

GUN

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TEASER

EXT. I-5 NORTHBOUND SHOULDER - DAY

Dreary, rainy morning. The kind of drizzle that gets one more depressed than wet. Thick stand of tall evergreens on either side of the interstate. The grey of the sky perfectly matches the gray of the pavement.

Parked car, occupied, Washington State plates. Its age and high-mileage shows. Starter cranking away in vain. The figure in the driver's seat violently shaking the steering wheel.

INT. CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

DRIVER

No!!! Come on you piece of shit!!

Starter still churning away, slowing as it gulps the remaining juice from the battery.

The driver's male, buzz-cut, early-20's, acne scars only partially obscured by a ratty attempt at a beard. He squeezes the steering wheel, hard. Eyes closed tight, pushing with all his weight back against his seat.

Breathing hard, grunting primally, driver tries to start the car again. Battery fades, the starter's just clicking now.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Fuck!!

Driver pushes steering wheel with both hands, hard enough to bend it, yelling gutturally.

TAP TAP TAP

EXT. I-5 NORTHBOUND SHOULDER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

STATE PATROL TROOPER taps on the driver's closed window with the end of his flashlight. Driver is oblivious, thrashing around. Trooper taps again.

TAP TAP TAP

Driver flinches in shock, sees officer, stares wide-eyed. Trooper, early 40s, would pass for a former defensive lineman. A few pounds heavier these days, but with a chest like a whiskey barrel.

Driver snaps out of his frenzy, sits up straight, eyes darting back and forth. After a beat, cranks his window down.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
Little bit of car trouble?

DRIVER
(not making eye contact)
Yeah, I don't know, it just quit.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
Yup, sounds like a Monday morning.

Trooper takes a slow look around the car, taking inventory.

STATE PATROL TROOPER (CONT'D)
Yup, these old chevies aren't quite like the new ones. Seems like they're always blowing a pump, or something's screwy with the electrical. Can I call you a tow?

DRIVER
A tow? No, I'm fine.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
No, you're not fine, you're broke-down on the side of a freeway. You have triple-a?

DRIVER
No, I'll get it going.

Trooper takes a long look at the driver, whose all-black attire, down to the black combat boots, screams one part paramilitary, one part dejected kid playing dress-up.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
So, where are you headed? Can someone give you a ride?

Driver stares forward, jaw tightens a little.

DRIVER
(still avoiding eye contact)
Nowhere, I'll figure it out.

Trooper scans interior of car, notices the oversized black duffle bag in the back seat, and the bulging black backpack in the front seat. Empty energy drink cans all over, a half-empty pint of vodka on the passenger seat floor.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
Going nowhere, huh? Well, that's
too bad. What are you up to today?
You going on a trip?

DRIVER
A trip? No, no trip. I'll just call
my mom to come get me.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
Alright, now that sounds like a
plan. I'll wait and make sure you
get a hold of her.

Driver stares forward, frustration spills across his face.

STATE PATROL TROOPER (CONT'D)
Well, are you going to call?

DRIVER
I left my phone at home.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
Ah, what a shame. Dangerous to
drive without a phone these days.
Could it be in your backpack there?

Trooper points at backpack in the front seat with the butt of
his flashlight, driver's eyes don't acknowledge it.

DRIVER
No, it's at home.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
I can call someone for you. What's
your name?

DRIVER
My name?

STATE PATROL TROOPER
Yeah, that's right. Your name.

DRIVER
Travis.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
You have a last name, Travis?

DRIVER
Davis. Travis Davis.

STATE PATROL TROOPER
OK Travis, who can I call for you?

DRIVER

No one, I'll just walk to the next gas station.

STATE PATROL TROOPER

It's raining out here, Travis, why don't we just call somebody? The next station is up three exists. Where do you live?

DRIVER

I'm fine, I'll just walk.

STATE PATROL TROOPER

Why don't you let me see your ID, Travis? It is Travis, right?

Driver stares forward, indignant.

DRIVER

I don't have it.

STATE PATROL TROOPER

Well, Travis, this just isn't your day for remembering stuff. Let me go write this up. I'll be back in a second, you sit tight.

Trooper heads back to his car, turns his head as he hears the sound of a car door opening and boots hitting the ground.

Driver takes off running towards the woods, trooper gives chase. Trooper gets on his radio.

STATE PATROL TROOPER (CONT'D)

(into radio, shouting)

Seven oscar seven, central.

DISPATCH

(from radio)

7-oh-7, go ahead.

STATE PATROL TROOPER

(yelling, breathing hard)

Suspect, fleeing traffic stop, on foot, into the woods, near exit 1-20-8, I-5 northbound. I'm in pursuit. Request all available backup, K-9 if available.

DISPATCH

7-oh-7 copy. Central to all
available units, assist 7-oh-7 with
pursuit of suspect on foot in woods
near I-5 northbound, exit 1-2-8.
K9-19 can you respond?

Chase continues, weaving through the dense stand of trees.
Trooper is yelling at Driver to stop, driver runs deeper into
the woods.

Leaping over logs, darting around trees, Driver starts to
pull ahead. Driver leaps up onto a large fallen cedar tree,
the moss and slime cause him to lose his footing, his feet
slide out from underneath him. He SLAMS down on top of tree,
tumbling over it to the ground. He lands with a loud THUD.

Trooper comes running around tree, drawing down on Driver.

STATE PATROL TROOPER

(winded)

Roll-over!!

(huffing and puffing)

Hands above your head!! Do it now!!

Driver lets out long sigh, slowly rolls over.

Trooper pounces on driver, giving a hard knee to the sacrum.
One cuff, then the other. Trooper is breathing hard, workouts
like this don't come often.

EXT. I-5 NORTHBOUND SHOULDER - DAY - A LITTLE LATER

Driver's car in-between state police vehicles, several
troopers onsite, two are searching car.

INT. CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

STATE PATROL TROOPER 2

Holy shit--

STATE PATROL TROOPER 3 looks over at other trooper, sees some
of the contents of the large black duffle bag. STATE PATROL
TROOPER 2 is holding a thin stack of what look like printed-
out blueprints, marked up with red marker.

STATE PATROL TROOPER 2 (CONT'D)

(to other trooper)

We need to call this in. We need to
call this in right now--

END TEASER

ACT ONE

SUPER: Monday.

INT. THOM'S WORK - DAY

Monday morning in a modern, open seating plan office. Cubicles everywhere. The din of office work. Phone conversations, side conversations.

Thom's desk, his nameplate clearly visible.

Thom is a project manager at a regional bank. Late 30's. Keen intellect, inhibited affect. Looks right at home in the Pacific Northwest. Techie, but not overly so. He has his dress fleece and his casual fleece.

Thom is just sitting there, staring at his space. He is looking around his desk, taking it all in. His computer, his notebook. His picture of his family and his kids. In the mild commotion of an open office, he is quiet.

He's just staring at his monitor, email inbox, 112 unread messages. Thom gets a lot of email.

DAN

Hey Thom, good weekend?

Thom spins around, sees DAN MILLER, 40s, formally-dressed for a business casual environment.

THOM

Pretty good, yeah, what's up?

DAN

I just found out that the timeline for the summer upgrade needs to be eight weeks, not 12.

THOM

Wait, what? All of our estimates were on three-man teams. If you do it in eight weeks, you can only have two per branch. That means late nights and early mornings all summer.

DAN

Yeah, I know, but I was told in no uncertain terms that the upgrade has to be done before the next regulatory audit, which is Sept 1.

THOM

What is the point of doing a project plan if they just throw away all of the work?

DAN

Nothing I can do, I'm just relaying it to you. Make it happen. I know you can do it.

THOM

Fine. I'll rework it. Still a kickoff of July 1?

DAN

No, needs to be June 10. They want it done early in case there are any snags.

THOM

(getting frustrated)

So, they want to take a third of my schedule away, making our teams a third smaller, and they want to start sooner?

DAN

You got it. Hey, listen, I know you can do it. We're all on the same team here and we need to roll with the punches.

Dan makes focused, direct eye contact with Thom.

DAN (CONT'D)

Look, I'm late to a status meeting. I need your updated project plan by tomorrow noon.

THOM

Fine. I'll get it done.

Dan turns to walk away.

DAN

I know you will. Thanks Thom.

Thom is alone in his cube again. He lets out a big sigh, opens up his project plan and stares at it for a second.

THOM

(under his breath)

Fuck.

INT. THOM'S WORK - DAY - LATER

Thom is plugging away. His cell phone rings. Unknown Number.

THOM
(into phone)
This is Thom.

V.O.
(from phone)
This is a message from Tacoma Public Schools and the Tacoma Police Department, please listen carefully. State Patrol Officers apprehended a suspect that was allegedly planning to, and preparing to perpetrate, a major violent event at Webster Elementary this morning. The suspect is in custody and was stopped before he was able to reach the school. As a result of this arrest, and this subsequent discovery, Webster Elementary was on lockdown from 10 A.M. to 12 P.M today.

Thom looks at his watch, it's 3:37.

V.O. (CONT'D)
Webster Elementary has resumed normal operation and will continue operating normally. Extra police will be onsite throughout the week. Our schools are safe and no specific threat currently exists against our kids, our staff, or our facilities. We will release further information to parents and local media as it is available.

Thom just sits there, mouth agape, face flushed. During the call, the din of the office went silent. It's like time is frozen.

Sound comes back up, time begins again. Thom gets up from his desk, grabs his coat and bag and walks quickly to the side door. Thom is frantically dialing his wife. He gets her voicemail. He calls her office line, another VM. He calls the front desk.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING PARKING LOT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

FRONT DESK RECEPTIONIST
(from phone)
Thayer, Hatchell, and Reed; how may
I direct your call?

THOM
(into phone, urgent,
trembling voice)
This is Thom Andrews, I need to
speak with SARAH ANDREWS, it's an
emergency.

FRONT DESK RECEPTIONIST
OK, Thom, I think they're in a
meeting. Let me get her. One
moment.

Silence, Thom is pacing next to his car.

SARAH
(concerned)
Thom? What's wrong?

THOM
(talking fast)
Have you gotten the voicemail from
the police? They arrested somebody
planning a major event at Webster.
Have you heard anything!?

SARAH
An event? What do you mean *an*
event?! Is JAKE OK?

THOM
I don't know what happened.
Something about an arrest and the
school being on lockdown. They said
everything is normal now, but I
don't know what's going on.

SARAH
Have you tried calling the school?
What did they say?

THOM
No, you're my first call, I'll call
them next. Holy shit, this is
scary.

SARAH

What should we do? Do we go over there? What happened?

THOM

I am going to get Jake now.

SARAH

Wait, it's 3:40, they're already on their way home, I'll call DARCY.

THOM

Fuck, OK, I'll just head home. They'll be there before I can get to them.

SARAH

Will you still call the school? Do you need me to come home?

THOM

No, if the kids are home, or about to be, that's all that matters. I'll get there as fast as I can.

SARAH

I'll just leave now, this is important. I 'll be home in an hour.

THOM

OK, honey, I'll call you if I hear anything. I'll call Darcy too. I love you.

Thom hangs up, starts his car, quickly heads out of parking lot. Calls school over bluetooth. Immediately to voicemail.

V.O.

(from car speakers)

As many of you have heard, we had a potential incident at the school this morning. A suspect is in custody and no harm came to any children. The facility is safe and secure. Normal operations are running and school will dismiss at 3:30PM today, as normal. Due to the heavy call volume we are receiving, we cannot return any phone calls. You will receive further updates as we get them.

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)

If you would like to email Principal Lewis, his email is delewis@tacomaschools.org. Your children are safe and our facility is secure. Our students' safety is our *number one* concern and we thank the Washington State Patrol and the Tacoma Police Department for their intervention this morning. Our school is secure and operations will continue to run normally all this week.

Thom just drives, expressionless, in shock. Thom accelerates, the gravity of what has happened is visible on his face, and growing. He calls his wife back. Gets her voicemail.

THOM

(into phone)

Hi honey, holy shit. The school's phone just goes to a recorded message. Did you get a hold of Darcy? Has MEAGAN heard anything? I'm heading home as fast as I can. Let me know if you hear anything. I love you.

Thom grips the steering wheel, accelerates to pass a car, then another. Silent, focused, Thom drives aggressively.

INT. ANDREWS RESIDENCE - EVENING

Thom opens garage, drives in, quickly enters house, not bothering to close garage.

THOM

Guys, are you here?

DARCY

Hi dad.

JAKE

Yeah, hi dad.

Thom walks around corner to see daughter, DARCY, a seventh-grader, at kitchen counter doing homework. Son, JAKE, a fourth-grader, is sitting on the couch, playing a game on the iPad.

THOM

(relieved)

Hey guys.

THOM (CONT'D)
(to Jake, tenderly)
Are you OK buddy?

JAKE
(not really looking up
from the iPad)
Yeah, I'm OK. We had a lockdown
today.

Thom hugs Jake, Jake doesn't break his focus on his game.

THOM
I heard. Did they tell you what it
was about?

JAKE
(still looking down at
iPad)
Not really. Something about a
threat or something. We had to stay
under our desks for two hours. They
made kids go to the bathroom in a
bucket.

THOM
A bucket??

JAKE
(Jake looks up, finally)
Yeah, it was gross. The girls were
crying. We couldn't leave the room,
or even get out from under our
desks, and we had lunch late. We
had to whisper and a bunch of kids
got in trouble for being too loud.

THOM
Were you scared?

JAKE
No, not really, we have practice
lockdowns all the time. It was
pretty much like that, only a lot
longer.

THOM
Holy cow buddy, I'm sorry that
happened. But, they didn't tell you
why?

JAKE

No. When it was over we just went to lunch. We had recess inside, but we got an extra recess in the afternoon. We had to stay in our classroom, though, so it didn't really feel like a recess.

THOM

(to Darcy)

Did you know about this?

DARCY

The lockdown? Jake told me on the way home. We have practice lockdowns all the time too.

Darcy gives Thom a curious look.

DARCY (CONT'D)

Why are you guys freaking out about this?

THOM

Lockdowns are scary, honey.

Darcy shrugs.

Thom gives Jake a semi-hug from the side. Jake's focus is on his game.

THOM (CONT'D)

I'm glad you're OK buddy.

JAKE

(not breaking his focus on his game)

I'm fine, dad.

Thom looks at his kids, one part relief, one part worry.

INT. JAKE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Thom and Sarah are putting the kids to bed, starting with Jake.

THOM

Good night buddy, sweet dreams.

JAKE

Good night dad.

Sarah hugs Jake.

SARAH

Good night little man. I love you so much.

JAKE

I love you too, mom.

INT. DARCY'S ROOM - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Parents walk in, Darcy has her phone, texting. She doesn't look up as her parents walk in.

DARCY

(looking at her phone)

Did you know there was someone arrested on their way to Jake's school today? Someone with a lot of guns?

Sarah's eyes get big, looks at Thom.

THOM

Yes, it's OK. And, you're not supposed to have your phone up here.

DARCY

(worried)

What happened? Is the school safe? Is Jake going to school tomorrow?

THOM

It was one person and the police got him. The school said it's safe and I believe them.

DARCY

Who was this guy? What was he planning to do?

THOM

It's time to go to sleep, sweetie, don't look this stuff up right now. We can talk about it tomorrow. Give me your phone and try to go to sleep. Everyone's OK.

Darcy reluctantly hands Thom her phone.

THOM (CONT'D)

(hug)

Good night sweetie.

SARAH

(hug)

Goodnight honey. I love you.

DARCY

I love you too mom. But, what's going on? Do we need to be worried about this?

SARAH

No sweetie, everything's fine. This was just one person and the police got him. Try and go to sleep.

Sarah kisses Darcy on the forehead. Darcy doesn't look satisfied. Thom and Sarah leave her room, go downstairs.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

SARAH

What do you think about all this?

THOM

I think it's as scary as hell. Can you imagine if the police wouldn't have found that guy, wouldn't have caught him?

SARAH

I've been trying to not think about that all evening. It makes me sick.

THOM

And, what's up with the school waiting until after school was out to tell us? That was such a chickenshit move--

SARAH

I'm just glad everyone is safe. I know you said no, but do you think we should keep Jake home? I'll be honest, I'm not sure I even want the kids to walk home by themselves tomorrow.

THOM

No, I think that will just make it worse. The more we freak out, the scarier it is for Jake. If there was any credible danger, the school would be closed.

SARAH
Who would do this? What kind of
person does this?

THOM
I don't know. I think the best
thing we can do is not traumatize
Jake by panicking about it.

SARAH
I guess. I still don't feel safe
with him at that school.

We hear someone coming down the stairs, it's Jake.

THOM
(to Jake)
Hey buddy, what's up?

JAKE
I can't sleep, I'm having bad
thoughts.

THOM
Bad thoughts? About what?

JAKE
Just bad thoughts.
(to Sarah)
Mom, will you snuggle with me?

SARAH
Of course, sweetie, let's get you
back to bed.

Sarah hugs Jake tenderly.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Everyone's safe.

Sarah and Jake head up the stairs. Thom, with a forlorn
expression, watches them go.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

Thom sitting in his chair, Sarah is coming back downstairs.
Thom's laptop is open on his lap. He's checking news sites
for info on the incident. He finds it, KOMO News, video. He
puts his headphones/earbuds on.

Reporter in the field reporting about incident from school.
Main anchor, ERIC ANDERSON, is throwing to reporter in the
field, AUDREY TAYLOR.

INT. KOMO NEWS STUDIO - EVENING

ERIC

We go live to Audrey Taylor who is at Webster Elementary in Tacoma this evening. Audrey, what happened today?

EXT. OUTSIDE WEBSTER ELEMENTARY - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

AUDREY

Hi Eric, after fleeing from a routine disabled vehicle stop, Washington State Patrol apprehended 24-year-old Yohan Millsap who, allegedly, was planning to perpetrate a mass-shooting event at Webster Elementary today.

Photo of Millsap.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Millsap was apprehended a mere 7 miles from the school. Found in his possession were numerous firearms, detailed floor plans for the school, a bullet-proof vest, and over 500 rounds of ammunition.

Show video from earlier in the day of Millsap's car from far away, doors and rear open, behind police line. Police cars with flashing lights in the foreground.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Police also discovered a YouTube video Millsap uploaded early this morning.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

As a warning to our viewers, this video contains disturbing content.

A black screen.

Video starts totally faded-out. Gunfire, like from an automatic rifle. Bursts of 5-10 shots each. Millsap's voice, focused and maniacal, comes in over a totally black background.

V.O.

You want to know what real power is?

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)

Real power is the ability to bend the world to your will. To reject what's false and project the truth into the world.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Fade in on Millsap doing target practice with an assault rifle. He's shooting at multiple objects. Glass bottles, paper target outlines of humans, pieces of wood. The weapon is making quick work of all of them, sawing them down. Millsap speaks over the video.

V.O.

They just don't get it. They think they can just kick us around. That we'll just take whatever pittance they feel like doling out, that they themselves are too good for. We are just a lower caste, a permanent underclass. It's inescapable for most, but not for all. Some know that escape must be taken by force.

CUT TO:

EXT WOODS - OTHER LOCATION - DAY

Millsap holding his biggest assault rifle up, with the butt on his thigh. Just posing for the camera.

V.O.

They are going to pay. Innocence is an illusion, they are all complicit. They are all ruthless conspirators and their time for reckoning is at hand. The righteous will prevail while the wicked are scorned.

CUT TO:

EXT WOODS - YET ANOTHER LOCATION - DAY

Millsap pacing back and forth, with a pistol in his hand. He stops and looks directly into the camera.

V.O.

They'll see, they'll all see. No one can escape judgement, no one can escape their punishment due.

Millsap turns and walks straight towards the camera, getting close to it, staring intently into the lens. Wide-eyed, staring deep into the camera.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds. No one is spared. My righteous will will triumph and, in my glory, the truth shall be revealed.

Video stops abruptly, freezing on Millsap's face in a hyper-focused, menacing stare at the camera. A slight, sinister grin is visible on his lips.

EXT. OUTSIDE WEBSTER ELEMENTARY - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Back to Audrey. She's visibly stunned. She looks past the camera, then back into the lens.

AUDREY

(stammering a bit)

Uh, Tacoma police chief WALTER BRADY held a press conference earlier this evening.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY - EARLIER

Tacoma Police Chief WALTER BRADY is giving a press conference to update local media on the details of the arrest and its ties to Webster.

WALTER

Mr. Milsap was apprehended after fleeing a routine disabled vehicle stop along I-5 northbound today, in Fern Hill, near Tacoma. Found in his possession were numerous firearms, ammunition, and detailed documents showing the floor plan of Webster Elementary school in Tacoma.

WALTER (CONT'D)

During a search of Milsap's Graham Washington home, a note was found, allegedly designed to be a suicide note. The note outlined a detailed plan which included taking control of the school during a multi-day stand-off with police. The note laid out, in great and grim detail, a plan to commit mass-murder of children and adults, that was expected to end at the hands of police at the end of a multi-day standoff.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Mr. Milsap is in custody this evening and is being charged with several counts of conspiracy to commit murder. Mr Milsap is being held without bail and is awaiting a full psychological assessment. Mr Milsap has refused to answer any questions and has remained silent since his arrest this afternoon.

WALTER (CONT'D)

We believe Mr. Milsap was acting alone and that no further threat current exists against Webster Elementary students or staff.

EXT. OUTSIDE WEBSTER ELEMENTARY - EVENING

Audrey has visibly collected herself a bit. Her voice is still a little weak.

AUDREY

As Chief Brady said, the suspect is in custody and no specific threat against Webster Elementary exists. We spoke with Webster's principal DWAYNE YOUNG earlier today.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY - EARLIER

DWAYNE

Our school is safe and is running normally. Our staff responded with aplomb, as did the Tacoma police department.

(MORE)

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Our safety measures were effective and we are grateful to the State Patrol for their quick action in apprehending this suspect. At Webster, our children's safety is our number one concern, and we will continue to do everything we can to keep our kids and our staff safe.

EXT. OUTSIDE WEBSTER ELEMENTARY - EVENING

AUDREY

Eric, parents tonight are understandably shaken up.

EXT. OUTSIDE WEBSTER ELEMENTARY - DAY - EARLIER

Various parent interviews, taken from parents gathered at the school.

PARENT #1

I just don't know what to think about all this. I'm scared to death to send my kids to school tomorrow. Sure, they caught this guy, but what if they hadn't? I just don't know--

Cut to other parent.

PARENT #2

This kind of thing makes me sick. Who would want to do this to a bunch of kids? I hope this guy never gets out of jail.

EXT. OUTSIDE WEBSTER ELEMENTARY - EVENING

AUDREY

A community in shock and disbelief. Reporting live from Webster Elementary in Tacoma, I'm Audrey Taylor.

INT. KOMO NEWS STUDIO - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

ERIC

A terrifying incident, thankfully avoided through the swift work of the Washington State Patrol.

Internet video fades out.

Thom closes his laptop, a look of 'holy fucking shit' comes across his face. He is silent for a moment.

THOM

(to Sarah)

I just can't believe this thing. It's so fucking scary.

SARAH

(looks up)

The thing at the school today? I know, terrifying.

THOM

They found a note at his house. Apparently he wanted to start a multi-day hostage situation and kill lots of people.

Sarah gasps, covers her mouth.

SARAH

Oh my god.

THOM

Yeah, no kidding.

They look at each other, exchange a long stare. Thom shakes his head, goes back to working. Sarah goes back to reading. Thom looks up, looks over at Sarah. Deep breath, despondent expression.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SUPER: Friday.

INT. THOM'S WORK - DAY

Thom is sitting at his desk, plugging away at a project plan. He sighs, hits his browser shortcut and types in Google News. There at the top of the page he sees a headline, clicks it to view the article. Portland newspaper website:

-- ON SCREEN --

Community College Under Siege by Gunman

Vancouver, WA – Terrified students were seen fleeing one of the campus buildings at Lower Columbia Community College today. The alleged gunman, Jason Stevenson, 19, entered the full Economics 201 classroom mid-morning, armed with a semi-automatic assault-style rifle with a high-capacity magazine...

-- END ON SCREEN --

Thom continues reading, looks up, sighs deeply. Thom's face tenses up, anger washes over it. Vancouver is only 135 miles away.

THOM
(under his breath)
Jesus Christ...

Thom looks at his watch, 4:30. He packs up his things and walks out the side door.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Thom and Sarah are sitting alone in the family room.

THOM
Did you hear about the gunman at
Lower Columbia this morning?

SARAH
Another one?

THOM
Yeah. He got into the classroom.
Assault weapon, fully loaded,
threatening the teacher over a
grade.

SARAH

Jesus. Was anyone hurt?

THOM

No, campus police got him before he did anything. I bet those kids were pretty freaked out. This guy came in the back of the classroom, yelling at their professor, gun in hand, and they ran.

SARAH

That's incredible. Thank goodness nothing happened.

THOM

Well, something happened, those kids and that teacher are probably in for a lifetime of nightmares and PTSD.

SARAH

That's terrible.

THOM

When is it enough? When have we had enough? Every couple months, it seems, we have one of these incidents. How much is enough? How much is enough for us to actually tell the truth? Our culture is sick, yet we are all in denial. We worship the cowboy and are terrified of the NRA. We appease gun nuts like they have a legitimate point of view, like what they have to say matters. Why can't we treat gun nuts like all other nuts? Why don't we marginalize them? They are the margin, after all. Why do we pretend that what they are saying needs to be honored? Tradition? Some misplaced loyalty to a worn-out, false ideal that gun rights are somehow sacred? Horseshit. Safety is a right. Living without fear is a right. Not being worried that some fucking lunatic is going to storm your kid's school is a fucking right!

SARAH

Thom, you're going to wake the kids.

Thom lowers his volume, but keeps most of his intensity.

THOM

I'm sorry, but someone has to do something. Someone needs to say it like it is. We have appeased the nonsense of this fucking gun paranoia too long. We live in fear of our kids getting murdered so that we don't arouse the panic of some fucking hick in a shack in Montana. Fuck talk radio, Fox News, and every other goddamned opportunistic parasite that stokes the paranoid for easy profit and power.

SARAH

This is tragic and you are clearly upset. I think you need to try and calm down.

THOM

I don't know, I don't know if I can calm down. This week changed me. I'm sick of just sitting here, watching, desperately hoping it doesn't happen to us, which sort of feels like waiting for it to happen to us. Our timidity is not helping. Our reasonableness is not helping.

SARAH

I don't know what to say, Thom. This is terrible, it's all terrible, but getting mad about it doesn't help anyone. You've got two beautiful kids upstairs, and getting mad about this does not help them, or you.

THOM

I know, but it just seems like something needs to change. It scares me to wonder what it will take. What will it take to finally load the spring, to finally get people to do something different?

SARAH

I don't know, Thom, I don't know.

Sarah and Thom exchange a gaze for a moment, and Sarah goes back to reading her book and Thom just sort of looks straight, into the middle distance. He sighs.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thom is sitting in bed with his laptop, Sarah is getting ready for bed. Sarah comes out of bathroom, rubbing lotion on her hands and arms, heading for the bed.

THOM

Did you know that it is estimated that more people will be killed by guns this year than by cars?

SARAH

Is that what you are doing? Gun research?

THOM

I just can't believe how far we have let this thing go. It's estimated that there are more guns than people in this country. Even if that's 50% off, that's still nuts.

SARAH

Thom, I think you are just making yourself upset. Clearly, this week had an impact on you, it impacted all of us. But obsessing over guns isn't going to make our kids any safer, or you any happier.

THOM

I know, I just can't believe it.

Silence for a moment, a bit of a pause in the conversation. Sarah changes the subject.

SARAH

Don't forget the barbecue over at MEAGAN and GENE's tomorrow. You still good to make your potato salad?

THOM

Fuck, I forgot all about that. Yeah, I have time to do it tomorrow.

SARAH

Good night, sweetheart. Please try to give this gun thing a rest and get some sleep. I love you.

THOM

I love you too, sweetie.

Sarah turns off her light, Thom puts his laptop down, and turns off his light. Sarah rolls over to go to sleep. The room is quiet. Thom is just lying there, staring up at the ceiling.

EXT. MEAGAN AND GENE'S HOUSE BACKYARD - DAY

Saturday. Barbecue. Thom and Sarah come around the side gate into the backyard. Thom has a big bowl of potato salad, Sarah has a bottle of wine. Kids are coming behind Sarah and Thom. Sarah and Thom walk up to MEAGAN.

MEAGAN

(to Thom)

Hey guys. Wow, looks great. That will go perfectly with the burgers.

(over her shoulder to

GENE)

Well, it will as long as *somebody* doesn't light the deck on fire again.

GENE

(from deck)

Hey, that only happened once. Plus, it wasn't my fault. *Do not operate under wood deck railing* really should be in the manual, page one I'm thinking.

MEAGAN

(to Gene)

Whatever you have to tell yourself, fireball.

Meagan leans in to hug Sarah.

MEAGAN (CONT'D)

(to Sarah)

How are you, sweetie?

SARAH

I'm OK, it's been a hard week. How are you guys doing?

MEAGAN

Pretty good, considering. TIFFANY
and CURTIS are here, ugh.

(to Thom)

How are you Thom?

THOM

I'm alright.

(Over to Gene)

How's it going Gene?

GENE

Pretty good Thom. Hey, you're
looking sexy. Look at you. That a
new haircut? I could just eat you
up. Nom nom nom--

THOM

Take it easy, tiger. Save something
for later.

MEAGAN

(to Gene)

Hey, grill monkey, more cookie-
cookie, less talkie-talkie.

GENE

Anything for you, love angel.

MEAGAN

Great Gene, thanks. Now I have to
go brush vomit out of my teeth.

GENE

(singing, badly)

"And I, ah-yai, will always, love,
youuuuu..."

Meagan's sister TIFFANY and her Husband CURTIS come through
the slider from inside.

MEAGAN

Sarah, Thom, you remember my sister
Tiffany and her husband Curtis?

Semi-awkward greetings, handshakes. Initial conversation,
brusque, awkward, uncomfortable.

MEAGAN (CONT'D)

Curtis, what is that shirt you're
wearing?

Thom was already looking at Curtis's shirt. In biker-esque
imagery, there is a big logo on the front for "DCA".

Flames, skulls, death imagery. The slogan reads "One Less to Lock Up".

CURTIS

Oh, it's just an aftermarket pistol accessory company. They make amazing triggers. Really the best in the world.

MEAGAN

'DCA', does that stand for something?

CURTIS

Yeah, Dead Criminal Armory.

Awkward silence.

MEAGAN

Yowza--

(to Gene)

Hey, Gene, how we lookin' on those burgers?

GENE

About five minutes, angel honey-lover.

MEAGAN

Seriously Gene. Gross.

Gene puts his hands over his heart, tips his head back, eyes closed, basking in all the love.

EXT. MEAGAN AND GENE'S HOUSE BACKYARD - EVENING - LATER

After dinner, the kids are playing inside. The major cleanup is done. Thom is sitting by himself at the table. Gene walks up.

GENE

So, Thhhom (over-pronouncing the 'h'), how did you end up with a name like *Thhhhom*? Is the added H because you are *Ehhhhxtra-special*?

THOM

No, probably just due to overly-pretentious parents.

GENE

High-Oh! Hey, how's work, you still coloring your pretty charts?

THOM

Yeah, pretty much. We've got this big rollout this summer and not only have they cut back on the time to pull it off, they cut back on the staff to do it and the time to plan it.

GENE

Seems reasonable. Who needs planning anyway? Fucking nerds.

THOM

Tell me about it. F-ucking nerds...

GENE

What do you think of that guy they caught by Webster. That's some scary shit. Were you guys OK?

THOM

I can't get it out of my head. I keep seeing flashes of getting a call that Jake was hurt, or worse. I don't know what I would do. I've had nightmares almost every night this week.

GENE

We live in a fucked up world, man.

THOM

We do, we really do. We have this fucking obsession with guns. It's sickening. We get into arguments about how many bullets we allow in a magazine. 15? 25? How about fucking none? Let's start there. Who the hell needs even five shots, besides the police? When was the last time you heard a deer hunter say, 'and by the 18th shot, I figured I probably got 'em'? We live in the most advanced country on the planet, yet we create and protect laws that allow this guy to put together an arsenal on a Sunday afternoon trip to the semi-monthly gun show? We put such a huge premium on protecting 'personal protection', yet who is protecting us, our kids? Why doesn't that matter?

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

Why does being able to have a gun, the biggest gun possible, trump everything else? It's like we set loose a virus, a contagion, and all we can do is throw up our hands and say, well, second amendment, because, you know, 'Murica!

GENE

I hear ya' buddy.

THOM

What's really scary is how we've tolerated this for so long. We let the NRA run our government. We accept the fact that gun control is not possible on a national level. It's a dead-issue. When did that happen? When did we get so fucking powerless? When did doing something sane and reasonable become insane, and when did doing something insane, like letting our kids get terrified, hurt, or worse, become acceptable, become just the way it is and damned if we can do anything about it?

Curtis walks up from behind.

CURTIS

You know, the Nazis got into power by taking the guns away. That's where it always starts, and don't you think for a minute that there aren't people working really hard to do the exact same thing here.

Stunned silence for a moment, dumbfounded, scrambled, at a loss for words.

THOM

Wait, what? Nazis? What the hell are you talking about? *Take all the guns away?* How is that even possible? There are more guns than people in this country. How could that even be done? The government couldn't possibly manage the coordination of a project even 1/10 that size. And, who would do it? The military?

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

Do you really believe soldiers would go door to door, collecting guns? And, how would they do it? Ransack everyone's home, garage, barn, storage space, attic, basement, shed, and hole in the ground? Serve and execute 400 million search warrants? That is so mind-bendingly impossible I cannot believe there are actually people who believe it could happen for more than a second or two.

CURTIS

I don't know, I'm just sayin' that they are coming for our guns. And when they do, mark my words, people in this country will finally rise up. This country was founded on liberty and if some government asshole wants to take my gun, I'm going to empty it at him first.

THOM

Liberty? What about the liberty to not worry about someone storming into your kid's school with 500 rounds of ammunition and a death wish?

CURTIS

I heard about that, and that's the real problem. It's keeping the crazies off the street. It's allowing regular citizens to take matters into their own hands. You put an armed guard in that school, and someone tries something? Shit, he wouldn't make it past the front door. They'd only be calling the police to come cleanup the mess.

Thom pauses a moment, is in stunned disbelief.

THOM

You know that's a deluded fantasy, right? That whole romantic idea of the hero with the gun taking out the bad guy with a gun. You know that doesn't happen right, in the real world? 32,000 people were killed by guns this past year.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

A private firearm is far more likely to be used against the owner than to protect anyone. It's that kind of ludicrous fantasy that keeps the grownups from being able to have a real conversation about this.

CURTIS

Listen, friend, you can cram all of that liberal, socialist shit up your ass. This country was founded on guns. And, so what if a bunch of gang-bangers want to shoot each other up, shit, I'll give 'em free ammo. But I'll be god-damned if I am going to let fruity, socialist, shitbag motherfuckers like you, who don't know what it's like to serve your country, to defend it from our enemies, who just sit back in your comfy house, sipping your tea and ironing your khakis, tell me how I can protect myself and my family!

Curtis stands up and looms over Thom.

GENE

That's enough, Curtis. Why don't you go inside and cool off. We're all friends here.

Curtis gives Thom a hard stare. Thom is frozen, but not backing down. The two just stare at each other, tense, poised. Curtis breaks the tension by quickly spinning around and starting to walk off, not to go inside, but to go out of the backyard.

CURTIS

(to Thom, walking backwards)

It's pieces of shit like you that make this country weak. We used to be strong and one day we'll finally wake up and take this country back.

Curtis turns around, goes through fence gate, SLAMS it. Door slam rings in the air. Thom is stunned, he just sits there in silence. Gene breaks the tension.

GENE

(to Thom)

You alright there buddy?

(MORE)

GENE (CONT'D)

I thought you were going to tackle poor dipshit Curtis there for a second.

THOM

(shaking)

Yeah, I'm alright. God dammit, I hate that our country is filled with motherfuckers like him.

GENE

I hate that my house is filled with a motherfucker that *is* him. He's here for two more days. That's a lot of me offering to go to the store just to get out of the house.

THOM

Probably not too late to develop a heavy drinking habit.

GENE

Man, I wish. But it would take me way too many Appletinis to get where I need to go with that knucklehead in the house.

THOM

That, and he'd probably give you a wedgie and call you a faggot.

GENE

Yeah, Meagan's already got that covered.

GENE (CONT'D)

(laughs at his own joke)

Hey, let's head inside. You gotta check out this new tube amp I got. Makes my last setup sound like it was being played through a dirty Mexican sewer pipe.

They head inside.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah getting ready for bed, Thom just sitting in bed, fuming, quiet.

SARAH

I heard you got into it with Curtis. Are you OK?

THOM

Yeah, I'm fine. Curtis is a gun-loving dipshit and things got a little heated.

SARAH

You and this gun thing. I really think you need to let it go.

THOM

I don't think I can. There are far too many Curtis's out there. Shit, our country is full of Curtis's. That's the problem, we have gotten so far away from anything reasonable, anything resembling the truth, because we are constantly tolerating the views and tiptoeing around the Curtis's of the world.

Sarah looks straight at Thom.

SARAH

This is not YOUR problem. You are taking this so personally. We had a scary week, but it was a fluke. Everyone's fine, but, for some reason, you won't let this go.

THOM

What about those kids at Lower Columbia? They're not fine. Or the Sandy Hook parents? They weren't fine, aren't fine, and will probably never be fine again. What about the people in that theater in Aurora? What about the Columbine kids? We delude ourselves into thinking things are fine and they aren't. We're not fine. We can't even see fine from here. What about us? After Monday, I don't think I am ever going to not worry about our kids getting shot at school. Is that fine?

SARAH

I'm not your enemy, Thom. I'm not trying to fight you.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'm simply stating the facts. Tragic things happen all the time. Right now, there is a three-year-old starving to death in Africa, maybe thousands of them. Cruelty, violence, torture, it's happening, all the time. Where's the outrage against that? You are just looking at this one small issue, isolating it to make yourself miserable.

THOM

You're right, I am isolating this issue. Someone has to. Nothing is going to change until we actually have a real, persistent conversation about this. We need to wake up and do something. My eyes are open, and, yes, there are tragic things that happen every day. It doesn't mean we're powerless, it doesn't mean we should just passively accept this as simply the way things are. This is wrong. Our culture is wrong. This needs to be fixed and someone needs to stand up and fix it.

SARAH

I'm not fighting with you about this, Thom. I'm going to bed. Good night.

Sarah kisses Thom briefly, turns off light. Thom slides down, turns off his light, stares at the ceiling. Still seething, wide awake. He lies there for a while. Finally, he gets up and heads downstairs.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Thom fires up his computer. He browses the web for a bit. Lands on Facebook, is reading his feed. Sees an update from Meagan about the BBQ, sees a picture of himself with Gene, Meagan, Tiffany, and Curtis. Gets mad again. Hits compose a new post. Types this out, looking at screen:

V.O.

When are we going to tell the truth?

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)

When are we going to admit to ourselves and to others that if you are not for gun control you accept mass shootings as just a way of life, just a cost of doing business, as inevitable, and thus acceptable? If you are against all gun control, you are on the same side as murder, even if it's just tacit tolerance.

V.O. (CONT'D)

The problem is that we give lunacy a voice. We accept nonsense as a valid argument, with paranoid fantasies as feasible possible futures. We dismiss the madman on the street corner, yet we acknowledge and respect the madman within our midst. '*They are coming to take our guns?*' Who are '*they*', and how does that jibe with the fact that there are more guns in the US than ever before?

V.O. (CONT'D)

No other advanced society does what we do. No other primitive society does what we do. We have a gun for every human in this country. No place else does that. We glorify the armed, our good guy is the good guy with the gun. The gun is our solution for inequality, for tyranny, for insecurity. Our guns make us feel powerful, complete, and we let this emotion run rough shod over the fact that guns are killing far more innocent people than they are saving, by an order of about 1000 to 1.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Our solutions are always more. More will solve it, we just need more. Well, we tried more, we have been doing more for a long time. One gun for every human in this country, hard to get much more *more* than that.

(MORE)

V.O. (CONT'D)

We seem to have the belief that we can fix our gun problem with more of the 'right' guns, yet all we seem to do is just create more of the 'wrong' guns.

V.O. (CONT'D)

I want to advocate for less, much less. I want to advocate for the truth, for people to see the corrosive poison guns have been and will continue to be in our society. I want people to wake up from the fever dream that the hero with the gun will swoop in and save everyone. I want people to surrender their grandeurous delusions and realize the simple truth, the simple truth that guns kill 32,000 people in this country every year. Guns kill kids, guns are killing our kids, and it is only when we can admit the truth to ourselves and each other that we can do anything about it.

Thom hits "Post", closes his laptop, turns out the light, goes to bed.

END ACT 2

ACT 3

SUPER: Monday.

INT. THOM'S WORK - DAY

Thom is sitting at his desk, mid-morning. Doing work, as normal. Pulls out his phone, scans email, opens Facebook. Sees his post has over 10,000 likes. People have re-shared his post.

THOM
(under breath)
Holy shit.

Thom starts reading, scrolling through comments. 'Bravo!' 'Well said!' 'Finally, someone said it!' 'I am sending this to everyone I know!' 'Thank you, Thom, our kids deserve better.' Etc. On and on this goes. Thom is just scrolling and scrolling, in amazement. Almost becomes a blur, it is so much. Almost all positive, at least what he chooses to see, 99% or greater. Sees he has a new private message, notification goes off while he is in Facebook. Subject: Your Post. Thom reads:

-- ON SCREEN --

Hi Thom,

My name is Aaron Dailey and I am the online editor for Seattle Weekly. My sister-in-law forwarded me your post, well done and well said. Would you be interested in publishing something a little longer to our blog? Say 1500 words or so?

Let me know if you would be interested. We would love to have your voice available to our online readers (currently over 120,000 per month). Think about it and get back to me.

Cheers,

AD

-- END ON SCREEN MESSAGE --

Thom sits there, stunned. He scrolls back through all of the comments on his post. Well into the 100's. He keeps scrolling down, then up, then down again.

Thom looks at the message again. Looks up, ponders for a second, gets a look of "fuck yeah I want to do that" and hits the reply button.

-- ON SCREEN --

Subject: RE: RE: Your Post

Hi Aaron,

Wow, thanks for getting in touch with me. I had no idea that what I wrote would strike such a nerve. I am just trying to take it all in. I'm pretty shocked, to be honest.

I would love to put something together, but I'm no writer. I don't even know what 1500 words looks like. Could you let me know a little more what you have in mind? Thanks!

-- END ON SCREEN MESSAGE --

Thom sits there for a moment. He takes a deep breath, sighs, and puts his phone back in his pocket. He is energized, re-invigorated. He gets back to work.

INT. THOM'S WORK - DAY - LATER

Thom is still working. He gets curious, pulls out his phone to check Facebook, sees he has a private message reply, he smiles.

-- ON SCREEN --

Subject: RE: RE: RE: Your Post

Hi Thom,

Thanks for getting back to me so fast. What I am thinking is just basically a longer version of your Facebook post. Nothing fancy, just you talking from the heart, addressing the problem with guns and gun violence, as you see it. Just your opinions expressed in a way that makes sense. I can help you with the editing, just get the ideas down and we'll get it up there.

I'd love to see this live this weekend, any chance you could get something to me on Wednesday? I know it is short notice, but if you could pull that off, that would be great. No pressure.

Let me know.

-AD

-- END MESSAGE ON SCREEN --

This all takes a second to sink in. Thom thinks about it for a moment, then replies.

-- ON SCREEN --

Subject: RE: RE: RE: RE: Your Post

I'm in, I will get something to you on Wednesday. Thanks for getting a hold of me.

Best,

Thom

-- END MESSAGE ON SCREEN --

Thom sits there for a moment, stares at the work on his screen. Decides to eschew it. Opens Word, new document. Blinking cursor for a moment. He starts in, title "We're All Complicit in Gun Violence". Starts to type the opening paragraph.

-- ON SCREEN --

I have come to bury our efforts on gun control, not to praise them. We mean well, but the net effect has only been to get in our own way, to embolden and empower our ideological enemies..

-- END TYPING ON SCREEN --

Screen fades to black somewhat slowly, with the sound of his typing going on. It is full black for a few seconds and we hear his typing.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thom is in bed, with laptop. Sarah is getting ready, coming into the bedroom from the bathroom.

THOM

I got contacted by an editor at the Seattle Weekly. He wants to have me write something for their blog for this weekend.

SARAH

Something for their blog, what about?

THOM

He saw my Facebook post on guns. Wants me to write a longer version of it. Says they get 120,000 readers a month.

SARAH
(confused)
Uh, huh... And he wants you? Why?

THOM
What's that supposed to mean?

SARAH
I guess I just don't really understand this whole thing. What are you trying to get out of this?

THOM
I don't think I am trying to get anything. I just shared my frustration, and it seemed to resonate with other people, lots of other people. This editor saw my Facebook post and wants me to do something similar for their blog.

SARAH
But, you're not a writer, you're a project manager. Do they know that?

THOM
I don't know what they know. All I know is that this is an opportunity for me to write something that's important to me and maybe a whole bunch of people will read it.

SARAH
And then what? Thom, I just don't understand--

THOM
(interrupting, getting angry)
Jesus, there's nothing to understand. I posted something, this guy liked it and wants me to do something for their blog. I don't understand why you can't be supportive.

SARAH
(surprised)
I am not trying to offend you, Thom, I just don't understand what's going on.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

These are pretty strong opinions you are sharing, opinions not everyone is going to agree with. Have you really thought through what you're doing?

Thom's getting more angry.

THOM

Fuck, I'm not *doing* anything. I got invited to write something for the Seattle Weekly blog, that's it. I think it is a special opportunity and I am going to take it.

SARAH

Alright, Thom, I'm not trying to fight with you.

THOM

You're not exactly on my side either.

SARAH

I am on your side, Thom, I just don't understand what's going on.

Thom rolls over, turns out the light.

THOM

It's nothing, I just thought I would tell you. Thanks for all your support. Good night.

A moment of silence, a bit of concern on Sarah's face, but also confusion. She sighs, turns her light out. Drop to black.

SUPER: Wednesday.

INT. THOM'S WORK - DAY

Thom is sitting at his desk, supposed to be working, looking at the photo of his kids on his desk. Just sort of in a daze. Thom's boss Dan walks up from behind Thom's desk.

DAN

Hey, Thom, good news, the board approved your plan. Well, there was one small change. They need the guys to double-up on rooms. You need to let them know.

Thom scowls, tenses, turns around in his chair, forcing the resent off his face.

THOM

Wait, wait. You're telling me that not only do they have to work longer hours, because of the smaller teams and shorter schedule; but they can't even have their own hotel rooms? Dan, these guys are going to be away from their families for two months, it seems ridiculous that we can't give them at least a little comfort. This is a 100 million dollar company.

DAN

Just telling you what they said. I'm just glad we got the plan approved.

Thom scowls about the 'we' remark. A moment of tense silence.

THOM

Fine. I'll let the team know at our next status meeting. Anything else?

DAN

Look, Thom, I'm just the messenger. We all have a job to do and I'm just telling you how this one needs to be done. I'm not the bad guy.

Thom is just staring at Dan.

DAN (CONT'D)

And, hey, look at it this way,
it'll be a bonding experience for
the guys. Nothing like a little
hardship to bring a team together.

Thom is looking daggers at Dan, a moment of silence, like he might say something back.

THOM

(sort of defeated)
We'll get it done, we always do.

DAN

(Turns to walk away)
And that's why you guys are the
best. Thanks Thom.

THOM

(under his breath, after
Dan is out of earshot)
You weak, sycophantic piece of
shit..

Thom pulls himself together and hits the email compose button. He feels his phone buzz in his pocket. Takes it out, sees he has a new email, it's from Aaron Daily. Clicks in to read it:

-- ON SCREEN --

RE: Article

Hey Thom, loved the piece, I'm not changing a word. It will go up Friday afternoon. I'll send you a link once it's up. Great job and thanks.

-AD

-- END EMAIL ON SCREEN --

Thom smiles to himself, sort of an internal "yesss!!". He doesn't give a shit about what Dan just told him now. Celebrates internally for a beat, then gets back to his work.

SUPER: Tuesday.

INT. THOM'S WORK - DAY

Pretty average day at the office, it is mid-afternoon. Thom's cell phone rings, it's a number he doesn't recognize. Thinks about whether to answer it or not, usually doesn't. Decides to answer this one.

THOM
(into phone)
This is Thom.

HOLLY
(from phone)
Hi Thom, my name is HOLLY BRADY, I got your number from Aaron Daily over at Seattle Weekly. I'm a campaign assistant to CONGRESSMAN GREG HUTCHINSON. Congressman Hutchinson read your article and would love to talk to you about working together. Congressman Hutchinson has a very strong record supporting gun control. When would you have time for a phone conversation?

THOM
(stunned)
Uh, um, I'm pretty busy at work, could it be in the evening?

HOLLY
Of course, which evening works best for you?

THOM
Any evening really, my kids go to bed at eight, so any time after that.

HOLLY
Great, how about tomorrow evening, at 8:30?

THOM
Sounds good.

HOLLY

Perfect, I have you down for Wednesday evening, tomorrow, at 8:30PM. He'll call you. I'll send you a calendar appointment, I have your email from Aaron. If you need to reschedule, just reply to the appointment or call me at this number.

THOM

Wow, OK, thanks. Looking forward to it.

HOLLY

Thank you, Thom. Take care. Bye.

Thom sits there, a little stunned. Looks around to see who might have overheard that. No one is paying attention. Deep breath, like an internal "holy shit". Gets back to work.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Wednesday night. Thom and Sarah have just finished putting the kids to bed and are downstairs.

THOM

I forgot to tell you, I have a phone call in just a minute with Congressman Hutchinson.

SARAH

Congressman Hutchinson? Why are you talking to Congressman Hutchinson?

THOM

He liked my article in Seattle Weekly.

SARAH

Your *blog* article?

THOM

Yes, he read my article. His assistant contacted me the other day, and he wants to talk to me. He should be calling in just a minute.

SARAH

Wait, why is a congressman calling you? What is this about? About guns?

THOM

Yes, the congressman has a strong gun control record and wants to talk to me about working together.

SARAH

Working together? How on earth could you *work together*? You don't work in politics, you're a project manager.

THOM

(getting a little exasperated)

I know, honey, you like to say that. I don't know exactly what he wants, that's why I am going to talk to him. I was just letting you know.

Sarah looks at him confused, is about to say something. We hear Thom's phone vibrate. Thom starts to reach in his pocket.

THOM (CONT'D)

Oh, that's him now.

Thom takes out his phone, turns away from Sarah to walk to his home office. Enters office, closes the door, Sarah is left standing there, befuddled.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

THOM

(into phone)

This is Thom.

CONGRESSMAN HUTCHINSON

(from phone)

Hi, Thom, it's nice to speak with you. I assume my assistant briefed you on what I wanted to talk to you about?

THOM

Yes, Congressman Hutchinson, sort of. She said you read my article?

CONGRESSMAN HUTCHINSON

First off, my friends call me "HUTCH". Second, yes, I'm a big fan.

(MORE)

CONGRESSMAN HUTCHINSON (CONT'D)

Took a lot of courage to say what you had to say. I'm not sure I have ever read any gun control opinion piece with that level of clarity and eloquence. It was great.

THOM

Well, thank you. That's high praise coming from you.

HUTCH

Don't mention it, your piece was great, I loved it. Anyhow, I'll cut to the chase. I think you probably know that gun control has been a big issue for me. I think I've gotten some good work done, and I'm proud of my F rating by the NRA. But there is still plenty left to do. There's an event we're holding next Friday that I would love for you to be a part of.

THOM

An event? I'm not sure I understand.

HUTCH

I'm giving the keynote at an event next Friday, on the stairs of The Museum of Glass, to commemorate all of the victims of gun violence. Your opinion is the most clear, best articulated I have ever read. I want you to speak at the event. I want people to be able to hear what you have to say.

THOM

I don't know, I haven't ever given a speech before...

Hutch interrupts Thom.

HUTCH

I am sure you can do it. Look, Thom, this is important, critically important. I can't do this work alone, I need your help. More people need to hear what you have to say. I read your article and your Facebook post, I know you've got it in you.

(MORE)

HUTCH (CONT'D)

This is a dialogue we need to have and you, a regular person, are the best person to start it. You have a real story. It's time to speak up about this. Holly's already talked with the organizers of the event. Everything is arranged.

THOM

I guess so, but I'm not sure what I have to say beyond what I have written.

HUTCH

I'm sure you have lots more to say. I'm glad you're in. Holly will contact you and coordinate everything, she's very good.

THOM

OK, how long of a speech do I need to write?

HUTCH

Just 8-10 minutes. I'll introduce you then I'll go on after you. HOLLY will get you your laminate and everything you need. Thanks for doing this, this is important.

THOM

Sure, um, OK, thank you, sir.

HUTCH

Thank you, Thom. Holly will take care of everything, contact her with any questions. I'll see you there.

THOM

Thanks, HUTCH. Goodbye.

Thom is dazed, again. He pulls out a notebook and starts to make some notes. Is writing fairly furiously. Looks up, thinking, back to writing.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Sarah is in bed, reading. Thom comes in.

SARAH

How was the phone call?

THOM

Pretty amazing. Hutch wants me to give a speech at a gun violence event next Friday.

SARAH

Hutch? And, don't you have to work next Friday?

THOM

I'll take the day off, this is important. Yes, *Hutch* is giving me 10 minutes to speak at an event for victims of gun violence. He will introduce me, I'll go on, and he'll give his keynote after me.

SARAH

A speech? Blowing off work? Thom, what are you doing?

THOM

(perturbed)

What do you mean, what am I doing?

SARAH

I think you know perfectly well what I mean. What are you doing? What is all of this for? What are you trying to accomplish?

Thom gives a heavy sigh.

THOM

Were you here last week? Were you paying attention? A man with 500 bullets in his car was planning to execute children at our son's school. Didn't that affect you? Didn't that change you? Didn't that open your eyes, wake you up to the fact that our world is crazy and we are just standing by, doing nothing, hoping it will all go away and leave us alone?

SARAH

I was terrified last week, I still am. But I don't understand what that has to do with you and what you're doing. So, what, are you an activist now?

THOM

I don't know what I am. All I know is that last week will haunt me for the rest of my life. All I know is that I have watched on the news as shootings and gun violence happens, to others, over there. Well, now it's over here, it's in our schools, it's affecting us. So, what now? What does it take? What does it take to say this is enough, this needs to stop here? Someone needs to take a stand against this, someone needs to tell the truth. We are arguing with an enemy that brings their own facts to the debate. Someone needs to stand up and tell the truth, and if that person is me, then that person is me.

SARAH

I'm not sure you understand what you're getting yourself into. There is a huge Army base 15 miles away. Tons of people hunt around here. I don't think you understand what you are about to unleash. Because, if you are successful, these people will come at you, hard. I grew up in a military family, you don't know what it's like. Guns are fundamental to these people and if you start talking about taking them away, they will attack you. You will be their enemy and they work really hard to see their enemies destroyed.

THOM

I don't care, Sarah. After last week, I just don't care. I can't sit here and do nothing. Maybe I can make a difference, maybe I can't. But, something has to change. We can't go on just escalating after each failed escalation. Have you been to Webster lately? Every door is locked, all the time. You have to be buzzed in, by a security officer, an *armed* security officer, with your ID out.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

What's next, forbidding the kids from going outside, from getting too close to the windows? We are building prisons for our kids, prisons to keep the monsters out. That's not a neighborhood school, that is a controlled-access, secure facility. This needs to stop, Sarah. We are going the wrong way and we just keep accelerating. Someone needs to tell the truth. Someone needs to start the conversation we need to have, as a society.

SARAH

Why does it have to be you? Why are you doing this?

THOM

I am doing this because no one else is. Something broke inside of me when I got that call from the police. Something in me died that day. And, something else awoke, something that made me realize this is intolerable and this ridiculousness has gone on too long. Why am I doing this? Someone has to. Someone needs to make a stand and say *this is not right*. We cannot abide in a society that can do so much, yet puts our kids, our people, in danger. It's time to take the scissors away from the baby. It's time to be grownups and face the truth that guns kill people, innocent people, children, and no one is doing anything about it.

SARAH

I don't know, Thom. I don't want this. I don't want you to do this. Please don't do this.

THOM

I feel like I have to do this. For our kids, for us. No one else is standing up. Things need to change. We can't live like this, in a world like this.

Silence as Thom and Sarah stare at each other, in a stalemate. Sarah finally breaks it.

SARAH

I just hope you know what you're doing. For our sake.

THOM

All I am doing is not standing by, for once. All I am doing is speaking up, telling the truth. If there are ramifications for that, I accept them. We can't be afraid anymore. This is too important. Our fear is a luxury our kids can't afford.

SARAH

I think you need to remember us in all of this. We matter, Thom.

THOM

I am doing this precisely because of how much you guys matter. And, because, every fucking parent feels the same way. We act like we are all so separate, so different. We all want the same thing. So, let's start there.

SARAH

I think you are doing this for you too, Thom. Just be careful, please? Don't start a war with these people.

THOM

I won't. All I am going to do is tell the truth. I am not attacking anyone or anything, except illusion, paranoia, and propaganda.

SARAH

There are people out there who will fight to keep things how they are. I don't think you are considering that.

THOM

I am considering that, but someone has to do something.

Sarah looks at Thom with tearful eyes.

SARAH
OK, Thom, OK.

Thom and Sarah embrace with a heavy hug.

END ACT 3

ACT 4

SUPER: Friday.

EXT. STEPS IN FRONT OF MUSEUM OF GLASS - DAY

Stage is setup on the front steps of the Museum of Glass, a pretty large crowd is gathered. We see Thom, waiting in the wings as Hutch emerges to take the mic.

Hutch greets the crowd. Thom is visibly nervous, staring down, taking lots of deep breaths.

Applause. Pictures of kids flank both sides of the stage. Congressman is at the mic, thanking the crowd for their applause. Thom nervously waits backstage. Lots of trembling sighs, sort of a look on his face like "what the fuck am I doing?".

HUTCH

Thank you all, thank you for joining us on this gray Friday morning to get together to remember those that are no longer with us. Those who have left us too soon as victims of gun violence. I'm proud of my record against gun violence, but there is still more work to do. Nowhere is this more poignant to point out than right here, in Tacoma. Where, just a few miles away, a man was apprehended, a man planning to do our kids and himself great harm. Thanks to vigilant and effective action by our State Patrol, violence was avoided. But what about the places this year, or in the last few years, that weren't so lucky? What are we doing about that? What are we doing about the next one? Not enough, from where I'm standing, not nearly enough.

HUTCH (CONT'D)

I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine, Thom Andrews. Thom has a son at Webster, a son that was at school that day. Thom, like hundreds of other parents, was terrified. Since then, Thom has done something different. Thom has dared to speak up.

(MORE)

HUTCH (CONT'D)

Thom has dared to be a voice for the voiceless, for our kids, for our community.

HUTCH (CONT'D)

I've asked Thom to say a few words here. As a parent, as a human being, I think Thom has a special gift for encapsulating this issue and it is my pleasure to introduce him to you. Please welcome to the microphone, Thom Andrews.

Quite a bit of applause. Thom comes from offstage, blinding light, noise. He adjusts, white balance is restored. Steps up to the mic. Applause starts to die down.

Crowd dies down fully. Just a moment or two of silence. People are listening. Thom looks out over the crowd. He slowly begins to speak. He speaks slowly, with a lot of pauses, to accentuate his message. He is focused, his intensity builds.

THOM

(pausing frequently, for emphasis)

500 rounds of ammunition. Think about that for a moment. 500 rounds of ammunition to walk into an elementary school on a Monday morning. 500 rounds of ammunition to shatter the world, to crack it open, to tear it apart. 500 rounds of ammunition to murder, to maim. To torture, to torment. To slice open, to disembowel this world, this world of rejection and alienation. 500 rounds of ammunition to exact a misplaced vengeance, an indiscriminate fury on the heads of innocent children. 500 rounds to scrape a dark, black, indelible mark on the world, a world desperately despised, force-feeding it back the poison that has been choked-down for a lifetime.

Thom looks out over crowd, looking people in the eyes, focusing on individuals as he speaks.

THOM (CONT'D)

It's hard to imagine what it takes. What it takes to assemble an arsenal, to draw up plans, to show up on the day to commit the grizzly act of mass murder.

Slight pause.

THOM (CONT'D)

It's hard, maybe impossible, to imagine what could drive someone so far into the darkness, where this is their only recourse. Where the only path for them was to go down deeper, deeper into their own inky black despair, never to return.

Thom looks around at crowd, focuses on one parent in crowd, a woman.

THOM (CONT'D)

Do you think about getting the phone call? I do, I do a lot. I ask myself, is today *the day*? The day I get the phone call that something's happened? That something's happened, and we can't find your child? Or worse? I think about that phone call every day. I wake up with it. I go to bed with it.

Slight pause, shifts weight.

THOM (CONT'D)

We lost something that morning at Webster, at *my* son's school. We lost our innocence. I'm haunted by these thoughts. They are my nearly constant companions now, now that gun violence has come calling to our door.

Shifts visual focus to another parent-age person in the crowd. Crowd is silent, intensely focusing on the speech and the speaker.

THOM (CONT'D)

But it has been all around us. This is nothing new. It's not even novel, it has become common.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

Several times a year we are horrified to see yet another mass shooting somewhere. We view it, but we don't really see it. We hear it, but we aren't really listening. We sympathize with victims, sure, but when violence happens, it happens over there. We do nothing because, after all, it's not our problem, it's their problem. It's tragic, sure, but we'll get over it. We'll be appropriately forlorn, for a time, and then we will get right back to doing what we were doing before. Nothing changes, the ship keeps sailing on the same course. We have a job to do and it's back to work, for all of us.

Slight pause, looks down briefly, looks back up.

THOM (CONT'D)

Well, this time, it wasn't over there. It was here, in our town, involving our kids, our teachers, our school's staff. Those were our kids in that school that day.

Looks around crowd, intense eye contact. Sees one woman, teary-eyed.

THOM (CONT'D)

We dismiss these acts as the unchecked lunacy of crazy people, simply a product of a failed mental health system. But are they? Are they the outflow of a broken system, or are they something else, something even scarier? Something we might actually have to reckon with?

Wide-eyed, getting a little more intense.

THOM (CONT'D)

The truth is, even though those with mental illness are more likely to be violent, the overwhelming majority of people suffering from mental illness are non-violent.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

Add to that, most of the perpetrators of mass shootings do not have any kind of documented psychiatric history. If we fixed the system, odds are, most of these people wouldn't even be in it. We need to realize that even though mental illness might be partially culpable, it is the warm, embracing arms of our gun culture that turns these tendencies deadly.

Focuses in on one crowd member, an angry-looking father.

THOM (CONT'D)

We need to ask ourselves, are these events simply the extreme of our culture reflected back to us? Is it us, as a society, reaping exactly what we have sown? After all, we created this. We made these laws that allow this. We glorified the gun, and the gunslinger. We are obsessed with these ideas. We have chosen all of this, partly through our apathy, partly through our unwillingness to look at who we really are, what we have done, and what we are truly willing to tolerate.

Thom grips the podium, knuckles starting to white.

THOM (CONT'D)

We have gun violence in our culture because we have an obsession with violence in our culture. We hold the gun sacred, as that most significant and pure symbol of righteous vengeance, of peacekeeping, of law and order, of vanquishing chaos and evil.

Thom's intensity is slowly erupting to the surface. Three men, blue-collar, gruff, outdoor sportsman types, stand together in the crowd, arms-crossed, faces scowled, looking at one another in a knowing silence.

THOM (CONT'D)

What has this led to? We are in a literal arms race, with ourselves. We militarize our police, and what's next, our schools?

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

Do we turn our schools into police-controlled, *secure facilities*? What then?

Pauses, looks out at crowd for a brief moment, waiting for a rhetorical answer. A mother in the crowd shakes her head.

THOM (CONT'D)

I went to Webster the other day. Do you know what I saw? Every exterior door was locked. The only way in was through the main door, which was guarded by an *armed* police officer. I had to be buzzed in, with ID out. I had to state my business. I had to show my papers.

Intense eye contact with one member of the crowd, a mother holding a young daughter. Thom relaxes just a bit.

THOM (CONT'D)

My first response was appreciation. I was glad they were doing this, I was glad they were taking our kids' security seriously. But then it hit me, is this what we want? Do we want our schools turned into another outpost of the TSA? Do we want to lock our kids away, isolating them from the outside world, a world that has grown too dangerous? Do we want to lock our kids away, all because we can't have an honest conversation about how we got here, because we feel powerless to do anything about it?

Thom is talking with his hands, gesturing aggressively.

THOM (CONT'D)

We escalate as the threat escalates. When does it end? When does it topple under its own weight? When do we realize the fool's errand of trying to fight guns with guns? When do we realize that the cage we construct to keep the monsters out also tightly confines us as well?

Thom is at very high intensity, almost shouting. The three men tense, clenching fists under their crossed arms, jaws tight.

THOM (CONT'D)

(intensely)

Why is this OK? How much is enough?
Why does any of this even exist in
our culture? Our kids are under
attack, we as parents are in
terror. This needs to end. This
needs to end and we need to stop
it.

Thom's intensity is spilling over into anger.

THOM (CONT'D)

We have mortgaged our peace to
placate the extreme. We have let
the extremes of our society dictate
the terms for the rest of us and it
is time for an insurrection, a coup
of the people, by the people, and
for the people.

Thom gives a heavy sigh, a reset. Calming down a little,
still focused, with a more tender intensity.

The three men look at one another. One nods, the others nod
back.

THOM (CONT'D)

We used to care about each other,
we used to help each other. We used
to band together to accomplish
something bigger than ourselves.
Now, it seems, we just work to
separate from each other, to turn
one another into simply the
'other', the 'them', the 'they'.

Thom grips the podium again, focusing on another member of
the crowd.

THOM (CONT'D)

We get more extreme, hoping it will
lead us back, not paying attention
to how we simply just stray
further.

A brief pause.

THOM (CONT'D)

We argue more fiercely, we dig our
heels in more deeply. We become
rigid, unbendable, until we break.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

More polarized, more about proving *them* wrong rather than doing what's right. We seem to miss that we are getting in our own way, to our own peril. We have become so isolated within ourselves that we have forgotten how to work together, how to band with one another to accomplish something great, something meaningful, something real.

Thom looks at the stage, then back at crowd. More tears and anger visible on the faces in the crowd.

THOM (CONT'D)

We are gathered here, at this event, this event to commemorate, to remember those who have died due to gun violence. But, what does this event say? What does this event say about us? Where are we going? What are we doing? Do we really know anymore? Are we so caught up in fighting each other that we forgot to keep moving forward?

Big eyes, looking for affirmation from crowd, crowd stands in rapt silence.

THOM (CONT'D)

Self-interest is not our highest virtue. We used to care about protecting the weak, we used to sacrifice our lives to make the lives of our children better. Now-a-days, instead, we have sacrificed the safety and security of our kids to appease the paranoid rhetoric of the bully.

Slight pause, closes eyes briefly, looks down, squeezes podium. Looks up.

THOM (CONT'D)

I say, no more. Enough with this violence, this terror. We hold in our hands the ability to stop this. We need to relinquish our romantic attachment to the gun.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

We need to realize that more guns will not save us, only fewer guns will save us, a lot fewer guns. We need to look at our gun-culture square in the face and realize it is hurting us, it does not suit us anymore, if it ever did. We need to end our love affair with the gun. That is the only way we will be able to become a peaceful society.

Slight pause, deep breath.

THOM (CONT'D)

Part of our problem is that we have forgotten who we are, we have forgotten our ability to do things bigger than ourselves, bigger than our own self-interest, bigger than our current reality. We have forgotten how to protect one another, how to work for one another. We lost a fundamental part of what makes us human, but we can regain it by facing the truth, protecting our kids, and working for one another. Thank you.

Applause, loud applause. Hutch comes up and shakes Thom's hand, crescendos into a hug. Hutch speaks to Thom, into his ear, can't hear over the crowd. A mix of congratulation and agreement. Hutch takes the podium, takes a minute for the crowd to calm down. Thom is going backstage.

HUTCH

(motioning over to where
Thom is)

Thom Andrews, everyone.

Another round of applause. Pretty vigorous. After it dies down Hutch starts in.

HUTCH (CONT'D)

My, Thom, that was moving. You're a tough act to follow--

HUTCH (CONT'D)

Thom's right, and I have said it for a long time. I've worked at it for a long time. We need to do something different.

(MORE)

HUTCH (CONT'D)

Just last year my amendment to
introduce background checks at gun
shows died, never even coming up
for a vote--

Fades out, screen black for a second, you still hear the
audio as it fades out.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Friday night. Thom and family are sitting quietly at home,
having a quiet evening. Darcy is on the floor, reading texts
on her phone, Jake is in mom's lap in a chair in the back
corner of the room. Thom is reading off of his laptop.

It is a quiet scene, the motion lingers for a bit, just
taking in the room and the scene.

The quiet is broken as, CRASH, a rock SHATTERS the bay window
at the front of the room, facing the street. We hear
SCREECHING tires and the rock rolls across the floor, next to
Darcy. It is shocking, frightening, the quiet has been
pierced, violently.

Darcy jumps up, SCREAMS, Thom jumps up too. Jake's crying,
Sarah is clutching him tight. After a moment of shock and
disbelief, Thom reaches down and picks up the rock. Looks at
it, turns it over. On the backside, written in black, thick
marker is "Your DEAD". Thom's eyes get big, he looks back at
Sarah, clutching Jake, she is terrified, with wide, tearing
up eyes. He looks at Darcy, she is scared. He looks at the
window, close-up on his face. A mix of fear and confusion,
like "Oh, fuck, what just happened?" Credit music starts to
play, we just see Thom's face, scared, confused. Slow fade
out, music playing. Black, scene end, credits.

End Act 4

End of Episode