

----- This is a section of scene 3 from my short play “Eye of God”. This play was written and submitted for the International Thespians Competition earlier this year. In this play, two teens (Marie and Evan) sit by a memorial table for Charlotte, a victim of school violence, speaking to one another about their memory of the event. This play was written to convey the horrors of school shootings. Warning for sensitive imagery/topics. -----

SCENE 3: THE HANDS

(The set shifts completely. The memorial table is rolled away and replaced by the desks of a classroom. The lighting changes to a dark blue. Eleven figures run in and join MARIE and EVAN on the floor. Each teen is holding a small candle, a tiny flame glowing softly. They are huddled together, looking terrified.)

MARIE:

You remember everything when you're scared. Everything.

The floor was rough carpet. I was digging my fingernails into the ground. The classroom smelt like flowers. Everything was fine just a few moments ago.

I remember the light, filtering in through the slits in the covered windows.

I remember the taste of my hand, my teeth pushing into my fingers.

Then outside, I heard the choir of Hell.

(Awful screams can be heard.)

There are twelve of us in the room...

...A guardian angel's voice warned us, desperately.

(The sound of an intercom announcing a lockdown comes on.)

We could not hear her. The choir persists. And persists. They sing until their throats run raw. I remember the melody.

...

And soon enough, they stop singing.

(The screaming trails off. The eleven students around her begin to hit their chest, as if to replicate a panicked heartbeat. They breathe heavily. MARIE begins to look more distressed, having more and more trouble recounting the events)

I heard every person's heartbeat. Every person's breathing. And then I heard footsteps. Growing nearer. I heard the shaking of metal. The trying of every single door.

Then it was our turn.

I remember... the doorknob was seized. The door began to shake with all the fury of Satan and every demon in Hell. And Heaven's gate was breached.

(The sound of a door breaking open can be heard. The SILHOUETTE enters. A scream goes around the room. A flashlight with a red beam slowly sweeps the room.)

He was so angry.

(As the flashlight passes them, three people hold up their candles, blowing out the flame and holding it to their chest. They slump over, the “beating” of their heart slowing and slowing as the scene goes on, until it eventually stops)

His hands cried anguish.

(Five people blow out their candles one by one, and hold it to their forehead. They slump over. Their “beating” heart stops nearly instantaneously)

His eyes demanded revenge.

(Two more people blow out their candle, and then hold it to their stomach, going completely still. Their beating heart slowing as the scene goes on, until it eventually stops all at different times)

His eyes...

(The flashlight sweeps the room around MARIE. The intercom cuts out. There is a long silence.)

I think the Devil I was imagining had slits for eyes. Or maybe they were just pure black. I was imagining fangs, and claws, and long, ugly horns. A snout and wrinkled skin. A vessel to hold all of my hatred. But it wasn't the Devil. It was just... someone.

I remember his breathing. The beating of his heart. I saw the Hell he carried in his body. I saw the scars on his arms. I saw the weariness in his bones. And a certain look in his eyes.

That look was so familiar. It was the same look I'd seen a million times before. It was the final look that those around me had in their eyes, the look they died with.

Hatred. And it burned, burned in his eyes.

And I just... I just remember thinking... I thought “If you can hate me, a stranger, this much... you must be miserable”

And I just... I just said to him— and I don't know why— but-

(The red flashlight is aimed at her suddenly, MARIE flinches and finally opens her eyes, staring at the source of this light with wide eyes. She begins to hyperventilate. Upon seeing this, EVAN sets his hand on her shoulder, scoots closer, and nods his head at her. She looks at him, then closes her eyes. She turns her head to the SILHOUETTE, and opens them with a defiant look. Just as she does, two bright flashlights situated right by MARIE's face are aimed at the SILHOUETTE, as if they were coming from MARIE's eyes. They are the same warm yellow as the “sun”. The red flashlight turns off at the same time. The SILHOUETTE is illuminated by this light.)

“I'm sorry.”

(A long silence fills the room. Then, retreating footsteps can be heard as the SILHOUETTE exits.)

I don't know why I said that. But he was gone. And I was alive.

(MARIE draws in a deep breath. CHARLOTTE is the final student, to stop hitting her chest in heartbeat fashion. The room is silent now. MARIE speaks, almost in a whisper.)

Listen around you. Right now. You don't know how loud breathing is until you can't hear it anymore.