

AFTERMATH

A One Act Drama

by Jon Jory

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A One Act Drama

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SYNOPSIS: A group of high school students grapples with that aftermath of a school shooting. Follow along as students and their families attempt to learn their new normal. A touching look into the grief that plagues American schools.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 females, 4 males, 7 extras)

MRS. JONES (f) Raven and Lindsey’s mom. *(3 lines)*
 RAVEN (f) 18, Mrs. Jones’s daughter. *(67 lines)*
 LINDSEY (f) 16, Mrs. Jones’s daughter. *(67 lines)*
 DARLA (f) High school student. *(15 lines)*
 KATE (f) High school student. *(29 lines)*
 STEPHANIE (f) High school student. *(7 lines)*
 JOEY (m) 18; High school student. *(29 lines)*
 WATTS (m) 17; High school student. *(26 lines)*
 BETTS (f) 40, Mrs. Jones’s friend. *(3 lines)*
 BOB (m) Mr. Jones’s friend. *(16 lines)*
 MR. JONES (m) Raven and Lindsey’s father. *(17 lines)*
 DONNA (f) cheerleader. *(14 lines)*
 JODY (f) cheerleader. *(13 lines)*
 VOICE (m/f) offstage or pre-recorded *(1 line)*

EXTRAS: 4 women, 3 men. Seven in white. The shades of the students killed in the shooting. *(Non-Speaking.)*

JIMMY (m)
 MIKEY (m)
 ZENDAYA (“DAYA”) (f)
 DEEKAY (m)
 ALLISON (f)
 TINA (f)
 BECCA (f)

DURATION: 30 minutes.

SETTING: The stage floor and a platform.

SET

Easy to move stage props are utilized to affect the specific locations. Stage Props needed: small table, two chairs, sofa, coffee table. There needs to be a platform located on the stage where the seven students killed in the shooting will stand.

PROPS

- three memorial flower bouquets
- stuffed giraffe
- backpack
- framed photo
- books
- papers
- two cookies on a plate
- cell phone
- pizza box
- football
- knitting needle
- yarn
- kleenex
- coffee in a paper cup
- newspaper
- sign that says "no more"
- sign that says "Please help us."

AT START: *An empty stage. Perhaps there might be platforms upstage where the “ghosts” can overlook the action, but it’s not crucial. Downstage near the audience is a small memorial pile of three flower bouquets and a stuffed giraffe animal. Just before the play begins a sofa is rolled or brought center by stagehands. There might be coffee table placed in front of it. MRS. JONES, a character in her forties sits on the sofa. She has some form of hand work in her lap, but sits staring out at us lost in thought. Suddenly she shakes her head and very firmly says...*

MRS. JONES: No.

A moment later her eldest daughter, RAVEN enters. She is eighteen. Home from school she tosses a backpack on the floor and kisses her mom on the cheek. MRS. JONES smiles.

RAVEN: Hi Mom, I love you to pieces, but what I really, really want to know is if you made the praline cookies?

MRS. JONES nods.

RAVEN: With pecans, right?

MRS. JONES nods and smiles.

RAVEN: And I know you want to know how I am and I’m pretty good, so that’s pretty good, right? And, ummm, I know you’re not pretty good yet, but you will be, Mom, and pretty good feels really good. It actually feels amazing. And I aced the trig test. *(Starts to exit.)* Oh, Lindsey, as usual, forgot something in her locker and had to go back, but she said she’d catch a ride with Glo so she’s probably on her way. *(Moves toward MRS. JONES.)* You heard me, Mom, right?

MRS. JONES smiles and nods.

RAVEN: I am now going to eat six incredible praline cookies, which is just enough sugar to fly to the moon unaided and I love you.

RAVEN exits. MRS. JONES looks after her, then she takes out a framed photo from under a couch pillow and looks at it. She kisses it three times. Replaces it and exits in a different direction from RAVEN. LINDSEY, Raven's sister, enters and just drops some books and papers on the floor.

LINDSEY: Mom? Are you upstairs, Mom? Raven just left me there, can you believe it? Mom? *(To herself.)* I can't stand this, I can't stand this, I cannot stand this. *(Calling.)* Mom? *(To herself.)* As if. Hey, Raven?

RAVEN: *(Offstage.)* In the kitchen.

LINDSEY: Are there cookies?

RAVEN: *(Offstage.)* Yes.

LINDSEY: Bring me cookies. *(Throws herself on the sofa. Feels something and pulls the framed picture out.)* Yeah, right.

LINDSEY looks back at the picture, kisses it, puts it back. RAVEN enters with two praline cookies on a plate.

RAVEN: You rode with Glo?

LINDSEY: No.

RAVEN: Who did you ride with?

LINDSEY: That would officially be none of your business.

RAVEN: You didn't ride with BJ, right?

LINDSEY: What are you, the vice squad?

RAVEN: That guy is a bad guy.

LINDSEY: Yeah, well that's what I'm up for at the moment.

RAVEN hands LINDSEY the plate

LINDSEY: So what's up with the cookie rule?

RAVEN: Saving some for Dad.

LINDSEY: So he's coming home?

RAVEN: I don't know, but if he comes there's cookies.

LINDSEY takes both cookies.

LINDSEY: It's so weird how this goes.

RAVEN: (*Ruffling LINDSEY'S hair.*) I know.

LINDSEY: It's like that domino thing where you set them up in line and then when the first one falls over they all fall over.

RAVEN: We don't.

LINDSEY: Yeah, maybe.

RAVEN: (*Sitting with LINDSEY.*) Mom seemed a little better.

LINDSEY: You think so?

RAVEN: Yeah, some.

LINDSEY: What's this then?

LINDSEY pulls the framed picture out. RAVEN holds it and looks at it.

RAVEN: It scares her that she might forget what he looks like.

Above them the young man in the picture, JIMMY, enters dressed in white and watches.

LINDSEY: She can't forget what Jimmy looks like.

RAVEN: (*Handing back the photo.*) I have already.

LINDSEY puts it back in the hiding place.

RAVEN: I thought Dad put all the pictures in the trunk of his car?

LINDSEY: Apparently not. I mean that was a terrible idea in the first place. That's so cruel. What was he thinking?

RAVEN: What are any of us thinking? We're trying to make it easier, but we can't figure out how.

LINDSEY: Well that's not the way.

RAVEN: I don't know. I guess we all have a breaking point—if we know anything we know that. His was Mom holding a picture of Jimmy and just crying and crying and crying. That just turned out to be beyond his ability to cope.

LINDSEY: Yeah, well I don't forgive him and you shouldn't either.

RAVEN: Who knows how to do this? I don't. Boy, I don't. Anything we do about it either breaks our heart or somebody else's.

LINDSEY bangs her head with both hands.

RAVEN: Hey, hey.

LINDSEY: I hate myself.

RAVEN: No you don't.

LINDSEY: I kind of went off in trig.

RAVEN: Went off how?

LINDSEY: I mean we're sitting there, right? Seven of our friends are dead and we're sitting in this room trying to figure out the relationships between the sides and the angles of triangles with fifteen people skipping class and they're still finding blood on the walls. Give me a break, what is that? So I hear somebody yelling about that and after a minute I figure out it's me. I have on the same shirt I took off and stuffed in a wound six weeks ago. It was insane to sit there so I got up and yelled about it and left.

A pause.

RAVEN: Sounds like a good thing to do.

LINDSEY: Really?

RAVEN: Yeah.

LINDSEY: Yeah, right.

RAVEN: Seriously. Sometimes I think I never had feelings before the shooting. I mean I bumped into stuff and got bruises and messed around with anger like it was a play toy and stuff like that, but I don't feel like I had any feelings that stuck. Feelings were just incidental and then feelings got central and that was a whole different ball game. We have no idea where to put them. At least I don't.

A pause.

LINDSEY: Okay, so you're a pain, but you're pretty smart.

RAVEN: Mainly I'm just a pain. Anyway, Dad says it's a lie to say time heals. He says time just keeps on ticking 'til the scab falls off.

LINDSEY: I don't even have a scab yet. I just bleed.

RAVEN: I love you.

LINDSEY: I don't love you, you only gave me two cookies.

RAVEN: Do your trig.

LINDSEY: Hah-hah.

RAVEN: I'm going up to check on Mom.

LINDSEY: So is she ever going to talk again?

RAVEN: She will. She just has to get the lump out of her throat. Just remember, none of us are in charge of this.

LINDSEY: Poor Jimmy.

RAVEN: Poor Jimmy.

A pause.

LINDSEY: You think Dad will come home?

RAVEN: He will. Just maybe not today.

LINDSEY: Maybe we won't cry tonight.

RAVEN: I think that's tomorrow night.

LINDSEY and RAVEN hug and then exit different directions. The lights change. Stagehands remove the rolling sofa. JIMMY sits on the floor still watching. DARLA, KATE, and STEPHANIE enter and move down to the memorial flowers.

DARLA: Can you believe this? I mean this is so depressing.

KATE: Why?

DARLA: You saw it the day after, right?

KATE: The day after I stayed home with my door locked and sat in the closet.

DARLA: *(Putting out her hand just below shoulder height.)* The flowers and stuff were like up to here. There were lighted candles and teddy bears and poems and pictures all the way down to the end of the street. Now we're down to three bouquets and a stuffed giraffe. I mean this is really, really sad.

STEPHANIE: You can't mourn forever, I guess, you have to move on, right?

DARLA: We can say that, but we didn't lose anybody.

KATE: Hey, not true. You know that's not true, Darla.

DARLA: I mean directly. We're not blood. Yeah sure we all lost somebody, but not somebody who wasn't home for dinner.

KATE: You hung out with Mikey the last half of freshman year...

Another boy, MIKEY, in white enters up stage.

KATE: You guys were peas and carrots.

DARLA: Yeah, okay, yeah, but that was just around the edges of my life. We were kind of, I don't know, stuck with each other. It wasn't...
(*She suddenly puts one hand over her mouth.*)

STEPHANIE: It's okay, Darla. It's okay.

DARLA: It wasn't...

KATE: Yes, it was.

KATE hugs DARLA.

DARLA: Don't hug me okay. Don't put your hands on me.

KATE: (*Hands in air.*) Okay.

A pause.

DARLA: I mean I want you to hug me, I just don't...

KATE: I get it. No problem, I completely get it.

DARLA: Maybe not just yet. I feel like my nerves have nerves.

A pause. They look at the memorial.

STEPHANIE: I don't want to be defined by it, you know, like there will always be somebody whispering, "She was in the Rolling Hills shooting." They'll be doing that at my wedding. Like this is the only thing I am.

DARLA: First of all, you're a survivor, not a victim. We just have to live cool lives for the seven who can't. Otherwise he broke us. I'm not giving that monster the satisfaction.

A pause.

KATE: There should be more flowers though.

RAVEN enters and walks by.

KATE: Hey, Raven.

RAVEN: (*Still walking.*) Hey.

KATE: (*Calling after her.*) You doing okay?

RAVEN pumps her fist twice into the air above her head as she exits.

DARLA: *(Looking after her.)* I can't imagine.

STEPHANIE: We can all imagine. I'd give anything not to have an imagination for a couple of years.

KATE: *(Kisses her own finger and then presses it gently to STEPHANIE'S forehead.)* Granted.

STEPHANIE: *(A smile.)* Thanks.

KATE: See you at practice. *(Exits.)*

DARLA: By the way, you're Stephanie who edits the paper, builds incredible robot fighting machines and who is desperately pursued by a thousand colleges who want her on their volleyball teams, but, most importantly, you are Stephanie who taught her dog Screwloose to lick Brad Pitt's image whenever he's on television, and also survived the Rolling Hills shooting.

STEPHANIE: That's me.

DARLA: See you at practice. *(Starts to exit.)*

STEPHANIE: Thank god for practice. *(Starts to exit the other way.)*

DARLA: *(Not looking back.)* You speak the truth.

STEPHANIE and DARLA exit. JOEY and WATTS enter carrying a pizza box and plop down on stage.

JOEY: No, I seriously, desperately hate the guy, man.

WATTS: Yeah.

JOEY: No, seriously. One of the things I can't extract from my head is that this guy shoots my actual friends, that he murders Zendaya who *(ZENDAYA, a young woman in white appears upstage joining the others.)* helps me, for no good reason, with my French and sent everyone in class hand drawn Valentine cards and who never harmed even a grasshopper. He murders her and then shoots her a couple times for good luck, but then to avoid jail he kills himself. He shoots nine kids and seven of them die and he's a complete coward!

A pause.

WATTS: Hey man, can we just eat lunch?

JOEY: No, Watts, we can't "just eat lunch," that's the whole deal, that's why the shooter wins because we can't "just eat lunch" ever again. He puts our minds in the fire and then he exits the universe so we can't ever be what we were before. Never. You know what he took from me? Just existing. He's the loop in my head. I see the moment he shot Daya so she's thrown against the trophy case so hard it vaporized and then she fell face forward and you could hear her hit the floor all the way down the hall, and that's a loop. I see that, hear that, thirty times a day including when I eat dinner with my folks.

WATTS: My dad says we have to stay strong because that passes and...

JOEY: Passes? Man, there is no "passes."

WATTS: He says you have to roll with it and...

JOEY: Oh please...

WATTS: After some time the loop is gone, but if you fight it...

JOEY: Just forget it.

WATTS: That just cements the loop.

JOEY: Blah, blah, blah.

WATTS: Seriously, man.

JOEY: Right, yeah, I would like to believe that. I need to believe that.

WATTS: It's going to be okay.

JOEY: Yeah, whatever. At least the funerals are over. I never even went to a funeral before this. Seven funerals. I'm done. I'm way done.

LINDSEY enters.

LINDSEY: Hey.

JOEY: Hey Lindsey—so, you want to sit?

LINDSEY: No, I just...

WATTS: Sit.

LINDSEY: Just for a minute.

JOEY: Pull up some grass.

LINDSEY: For a minute. *(Sits.)*

WATTS: *(After a brief pause.)* How you doin', girl?

LINDSEY: Hey, Watts. Good shoes.

WATTS: You okay?

LINDSEY: Who's okay? I'm okay like all the other people who aren't okay. Well, maybe I'm a little better, but I'm not proud of it.

WATTS: I get that.

LINDSEY: Thanks. My sister doesn't get it.

WATTS: She's a tough date. Not for the faint of heart.

LINDSEY: So they're going to let the football team play this week?

WATTS: So they say. How dumb was it to cancel games so we can all sit around and cry. Oh sorry, guys, don't cry.

LINDSEY: Everybody wants to play, right?

JOEY: Everybody who's alive. (*Another guy in white, DEEKAY, enters above. He carries a football.*) Sorry. Anyway, you're in a game you can't think about other stuff or they knock your teeth out. So, that's good. That's really good. That's ordinary. I never realized how fantastic ordinary is.

WATTS: Word.

JOEY: How's your mom? Or should I ask?

LINDSEY: Fine. Well, actually she's not fine. Actually she's kind of scary.

WATTS: What kind of scary?

LINDSEY: She doesn't talk.

WATTS: As in, "not much"?

LINDSEY: As in never.

WATTS: Okay.

JOEY: You mean since "the day"?

LINDSEY: Since the day.

JOEY: She just like, "sits"?

LINDSEY: No, she does stuff like always. Cleans like she was killing the furniture, but never speaks. She keeps touching me like she wants to make sure I'm there, but not a word. Scares me.

WATTS: Yeah, well, after the shooting it's all scary. Every morning I do this prayer thing in my car. And I don't pray.

JOEY: Miss your brother, huh?

LINDSEY: (*Nods.*) Miss my brother.

JOEY: Me too.

LINDSEY: It's like none of us know how to act, y'know? Since Jimmy got taken, the house is like a minefield!

JOEY: Losing Jimmy—I can't imagine. That guy was a presence.

LINDSEY puts her head in her hands.

JOEY: I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

LINDSEY: No, don't be sorry. Please don't. I have to be able to talk about it. I don't want to go where Mom is.

JOEY: Dude was special.

LINDSEY: They were all special. All seven were special, we just didn't know it. He was just more special in our house.

JOEY: There's gotta be away to go back, right? Like right back to the moment before the first shot. But how? It's like this dead end where there's no road back to normal. If we...

WATTS: *(A sudden explosion.)* Just shut up about it! Stop talking and just suck it up! *(A shocked silence.)* Sorry, I'm really sorry. I don't even know where that came from. I don't even know who that was.

JOEY: That was me.

LINDSEY: That was me.

JOEY: We're just ragged.

LINDSEY: We're not all in one piece, we just look that way. *(Reaches out and touches WATTS.)* You're good. You're just ragged like the rest of us.

WATTS: *(Shaking his head.)* I'm sorry.

LINDSEY: *(Getting up.)* Hey, if you guys see Raven will you tell her I need a ride today?

WATTS: Yeah, I see her last period.

LINDSEY: Thanks. *(To JOEY.)* You guys are going to kick butt.

JOEY: In our dreams. They won state last year. I just need to play some ball.

LINDSEY: *(Checks her phone.)* Gotta go. *(Starts to exit.)*

JOEY: Hey Lindsey, does Raven like me?

LINDSEY: Not enough.

JOEY laughs.

LINDSEY: But I do. *(Exits.)*

JOEY: Did I hear that?

WATTS: Far as I know. The point is what will you do about it?

JOEY: Well, I'm definitely processing. *(Starts to exit. Turns back. WATTS is standing there staring.)* Hey, Watts, what's up?

WATTS: The loop. Sorry.

JOEY: Come on, man.

WATTS: *(To himself.)* I have to stop doing that.

JOEY: We're late.

WATTS: Yeah. If I cared.

JOEY and WATTS exit. RAVEN enters with KATE. RAVEN has her arm around her.

RAVEN: It's okay, seriously, it's no biggy.

KATE: I don't know why I did that, I shouldn't have done that.

RAVEN: You think you're the first one? All you hear in the school is doors slamming. You want a Kleenex? *(Offers Kleenex.)*

KATE: It's so embarrassing.

RAVEN: Katy, if I don't run out of one class a day crying, I'm not doing my job.

KATE: *(Takes Kleenex.)* Thank you. *(Wipes her eyes.)* What's your job?

RAVEN: Grief. Gotta mourn my brother.

KATE: And that's my job too?

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