing, almost to show that he doesn't plan on backing down easily. As they continue, he sits.

JERRY

Officer?

OFFICER ROBO

In the city, not hard at all. If you know the right people. But in a small town like this, it'd be damned hard to come by.

JERRY

So it stands to reason that the confirmed murder weapon--

He holds up a plastic bag containing the 9-millimeter, hands it to the Bailiff.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Which I now submit as exhibit 101. It stands to reason that Seth would've had little or no access to such an instrument, were it not kept in his parent's bedroom.

OFFICER ROBO

That is correct. Definitely.

Jerry sits, satisfied.

JERRY

Your witness.

Again, August doesn't bother to stand. He is very casual.

AUGUST
Officer Robo, do guns with six
bullets also kill people?

OFFICER ROBO
Yeah, sure. But the 9-mill--

AUGUST
How about knives? Do they kill
people?

OFFICER ROBO
(smart ass)
Not butter knives.

Some of the spectators chuckle.

AUGUST
I'll wait until our comedian has
finished his act.

Officer Robo looks about ready to jump over the witness stand
at August.

JUDGE CARTER
Answer the question, Officer.

OFFICER ROBO
(through grit teeth)
Yes, knives kill people.

AUGUST
No further questions.

As Robo steps down, Judge Carter checks the clock.

JUDGE CARTER
Due to the hour, we'll reconvene on
Monday morning at 10. Have a
restful weekend.

He BANGS his gavel. The spectators mumble to one another and
file out. Mark turns to August.

MARK
Is this the way you planned it? Why
didn't you say more, like the other
guy?

AUGUST
There was nothing more to say.

He pats Mark's arm in an obligatory way, stands, exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - LATE AFTERNOON

REPORTERS are waiting. August willingly approaches, doesn't even wait for questions.

AUGUST

I'm just gonna make a quick statement, then I gotta get back to work. Judge Carter is pulling particularly tight reins on the defense. That was obvious from the outset.

REPORTER

Sir, do you think he has a bias against your clients or just you?

AUGUST

Draw your own conclusions. That's not my business. As always, I'm here to fight. And nobody's gonna veer me from my usual ferocity. Not even the toughest adjudicator in the state.

(another sound bite)

Because when I'm on a job, no matter how insurmountable the odds, that job is done right.

The reporters continue the inquisition, but August moves on down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. WESLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Wesley sits behind his desk, pen in hand, listening thoughtfully. Mary sits opposite, arms folded.

MARY

I don't cry anymore. Not even when I'm alone. Is that normal?

WESLEY

Maybe you're starting to recover.

MARY

I don't think that's it.

(beat)

My folks are making me talk to that stupid lawyer.

WESLEY

Mary, I can't imagine what you must be feeling right now. Seems very unfair to ask more of you.

(thoughtful)
Do what your conscience tells you,
and you'll be fine.

MARY
Conscience.
(scoffing at the word)
Right.

Wesley puts down his pen.

WESLEY
Did you know that I had a hard time
in high school myself?

MARY
Really?

AUGUST
Most of my freshman year, if I can
remember back that far. Kids aren't
all that different today. Same kind
of pecking order.

MARY
But look how you ended up.

WESLEY
Sure, because I had strong parents
and the right teachers. They didn't
coddle me for a minute. Made me
earn whatever I got. It's called
the school of hard knocks. Wasn't
easy, I'll tell you that.
(softening)
But you have to remember, life
never is. You'll get a lot further
if you accept that now.

MARY
No shit.

Wesley smiles.

WESLEY
See, they made me cool, too. Most
guidance counsellors wouldn't
appreciate such language.

Mary looks at him in a new way.

MARY
So you got picked on, like Seth?

WESLEY
All the time. But only at first.
(with pride)

I was smaller, but I found ways to fight back. Used my wits. Seth just sat there and took it. Like a volcano waiting to erupt.

MARY
Couldn't you have helped him?

WESLEY
What d'ya mean?

MARY
I dunno. Taken him under your wing or something. Told him how you got through it.

WESLEY
Believe me, I tried. In my own way.

Mary nods acceptance, stands, starts out.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Be a rock. That's the trick.

MARY
(blank expression)
Shouldn't be a problem.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

A somber Linda kneels at a grave.

REVERSE ANGLE to SETH'S GRAVESTONE, which has been spray painted with assorted profanity in vivid colors. There are beer cans strewn around the site. Linda pauses.

LINDA
Hi, baby.

She opens a plastic trash bag and proceeds to fill it with the beer cans. She then pops open a container of paint thinner. By now, she knows the drill.

INT. AUGUST'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

August sits up in bed, arms folded behind his head. His wife sits next to him reading a newspaper.

AUGUST
Babe, you ever think about high school?

VAL
Sometimes, I guess. When I'm really, really bored.

AUGUST

Do you remember what I was like?

VAL

Auggie, it's only when we started dating and I fell in love with you.

AUGUST

What did you like about me?

VAL

(flirty)

You were cute. You had a rockin' bod. Lots of girls wanted you.

AUGUST

Oh yeah? Then how did you get so lucky?

VAL

I pretended like I didn't.

She leans over to kiss him, maybe get something started, but he's pre-occupied.

AUGUST

Was I a nice guy?

VAL

Define the term.

AUGUST

Did I treat people well?

VAL

Don't you remember?

AUGUST

Humor me.

VAL

You won't find it humorous.

AUGUST

So I was an asshole, is that it?

VAL

You're getting warmer.

AUGUST

Worse than that?

VAL

Not to me. Then again, I've always been drawn to assholes.

AUGUST

Thanks. That's a real comfort.

VAL

What do you want? You had an edge.
You and your buddies used to walk
around campus like you owned the
place. Probably because you did.
Bucky, Robbie, Paul...pretty much
the whole football team.

(sizing him up)

C'mon, you remember.

AUGUST

(half-smiles)

Yeah, I do.

She sidles up next to him.

VAL

We were kids. We weren't supposed
to be perfect.

(rubbing his chest)

Here's a news flash. We still aren't.

AUGUST

Back then, the thought of
retaliating, I mean, guns just
weren't available like they are
now. So when I did...stuff, they
just took it.

VAL

I suppose. But Jesus, it's not like
you jammed razor blades up their
noses or anything.

AUGUST

Some of the names are coming back
to me. I been having weird dreams.

VAL

That's good.

AUGUST

You think so, huh? What did I
marry, some kind of sadist?

VAL

It's your past coming back to bite
you on the ass. But it's just a
love bite, Auggie. Nothing bad
happened. They all survived.

AUGUST

(assuaged)

So it's nothing to feel guilty

about?

Val returns to her paper.

VAL
I never said that.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Again, standing room only. Life-size photographs of the three boys stand sentinel next to the witness stand, lifelike, angled to face both the spectators and the jury.

Rob Wellburn, father of Patrick, is mid-testimony.

JERRY
Did they have goals, Rob?

ROB
Yeah, they did. Lots of 'em.

JERRY
Would you tell the court?

Rob looks forward, clears his throat like a seasoned orator.

ROB
Timmy King was an athlete at St. Pete's, and a damn good one. I saw him win games single-handed in three different sports. But football was his first love.

Jerry takes a pointer and indicates Timmy's photo.

ROB (CONT'D)
He was promised scholarships to a bunch of Big 10 schools, including U. Michigan. It had always been his dream to play free safety for the Wolverines. He had real talent, set plenty of school records. Who knows how far he coulda gone?

JERRY
But that's over now.

ROB
(looking at the Gilreins)
Yeah. Because my son is dead!

AUGUST
(standing)
Your Honor, all due respect, we all know the tragic outcome. Can we avoid the melodrama and stick to the facts?

JUDGE CARTER

The melodrama is a fact, Mr.
Gorsky. This man will speak.

August sits. As the judge promised, no quarter will be given.

JERRY

What about Joey Nagle? Was he a
good person?

Again, Jerry points to the subject as Rob narrates.

ROB

The best. I woulda been proud to
call him my own. He and Tim were
attached at the hip since grade
school. Kid was smart as a whip.

Rob starts to well up with tears, fights them off.

ROB (CONT'D)

Sorry.

JERRY

Not a problem. Take your time.

ROB

Anyway, he used to work weekends
and summers for me landscaping.
I told him he could get into the
business easy if he wanted. But he
had higher goals. Doctor, maybe a
surgeon. He used to watch all those
medical shows, even the real ones
with the blood. But that's all over
now.

August does everything to avoid showing disapproval, for fear
of further alienating the jury.

JERRY

Okay. Now I have to ask you to
summon the courage to talk about
your own son, Mr. Wellburn.
(using the pointer)
Patrick.

Rob knows this is gonna be hard, takes a second. But no
amount of time will suffice.

ROB

Patrick. My boy was...he was such
a...

(breaks down)

No. I'm sorry.

JERRY
Mr. Wellburn, try.

ROB
I can't. Please, Mr. Vorhees, we
have to stop now.

Jerry takes this as a cue.

JERRY
Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I
won't press further and add to the
suffering. Suffice it to say that
Mr. Wellburn loved his precious
offspring to the very core. All
these parents did.
(looking to August)
Your witness.

August stands, knows that he will be hard pressed to win
points with the jury now.

AUGUST
Do you need a minute?

ROB
(composing himself)
No, I'm fine. I can continue.

AUGUST
Mr. Wellburn, did you raise a
perfect kid?

ROB
(like he swallowed
something sour)
What kind of a stupid question is
that?

AUGUST
He had goals. Did he also have
problems?

ROB
What sorta problems?

AUGUST
Disciplinary problems.

ROB
No.

AUGUST
You sure about that?

JERRY
(standing)

Your Honor, he answered the question.

JUDGE CARTER
Move on, Mr. Gorsky.

August walks over to the defense table, picks up a file.

AUGUST
Would it surprise you to know that Patrick was suspended three separate times over the past two years? In addition to seven detentions.

ROB
His mother dealt with that stuff.

AUGUST
Maybe I should be talking to her, then.

ROB
(defensive)
No. She's been through enough already. I can answer.

AUGUST
(reading from the file)
One-day suspension, vandalism of a bicycle belonging to Seth Gilrein. One-day suspension, bloodying Seth's nose after a football game. Two-hour detention, harassing a student in the lunch line. Just one guess who that was. Two-day suspension--

ROB
He was rambunctious, okay? He didn't take crap. That's what made him a natural leader.

AUGUST
Oh. Is that what a leader does, Mr. Wellburn? Because it sounds like he was more of a vicious thug to me.

JERRY
Objection!

AUGUST
Withdrawn.
(redirecting)
Sir, based on what we know, would it be fair to say that your son tormented Seth Gilrein?

ROB

No, it would not be fair.

AUGUST

No? Three suspensions and seven detentions? And that's just the times he was caught. Will you at least admit that he instigated trouble time and again? Can you be honest enough to do that, sir?

JERRY

(standing)

Badgering, Your Honor. And he has no right to imply that there were further incidents without proof.

JUDGE CARTER

Stick to the facts, Mr. Gorsky.

August walks to the defense table, grabs two more folders, holds them up.

AUGUST

I have files here that list nearly as many infractions for Joe and Tim.

ROB

These are just kids. S'cuse me, were kids. They messed around sometimes. Didn't you ever get into trouble when you were in high school?

AUGUST

As a matter of fact, I did. Quite a lot. But Seth seemed the only target for these three boys. I'm wondering if you know why.

ROB

I got no idea. I'm sure it didn't come from nowhere. Maybe the kid deserved to be unpopular. You ever think of that? He sure seemed to get it from all sides.

AUGUST

Exactly my point.

ROB

Do you think it was enough to merit their slaughter?

AUGUST

(ignoring him)

Mr. Wellburn, have you ever--

ROB

Wait a second. I asked you a question. I think it's only fair you answer if I gotta do the same.

JUDGE CARTER

(interjecting)

Mr. Wellburn, that's not how it works.

AUGUST

No, Your Honor. I'll answer.

(sincere)

Sir, I don't know what happened on a daily basis at St. Peter-Marion. I can only piece certain facts together based on secondhand accounts. Apparently, it was akin to a jungle for certain students. Some of the animals in that jungle were predators, and some were prey. Most were like you and me. Just interested observers more than happy to be staring from a safe distance.

(beat)

Was murder justified? No.

(to the jury)

But a form of self-defense, built up over time, that's another story.

Rob is anxious to respond.

ROB

So you have the nerve to imply--

AUGUST

I have no further questions, Mr. Wellburn. We're done.

ROB

Fine. But I--

AUGUST

Judge, the witness is excused.

ROB

Your Honor, I'm not finished--

JUDGE CARTER

He doesn't have to ask you any more questions if he doesn't choose to, Mr. Wellburn. But thank you.

Rob grudgingly leaves the stand, having allowed August a brief soap box.

August sits down. Linda leans in and whispers.

LINDA

That was good.

AUGUST

Small victory. But we'll take it.

CUT TO:

INT. AUGUST'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. Wesley Anguila sits on a chair in the middle of the room, as August meticulously prepares him for testimony.

WESLEY

(with authority)

There's bullying, and then there's what happened at St. Pete's. At most schools I worked at, we'd get what I refer to as a "dispersal of terror."

AUGUST

And what's that, Doctor?

WESLEY

The bullying is spread out. Plenty of targets, so no one kid gets more than he can handle. Seth wasn't just their primary scapegoat. It seemed he was the sole object of derision. Designated "boy least likely," I suppose. It was far worse than anything I've encountered in my 23 years as a psychologist and educator.

AUGUST

Sir, is there anything about the brain, biologically speaking, that might have brought Seth to such an extreme point of retaliation?

WESLEY

(off guard)

Oh yeah, I almost forgot.

(in character)

There is a barometer of reason, an ability to perceive repercussions, that hasn't fully formed in adolescents. It's no accident they feel invincible at that age. It's chemical.

AUGUST

Perfect. You're gonna be great.

Wesley stands, stretches. August reaches for his jacket.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
You'd be a real star in the
classroom. You got an affable way
of speaking. Ever think about
moonlighting?

WESLEY
No need. I already teach a class.

AUGUST
Yeah?

WESLEY
Almost all of us have a second job
at St. Pete's. Coaches teach.
Teachers coach. So we have exposure
to the kids in different
environments.

AUGUST
It wasn't like that when I went
there.

WESLEY
We've come a long way.

August opens the door.

AUGUST
Now go home and get some rest. Save
those vocal cords.

Wesley turns an imaginary key in his lips. He'll be ready.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

August is sitting across from Val at The Sole Proprietor, a rustic seafood restaurant. They make a striking pair, and by the way they are looking at one another and gently touching, they are still quite smitten.

AUGUST
This doctor is a slam dunk, but I'm
not sure about the girlfriend.
She's got something to say, but I
don't know if I can coax her to
spit it out.

VAL
You'll do it. Just don't hold back.

AUGUST

That's aggressive talk, coming from
a florist.

VAL
I never hold back on flower
arrangements, pal. You should see
what I do with a begonia.

August smiles, takes her hand. A large shrimp cocktail is
delivered. They hardly notice.

AUGUST
Then there's Paul, nipping at my
heels. He wants me to wrap this all
up in the next two weeks.

VAL
Did you tell him it doesn't work
that way?

AUGUST
He's aware. But Bruce Dalbeck did
declare last Thursday. It'd be nice
to throw my hat in the ring soon.
The party will shift its support if
he gets up a head of steam.

VAL
Are we gonna get into this again?

AUGUST
(playful)
Oh God, I hope not.

August reaches for a shrimp. Val slaps his hand away.

VAL
This is serious, August. I thought
you came around on this.

AUGUST
If it means anything, I think the
jury is about to.

VAL
And what's your opinion?

AUGUST
Irrelevant, counsellor.

Again, he reaches for a shrimp. This time, she grabs his hand.

VAL
Not to me.

AUGUST
(fessing up)

Val, I'm sorry. You can talk until doomsday, but there's simply no legal or ethical justification for what happened at that school. I pored through those files. Okay, the kids might've stretched the limits of persecution, but I can't find any scenario that allows me to believe the Gilreins aren't at least significantly responsible. Wanna know what I think?

VAL

Your expert opinion? Why not?

AUGUST

They didn't talk to him enough. They had their heads up their asses. It was their business to know what was going on. I would.

(Val moves to speak)

Dr. Anguila is the only one on their side. In fairness, he's given me reasonable doubt. And those are two words I definitely believe in.

Val pulls back.

VAL

I'm not hungry anymore.

AUGUST

Great. So now you're gonna hate me because of this?

VAL

(softening)

I'm always gonna love you, Auggie. Can't help that.

He grins smugly.

VAL (CONT'D)

But it doesn't mean I have to like you.

The grin disappears. Satisfied, she starts eating.

CUT TO:

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A CACOPHONY of kids gabbing. Most of the student body is gathered, sitting in the rafters. No adults are present.

Mary sits in the front row, between a very stocky GUY in sweats and an especially gangly KID with acne. Odd looking

bookends.

Jeff, the kid from the opening prom scene, walks to the front. Everyone goes silent when he raises his hand.

JEFF

We all know why we're here. Some of us have been asked to testify.

He looks in Mary's direction.

JEFF (CONT'D)

We each played a part in this, and you know what I'm talking about. But no matter how things get twisted, only one person committed an actual crime. I got no intention of taking the stand. And if they make me, I'll do what I gotta to protect my friends' honor. These lawyers make it so you don't know what's right and what's wrong. But I got the ghosts of my buddies standing behind me. They got my back. Do you see them? Because I do! Every day.

(with authority)

Don't piss on their memory. Or you can answer to me.

A few people APPLAUD, while others remain silent. As the assembly disperses, Jeff walks out, rounds a corner and enters an adjacent office.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. Anguila is sitting on the edge of a desk, waiting.

JEFF

How's that?

WESLEY

Perfect. I'm proud of you, Jeffrey.

JEFF

If we stick together, everything will be cool, right?

WESLEY

(quoting himself)

Enough people have been hurt already. It's the right thing to do.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Everyone is in place. August is dressed extra natty, ready for the main event.

JUDGE CARTER

Before you call your next witness, Mr. Gorsky, I'm forced to issue a warning.

AUGUST

I'd expect nothing less, Your Honor.

JUDGE CARTER

See, once again, you're testing my patience, sir. As you have throughout trial. It isn't working in your clients' favor, but by all means, keep it up.

(put off)

Stand up when I'm talking to you.

August stands, shows little respect in his posture.

JUDGE CARTER (CONT'D)

I've been watching your vociferous commentaries to the press, despite my earlier admonition. Maybe you didn't realize, but I have my own television. And not just to catch Judge Judy. It's no secret to those of us in legal circles that you plan to run for office and leave this estimable profession. But if you make another public comment before the verdict, I mean of any kind, I'll sentence you to a month in lock-up, starting precisely when your campaign should be burning rubber. Then we'll see if your adoring fans want to elect an ex-con.

AUGUST

Thank you, Your Honor.

JUDGE CARTER

A pleasure. Now you may proceed.

Linda looks to August, as if to say, "what's all this about public office?"

AUGUST

Defense calls Mary Halpin to the stand.

As Mary emerges from the crowd, August unveils a life-size picture of Seth, similar to those unveiled by the

prosecution. It is anything but flattering. Seth is conspicuously overweight, offers a face full of braces, sports persistent acne and a mop of unwashed hair.

Mary takes the stand, crosses her legs.

AUGUST

Would you state your name, please?

MARY

Mary Elizabeth Halpin.

AUGUST

And you were close friends with Patrick Wellburn. Is that correct?

MARY

(proudly)

I was his girlfriend.

AUGUST

Did he ever talk about Seth to you?

Mary looks to the judge.

MARY

Can I take the fifth?

JUDGE CARTER

(warmly)

You're merely a witness, dear. By law, you have to answer.

MARY

Okay then, he didn't like Seth.

AUGUST

Why not?

MARY

Because the kid was a know-it-all. He acted like he was better than everyone.

AUGUST

Well if he was smart, as you say, his grades sure didn't show it.

MARY

Maybe not recent ones, but when he first got to school, he was always on top of the honor roll. He went to Phillips Exeter up in New Hampshire, but then he moved here.

AUGUST

Because his parents couldn't afford

it anymore?

MARY

Yeah. And we all knew because he told us. I think he was scared about being new, so he tried to make it sound like he was somebody.

AUGUST

And was he?

MARY

At first. But you don't want to be somebody here.

AUGUST

Why not?

MARY

Because then they notice you. And the best thing for a kid like Seth is to blend in. All the other dorky kids did. They didn't seem to have a problem with it.

AUGUST

Dorky. That's an interesting word. One we've all heard before, I'm sure. But what exactly makes a person a dork?

MARY

What?

AUGUST

Y'know, physical characteristics. What gains a kid entry into the realm of dorkhood? You don't have to get into personality.

August walks over to the prosecutor's table and grabs Jerry's pointer.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

May I?

As Mary talks, August points to Seth's picture.

MARY

Well, short kids have trouble.

August points to a superimposed ruler, signifying that Seth was just 5 feet.

AUGUST

Fair enough. What else?

MARY

Chubby kids. Ones who are totally out of shape, eat like pigs.

August points to Seth's protruding belly.

MARY (CONT'D)

Kids who are into weird stuff.
Dungeons and Dragons, sci-fi,
gothic crap.

August points to a Star Trek patch on Seth's shirt.

AUGUST

How about facially?

MARY

Goofy glasses.
(August points)
Zits.
(August points)
Bad hair.
(August points)
Anything that stands out in a bad way.

AUGUST

Thank you, Mary. That'll do.

August returns the pointer. The jury is now with him.

AUGUST

Was Seth a target because of these physical things, too?

MARY

He got picked on, yeah.

AUGUST

And you just stood by and watched?

MARY

No. I mean, yeah. I mean, I never said anything bad to him.

AUGUST

(fishing)
But you didn't say anything to help, either.

MARY

Yeah I did!

AUGUST

Did you? Well, now we're getting somewhere.

MARY

I used to tell Patrick to be nice.
Swear it I did. And when Seth went
crazy--

She stops. August presses his advantage.

AUGUST

Yeah, when Seth went crazy--

MARY

I almost saw it coming. I used to
think if anyone freaked out here,
well, you wouldn't have to look
hard to find him.

AUGUST

So what exactly did Patrick do to
provoke such vindication?

Mary folds her arms. She has no intention of saying.

AUGUST

You wanna protect Patrick's memory,
don't you? Then give it up.

MARY

(defensive)

Who gives a shit about memory, Mr.
Gorsky? I want my Patrick back.
Don't make me out to be some saint!
I fucking hate Seth Gilrein, excuse
my French. And I ain't too fond of
you, either.

The spectators CHUCKLE. Judge Carter quiets them.

AUGUST

(going for broke)

Mary, just tell me one thing, and
I'll let you off the hook. Out of
all those kids, why was Patrick one
of Seth's targets? What put him on
the short list?

Mary pauses. The moment of truth.

MARY

It's no big deal, really.

AUGUST

Then just say it.

She seems like she is about to confess something, then backs
off. August can tell she's wriggling off his line.

MARY

Patrick was...was a tough kid. And I asked him to lay off, for me. So he did. Or he was about to.

AUGUST

(pouncing)

He was about to, eh? Gee, what rotten luck. Patrick was right on the verge of laying off after years of torment, and he couldn't quite manage. So what on earth stopped him?

MARY

(deadly serious)

Seth.

The spectators start to JABBER. Judge Carter BANGS his gavel. Her last line was a dagger in the heart. She's a rock.

AUGUST

(cutting his losses)

Thank you, Mary. No more questions.

August sits.

JUDGE CARTER

Mr. Vorhees? Questions?

JERRY

I'm fine, Your Honor.

August tries to re-group. If anything, he damaged his own case.

JUDGE CARTER

Mr. Gorsky?

Linda leans in to speak with August. He waves her off.

AUGUST

Yes, Your Honor. Defense calls Dr. Wesley Anguila.

Dr. Anguila makes his way to the stand. Many of the kids in the crowd inch forward with interest. It's August's last shot.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

You are the guidance counsellor at St. Peter-Marion, are you not?

WESLEY

That is correct.

AUGUST

Dr. Anguila, no person was better equipped or in a better position to

evaluate these students. You have a B.S. From Princeton, a PhD in clinical psychology from Harvard. You boast more than 23 years in the field of education, not to mention--

JERRY

(standing)

"Not to mention?" Your Honor, there's nothing he hasn't mentioned. Might we anticipate a question sometime in the coming weeks?

JUDGE CARTER

Ask a question, Mr. Gorsky.

AUGUST

Dr. Anguila, would you kindly tell the court, in your seasoned and professional opinion, what transpired leading up to March 24th?

August steps back, giving ample room for Dr. Anguila to unload his expertise.

WESLEY

I'd be happy to.

(turning to the jury)

Seth Gilrein wasn't equipped emotionally to handle the pressures of high school, so he shot three classmates at point blank range.

August steps back. Is Wesley aware of how badly that came out? He'll give him another chance.

AUGUST

Okay. But why, sir, wasn't he equipped to handle the pressures? Wasn't it too much for any kid to handle? Wasn't he pressed to the limit?

JEFF

Objection. Leading.

JUDGE CARTER

Sustained.

AUGUST

I'll re-phrase. Dr. Anguila, in your experience as an educator and psychologist, have you ever seen a similar torment inflicted on a kid?

WESLEY

Sure. Plenty of times.

(looking to the judge)
Kids get a little stir crazy. They
have to release somehow. It's all
part of growing up. Learning to
fend for themselves.

AUGUST
But, Dr. Anguila--

JUDGE CARTER
Let him finish, Mr. Gorsky.

WESLEY
Thank you, Judge.
(to the jury)
It's like this. As we get older, we
face equivalent pressures in our
daily lives. Competition from
colleagues, performance anxiety at
work, financial demands. High
school, and the commensurate
stress, prepares kids to cope.

August steps back. The wheels have fallen off the wagon and
are rolling down a very steep hill.

AUGUST
(desperate)
Let's talk medically. Is there any
type of chemical deficiency in
teenagers that might give them a
feeling of invincibility, despite the
pressure?

WESLEY
None that I'm aware of.

AUGUST
What?

WESLEY
There is no biological explanation
or excuse for what Seth did.

AUGUST
Are you sure? Because when we spoke
in my office--

JERRY
Objection.

JUDGE CARTER
Yes, I'm gonna put a stop to this.
Mr. Gorsky, he's answered the
question. Whatever might've been
discussed behind closed doors is
supposed to remain there. Now do

you have any new angle you'd like
to pursue?

August looks at Wesley, burns, but to no avail. He is beaten.

AUGUST
No. We're through.

JUDGE CARTER
Mr. Vorhees?

JERRY
(in the catbird seat)
More than fine, Your Honor.

JUDGE CARTER
You may step down, Doctor Anguila.

WESLEY
Thank you.

Wesley doesn't even glance at August. Just makes his retreat.

August looks like a lost sheep. He scans the crowd, as if
searching for another witness. But there are none left. Judge
Carter senses his panic.

JUDGE CARTER
We'll adjourn for the weekend. Back
here Monday at 10.

The spectators ERUPT in conversation. Linda doesn't know what
to think. Mark does.

MARK
What the hell happened with our
witnesses?

AUGUST
I don't know.

MARK
(grabbing his sleeve)
That's not good enough!

August turns to his notes.

AUGUST
I'm sorry. It's all I got.

Linda touches August's arm with feeling. He notices the
difference, looks up.

LINDA
We're gonna lose, aren't we?

AUGUST

We'll have appeals.

LINDA

No appeals, Mr. Gorsky. If we don't win this time, we weren't meant to.

(comforting)

And we won't blame you.

August is crestfallen. He let this one slip away, and now it's killing him.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK #3

(Again, MOS and reduced motion.)

INT. LUNCH HALL - DAY

The entire STUDENT BODY is gathered, most already at their tables chowing away, some still in line, almost too anxious to get to their respective seats.

Seth is set off at a corner table, a few STUDENTS clustered at the other end. Another KID, tall and wiry, sits opposite. But we only see the back of his head.

Some of the kids begin to eye one another, then the clock.

It is 12:14 and 50 seconds. Tension is building. They are holding back smiles. Seth is oblivious. But his friend gets a sense of what's happening. Rather than warn Seth, he walks off, motioning that he needs another spoon.

Joey Nagle raises his hand. Everyone waits for his signal.

The clock hits 12:15, Joey drops his hand and about 20 kids throw the vast remaining contents of their trays directly at Seth. Enough debris hits the mark to drench him in food.

TEACHERS and FOOD SERVICE WORKERS spring into action, SCREAMING at the kids, but the damage has been done.

The school goes crazy.

END OF FLASHBACK #3.

CUT TO:

INT. AUGUST'S BMW - NIGHT

Val drives, as August slumps in the passenger seat, bereft of direction.

VAL

It's not over.

AUGUST

Val, it is so over.

VAL

You're a lawyer. You have tricks.

AUGUST

Not this time. We won a few battles, but then that fuck Anguila sank the ship.

VAL

It doesn't make sense. Why would he sandbag you? What does he have to gain by it?

AUGUST

Nothing. That's why I got no place to go on this.

VAL

So put the mother on the stand.

AUGUST

Who? Mrs. Gilrein?

VAL

You mean Linda, right? Aren't you even on a first-name basis with these people?

AUGUST

I'm trying to remain emotionally detached.

VAL

Which is ridiculous. I'm emotional about the case, bordering on psychotic, and I'm not even involved.

AUGUST

I won't put her up there. That's a desperate move at this stage of the game. And I can't afford to look desperate.

VAL

What do you care? If you think you've already lost, then anything you do won't make it worse.

AUGUST

You weren't there. You don't know.

VAL

What are you talking about? You've

told me everything.

AUGUST

(frustrated)

Maybe if you showed up once in a while, I wouldn't have to.

Val SLAMS on the brakes in the middle of traffic, turns to August.

VAL

No you don't. This has nothing to do with us. This is about you! From the very beginning, you only took this case for the notoriety. You made no secret of that. So now you're losing, and it's like this big surprise to you? Grow up, honey. If you're going to be a slime, at least live up to the part. This half-assed shit is getting a little boring.

AUGUST

I tried. You know I did.

VAL

With your brain, maybe. But not your gut. You gave up before this trial ever started. Just the opposite, probably, of that little boy.

AUGUST

Are you still defending him?

VAL

Well, what the fuck are you doing?

AUGUST

Making an argument. It's what we do.

VAL

No, Auggie. It's what you're good at. What you do is protect people's rights. Save them from the vultures who swirl overhead whenever they smell blood.

She opens the car door, climbs out, leans back in, hands on the door frame.

VAL (CONT'D)

You know something? As cute and smart as I thought you were, the main reason I married you was

because you impressed me. You knew what college you wanted to go to by the eleventh grade.

AUGUST

Tenth.

VAL

Whatever. You knew you wanted to be a lawyer, that you wanted to get into politics. You knew it was a fight for survival, every day. But the one thing I never realized until now was that you never knew what in hell you were fighting for!

She SLAMS the door, walks off into the headlights, hails a cab.

CUT TO:

INT. AUGUST'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Unshaven, exhausted, still dressed in the same suit, August is talking to a conciliatory Paul on the speaker phone.

PAUL

(through speaker)

I'll be honest, pal. I'm relieved you took a dive.

AUGUST

I didn't take a dive, you shit. We're losing, that's all.

PAUL

(through speaker)

Either way, it's the right move. When momentum started to shift in your favor, Kessler started to sweat. Defending these people is one thing. But getting them off, that might have done more damage than I first thought.

AUGUST

Thanks for being up front.

PAUL

(through speaker)

Hey, I didn't think you had a shot before. Now that I'm sure of it, I can be totally honest.

AUGUST

So, what, I should be thanking you?

PAUL
(through speaker)
Nah. What are friends for?

There is a CLICK on the phone.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(through speaker)
Okay, this is Kessler and the major donors I told you about. I'm gonna warm them up a bit, then cue you in. Sit tight.

Paul CLICKS to the other callers, leaving August to suffer through CHEESY HOLD MUSIC. He stares at the ceiling, taps his pencil, then notices Seth's translated e-mails on the corner of his desk.

He begins to thumb through them, almost casually. But it starts to get interesting. And August doesn't just have a photographic memory. He absorbs like a sponge.

He reaches into his drawer, pulls out a red pen, begins to circle key words. "Toilet," "Shit Swirly," "Food Fight," "Punching Bag." Then one word starts appearing again and again, more than "Tim," "Joey" or "Patrick." It's "The Eel." August circles feverishly. He skips ahead. Finally, he arrives at a paragraph that stops him cold. It reads:

"Can't take how the Eel nailed me today. Made me feel like a piece of shit in front of everyone for the last time. He's got one coming. They all do. Stay home tomorrow."

It's the last entry, dated March 23rd.

August gets up, grabs his coat, bolts. A beat later, Paul is heard through the SPEAKER PHONE.

PAUL
Okay buddy, we're all here.
(pause)
August? You there?

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

Defying his court orders, August is standing in front of a throng of REPORTERS. His home-away-from-home.

AUGUST
I'm not supposed to be here right now, but here I am.

He looks straight into camera.

AUGUST (CONT'D)

I'll be incarcerated by order of the judge, but that doesn't matter. What does matter is there's someone out there who refuses to be brave. Someone who knows what's been going on and won't say. I don't know his real name. Just his e-mail address. So here's what I want you all to do. I want you to flood this kid with e-mails. I promised I wouldn't, but you can. Tell him he has to testify or a great injustice will be done. Tell him that if one guy is willing to risk his career and his freedom for something, then he can risk his reputation on campus. It's up to you guys. He's Stork1829@aol.com. Go to it.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The crowd comes to order. August sits, sports a poker face.

JUDGE CARTER

Caught you on the news Saturday night, Mr. Gorsky. You just don't know when to quit, do you? Now I have no choice but to hold you in contempt and sentence you to one month at county lock-up, beginning immediately after this trial ends.

AUGUST

And I accept that punishment willingly, Your Honor. But just to prolong my freedom--

(turning to the crowd)

Defense calls Jacob Riley.

The back doors open, and a gangly KID with a big nose walks in. The same kid who was sitting next to Mary at the students' assembly. The same one sitting across from Seth before the food fight. He takes the stand.

Jerry immediately rises.

JERRY

Objection, Your Honor. This individual is nowhere to be found on the witness list.

AUGUST

Approach the bench, Your Honor?

Judge Carter motions for both counsels to approach.

JERRY

This kid has no business being here. Mr. Gorsky has had ample time to assemble witnesses. This is just grandstanding because he's gonna lose.

AUGUST

(countering)

A rebuttal witness, Your Honor, here to refute direct testimony. It's well within the limits of the law.

JUDGE CARTER

(to Jerry)

He's got you, Mr. Vorhees.

(to August)

But this had better be in reference to direct testimony, or you can spend Christmas in jail, too.

AUGUST

Thank you, Your Honor.

Jerry sits down. August walks over to Jacob.

AUGUST

Would you please state your name for the record?

JACOB

Jacob J. Riley.

AUGUST

Mr. Riley, do you currently attend St. Peter-Marion High School?

JACOB

I do.

AUGUST

And were you friends with the child of the defendants, Seth Gilrein?

JACOB

I was.

AUGUST

Did you remain friends?

JACOB

Not really. I began to distance myself from Seth a few months before everything went down.

AUGUST

Why, Jacob? Why did you do that?

There is a moment of hesitation.

JACOB

(timid)

There was this stupid contest.

AUGUST

What kind of contest?

JACOB

To see who...who could get Seth to drop out of school first.

AUGUST

You're telling us there was an actual competition to see who could pressure him to leave?

JACOB

It was no big deal at first. I didn't really believe it. But then people started to band together. Everybody put in 20 bucks, and something like 50 people had a stake. But it was mostly for the challenge. That's what Patrick said.

August turns to the jury.

AUGUST

That's what Patrick said?

JACOB

Yeah. Some days they'd all do stuff to him, like in the cafeteria or outside. Other days, well, Patrick, Tim and Joey had the same free period as Seth.

AUGUST

Was Seth aware of this contest?

JACOB

Eventually. I told him when I found out. But he never backed down. He said there was no way he was gonna get forced out. He was tough that way.

AUGUST

So why did you back off?

JACOB

For my own protection. You didn't want to be close to Seth after you saw some of the stuff they were doing.

AUGUST

But you were still writing to Seth on the Internet, is that correct?

JACOB

We always did that. It didn't stop. It was like our way of venting. We could be entirely separate people on the computer.

AUGUST

Did Seth write to you the day before the incident?

JERRY

(sensing trouble)
Objection!

JUDGE CARTER

On what grounds, Mr. Vorhees.

Jerry can't think of a thing. Sits back down.

AUGUST

Jacob?

JACOB

Yes, he did write to me.

August holds up a sheet of paper.

AUGUST

I submit this series of e-mails collectively as exhibit 105.

He gives copies to the prosecution, hands Jacob the last page.

AUGUST

Would you be kind enough to read the final passage you received from Seth? The last words, as it turns out, that he ever wrote?

JACOB

Sure.

(reading)
"The Eel nailed me today. Real bad. Made me feel like a piece of shit in front of..."

As he speaks, we...

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK #4

(Unlike the other scenes, this flashback is shot in real time and with sound.)

INT. MATH CLASS - DAY

A classroom full of KIDS has completed a quiz. Dr. Anguila sits at the desk in front, looks up from a book he is reading.

WESLEY
Pencils down.

The kids comply.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
I have a new way of grading that's gonna save me a lot of time, and you all days of anticipation. Switch papers with the person next to you. I'll read out the answers, and you grade them. But be honest.

The kids switch papers. Seth gets Patrick's paper. Patrick gets Seth's.

WESLEY
Pencil's ready. Here come the answers. 1, A. 2, D. 3, E. 4, E. 5, B. 6...

As Wesley continues to call out the answers, Seth shuffles in his seat, looks to his neighbor. Clearly, he is not doing well. Patrick is smiling to himself as he marks X after X.

WESLEY
...19, E. And 20, A. Each question is worth five points. So add it up, write down a grade and then switch back papers.

Again, the kids do as they are told.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
I'll call out your name. You read me your score. Peter Abrams.

PETER
90.

Wesley marks it in his grade book.

WESLEY
Allyson Belmont.

ALLYSON
75.

WESLEY
Jeff Bednarz.

JEFF
85.

WESLEY
Kathy Craig.

KATHY
95.

WESLEY
James DiSandro.

JANE
100.

WESLEY
Nice. Melissa Fahey.

MARY
95.

WESLEY
Seth Gilrein.

Seth does not reply.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Seth Gilrein.

Again, silence.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Seth, are you going to answer me?

Seth doesn't know what to say.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Mr. Gilrein, come to the front of
the room, please. With your paper.

Reluctantly, Seth complies. Wesley sits on the edge of his
desk, faces Seth. Jacob looks up, powerless to react.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Now I want you to read your score to
your classmates. And loudly, so
everyone can hear it.

Seth holds up the paper, shows Wesley the clearly visible
grade. But that's not good enough.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Out loud, Mr. Gilrein.

Seth is unable to speak.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Spit it out, man. You earned it, so
say it!

SETH
(fighting back tears)
15.

The class erupts with LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE. It is barely a
grade at all.

A trickle of urine runs out Seth's pant leg and over his
shoe. Wesley notices.

But he isn't finished.

WESLEY
You need to learn respect, Mister
Gilrein. And how to study for a
quiz. So I want you to go to each
and every classroom on this floor,
tell the teacher I sent you and
announce your grade to those
classes, as well.

Suddenly, the room goes silent. There's nothing funny about
this, and they know it.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
Right now, Mr. Gilrein.

Seth starts out.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
And in case you're thinking of
skipping out on your assignment, I'm
going to check with the teachers to
make sure you did it. If you miss a
single classroom, you'll do it all
over again, every day for a week. And
I'm not kidding.

Seth walks out, shaking with each step. Wesley turns his
attention back to his class.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
It's about respect for authority,
gang. When a teacher tells you to
do something, you do it.
(returning to his desk,
back to the grade book)
Back to business. Jacob Riley.

Jacob says nothing.

WESLEY
Mr. Riley!

JACOB
Sorry...80. 80.

END OF FLASHBACK #4

DISSOLVE TO:

A SILENT COURTROOM

August doesn't speak. He just lets the image sit for a moment.

AUGUST
Good work, Jacob. That was very brave.

August sits.

JUDGE CARTER
Mr. Vorhees?

Jerry looks to the judge smugly.

JERRY
Your Honor, since no connection has been made to direct testimony of any kind, we have no desire to even recognize this witness.

JUDGE CARTER
You may step down, Mr. Riley.

Jacob does as he is told.

JUDGE CARTER (CONT'D)
Mr. Gorsky, I'm sorry. But with no connection to direct testimony, I must now advise the jury to completely disregard--

AUGUST
Served on a platter, Your Honor.
Defense re-calls Dr. Wesley Anguila.

Everyone looks around. Wesley is seated in the middle of a row. He gets up, squeezes past many students from his class and walks toward the stand. Only his FOOTSTEPS are audible.

August picks up a folded card from the defense table.

JUDGE CARTER

You realize, Dr. Anguila, that you're still under oath?

WESLEY
Yes, Your Honor.

AUGUST
Dr. Anguila, I have here a copy of Seth's last report card.

WESLEY
(snide)
What are you gonna do, make me read his grades out loud?

AUGUST
No sir. I would never humiliate you like that. I just want you to list the courses that he took.

WESLEY
Why?

JUDGE CARTER
(chiming in)
Just answer the question, Doctor.

Wesley takes the report card, reads it aloud.

WESLEY
English 4, Chemistry, Western Civilization, Pre-Calculus, Spanish--

AUGUST
(interrupting)
Spanish. Wonderful language, that. I took three years of it at this very high school.

WESLEY
Good for you.

AUGUST
Dr. Anguila, Seth frequently referenced "the Eel" in his e-mails to Jacob. Most notably, he vilified the Eel in his final entry. His most angry and bitter declaration.
(to the jury)
The e-mails between Jacob Seth were in Spanish. His best class. I had them translated.
(meaningful pause)
Doctor, does your last name have a translation in Spanish?

WESLEY

Not that I know of.

AUGUST
Try again, Doctor.

Jerry holds back an objection. He wants to know himself.

WESLEY
It's a very loose translation.

AUGUST
On the contrary. According to our translator, it's an exact definition. Please say it. And loud enough so we all can hear.

WESLEY
It means...it means eel.

A lone VOICE YELPS approval. August looks out into the crowd. Valerie is standing in the back. Others MUMBLE their surprise as the judge BANGS his gavel.

AUGUST
Seth Gilrein wasn't aiming at the student standing behind you, was he, Dr. Anguila? He was aiming at you. Finally, fruitlessly pulling the trigger of an empty gun. You were the straw that broke the camel's back. The catalyst. Seth had a breaking point and you're the one who found it, weren't you?

Wesley has no answer. He looks to the kids in the crowd. Nobody is about to come to his aid.

AUGUST (CONT'D)
That's why you didn't say everything leading up to March 24th. You left out the fuse that ignited the bomb. Did you have temporary amnesia, sir? At least that would be an excuse.

Wesley is speechless. Vorhees slumps in his chair.

AUGUST
Didn't think so. Thank you, Doctor.
(turning to the bench)
Defense rests.

It's as if a great weight has been lifted off all the kids' shoulders. Their guilt has been purged. Dr. Anguila slinks off the stand, trying to muster a last shred of dignity. But there's none there.

August returns to his chair, sits. Linda places her hand on

his shoulder and squeezes.

CROSS DISSOLVE TO:

AUGUST--

Pacing the floor in front of the jury, delivering his closing statement.

AUGUST

Were the Gilreins to blame for what happened on March 24th? Yes, I'm afraid they were. But so were Seth's fellow students, who actually wagered and cheered as he was being tormented. And his teachers, who stood idly by, disseminating innocuous suspensions instead of gathering the parents to exact real change. As was the vicious and psychologically damaging Dr. Wesley Anguila. Was Seth ill-prepared for what happened to him at school? Perhaps. But what he went through was extraordinary, by any standards. I'm not excusing what he did. It was criminal. But when it came down to it, all he wanted was a simple education.

(pause)

He gave us one, instead.

August sits, folds his hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

The attendants sit in quiet anticipation. The Gileins and August stand next to one another, hands interlocked. The jury is already assembled.

JUDGE CARTER

Madame foreperson, has the jury reached a verdict?

FOREPERSON

We have, Your Honor. In the matter of Wellburn et al. versus Gilrein, we find the defendants, Mark and Linda Gilrein...not guilty.

There is a smattering of APPLAUSE as the couple embraces. Even Vorhees looks over with some measure of sympathy.

JUDGE CARTER

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,

your work is finished. You are
hereby excused with our thanks.
Court is adjourned.

Judge Carter BANGS his gavel, turns to August and shrugs, as
two SECURITY GUARDS approach.

One of them handcuffs August, who willingly gives himself
over to their custody.

Linda turns to her lawyer, who is already facing the door.

LINDA
(more to herself)
What Seth went through, all alone.

Linda looks at the defeated parents of the dead boys as they
console one another.

LINDA (CONT'D)
There's nothing to celebrate, is
there? Not for any of us.

AUGUST
You fought for your son, Linda.
Celebrate that.

LINDA
We'll never be able to repay you
for what you did.

AUGUST
(looking toward his wife)
You already have.

August is escorted out. Linda and Mark join hands and follow.
The remainder of the crowd begins to disperse as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The seniors have gathered. Mary walks up to the front gate,
places Seth's picture next to the other three.

She backs up, stands next to Jacob. A hint of sun peeks
through the clouds.

The kids bow their heads in silent prayer.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPERS:

Shortly after the trial, Mark and Linda Gilrein moved to
Schenectady, NY. They recently adopted an 8-year-old boy.

August Gorsky was elected to the Massachusetts State Senate. He currently serves on the Education Committee and is a vociferous advocate for disciplinary reform.

Dr. Wesley Anguila was fired from St. Peter-Marian High School. He never even went back to collect his belongings.

Nobody served time or paid any damages for the March Massacre.

The event itself took less than three minutes.

Fade out.