

ABSTRACT

The Psychological and Aesthetic Development of *Closet Memories* As a Short-Film Production

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This work will contain a detailed account and analysis of the making of *Closet Memories* as a short-film production, including descriptions of content research and resources, concept and aesthetic development, production goals and examples and finally, a thorough self-evaluation of situational outcomes involved in every stage of production. In providing a comprehensive presentation on the encompassing process of producing a thesis film, the intention of this work is to demonstrate the success of creating a product whose narrative intent is properly and satisfactorily represented by way of a researched and intuitive method of approach required in thesis development. Thus, the underlying objective of this work is to effectively demonstrate the significant nature the following content possesses in relationship to modern social occurrences, and thus encourage the application of its relatable content in appropriate areas of interest and compatibility within modern society.

The Psychological and Aesthetic Development of *Closet Memories*
As a Short-Film Production

by

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DEDICATION

For my husband whose endless faith gives me hope

CHAPTER ONE

Storytelling and Professional Goals

Closet Memories is a story that attempts to explore and reason why a person might be driven to commit the unthinkable. Austin Still is a 16-year-old girl who makes a decision to bring a loaded gun to school and open fire--a decision that goes beyond all lines of sanity and reason. And while in the process of drawing up her horrific plans, calculating the deaths of her peers, we dive into a world where hope has been extinguished and replaced by an apathetic existence. "You don't care, so I don't care, and pretty soon...no one is left who does" (See Script).

This story first began to form when the Columbine shooting of April 1999 took place. I was young, only 11-years-old, but this particular event impacted me greatly and I remember it with vivid detail. I watched newsreels, the footage from the school and read books on several of the victims in an attempt to try and understand what took place and why those two young men, did what they did. The underlying motivation behind these two young men that led them to such an extreme display of violence and hate has remained ambiguous and debated to this day. Many people have cast blame on outside influences, video games, violence in the media and aggressive song lyrics as possible influences that drove these students to such lengths. I cannot say that I truly understand why Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold committed such a horrible crime, but I truly do believe that whatever their reason, whether legitimate or completely unfounded, it came from a place within them that did not care about the outcomes of their actions.

Writing and making *Closet Memories* was my personal attempt at understanding the one holding the gun, which required me getting into the mind of the shooter and seeing the decision that led them to pull the trigger. This story serves as an avenue into the world of a young teenage girl and her reason for picking up a gun, that reason being apathy. I recognize that this story reflects only one of many-thousand possible reasons why a person might be compelled or motivated to willingly hurt their surrounding peers. People are complex beings, and apathy does not encompass the behavior of every person that has ever desired secretly or openly to exact violent acts towards another; however, I do believe that an underlying hint of apathy exists in all other motivations present, in that it involves the lack of thought or interest for the other. In order for a killer to victimize a person or people with malice, hate, vengeance, hurt, abuse, disinterest, payback, or whatever it is, they would have to lose sight of another's well-being and thus not care enough to stop squeezing the trigger and lay down their reason for doing so. "Apathy is contagious," and in writing this story, I try to relay the dangers of living in a world where one does not care enough to stop (see Appendix).

The goal of this story is not to deliver a message. There really is no message, simply a statement of what exists. Everyone knows apathy on a personal level. Everyone suffers from it; there is simply too much to care about to care about everything. In fact, we use apathy as a kind of safeguard against the world, a defense against those around us that serves well to keep people at a distance. However, there are those few items, those few people to which we do extend our hearts, those places within us that apathy has not affected. What and who we care about is the question this film asks of those watching.

Therefore my goal in making this short film, aside from creating a good story that people might enjoy, was to create a story that most audiences could relate to and understand by way of personal experience. I would hope fewer people than most have ever truly wanted to harm those around them; however, the widespread influence of apathy in our society is constant and in some cases, as in the case involving this story, deadly. Becoming aware of it within our own lives is one of the most effective means of battling those harmful consequences. I am hopeful that audiences from all levels of experience will be able to understand this story in a unique and intimate way and then apply its contents to the circumstance of life they currently exist in as individuals. In my opinion as an upcoming writer, a good story is only a good when the audience can find themselves within it.

On another note, my ambition for *Closet Memories* certainly goes beyond simply telling a good story and leaving it at that; in fact, it is evident that part of telling a good story is to bring it to those places where it will be heard--those places are film festivals.

I intend for *Closet Memories* to be a project that with extensive effort and time will be a professional product polished for the film festival circuit. I believe that due to the unique content of the story as well as the quality of the production itself, this short film is bound to not only do well, but to be the recipient of awards that will serve to set the film apart and give it legitimacy in the short film world. After researching several of the available events open to amateur filmmakers, I intend to enter this film into the following film festivals: Sundance Film Festival, Austin Film Festival, Seattle International Film Festival, New York Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, Nashville Film Festival, San Francisco International Film Festival, Chicago International Film

Festival, Cucalorus Film Festival, San Diego Film Festival, and South by Southwest Film Festival. In so doing, I hope to give this film every opportunity available as a story that could find a successful reception.

I am not expecting a distribution deal or producers interested in turning this film into a feature; in fact, neither of those opportunities really appeals to me. Professionally, I hope to advance this film as a showcase in my ability as a filmmaker and in so doing network and establish those relationships that will enable me to continue to work as a filmmaker after graduation. In short, I hope this film is one of the main means by which opportunities for other productions become open to me. Making films is what I want to do professionally, and from my understanding, the way to make films is to do just that.

Closet Memories is by far one of the most difficult and rewarding productions I have had the opportunity to produce as an amateur filmmaker here at Baylor University. And while I am thankful for the experience and the product produced by that experience, I perceive this short film as another stepping stone on the way to the rest of my career as a filmmaker. My goal for this film is to produce a quality product and hopefully see it recognized for the quality I believe is there by way of film festivals and critical reviews. However, in accomplishing that single goal, I simply come closer to what my overall goal has always been: making good stories as a means of living.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The initial process of taking the concept of *Closet Memories* and developing it into a workable narrative that included essential elements such as plot structure, character psychology, content knowledge and aesthetic make-up was a detailed procedure involving in-depth research and exploration. Multiple resources including feature films, documentaries, written and published articles and books were involved in the aforementioned categories in order to obtain a basic understanding of the subject matter and thus provide a foundation on which to proceed into the coming production.

The following is a detailed description of each of the sources that were considered in the developmental process of this project, as well as an explanation of whether or not that source contributed to the project and, if so, what that contribution entailed. The process of making a film is full of varying choices, and with each choice made, directing the content of the film either one way or another, the personality of the film becomes more defined. Therefore, the end product of viewing *Closet Memories* as a short-film will be the result of hundreds of pre-cursory choices that were made before the first pages of the script were even written. The review of the literature involved in the conceptual construction of this thesis film is a detailed demonstration of the effort and planning that precedes all other stages of the filmmaking process. It is therefore the intention of this chapter to illuminate the layers of development that lie beneath the content, structure, characters and aesthetics that ultimately make up the resulting product of this narrative.

School Violence in Feature Films

The primary content of *Closet Memories* revolves around the issue of school violence. Thus, in preparation to demonstrate a violent school event in a believable and sensitive manner I determined to become better acquainted with the subject by watching and analyzing several feature and documentary films with similar content that revolved around a singular tragic or violent event within a high school environment. Not all the reviewed sources were helpful in the development of my thesis film and the nature of the sources' contributions will be clearly presented at the end of each brief description.

The first of my helpful sources was *Zero Day*, a narrative feature film written and directed by Ben Coccio in 2003. The film tells the story of two young men and the details surrounding their plans to shoot up their high-school. Unlike previous narratives, this story revolves around the process these potential shooters undergo as they make home-videos detailing every element of their plans from creating home-made bombs, to concealing guns, to their process of selecting the day to begin the massacre. Most of this narrative, therefore, takes place in a home-recording fashion as the two boys attentively record their process. Also, once the shooting takes place, the audience witnesses the massacre through school footage, making the entire film a kind of news event experience.

This film served as a helpful resource for my thesis due to the documentary nature it projected, as well as the extreme time and detail spent on the two young men and their personal processes leading up to the school shooting itself. Watching this film gave me some insight into what a normal process might incorporate if a student were planning on shooting up their school; therefore, I was able to incorporate elements of their planning process into my own film. Additionally, the personal nature that *Zero Day* portrayed of

the main characters added emphasis to the fact that horrible acts of violence can occur from a place where there is no evident motivation, such as bullying.

A second source that was surprisingly helpful was *Bowling for Columbine*, a documentary feature film written and directed by Michael Moore in 2002. This controversial documentary explores many of the possible reasons why Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold might have been motivated to shoot Columbine High School and a majority of those reasons are portrayed with an underlying theme referred to throughout the film as a “climate of fear.” This film attempts to highlight the violent tendencies of American media and the lenient viewpoint America seems to possess on the issue of firearms and thus link those cultural characteristics to events like the Columbine massacre.

While the overall content of this documentary did not directly contribute to the development of my thesis script, I felt that it proved relevant by making me familiar with the political and social issues involved in firearm use within the United States. As a filmmaker, it is my responsibility to be aware of sensitive issues that exist within the content of my story. By watching this film I was able to insure, after being made aware of those controversial issues surrounding firearms, I did not create another political statement either for or against the use of firearms. *Closet Memories* was intended to be a story about a young teenage girl, not a statement about guns or violence in schools; therefore, by becoming knowledgeable on such issues, I was better able to avoid making a misconstrued statement in my own film.

A third relevant source was *Elephant*, a narrative feature film written and directed by Gus Van Sant in 2003. This narrative feature tells the story of two young men named

Alex and Eric who, after being victimized by high-school bullying, carry out plans to shoot up their school. The events leading up to the shooting briefly enter into the lives of several unsuspecting high-school students, including a young man named John who, upon realizing the events about to take place, tries to warn people from entering the school, but with little success. The events in this film similarly parallel that of the Columbine massacre though the conclusion of the film is left open and ambiguous after Eric shoots Alex for no apparent reason.

This film was yet another example of school violence provoked by bullying and did not serve to aid the development of my thesis which does not address any issues regarding school bullying. However, the violent yet apathetic nature of the characters and the seemingly meaningless conclusion of the film proved relevant as an example to my story development on the topic of apathy. Though the shooting was provoked by bullying, the circumstances involving Alex's death allowed me a filmic example of the apathetic nature I was attempting to develop in my own film. Why did Eric shoot Alex? By drawing my own conclusions to this question I was able to personally delve into the questions I posed to my own story. Eric does not appear to shoot Alex out of hate, anger or revenge of any kind; instead, he just kills him and does not seem to care. That uncaring nature was the exact trait I wished to convey in Austin's character at the beginning of my film, which translates into her apathetic state.

In addition to Eric's apathy, this film proved useful due to its positive critical reception and acclaim. *Elephant* was a film that people respected and one that impacted society's perceptions of school violence. Thus I took note of its story structure and production quality with the hopes of creating my own film in a similar fashion, which

would serve to raise the stakes and heighten my own expectation as a filmmaker looking to make a story that held weight.

A fourth source was a narrative feature film called *Heart of America*, written and directed by Uwe Boll in 2002. The film is a story about two bullied young men named Daniel and Barry who make plans to shoot up their school on the last day before classes let out for the summer. However, at the last moment before the shooting begins, Daniel decides to leave, realizing that their extreme act of revenge is not worth it. Barry is then immediately joined by a teenage girl named Dara, who eagerly demonstrates her want for revenge by killing one teacher and student before being subdued. At the end of the film Barry commits suicide after killing the students he deemed responsible for his suffering and Daniel sits alone in his room, afraid to answer the phone that continues to ring.

This film, while an extension of the topic concerning school violence, did not execute the story well and therefore did not hold weight as an effective source in the development of my thesis. The characters were shallow and some were without clear motivation or purpose. I also felt as though the plot was at times misleading, focusing on several characters that did not seem to significantly contribute to the progression of the film. Overall, this film was not a relevant source in the construction of my thesis story.

A fifth source was a narrative feature film called *Duck! The Carbine High Massacre*, written and directed by both William Hellfire and Joey Smack in 1999. This film gives a brief account of the lives of two young men named Derwin and Derick who, after suffering the effects of high school bullying and unsupportive families, decide to shoot up their school. Also, Derwin and Derick came to adopt a neo-Nazi persona, believing that by killing their peers, they were acting upon a just cause. After murdering

several of their peers, they then simultaneously shoot and kill each other and at the end of the film we discover that a bomb has been left in the basement and is presumed to have exploded, taking more innocent lives.

The nature of this film was very vicious and unrelenting in its attempt to drive the message of violence to a level of Nazis-like terror. Because of the parallels drawn between the two shooters as Nazis thugs I was not able to attain any helpful or relevant material that might aid my thesis. I intended for my story content to deal directly with the unnatural circumstances involving a school shooting and the nature of potential shooters; however, this film seemed to use the tragic situation involving a school shooting as a type of good guy versus bad guy action routine without attempting to delve into the deeper layers of high school violence. Therefore, the content of this film did not directly contribute to the development of my thesis.

A sixth source was an obscure narrative feature film called *Home Room*, written and directed by Paul F. Ryan in 2002. This film tells the story of the aftermath of a school shooting that left nine students dead and one seriously injured girl named Deanna. During the investigation following the tragic event, Alicia Browning who shuns her classmates and dresses with a gothic style becomes suspected of aiding the recent shooting. Alice and Deanna become unlikely friends and help each other cope with the psychological stress resulting from the traumatic experience.

The setting of this film did not directly aid in the development of my thesis. Because the story takes place only after the school shooting has taken place, I was not able to draw on any relevant material that influenced the content of my own story which precedes a school shooting. Additionally, the psychological impact of a school shooting

on the community itself is not a subject my film addresses and considering that consummates the entire content of this film, I found *Home Room* an unhelpful source in my overall thesis construction.

Examples of Story Structure Influence

When developing the script for *Closet Memories* one of the main aspects was creating a workable structure from which the audience could relate. This story structuring included elements of climatic build and imaginative essentials used to demonstrate strong character traits and bring the audience into the world of the film. In order to create a story that would effectively engage the audience, I reviewed several films with the kind of personality I was attempting to re-produce in my own film.

The first of these sources was *Bang, Bang, You're Dead*, a narrative feature film written by William Mastrosimone and directed by Guy Ferland in 2002. This film is the story of teenage boy named Trevor Adams who after experiencing an array of intense bullying, threatens his school with a self-made bomb. Though the threat is never realized, Trevor is labeled an outcast within the student body, and his attempts at regaining social acceptance are met with harsh opposition both from the students and the adult community.

This film was a useful resource because of the similarity between its story climax and my own, which involved a scenario in which the protagonist undergoes a large transformation. In this film, Trevor undermines a planned school shooting by a group of outcasts called the “Troggs,” of which Trevor is a member. This scenario is similar to *Closet Memories* in that my main protagonist undermines a hostage situation in her

school, which happens to be a plan she originally created. In this way, a parallel theme of “killer turned savior” runs through both films, which allowed me the opportunity to insure that my own plot twist was unique even though the theme has been explored in previous films.

The second source that contributed to my story structure was *Heavenly Creatures*, a narrative feature film written by Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh and directed by Peter Jackson in 1994. This story is based on the lives of two young women named Pauline and Juliet who possessed a wildly imaginative friendship that eventually led to great social concern and forced separation by their mothers. As a result, both friends decide to take matters into their own hands and kill Pauline’s mother, the main barrier standing between their friendship, and then run away together.

The highly imaginative nature of the film, which often portrayed the main characters as perceiving hallucinations as real entities, is relevant to *Closet Memories*. This characteristic offered me several creative ideas in writing my own main character as one who is prone to hallucinatory episodes. An additional reason this film proved relevant was the violent nature the two female characters came to display at the end of the film. On a general note, commonplace women are not often portrayed as possessing violent tendencies; however, due to the violent intentions of my own female character, the example presented in this film was very helpful by demonstrating how two normal girls can be driven to commit murder. Due to the demonstration of severe violence portrayed from two female characters in *Heavenly Creatures*, I became confident in the believability of the violent nature of my own main character.

The third helpful structuring source was a narrative feature film called *2:37*, written and directed by Murali K. Thalluri in 2006. This film is a complex narrative feature that tells the individual stories of six, contemporary youths all facing different hardships that are often commonplace to a high-school setting. Each of these six stories are interwoven throughout the film resulting in a climatic school shooting that brings each character's involvement into focus.

This film proved relevant to the development of my own thesis because of the useful detail given to each stereotypical character in the story. I wanted to become familiar with the types of students expected to be present in a modern high-school setting and thus use those expectations as a basic outline to create characters which a general audience would be familiar with. In this way, I would be able to draw upon the pre-conceived ideas of the audience rather than detailing the aesthetics of each character, which would extend the story unnecessarily. By watching this film and taking special note of the character types, it was simple to pick a single trait from each person that defined their stereotype and then use that single trait as the foundation for my own supporting characters.

The final source I pulled into the structuring category of development was a recent film called *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, a narrative feature written by Lynne Ramsay and Rory Kinnear and directed by Lynne Ramsey in 2011. This recent film highlights the childhood development of a boy named Kevin through the observation of his mother who acts as the main protagonist. Throughout the film the mother notices patterns in Kevin's growth that point to several disquieting and sometimes alarming tendencies he portrays even as a small child. Eventually, her fears are realized in Kevin's

adolescence as he demonstrates several disturbing and violent behaviors directed towards those around him.

While the psychological content of this film proved interesting, neither the content of the story or the development of the characters proved relevant to my own thesis construction. This film focused greatly on the mother and her fears concerning her child, which is a topic that is completely absent from my story. Also, the psychological development of Kevin suggested that his violent nature began in his early childhood without any apparent provocation, versus in *Closet Memories* in which Austin's violent nature develops in her adolescence due to the absence of her mother and the lack of interest from her father and peers. Therefore, I found that this film did not contribute to my thesis in by any relevant means.

Examples of Aesthetic Contribution

One of the final processes involved in the development of my thesis film was the creation of an aesthetic vision for the film itself, which included elements such as texture, color, pacing and mood. Thus, in developing the aesthetics of *Closet Memories*, I reviewed several films that possessed similar traits I hoped could be mixed and then applied in the production process. All of the following resources are direct demonstration of the overall feel I intended for my thesis film.

The first source I wished to apply in the making of my thesis film was *Minority Report*, a narrative feature film written by Philip K. Dick, Scott Frank and Jon Cohen and directed by Steven Spielberg in 2002. This science fiction narration is set in a future where a system known as PreCrime has enabled a special police force to prevent crime before it occurs due to the foreknowledge acquired by thee psychics. The film revolves

around a law enforcer named John Anderton who is set up by the very system under which he has operated and for which he has vouched when scrutinized for the last ten years. The story is a struggle of free will vs. determinism and explores the possibilities of a person changing their future by sheer force of will.

This film showed relevance to my thesis due to its unique look and texture that I hoped to mirror in my own production. *Minority Report* possessed a kind of neo-noir look with an often de-saturated color scheme that possessed an underlying blue tint to several of the key scenes throughout the film. My own visual concept for *Closet Memories* resembled this style by means of the color scheme involving washed-out earthy tones and an overall blue tint as an aesthetic theme. I hoped to accomplish a kind of pale sheen in the overall visual presentation, which was highly motivated and contrived from the look in *Minority Report*.

The second source I pulled from was *Ondine*, a narrative feature film written and directed by Neil Jordan in 2009. This film is about an Irish fisherman named Syracuse who mysteriously finds a woman tangled in his net one day while fishing. The fisherman's daughter believes the woman to be a "selkie," a mythical creature that sheds its skin as a seal to become a human being. Though it is revealed in the film that Ondine has no mythological origins, the relationship she develops with Syracuse and his daughter lead them all into a precarious and potentially dangerous situation.

This film was a valuable resource and relevant to my thesis because of its emphasis on the specific look intended for my own production. *Ondine* is a visually stimulating film that bases its texture and color schemes similarly to that of *Minority Report* excluding the use of noir stylization. Thus, *Ondine* visually focuses on an earthy

color scheme with evidence of desaturation. Additionally, since most of the story takes place on the ocean it easy to recognize the overlying hint of a pale blue that makes up most of the visual story. In developing *Closet Memories*' look, I attempted to take the elements presented in both *Ondine* and *Minority Report* and fuse them together to create a texture unique to my production.

A third source I used that contributed more to the nature of the film rather than the look or texture was *Donnie Darko*, a narrative feature film written and directed by Richard Kelly in 2001. This film is a kind of fantasy narrative about a young man named Donnie Darko who is driven to commit acts of disturbance and violence while under the influence and direction of a life-size, rabbit hallucination named Frank. Through a series of building events that are supposed to lead to the end of the world, this narrative unravels a mysterious and highly debated tale that high-lights the psychological instability of a young teenage man.

This film proved relevant to my thesis because of the volatile psychological nature of the main character, which parallels in a similar fashion to the psychological design of my own main character in *Closet Memories*. Austin Still, like Donnie Darko, suffers from a hallucinogenic imagination that influences her behavior throughout the film. At certain points in the story, she is even unable to divide reality from non-reality, which most audiences would argue is Donnie's main affliction in the film. By noting the behavior, traits and processes of a character under extreme psychological pressure, I was able to depict Austin as a convincing character with mental instabilities and thus strengthen her believability as person suffering from hallucinations.

Additionally, the thrilling nature of *Donnie Darko* was a design that I hoped to at least partly adapt to my own film. I wanted the nature of my thesis to be suspenseful, while the content dealt with less of the physical world and more with the mental world of both the audience and the characters. Thus, I gleaned from the example that *Donnie Darko* presented and created a story that relied heavily on the intelligent nature most sophisticated, modern audience would be privy to by writing a story partly told in the mind of the main character.

A final source that proved helpful in the overall pacing or personality of my film was *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2*, a narrative feature film written by Steve Kloves based on the novel by J.K. Rowling and directed by David Yates in 2011. This film is the last installment in an eight film series that follows the life of a young teenage wizard, named Harry Potter, and his constant battle against the evil Lord Voldemort who is responsible for the death of his parents. In this feature, Harry, after a long and painful struggle, is finally able to defeat Voldemort and free the world of magic from his evil dominance.

This film proved relevant to my thesis because of its dark thematic elements as well as the slow, but intensely purposeful pacing of the entire film. I wanted *Closet Memories* to portray a sense of slow but purposeful movement in which the action of the scene was always smooth while transcending into the intensity captured in the expressions of the characters themselves. *Deathly Hallows: Part 2* displayed this particular feel with perfect balance; thus, by focusing on the pacing and taking note of those elements that served to intensify the moments even in their slower-than-normal state, I attempted to apply those characteristics in the writing process of my thesis.

Overall, the dark and foreboding sense of dread that exists through *Deathly Hallows: Part 2* was the exact nature that I desired for my own film.

Written and Published Sources

School Violence and Aggression

One of the primary focuses of the creation of *Closet Memories* was the detailed characterization that went into the protagonist, Austin Still. In order to develop a believable character whose complexities and behavioral tendency showed similarities to that of other school shooters, Austin Still's motivations and reactions needed to be clearly developed and based on true situations. Thus, in order to better acquaint myself with the nature or personality that has historically followed youth who demonstrate their frustrations violently, I reviewed several statistical studies of teenage aggression and descriptive accounts of past school shooting events. The following sources provided me with a deeper knowledge of the subject of school violence, resulting in the believable depiction of a similar circumstance in my own thesis film.

The first contributing source was *School Violence: Fear Versus Facts*, a book written by Dewey Cornell in 2006 and its content accomplishes two things. First, it provides detailed statistics of youth violence throughout the United States that discuss multiple subjects including locations of violent acts, homicide incidents, types of threats, types of weapons students use and violence in entertainment. By accurately depicting the current circumstances involving high-school violence, this book accomplishes a second goal: seeking a means for prevention. This book attempts to answer or at least partly illuminate a variety of questions all of which center around the concept of preventing

violence erupting within the school system. Overall, this book could be described as an adult's guide to understanding and deterring violent behavior in youths.

This book was relevant to my thesis because it made me familiar with the national outlook of violence within the school system. By writing a story that directly depicts the worst situational nightmare most parents and teachers have regarding the public school system, I believed that being sensitive and aware of such matters would be helpful in the development of the overall story. Additionally, I wished for the content of my thesis to exist slightly outside of the societal expectation of what would normally cause such an extreme form of violence as a school shooting. Thus, by becoming familiar with those expectations, I was able to avoid them, writing outside the bounds of the uncomfortable yet familiar territory that is school violence, and in so doing, hopefully create a story that satisfactorily countered communal anticipation, which not only adds a unique twist to the content of my story, but helps to demonstrate my belief that violent acts should not be limited to certain, typical circumstances.

The second invaluable source was *Columbine*, a book written by Dave Cullen in 2009 in an attempt to delve into the personal and hidden lives of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, exploring their hearts and minds as young men struggling in a life of modern hardships and expectations. By focusing on the person within these infamous shooters, the author attempts to illuminate at least a small part of their motivation in shooting up their school. This book contains personal accounts and interviews with several victims of the Columbine shooting as well as individuals associated with the shooters both personally and indirectly. Overall, this book attempts to bring understanding to a place of tragic loss and unimaginable pain for those involved in the shooting themselves.

This book proved unquestionably relevant to the content of my thesis because of the insight and personal nature its contents portrayed of the shooters themselves. Just like this book, I attempt to get into the mind of a shooter; thus by understanding the behaviors, reasoning and motivations of these two young men, I was able to begin creating a character whose thought patterns would parallel a true example of a mind contemplating violence. Another reason I chose this book as a source was an attempt to make the content of the situation more tangible. I do not believe that a story can be truly effective unless you have a personal connection with the material as you write it, and since I have never experience a school shooting or an extreme form of physical aggression as this story demonstrates, I required all the material I could find to make the subject matter personal. Overall, this source was necessary in my journey of becoming intimately familiar with the person of a potential shooter be beneath the violent layers.

Psychological Exploration of Violence

The second stage in developing a believable motivation that drove my protagonist into a violent demonstration was the process of creating the psychology behind the motivations. In order to effectively communicate the internal thought processes of Austin Still as a potential shooter, I attempted to explore the psychological nature of teenagers and the situations involving their aggressive responses in modern high school environments.

My first helpful source was a research study called *Childhood Aggression and Violence: Sources of influence, prevention, and control*, written by David Crowell and Ian Evans in 1986. This book thoroughly addresses multiple causes in the progression of childhood aggression including neurological perceptions, environmental influences,

maltreatment, and family and peer relations. The content of this book dealt specifically with the development of aggression in children and after highlighting several key elements that provoked violence in young children, demonstrated different means of prevention and control that would serve to deter aggression in children before it reaches a violent and self-destructive state.

The broader subject matter of this book dealing with childhood aggression and the circumstances usually involved in the development of such behavior proved relevant to *Closet Memories* because by being made acquainted with the theories involved in developmental aggression in modern youths, I came to understand one basic and insightful principle: violent behavior is almost completely circumstantial. While outward forms of physical aggression might be heightened by cognitive reasoning or mental instability, a majority of aggression results from a place containing some kind of situational dissatisfaction. Therefore, I realized that in order for my character to be justified in her violent expression, her situation would have to justify her behavior. This is a simple conclusion derived from a wide range of complex theories, but it is one that unquestionably strengthened the content of my thesis.

A third contributing source was *Ceremonial Violence: A psychological explanation of school shootings*, an explanative work written by Jonathan Fast in 2008 and it contains a detailed behavioral analysis of several identified school shooters. It limits, however, the in-depth examination to five specific cases of school shootings that involve the following shooters: Brenda Spencer, Wayne Lo, Evan Ramsey, Luke Woodham, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. The author of this book attempts to explain the outward show of violence demonstrated from these particular students as their

personal attempts at a kind of poetic and twisted cry for justice and acknowledgement. By adding emphasis and value to their violent crimes, the behaviors of these youths are compared to a kind of ceremonial passage, separating them from the “tribe,” otherwise known as high-school society, and thus, by their own perception, they become true individuals (Fast 13).

Because of the unique approach and theoretical explanation on youth violence, this book aided me greatly by adding yet another layer of perception onto the possibilities that could motivate a youth to such an extreme act of violence as a school shooting. The fact that this book posits the shooters’ displays of aggression as a kind of ceremonial event allowed me to understand the weight behind the act itself and deduce that shootings perhaps were not mindless and unfounded forms of terror, but perversely motivated demonstrations of a need to be set apart and recognized as an individual.

Thus, I applied this principle on a surface level to the motivation driving my own protagonist to such an atrocious crime. I attempted to add weight to her reasoning; as though she believed what she was doing was necessary both for herself and for those around her. In doing this, I hoped to add another layer of perception to a topic that all too often is plagued with stereo-types and misconceptions.

A fourth source that contributed as a situational descriptive work was *The Shooting Game: The making of school shooters*, written by Joseph Lieberman in 2006 that provides pictures, descriptions and interviews detailing over ninety accounts of school shootings and other forms of extreme violence. The horrific detail involved in the content of this book serves to provide a sobering realization that school shooters can literally come from anywhere and any type of student personality within a high-school

setting. Accounts of girls as young as seven have demonstrated potential for school violence; therefore, the overall effect of this book was incredibly compelling.

This book was relevant to my thesis due to its unassuming approach to the elements that ultimately create a school shooter, but the specific attention it gives to female shooters in the twenty-first chapter proved most helpful. While this chapter references that females make up only a small 3% of all school shooters, it also emphasizes the need for awareness when dealing with the possibility of female violence. Thus, this book points out that even though females tend to internalize their frustration and anger rather than physically demonstrate it in a harmful manner, numerous instances clearly indicate that violence in its most extreme form is not beyond the abilities of the female populace.

The detailed examples of school shootings in this book allowed me to broaden my perspective of what I personally believed constituted a potential killer and helped me to abandon any pre-conceived ideas I had formulated on the subject previously, which was due to the majority of all school shooters being young, angry males. The fact that girls as young as twelve had opened fire on their peers for no better reason than their personal dislike of Mondays was enough to open my eyes to the incredibly tragic circumstance that constitutes a potential school shooter, which then motivated me to try and convey that same tragedy in my own thesis protagonist.

A fifth and final source that contributed to my exploration on individual aggression was *School Rampage Shootings and Other Youth Disturbances: Early preventive interventions*, a researched analysis written by Kathleen Nader in 2012. This book details research studies on the development of youth violence in a public school

setting by focusing on modern issues teenage youth are often subjected to, the risks involved in youth development, youth suicides and the probable causes motivating active demonstrations of teenage aggression. The second half of the book focuses its content on several preventive methods to youth violence, most of which are encouraged and most effective when applied to youths at a young age, before adolescence truly sets in.

This book proved very helpful to my thesis development by way of two specific topics that directly applied to my production. The first subject was the detailed description and explanation of a modern school environment. By becoming familiar with a general high-school environment not only through personal accounts, but by detailed, situational statistics, I was able to accurately depict the ongoing activities, risks and issues present in a normal high-school setting, which was necessary in order to develop a believable high-school setting.

The second subject of aid was the preventative section of the book, specifically on the subject of establishing an empathetic attitude in early youth as a means of violence prevention. This chapter strengthened my stand on the idea that apathy exists in all forms of motivations to violence, which became a topic I attempted to reinforce throughout the content of my story. Thus, I found the chapter on empathetic development in early youth as evidence supporting my thesis statement regarding an apathetic existence and demonstrated how not caring enough to stop oneself can lead to extreme forms of outward viciousness.

Female Aggression and Development

The final element involved in designing my protagonist, Austin Still was the process of understanding and developing her personality as a female shooter and thus, the psychology often involved in teenage females. In order to believably demonstrate Austin Still's behavioral reactions to her environment, I had to develop a basic understanding of female tendencies and traits, more specifically the developmental process of teenage girls and how they might be motivated or provoked into violent demonstrations as is seen in *Closet Memories*.

My first invaluable resource in studying the psychological make-up of teenage girls was *The development and treatment of girlhood aggression*, an enlightening work written by Debra Pepler, Kirsten Madsen, Christopher Webster and Kathryn Levene in 2005. This book demonstrates an objective and thoroughly researched approach to the growing aggression in young teenage females. Not all of the subject matter in this book directly applied to the development of my own female protagonist, but much of it was incredibly insightful and useful in my overall understanding of the hidden culture of female aggression and the multiple reasons motivating such behavior. This book directly demonstrated, with the support of research evidence, an increase in aggressive female behavior and even went as far as to address areas of developmental issues that were often the cause of conflicting behavior within young females.

The objective evidence put forth on the subject of female aggression, while helpful in my basic understanding of girlhood violence, did not aid in the development of my thesis except in the matter of reinforcing the personality nature of my main character. Though previous sources have addressed the same subject matter, this book demonstrated

hard evidence that supported the abnormal quality of my thesis' protagonist, as being a quiet young teenager with a violent thought-life. Thus, due to the evidence put forth in these research studies, my female protagonist was legitimized in her violent expressions, but with a personality and motivation that existed perhaps a bit outside the normal research projections demonstrated in this book. By making the character of Austin Still exist outside the confines of researched stereotypes, I was able to create a character that was unique, provoking and believable.

Additionally, I believe every writer should be intimately familiar with their subject matter, and, seeing as my thesis deals with the unusual subject of a female shooter, my becoming aware of situations involving female aggression in public school systems was a necessary step in writing a story based on that material.

The second contributing source was *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*, an impressive work written by Mary Pipher in 1994. This book focuses heavily on commonplace issues the modern teenage girl is prone to either experience herself or encounter by way of association. Issues the book touches on include a teenage girl's relationship with both her father and her mother, divorce, depression, appearance, drugs, alcohol, sex and, of course, sexual violence. Because the author acted as a girl's professional counselor, a majority of the content of this book are first-hand accounts of girls encountering the above issues, how the author approached their circumstances and what the author suggested or attempted as a form of remedy or healing.

The content of this book directly addressed the issues and personality types privy to the modern teenage girl and was therefore strongly relevant to my thesis as it applies directly to the state of the driving character in the story. I realize that having lived the

life of a teenage girl I should know something that might prove useful in the development of my female protagonist, Austin Still. However, I found my personal experience as a young teenager girl unhelpful because they varied considerably from the character I wished to portray in two significant ways. First, I grew up home-schooled and therefore with limited knowledge of typical high-school culture. Second, I never experienced the loss of my mother, a fact that demonstrated a large amount of influence in Austin's behavioral development as a teenager. Thus, this book aided me greatly in providing relevant examples and situations that more closely paralleled the circumstances of my main character. I also heavily pulled on the chapter regarding teenage girls and their relationships with their fathers and mothers and was able to glean what healthy relationships generally depicted versus relationships that were unhealthy.

Thus, in reading this book, I discovered the pressures, expectations and situations most teenage girls encounter on a day-to-day basis, which greatly aided me in the development of my female protagonist as I attempted to create a character that was both unique and familiar enough for people to recognize and understand. Also, owing to the information provided on teenage girl and her parental relations, I believe I was able to accurately depict the positive relationship Austin had with her mother, which was later lost, and the resulting relationship with her father, which was distant and uninvolved.

The third and final relevant source was an unveiling work called *Odd Girl Out: The hidden culture of aggression in girls*, written by Rachel Simmons in 2011. This book deals specifically with the types of aggression teenage girls are prone to either initiate or fall victim to, as well as the societal expectation involved in those aggression types. The author goes to great lengths to reveal the ways in which girls subtly

demonstrate their aggression by means of manipulation or indirect methods that often go unnoticed by authorities. The book indicates that due to society's overbearing expectation that girls must be nice and never participate in outward shows of aggression, young women are forced to express their anger or frustration through more indirect means, while boys, on the other hand, are expected to engage in physical forms of conflict, thus casting light on the double standard by which our society perceives both genders.

This book proved relevant to *Closet Memories* based on the applicable nature of its topic, being female aggression. My thesis production portrays a young teenage girl who plans to demonstrate her hostility at an extreme level by shooting up her school. Naturally, this book explains that outward shows of aggression are expected of young men, while young girls who have participated in any kind of physical conflict are immediately labeled as abnormal, unattractive and unfeminine. By becoming aware of the societal expectations of female aggression, I was better able to create a character that purposefully broke those boundaries by not only revealing a strong sense of internal hostility, but by attempting to demonstrate not only the possibility, but the likelihood that teenage girls are also plagued by violent tendencies. I wished to create a character that existed outside the communal anticipation of normal female behavior.

Practical Resources on Filmmaking

After designing *Closet Memories* as a story with multiple layers of structure and characterization was accomplished, it was time to turn my attention to the practical application of both writing and directing skills that would eventually see the production

through to completion. Thus, I pulled a couple resources as references and a means to gain knowledge for the upcoming production, specifically in the area of directing.

The first resource that contributed to my knowledge of producing a short-film was *The complete guide to writing, producing, and directing a low-budget short film*, a helpful work written by Gini Scott in 2011 that provides essentially what the title indicates: a complete guide to writing, producing and directing a low-budget short. While I found a large part of this book a reiteration of knowledge given me both in the classroom and on a variety of film sets, I found it refreshing that this book emphasized a systematic approach to the short-film production by clearly demonstrated and often step-by-step descriptions and examples of different areas of the production process.

I found this book useful mainly in the area of producing in that it provided helpful advice on budgeting and financial expectations for the level of production I hoped to produce in my thesis. Making a short-film is a daunting and often overwhelming project, and the organization required to produce something of such proportions must be highly detailed and involved. Overall, this book was helpful in the assembly of the production itself without much input on the creative elements the project also required.

The second source that focused on the aspect of directing specifically was *Directing the film: Film directors on their art*, a descriptive guide written by Eric Sherman in 1976 that delves into great detail concerning the director's role in developing the elements that ultimately create a good story. A large majority of this book contains helpful, insightful and often challenging quotes from several successful directors throughout cinema history, whose content and material engage in a certain topic that adds a piece into what constitutes a director as a whole. The subject matter the book touches

on includes topics such as collaboration, directing actor's, forming and maintaining vision for the story, communicating visually and even understanding all the integral parts that must work in harmony to create a film.

This book was relevant to my thesis because the invaluable knowledge that it provided to me as a first-time director. The main principle that it relayed to me was communication. Owing to my introverted personality, I have often found it challenging relaying my wants or desires in an effective or visual manner. It is a requirement as a director to communicate one's vision to the rest of the crew enabling them to bring that vision to reality. Thus, in being made conscience of the invaluable need for me to communicate externally, I was aided in my development as a director and pushed myself to relay my internal vision clearly and effectively.

The final and most frequented source I benefitted from was *The screenwriter's bible: A complete guide to writing, formatting and selling your script*, a helpful resource written by David Trottier in 2012 for anyone planning to write a script. This book details the processes involved in writing a film script based on the most up-to-date rules applied to the trade of screenwriting as whole. The contents of this book touch on several subjects including copyrighting once work, formatting a script, the writing processes itself, finding the inspiration and getting your work into the right people's hands.

While this book served as a helpful refresher during the process of writing my thesis script, it did not serve to directly influence the contents or the manner in which I produced the story. Therefore, this book did not prove an indispensable source to my overall thesis production.

Freudian Sources

One of the critical story elements in *Closet Memories* is the concept of a female lead in a masculine role. Austin Still, a teenage girl, premeditates a violent event that traditionally has been associated with male instigators. As previously mentioned, female shooters make up a very small percentage of recorded shooters overall; thus, I purposely created a female lead within the confines of a masculine-based role in order to demonstrate how motivations leading to violent behavior can extend beyond gender or age. In the interest of understanding the outside effects of placing a female character in the midst of a masculine role, I undertook a small sample of Sigmund Freud's works, to explore the complexity of such a situation and glean his perspective on the subject.

The first source I consulted was *Freud's Dream: A Complete Interdisciplinary Science of Mind* written by Patricia Kitcher in 1995. The content of this book primarily focuses on interpreting the subliminal behaviors of the mind by identifying elements within a person's dream state as references or symbols to outside meanings. Freud believed that dreams were a direct link into the functions and behaviors of a person's mind and that one could dissect an individual's internal motivations or desires, and thus their external behavior in pursuit of those desires, by understanding the multiple symbols put forth in their dreams (115).

The primary piece of information that I took from this source was Freud's belief that the use of weapons within dreams was what he referred to as a phallic symbol—a physical representation of a sexual need or desire. *Closet Memories* revolves around an event that included the heavy use of guns, specifically by a female character, and because my female lead used weaponry, Freud could have easily interpreted that scenario as an

external demonstration of her internal sexual frustration. However, that specific interpretation was not relevant to her character because I constructed her without any intention of including Freud's influence or perspective on her role as a female shooter.

The second source relating to Freud that I consulted was *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* written by Freud in 1905. The majority of this work dealt with the sexual maturation of young males including both the internal and external accompaniment of their puberty stage; however, my primary interest in reviewing this work was the Freud's input on the development of female sexuality. Freud maintained that a female's identity has a foundation of a masculine nature and it is only once she enters puberty that she transforms into a woman; however, the spark that initiates the transformation is the female's awareness of her lack of a penis (86). As a result of this realization, the female's sexuality develops in a repressed form, lacking the potency demonstrated in male's sexual potency; this constant state of repression thus causes the female to be more prone to demonstrations of what Freud referred to as "hysteria" (87).

This source did not prove useful either in the development or interpretation of Austin Still as the female protagonist; however, it is evident that Freud could have interpreted the violent demonstrations put forth by the protagonist a product of hysteria brought on by the repressive state of her sexual need. In that case, the fact that Austin Still wields a weapon as her source of power and that the weapon becomes one of the main identifying factors associated with her character, could easily point to a Freudian interpretation of her utilizing a weapon as means of compensating for her lack of a penis. While such an interpretation proves interesting, it does not hold any value or relevance in my understanding or development of *Closet Memories*. It is therefore outside the scope

of my intentions for this thesis film, though further study of Freud in relation to female school shooters might be of interest in future studies.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, the process of reviewing and analyzing previously produced films was a valuable resource in the construction of *Closet Memories* in areas such as content analysis, aesthetics and plot structure. By applying certain elements gleaned throughout these films, the nature of my own film became a more tangible design and successfully passed from the conceptual stage into a workable model advancing towards production. Additionally, the invaluable knowledge provided by the described written and published works of multiple authors proved beneficial to the development of my thesis by providing me with a deeper understanding of teenage aggression and school violence.

Conclusively, by gaining a more intimate knowledge of the content put forth in *Closet Memories*, by means of exploratory research, I was able to build a story whose characters, motivations and behaviors accurately reflected those personalities, with whom history and audiences would find familiarity, resulting in the believable presentation of content pertaining to high school violence in a narrative setting. In short, this literature review provided the complexities and layers that often accompany such a tragic and unexplainable event as a school shooting, and also contributed to my personal understanding of a subject matter that has proven difficult to produce on a relatable level.

CHAPTER THREE

Scene by Scene Analysis

Introduction

In the pre-production phase of making a film several steps must be organized and taken in order to create a unified and harmonic vision of the end product. Due to the fact that a single production requires the combined effort of multiple people with multiple roles and responsibilities, the clearer the initial vision the better the outcome. Thus, in an effort to clarify the initial essence of *Closet Memories*, I created a scene by scene analysis whose descriptions and examples serve to visually demonstrate the intent of every scene. By detailing elements such as the purpose, the mood or tone of the scene, the look or texture, the performance of the actors, and finally the goals of the characters within the scene itself, I am able to clearly portray the overall vision that I possess for each scene, which then enables those responsible to make that vision a reality. Thus, a scene by scene analysis is a helpful and methodical approach to producing a quality product from which every production member can actively contribute towards.

For the sake of providing a unified understanding of the overall plot of *Closet Memories* rather than relying on a scene by scene analysis, the following is a brief plot description. The story begins with a young girl named Austin Still who covertly makes plans to sneak into her school with a pair of loaded guns and wreak havoc, a motivation bred from the belief that the world has become apathetic. On the eve of her plan, she meets a student, Mace Burning, who inadvertently shows her that some people still care about others. This realization results in her canceling her plans and moving on with life;

however, her happy ending is cut short when an actual school shooting takes place that coincidentally pivots around Austin despite her lack of involvement. Austin discovers during the chaos, that Elliott, a young man she never gave much thought to, had taken her plans and made them into reality as means of causing her to notice him. In the resulting end of the film, Austin saves the student body by turning on the unsuspecting shooters, just as police enter the premises. Due to appearances, the police mistake her as one of the shooters and open fire. Austin dies having proven herself a changed individual.

Please note, that the following chapter contains a description of five aforementioned elements for each individual scene within the script: purpose, mood/tone, look/texture, performance and character goals. By detailing the concepts and objectives behind the creation of each of the five elements contained within these scenes, awareness of the visual intent of the storytelling process becomes apparent. It is therefore, the intention of this chapter to grant insight into the aesthetic construct of *Closet Memories* as a visual entity as a means of deepening the understanding of the audience and furthering the appreciation of the developmental process that results in a finished short-film product.

Scene 1: A Non-Visual Narration By Austin Still

The purpose of this scene is to set up and define the reason why the main protagonist wants to shoot up her school, which is an attempt to wake up both the world and herself from an apathetic state. It propels the story forward by the sound of a gunshot, which shocks the audience into a disturbing reality at the start.

The mood of this voice-over scene can be described as a sense of inevitability. I intended for the audience to feel trapped, disheartened, as though there is no way out and

leaving them with a sense of curious hope in the question raised at the end: “what would it take?”

Because this is a voice-over, the screen is black with no visual stimulation, merely the sound of the performer’s voice and thus the look or texture of the film is non-applicable.

The performance in this scene is cold and monotone, almost frustrated, but not caring enough to truly be angry. As though the voice itself were depicting the apathetic state it is describing. To further this point, the goal of the character narrating is to reveal the true motive behind her actions and inevitably raise the interest of the audience enough to cause them to listen.

Scene 2: Austin Holds The Smoking Gun

The purpose of this scene is to set up Austin, the main character, as the school shooter and to establish her eventual death. It propels the story forward by stimulating the interest of the audience in that it gives them the ending without the story leading up to that point. Thus it begs the question: how does a young girl get to such a horrible point in life?

The mood of this scene is intended to be part chaos, part quiet horror, as if everything is moving in surreal slow motion, like it were a living nightmare both for the protagonist and for those watching.

Because this scene takes place inside a gym, the lighting is high-key with warm colors but everything seemingly washed out and soft in order to emphasize a dreamlike state. Thus, the texture of this scene is very soft and surreal.

The performance in this scene is meant to be almost vague and uninvolved, forcing us to try and guess what the character is really thinking or intending. Her movements should be calm and her features invoking a sense of acceptance for what is about to come.

The goal of the main character in this scene is presented to the audience as being one of harm for reasons yet unknown to them.

Scene 3: Lacey Accidentally Hits Austin

The purpose of this scene is to establish Austin within the student body as someone who people rarely notice or care about. It also introduces a main supporting character named Lacey who remains throughout the film. This scene propels the story because it shows Austin before the shooting takes place, heightening the interest of the audience who will be wondering how a girl so timid could turn to a cold-blooded killer.

The mood of this scene is high energy owing to the fact that the students are in volleyball practice. Once Austin gets hit with the ball, however, the atmosphere immediately leaps to a defensive, awkward environment when Lacey approaches her.

Since we are still in the gym, the colors are warm and the lighting high-key with slow falloff; however, the hazy, dreamlike state is gone – now replaced with a sharp reality. Lacey's performance depicts a typical, popular high-school girl, which harshly contrasts Austin's performance as the awkward, timid type of high-school girl. Because of these opposite characters, their encounter easily establishes an immediate strain. While Lacey's performance comes across as flippant and insincere, Austin's performance comes across with a hint of hostility wrapped in an apathetic mask.

Lacey's goal is to get the volleyball and get back to practice. Austin's goal is to go unnoticed and get Lacey to leave as quickly as possible, which is more complex considering she never speaks.

Scene 4: Austin Meets Mace Burning

The purpose of this scene is to first alienate Austin from the rest of the student body by establishing her within an empty classroom, and second, to introduce Mace as a vital main character that continues throughout the course of the film. This propels the story by showing that Austin is possibly hiding something when she covers her notebook from Mace. Also, it sparks a possible connection between Austin and Mace through their unusual encounter that seems to draw her out of her anti-social shell.

The mood of this scene is made to establish a high level of awkwardness, almost humorously, when Mace invades Austin's bubble and starts asking her questions. Therefore, this encounter is made to be almost painstakingly uncomfortable both for Austin and the audience.

The texture of this scene possesses a blue, slightly de-saturated palette. The look is smooth, but at the same time invasive, focusing on the facial reactions of the characters to the point of obtrusiveness. The lights within the classroom are also turned off, thus allowing the sunlight from the window to fill the room with a clean, white sunlight that helps to wash out the blues to a more muted tint.

Austin's performance invokes a feeling of incredible awkwardness, in that she is obviously uncomfortable with being seen or talked to by another student and therefore attempt to project an air that is clearly closed-off to outside contact. Mace on the other

hand is warm and open with an accepting and non-assuming approach to Austin's cold responses. He is intentional in his questions and mannerisms, which gives you a sense of quiet persistence from his character.

Austin's goal is to get Mace to leave the room because he is invading her space. Mace's goal begins as trying to find his calculus class, but then it quickly changes to trying to get Austin to open up. In a way, his character rises to the challenge presented to him when Austin gives him the initial cold shoulder.

Scene 5: Mace Late To Class

The purpose of this scene is to establish Austin's lack of awareness of certain elements such as time or surroundings. This is demonstrated either because she doesn't care about those elements or because she possesses some kind of mental impairment. The true reason is never fully revealed, forcing the audience to guess and draw their own conclusions. Once Mace re-enters the scene we then receive a sense of extreme caution radiating from Austin, emphasizing the impact he has already made on her from their initial encounter.

The mood in this scene starts out as startling and obtrusive, when the teacher Mr. Nathan, looms over Austin's desk in a condescending manner. It again establishes a kind of alienation between Austin and, not only the students, but the authority figures in her school as well.

The look in this scene is again designed to be obtrusive and belittling by establishing Mr. Nathan from an inferior, first-person perspective. Since we are in the same classroom, the coloring and texture is very much the same as monotone blue as the

scene previous. However, at this point the overhead lights are now turned on, which gives the room a colder, business-like feel.

Mr. Nathan's performance invokes a sense of impatience and annoyance with both Austin and the other students present by way of both his condescending tone and sluggish mannerisms. Austin, being in a classroom setting, is fully enveloped in her apathetic state, hardly caring that Mr. Nathan is looking at her or that she is surrounded by students. Her interest only sparks when Mace enters the room and from there we see her discomfort rise.

Mr. Nathan's goal is simply to bring Austin's attention back to his class by way of directly addressing and embarrassing her. Austin's goal is to go unnoticed, especially when Mace re-enters the room; her movements and expression almost sink her into her chair. Mace's goal is to get to his desk while maintaining as much dignity as he possibly can after being late on first day.

Scene 6: Austin Counts Her Steps

The purpose of this scene is to establish Austin within the mass of the student body and again show how disconnected she is with those around her. This propels the scene forward by both showing Austin very focused and involved in counting her steps, which is seen as an unusual activity for a teenage girl. Additionally, an indirect purpose in this scene is to plant the seed of the upcoming pep rally in the minds of the audience, making them aware of the environment and thus connecting the plot lines throughout the story.

The tone in this scene is again very high energy. School is just letting out and students are in quick pursuit of the exits. This mood contrasts sharply with Austin's calm and constant movement through the halls, emphasizing her non-caring state as an individual.

The texture in this scene, while still possessing that hint of a monotone blue (which persists as the main palette throughout the entire film) is filled with a lot more color variety, which include heightened and warmer tones come across in the dress of the various students and the posters on the walls, adding to the energy of the scene. All the colors present remain slightly de-saturated, however, muting out the vibrancy of the student body so as to not over-power Austin during her contained movement.

Austin's performance in this scene is very focused and internalized as she walks the halls. Her counting reveals that she is either unaware or completely uncaring of her surroundings, which brings her internal thoughts, the counting, verbally to the surface, which could indicate that she is perhaps socially unaware of herself.

Austin's goal in this scene is to accurately count her steps from one destination to another. Exiting school at the end of the day is secondary to her current task, showing that her priorities as a teenage girl are abnormal to what would be expected of a teenage girl.

Scene 7: Mace Befriends Austin

The purpose of this scene is to show that Austin has made enough of an impact on Mace that he intentionally seeks her out to deliver a simple jest. This encounter serves to solidify the connection between Austin and Mace that was only hinted at before and thus propels the story forward with the hope that Mace will inadvertently become the friend that Austin does not yet possess.

The overall mood in this scene is again high energy in that students are exiting the school, happy to be heading home. Once Mace approaches Austin an underlying humor is added to the scene when he realizes he was duped at their first meeting into being late to class. This light-hearted exchange serves to strengthen the relationship between these characters.

Since they are outside the school building on a bright, cloudless day this scene is very high-key and warm with a nice afternoon look that contains sharp, but greying shadows.

Austin's performance in this scene is much more open than what it has been in previous scenes and though she is trying to hide her amusement, she is enjoying this encounter with Mace. Mace's performance is very charming with a hint of friendly annoyance towards Austin that evolves into a joking manner by the end of the scene, which shows just how quickly he has entered Austin's closed off world.

Austin's goal in this scene is to hide her amusement from Mace. Mace's goal in this scene is to enact a humorous form of revenge on Austin by confronting her about making him late for class. By doing this, Mace's ultimate goal is to befriend Austin.

Scene 8: Austin Greet Her Uninvolved Father, Monte Still

The purpose of this scene is to establish Austin within her everyday environment by showing her come home from school and have a brief interaction with her father, Monte. Thus the primary purpose is to establish Austin's relationship with her father and secondly to re-emphasize that Austin seems to be hiding something.

The mood of this scene is meant to be straining and uncomfortable for the audience owing to the apparent lack of relationship between father and daughter. It is obvious that over the years Austin and Monte have had little to no contact from day to day and most of their interaction results from a place of necessity rather than desire.

The look of this scene is very similar to the previous in that it takes place outside on a bright, cloudless day which casts the entire palette in a warm, afternoon heat. Shadows are therefore sharp in contrast but grey due to the brightness of the overhead sun. The texture in this scene can be described as shimmering, emphasizing hot spots in places where the sun is concentrated.

Monte's performance in this scene is meant to come across as distracted or disinterested, almost as though his interactions with Austin are being forced through gritted teeth. It is obvious by the end of the scene that he still continues to put forth effort in trying to connect with her personally, but he does so timidly and without hope of succeeding. Austin's performance is again cold and uninvolved with a hint of abrasiveness when questioned by her father. It is apparent that she normally operates independently from Monte and wants to keep it that way.

Monte's goal in this scene starts out as simply cleaning his car. Once Austin arrives, however, it shifts to treading lightly in his inquiries about her day, as though he

were trying to get through their greeting without causing any harm to their non-existent relationship. Once Elliott calls Monte's goal again shifts to trying to locate the missing firearm, which ends the scene with him going to the gun-shop in search of it. Austin's goal is to get through the formality of interacting with her father as quickly as possible and without having him suspect anything that she might be up to; essentially, her goal is to make him think that everything is normal even within their abnormal relationship.

Scene 9: Austin Makes Deadly Plans

The purpose in this scene is multifaceted. The primary goal in this scene is to reveal what Austin has been hiding up to this point in the film, being that she is planning on shooting up her school. This scene establishes her plan in extreme detail and her intent to have the shooting take place at the pep rally, which was announced at school in a previous scene. The second purpose is to reveal the absence of Austin's mother in her life by way of unknown reasons.

The mood of this scene is incredibly tense and suspenseful revealing the true motive Austin has been hiding and showing her in the process of intently planning the death of her peers. In a word, this scene is meant to be disturbing.

The texture of this scene is very de-saturated, reducing the colors in the room to a pale tint. The dominant colors in this scene are grey, being her bedspread, and black, being her wardrobe; therefore, the texture in this scene is much darker and muted than any other scene previous.

Austin's performance in this scene is extremely focused to the point that she loses track of the time. There is also an underlying hint of excitement or determination in her

movement, which should be unnerving for the audience. In a way, this is the first time that we've seen the true Austin, which she has kept very well hidden from both her father and peers.

Austin's goal in this scene is to complete her planning process to perfection. She is not worried about being discovered because she is too focused and too determined for any outside distraction.

Scene 10: Austin Learns About Mace and Meets Elliott

There are two purposes for this scene. The first is to learn more about Mace's character which is accomplished by having Austin overhear a conversation from two girls who are, of course, talking about Mace. The second purpose of this scene is to introduce the character of Elliott, whom we've only seen Monte talk to over the phone. This encounter between Austin and Elliott allows the story to propel forward by sparking the interest of the audience in the odd behavior delivered by Elliott's character.

The mood of this scene operates within a high energy environment since students are moving to and from classes providing a lot of background movement; however, the main focus of this scene is on Austin's reactions to the activities around her. For example, we notice her attention shift to the girls when they are talking about Mace; as a result she studies Mace from afar as though trying to figure him out. Another example would be her inattentive reaction to Elliott when he asks for her key because his presence obviously has no impact on her. In this way, the small reactionary details slow the scene down significantly, forcing the audience into an observant, almost cautious state.

Again, the look involved here falls back upon the de-saturated blue tint that makes up the overall palette throughout the film. The colors vary in the background, but because they are out of focus and muted they do not disrupt the pale, blue tint that dominates this scene. The lighting is high-key and cool with soft shadows and low contrast.

Austin's performance in this scene is primarily reactionary because she does not speak, but her facial interpretations of the environment speak for themselves. For example, when she listens in on the girls talking about Mace, she is obviously curious about his history as a person. Also, when she encounters Elliott in the hall, she almost looks through him as a person without any care or interest in him. Elliott's performance projects nervousness when he talks to Austin, indicating that he not only notices her as a person, but perhaps secretly harbors romantic feelings towards her. The fact that she seems not to notice his uncomfortable state speaks volumes for how little she regards him.

Austin's goal in this scene is to understand who Mace Burning is as a person; everything else is only a passing thought, including Elliott. Elliott's goal in this scene, while superficially is to acquire Austin's key, is to gain her attention or notice, which he does not seem to accomplish even though she looks directly at him and responds to his request.

Scene 11: The Pep Rally Begins

The purpose of this scene is to establish the excited state of the student body during the pep rally. The tone in this scene is extremely high-energy with the crowd pumped up and entertained.

The look in this scene is chaotic with lots of colors splashing together in a warm, high-energy environment. No direct color scheme can be defined because everything is a mix of color and movement therefore producing a messy texture.

The performance of the student body in this scene is nothing short of pure excitement being expressed through yelling, shouting and a lot of movement.

The goal of the student body in this scene is to have fun.

Scene 12: Austin Prepares for the Shooting

The purpose of this scene is to elevate the tension and anxiety for the audience by revealing that Austin intends to shoot up the pep rally. Once Mace arrives, however, Austin's intent seems to falter, which propels the story forward on whether or not she will decide to go through with the shooting.

Like the previous scene, the pep rally is a very high-energy environment; however, because we are focused on Austin's brooding state, the tone is filled with suspense and dread over what will happen next. Once Mace enters the gym, a spark of hope leaks into the scene as uncertainty rises in Austin's reaction, revealing that perhaps she is rethinking what she intended.

The look for this scene is de-saturated but predominantly blue tinted more so than in other scenes, as though it is trying to emphasize the internal state of Austin's brooding thoughts in the surrounding environment.

Austin's performance is one of visual indecision and struggle. We see that instability come across in her face after her interaction with Mace as she realizes the possibilities of what could happen if she went through with the shooting.

Austin's goal initially is to execute her plan and shoot up the school; however, once Mace arrives her goal is overshadowed by her want to protect Mace. Mace's goal in this scene is to get to the pep rally and see his sister dance; he's in a rush, but he still takes the time to invite Austin to join him, which indicates his underlying motive in befriending her.

Scene 13: Austin Locks the Gym

The purpose of this scene is to indicate Austin's decision to go ahead with the school shooting despite Mace's presence; thus, heightening the anxiety of the audience. Also, it establishes, via announcer, that Mace's sister, Liz Burning, is also inside the gym, which helps to increase the conflict Austin may still be having about going through with her plans.

The mood in this scene is dark and very harsh as Austin shuts and locks the gym doors. Each movement is supposed to elevate the tension for the audience, bringing them closer and closer to a fate they would rather avoid. Also, the fact that the crowd in the gym is unaware adds more layers of anxiety for the audience as well.

The look of this scene is dark and dreadful with a firm sense of finality in the extreme close-ups of the locks and chains on the doors to the gym.

Austin's performance in this scene is cold and calculating, as though she possessed no guilt or second-thoughts over the crime she is about to commit. Once she realizes Liz Burning is on the dance team, however, that internal conflict can be seen in her facial reaction.

Austin's goal is to secure the gym quickly and without being seen in order to set up for the inevitable shooting.

Scene 14: Austin Hallucinates the Shooting

The purpose of this scene is to demonstrate how Austin's sees the shooting taking place. It shows Austin purposefully killing Liz, which Mace is witness to. Also, the driving purpose of this scene is to confuse the audience into thinking that she actually did go through with the shooting.

The mood of this scene is much like the opening scene in by playing like a chaotic dream where everything is smooth and surreal, but confusing and jumpy at the same time.

The look in this scene is a very pale haze throughout the gym, muting all warmth and projecting the room in a kind of limbo state that is both de-saturated and high-key.

Austin's performance in this scene is not only cold, but dark and evil, especially when she approaches Liz with the intent to kill her. Her mannerisms are almost devoid of all human reactions to the death and chaos she is causing. Even Mace does not seem to have any kind of impact on her behavior after she shoots Liz at point-blank range.

Austin's goal in this scene is to cause as much harm and death as she is able.

Scene 15: Austin Breaks Down

The purpose of this scene is to reveal to the audience that Austin never went through with the shooting like they were lead to believe; instead, it was all in her head. This scene also serves to show the beginnings of transformation by showing Austin break down and cry for the first time in the film.

The mood of this scene is very chaotic. While the audience finds a small sense of relief in knowing Austin did not go through with the shooting, there is a very real panic emanating from Austin that continues the high-strung state without pause or true reprieve.

The look in this scene is unique in its coloring in that it depicts a sunset state that is mixed with the ongoing blue tint. In this way, the warm and cool palettes are mixed emphasizing the conflict that Austin is currently undergoing.

Austin's performance in this scene is very simply a state of panic. She throws the contents of her bag on the bed, checking everything, trying to insure herself that she didn't go through with the shooting like she intended. Once she convinces herself of this, she angrily backs away from the incriminating contents and huddles in a corner, obviously angry and broken at the crime she almost committed.

Austin's goal in this scene is to account for everything in her possession and prove to herself that she did not go through with the shooting.

Scene 16: Austin and Her Dad on Friendly Terms

The purpose of this scene is to establish how much Austin has changed as a person by establishing a real, growing relationship with her father in which both characters take an active interest in each other.

The tone in this scene is very light-hearted and warm. The characters are comfortable with each other and even appear to enjoy each other's company, which is a sharp contrast to their initial meeting earlier in the story where they were almost cringing in one another's presence. The mood in this scene is meant to be very sweet and assuring to the audience.

The look in this scene sense takes place outside making it very warm with a cool sheen to indicate the time as morning. The sun is bright and therefore provides a high-key environment with sharp, grey shadows.

Austin's performance in this scene is sharply different than anything we have previously witnessed with her character. She is warm and open with her father, and though she still appears timid in her responses and mannerisms, it is apparent that she enjoys her father's attention and responds in kind. Monte's performance in this scene is warm and full of interest. He even subtly hints at her feelings for Mace, eliciting an almost girlish response from Austin; thus, revealing him as a warm and tender father.

Austin's goal in this scene is to connect with her father, almost as though she's making up for being closed off for so long. Monte's goal in this scene is to respond to his daughter and show interest and support in the activities going on in her life.

Scene 17: Austin with Friends

The purpose of this scene is to re-establish Austin within her school environment after her transformation. By doing this the audience sees how Austin operates within a circle of friends that appears to be both led and established by Mace, making her appear more open and social with those around her.

The mood of this scene is very carefree and light involving a group of friends joking and walking down a school hall with no anxiety or awkwardness. Austin is still slightly set apart from the rest of the group, but it is obvious that she's trying to be a part of what is going on around her.

The look in this scene is again high-energy with dozens of students streaming up and down the halls in Halloween costumes, therefore providing a wide range of movement and activity. The coloring in this scene, while possessing the same basic desaturated, blue tint, also contains a more vibrant array of colors, pointing to the holiday at hand.

Austin's performance in this scene can be described as timidly contented. She is happy to be in the group, but her main interest is still focused on Mace, which provokes an almost curious watchfulness in her behavior. Mace and Liz are seen playing with each other just like a pair of rivaling siblings would be expected to do, which shows the closeness of their relationship as brother and sister. Eric is quickly established as the jester in the group because no one takes him very seriously. Jordan is seen as the tag-along, perhaps interested in Eric romantically, but for the most part she appears confident and at ease. The last character in the group is Lacey, already having been introduced as a

popular, pretty girl; however, in this scene Lacey is attached to Mace in an almost possessive manner.

Austin's goal in this scene is to understand the group dynamic and participate. Liz's goal is to annoy Mace in a playful manner. Mace's goal is to include Austin in the group activities. Lacey's goal is to establish her place as Mace's girlfriend. Eric's goal is to get the group to go camping. Jordan's goal is to support Eric in his endeavor.

Scene 18: Austin senses Something's Wrong

The purpose of this scene is to establish that something is wrong and no one but Austin seems to notice, immediately raising the tension in the scene for the audience.

The mood in this scene is eerie and meant to invoke a sense of dread or foreboding within the audience, especially since Austin's reaction is so abrupt and fearful. Slow, purposeful movement defines this scene and should clearly shift the tone from one of careless fun, to impending dread.

The look in this scene is meant to move like a smooth transition into a dreaded situation, as though we were re-entering into that nightmare state at the beginning of the script. The color scheme from the last scene carries over to this one; however, the addition of the color purple, being the antagonist primary color, heightens the expectancy and tension.

Austin's performance in this scene is clearly coming from a place of fear because she knows something is wrong. Mace, though confused along with the rest of the group, is willing to hear Austin's concerns and makes the decision to lead the group away. Liz, however, is the only one not willing to follow Mace because she is headstrong and

determined. In fact, Liz is annoyed with Mace and Austin for trying to tell her what to do without a clear cause.

Austin's goal is to get Mace and the others away from danger. Liz's goal is to get to her dance. Mace's goal is to give Austin what she's asking for and hear out her concerns. The rest of the group, while perhaps impatient at being delayed to the Halloween competition, wants to do what Mace asks of them; therefore, they easily go along when requested to do so.

Scene 19: Liz is Killed

The purpose of this scene is to continue the suspense that began in the previous scene and reveal the source of the tension: a shooter has infiltrated the school. In short, Austin's imagination has become a reality. This scene also serves to show the sudden death of Liz and to therefore set up the rest of the movie in which the group attempts to escape.

The tone of this scene is high-energy and filled with confusion and tension. Austin knows something is wrong, but is unable to answer any questions Liz is posing to her. As a result, frustration and annoyance is directed at her and eventual disregard of her warnings.

The look of this scene completely matches that of the previous in that the palette and coloring have not changed; however, the difference in this scene is the extreme focus on the facial reactions in order to get across the intensity that continues to build with every passing moment.

Austin's performance continues to be motivated out of a place of fear, but in this scene it has evolved to a place of internal calculation, as though she is trying to figure out what is really going on. Mace almost mirrors this mannerism of internal calculation, except he's attempting to pull his answers from Austin rather than the environment. Liz remains overtly frustrated and eventually takes the situation into her own hands by disregarding Austin and her pleas for her to stay away from the gym. The rest of the group primarily remains in a place of confusion and perhaps disbelief at Austin's strange reactions.

The character goals primarily remain the same from the previous scene. Austin wants to keep Mace and the group away from the gym. Mace wants to give Austin room to express her concerns. Liz wants to get to her dance and the remaining group members want to understand what is going on and why Austin is reacting so strangely.

Scene 20: Hiding

There are multiple purposes that make-up this scene. The first purpose is to establish that a school shooting is taking place. The second purpose is to create distrust in Mace towards Austin due to the amount of knowledge she seems to have on the subject of shooting. And the third purpose is to establish the possible intent of the shooters.

The mood in this scene needs to display a sense of extremely high anxiety. Though the group is inside a closet and unable to see what's happening outside, they can still hear gunshots and screams outside the door. Therefore, the tone of this scene is very dark with a heightened sense of growing panic filtered by a feeling of shock and disbelief.

The look inside the janitor's closet is, of course, very dim because the power was thrown and no lights are working at this point. Outside light, however, provides an eerie glow from the cracks between the door and frame, filling the tiny, dingy space with a kind of tunneling effect. The colors are again, highly de-saturated, but now without the blue tint. Everything is now a more concentrated grey tone, with a black background due to the deep shadowing.

Austin's performance in this scene, while concentrated on finding an answer, is coming from a place that fears discovery, as though she has something to do with the shooting because of her plans. Mace's performance is full of self-loathing and anger at the death of his sister, which raises suspicious and violent reactions towards Austin and her possible involvement. Lacey is panicked and searching for solace in Mace who is beyond being able to help her. Jordan and Eric cling to each other for comfort, even though Jordan attempts to provide a solution in calling the police, it is clear that both she and Eric are operating out of a place of desperation.

Austin's goal in this scene is to find a solution to the situation at hand while hiding her dark secrets about her past from the others. Mace's goal, initially, is to get out of the closet, perhaps get himself killed while trying to payback the people responsible for Liz's death. After Austin prevents him from leaving, his goal changes to getting his friends to safety, even if it means trusting Austin to do so. The goal of the remaining three is to get out and get to safety.

Scene 21: Austin Locates the Shooters

The purpose of this scene is to show Austin's reaction to Liz's death and how she blames herself for what happened. The second reason is to raise the anxiety of the audience by showing the shooters continuing their horribly work throughout the school halls.

The mood of this scene is very suspenseful as the shooters are right down the hall and Austin is crouched just behind the corner, watching them search the classroom. It is also a very saddening situation as we see the pain in Austin's mannerisms when she reacts to Liz's body on the ground. Her expressions obviously tell us that she holds herself responsible.

The look of this scene is still very dim with the lights having been turned off; however, hotspots of bright white sunshine leak out of the open classroom doors, indicating the presence of an outside window. This mixture staggers the lighting in the room, breaking up the smooth movement throughout the scene.

Austin's performance in this scene is a clear indication of how she blames herself for what happened to Liz. Her reaction to Liz lying dead on the ground is a strange mixture of shame and fascination, though it clear that she is very pained by the encounter. The shooters performance is very purposeful and aggressive as they swing open classroom doors, marching up and down the halls in a triumphant and perverse manner.

Austin's goal in this scene is initially to find out where the shooters are located. After doing so, she lingers at Liz's side, her reasoning vague and perhaps unnatural, motivated out of either a sense of self-punishment or pure curiosity. The shooters' goal is to find and kill anyone that was missed in the initial shooting.

Scene 22: Plan of Escape

The purpose of this scene is to establish a plan of action within the group, which is to get to the exit located by the gym.

The mood of this scene starts out as very suspenseful by leading the audience to believe that Mace and Austin have been caught by the shooters. However, once they arrive back at the janitor's closet and Austin suggests a plan of action, she is met with that same distrusting and almost hostile tone from the rest of the group.

The look of this scene is very similar to the previous janitor closet scene by being very dark and full of deep shadows; however, the difference here is the fact that once the door swings open, a halo of white light surrounds Austin and Mace. In that moment when they open the door and the group realizes it isn't the shooters, a visible relief should overtake the scene, emphasized in the positive lighting surrounding the two main characters.

Austin's performance in this scene is much more controlled and calculating, as though she has been able to assess the situation and a solution has presented itself. Mace, while still displaying feelings of doubt towards Austin is obviously determined to get out. The remaining three, while skeptical of sneaking so close to the gym, are overcome by their need to escape and therefore agree to the plan with little hesitation.

Austin's goal is to get the group to safety, probably in the main interest of making sure Mace gets out unharmed. Mace's goal is also to get the group to safety. The remaining three characters possess a unified goal of getting out as quickly as possible even if that involves some risk.

Scene 23: Getting Out

The purpose of this scene is to build tension with the audience and lead into the group being cornered and captured by the shooters.

The mood of this scene should be high anxiety for the audience as they watch the group sneak down the halls with two shooters somewhere close by. There should be a very real sense of fear and suspense in both the movement and development. Once the shooters arrive, however, the pacing of the scene dramatically speeds up into a chaotic race, having the group plunging forward in a panic as they try to get to the exit.

The look of this scene is dim with a blue undertone tint due to the blue walls. The colors are again de-saturated with an emphasis on the paleness and white light streaming into the hall from the supposed exit. In this way, the powerful light from the sun is like a bright beacon of hope for the group seeking to get out and get to safety. However, that hope is quickly prevented by the presence of the shooters. The movement while initially smooth and slow suddenly shifts to a chaotic motion, emphasizing the sudden rise in anxiety once the shooters are revealed.

Austin's performance is similar to the previous scene in that she is focused and calculating as she leads the group down the hall; however, her final line seems to resemble a hint of manipulation or dishonesty, as though she were trying to lead the group astray. Austin's strange behavior near the end of this scene elicits a suspicious reaction from Mace; however, because they are cut off by an approaching gunman, Mace's reaction immediately shifts to one of protection for his surrounding peers. The three remaining group members continue on the edge of panic since they are in an

exposed area; however, their want for escape outweighs their fear, driving on their movements throughout the scene.

Austin's goal is a bit unclear in this scene because it seems as though she wants to get the group to safety, but simultaneously she seems to have the intent of staying behind after the group has escaped. However, because this scene is interrupted we never see her true motive. Mace's goal is a constant need to get the group to out of the school and keep them safe once the shooters come on the scene. The remaining three are still powerfully driven by their need to escape.

Scene 24: Recognition

The purpose of this scene is to reveal that Austin has made an internal connection and figured out the identity of the shooters by showing her recognition of one of the shooter's masked face. The tone of this scene is surreal and powerful, focusing on the eyes of the shooter. The look of this scene is meant to liken to a memory, making it obvious that it is a thought passing through Austin's mind.

The shooter's performance in this scene is simply meant to convey a look of recognition that is direct and gleaming with curiosity. The shooter's goal in this scene is not clearly defined, though it can be assumed that he possibly wants to know what Austin is up to and perhaps leave an impression on her.

Scene 25: Captured

The purpose of this scene is to introduce the shooters and establish that they have been searching the halls and looking specifically for Austin.

The tone of this scene is incredibly tense with a sense of overwhelming despair as the group gets caught just before the exit. The audience needs to feel as though all their remaining hope for the members of this group is no longer viable.

The look of this scene follows the patterns of the previous scene. It is dark, with a blue undertone and a flood of bright sunshine pouring in at the end of the hall, representing their exit to freedom and safety. The movement and angles should focus intensely on the panicked reactions of the group members and the dominating presence of the shooters in an unstable manner.

Austin's performance in this scene is clearly coming from a place of desperation because she realizes the danger Mace is in and what the shooters are doing. Mace appears ready to fight and die at this point in the scene and puts himself between the shooters and the rest of the group. Jordan and Lacey are completely helpless and overwhelmed with panic and fear, while Eric appears to strengthen at this point in the story and attempts to shield the girl's from the gunman.

Austin's goal is clearly motivated out of a place of wanting to protect Mace at all costs. Mace's goal, on the other hand, is not his own self-preservation, but the protection of the group. With their escape route cut off, Lacey and Jordan's goal is to keep from getting shot. And finally, Eric's goal is to shield Lacey and Jordan from harm.

Scene 26: Elliott Revealed

The purpose of this scene is to introduce Elliott as the perpetrator behind the school shooting and to reveal his obsession with Austin.

The mood of this scene is despair and helplessness as we see the hostages for the first time and their reactions to the group being herded into the gym, taking even more hope from their faces. The entire gym, while expected to be a place of excitement and high-energy, is deadly quiet, which adds to the eeriness of the situation and heightens the anxiety of the audience.

Since this scene takes place inside the gym, the environment possesses warm, orange colors, but paled and de-saturated in order to mute any color vibrancy. Elliott is wearing the color purple, which is a stark contrast to his surrounding environment and stands out as an ominous symbol of loneliness and separation from the rest of the world.

Austin's performance in this scene reveals a level of expectation when she encounters Elliott for the first time, hinting that she had already figured out who was behind the shooting. Elliott's performance portrays a heightened level of obsessiveness with Austin and dominance over the crowd with a hint of mental instability.

Austin's goals in this scene are not very clear. It is evident that she is controlling her reactions, though her reasons are not yet revealed, which keeps the audience in a place of unknowing tension. Elliott's goal is to have Austin notice him, which he accomplishes immediately, therefore furthering his goal to impress Austin by what he has accomplished for her sake.

Scene 27: Elliott finds Austin's Plans

The purpose of this flashback scene is to show Elliott's true motivation in getting Austin's key and thus reveal his obsessive nature and how it was directed towards Austin.

The fact that he was in her bedroom without her knowledge goes to show that he went to great lengths to be a part of her life and find out who she was as a person.

The mood in this scene should be nothing less than extremely unsettling for the audience with an eerie unveiling of how deep Elliott's obsessiveness actually goes. The look of this scene is slow and purposeful, perhaps completely de-saturated of all color in order to emphasize Elliott's movement within Austin's bedroom.

Elliott's performance in this scene displays symptoms of extreme fixation on Austin's life, as though when searching her room he is actually searching for the person she hides from everyone else. Elliott's goal in this scene is simply to discover more about who Austin is as a person, which results in him uncovering her secret plans about shooting up the school.

Scene 28: Elliott Affections

This scene is a continuation of what was begun when Austin and her group first entered the gym. The purpose of this continuation is to show that Elliott's motive in shooting up the school is to impress Austin. It is revealed that Elliott has suffered from not being seen by Austin much to the same degree that she has suffered; thus, this scene emphasizes Elliott's motivation in having Austin notice him.

The mood of this scene, while eerie and unsettling is also extremely intimate between Elliott and Austin to the degree that the audience might suspect that Austin is falling for Elliott's twisted declaration of love.

This scene, being a continuation, still possesses a warm, orange tint that is highly de-saturated in order to add emphasis and focus on Elliott's purple shirt. In doing this,

Austin and Elliott are separated from the rest of the gym in a very closed off and personal way.

Austin's performance, continuing from the last, is vague, cold and watchful as she listens to Elliott's recollection of the events thus far transpired. Elliott's performance is very boastful and triumphant as he explains Austin's role in the school shooting. Once he approaches her, however, his attraction for her comes out in his nervous movements and heightened breathing.

Austin's goal in this scene is not clearly defined; however, it is evident that she is being patient, perhaps waiting for something to happen, but with no true indication as to what that may be. Elliott's goal is to have Austin notice him and, in a way, choose to love him for what he has done for her.

Scene 29: Elliott Invisible

The purpose of this scene is to emphasize the irony of Austin not seeing Elliott in the school hall in the same manner that she herself was never seen by her school peers. The mood of this scene owing to it being a flashback is surreal, slow and purposeful in its message and presentation.

The look of this scene is meant to be a revealing flashback, with the colors highly de-saturated order to establish a visual difference from when we saw this scene earlier in the film. In this way, the color change adds emphasis and brings to light an additional meaning the audience would have otherwise missed.

Elliott's performance in this scene is timid and shy, revealing his nervousness in encountering Austin. Austin's performance shows her disinterest and her uncaring

interaction towards Elliott as a person. His goal in this scene is to get Austin's attention. Austin's goal in this scene is to simply get to her next destination.

Scene 30: Shooter Turns Savior

The purpose of this scene is the conclusion of the gym scene, which has been divided into three overall sequences. This scene completes the story and reveals how Austin's death, first foreshadowed at the beginning of the film, comes to pass.

The mood of this scene possesses a slow, building tension as Austin approaches Mace with a gun. Suddenly, however, the moment leaps into a chaotic mess as Austin turns on the gunmen and shooting erupts, throwing the crowd into a dangerous panic.

The look of this scene follows those previous pieces in which the warm colors of the gym are de-saturated to a pale sheen. The initial movement is slow and building, but then leaps into unstable chaos once the shooting begins.

Austin's performance is very cold, focused and direct as she takes aim and fires at the shooters. She has a goal in mind and she's determined to see it through. The performance of the general populace is one of fight and flight. Terror grips the crowd and movement erupts, filling the gym with deafening confusion.

Austin's goal is to kill the shooters who are still posing a threat. Once Austin gets shot, however, she seems to take the finality of her death in an accepting manner by being content to have Mace next to her as she dies. The shooters' goal is to fight back, though they are clearly overwhelmed by both the surprise of the attack and the sheer size of the crowd. Mace's performance at the end of the scene is one of profound regret and

confusion as he asks a dying Austin why she didn't go through with it, a question that Austin is unable to answer before dying.

Scene 31: The Moment of Change

The purpose of this scene is to essentially answer the question that Mace poses as Austin lays dying. Since she is unable to answer the question herself, the audience is allowed a glimpse into the moment that changed Austin's motive and shifted her decision from shooting up the school to not going through with it. As revealed, this moment took place earlier in the film at the beginning of the pep rally.

The mood of this scene is meant to display a strong sense of contentment and satisfaction both in Austin as a character and in the audience watching. Austin realizes that she doesn't have to shoot up the school because she has found someone, Mace, who was willing to take the time to care.

The look of this scene possesses a paling blue tint, which brings the story back to its main palette that has been present through most of the story. The final shot of the film shows Austin leaving the gym in a flood of sunlight, as though indicating that she was able to find her exit after all. Mace's performance in this scene is warm and welcoming as he intentionally makes the effort to bring Austin into a world that involves friendship. Austin's performance responds to Mace's offer with a quiet joy and tender acceptance of him and his friendship. Mace's goal in this scene is to offer Austin friendship. Austin's goal is to show Mace that he's made a difference in her life

CHAPTER FOUR

The Psychological Development of Teenage Girls

The psychological development of characters within a film is a highly detailed process that requires multiple layers of unique and defining traits, a process that begins only once adequate research and study have been conducted on the character type being developed. The protagonist in *Closet Memories* is Austin Still, a 16-year-old high-school girl; therefore, it is necessary during her character construction for the writer to be intimately familiar with the general behavioral outline of a modern teenage girl, as well as a basic knowledge of the various personality types demonstrated by teenage girls. Naturally, a screenwriter does not possess the expertise of a professional psychologist and would not be able to provide a specialized researched analysis on the mental development of teenage girls. However, in order to create relatable and believable characters with multiple personality traits, the writer must at least possess amateur abilities in observing and constructing a very basic psychological understanding of the characters they create.

Therefore, owing to the fact that the protagonist is a high-school girl, the purpose of this chapter is to define a loose psychological outline of the behaviors, motivations and developmental processes of modern teenage girls. *Reviving Ophelia* written by Mary Pipher and *Odd Girl Out* written by Rachel Simmons will serve as the sources from which the subject matter of this chapter is derived including, but not limited to: the daughter and mother relationship and modern societal expectations of women. Once having established this basic outline, an analysis will then be conducted on Austin Still as

a character, defining her qualities as an individual and providing explanations as to her development and processes demonstrated throughout the story.

A daughter's relationship with her mother is a complicated connection and Dr. Mary Pipher goes to great lengths in her book *Reviving Ophelia*, to emphasize the complexity by providing examples of various forms of that relationship each possessing its own unique circumstance and qualities. Additionally, Pipher largely applies a Freudian perspective to her approach of the topic, and explains that the connection a daughter possesses with her mother is full of contradictory feelings that must be present in order for the relationship to be whole and healthy: "relationships with mothers [are] extraordinarily complex, filled with love, longing, a need for closeness and distance, separation and fusion," a view that has its foundation in Sigmund Freud's theories concerning the progression of a girl to womanhood (102). Pipher goes on to emphasize the cultural expectations of mother and daughter relationships, explaining that "Distancing from one's mother is viewed as a necessary step towards adult development," while, on the other hand, a close and involved relationship with the father is culturally "praised" (103). While this state of double standards may not be morally justified or fair, it is culturally acceptable and even expected. Pipher does not take sides on this social issue one way or another; she simply states the facts of the situation and reiterates the extreme amount of complexity involved, thus encouraging an open-minded and flexible approach.

Also, it is worth noting that Pipher makes mention of the influence of Freud in her approach to the subject matter, stating that her concepts have their foundations in Freudian thought, but she fails to go into great detail concerning those specific theories or

their construction. Instead, she re-produces the concept of the mother/daughter relationship in a manner that applies to the modern situations presented in her work, and thus expands the concept into a form that directly supports her own ideas on the topic at large. She does not spend time exploring the function of Freudian thought, but instead directs the attention of the reader to our current state as a society and the expectations and ideas involved in our modern environment.

The mother/daughter relationship is a delicate combination of intimacy and separation, suggesting that the development of a teenage girl is just as delicate and, according to Pipher, requires one key ingredient: “Growing up requires adolescent girls to reject the person with whom they are most closely identified” (103). As mentioned, Pipher’s view is influenced by Freudian concept, stating that a teenage girl grows up first identifying herself within the persona of her mother and that the first pieces or qualities of herself that she is able to identify and claim are very often a duplication of what she has already identified in her mother (104). As a result this causes a teenage girl to naturally associate herself with her mother more closely than any other person and must therefore separate herself from that intimate connection in order to achieve her full potential as an individual. However, Pipher points out that the choice of separation must be timely and intentional, and one that the daughter consciously makes and puts effort to. If a separation is forced upon the relationship, resentment and bitterness of the untimely loss are likely consequences to follow (105). A daughter and her mother are two mirrors of each other with a single person reflected in both; their reflections, however, must remain hidden from one another, so that the other can exist apart and individually or at least believe she is doing so.

In her popular work, *Odd Girl Out*, Rachel Simmons provides an in-depth look into the various methods of aggression that teenage girls have either demonstrated or of which they have become victims by other female peers. Simmons points out that female aggression is expected to project various forms of a non-violent nature: “girls have been portrayed as jealous and underhanded, prone to betrayal, disobedience, and secrecy. Lacking a public identity or language, girls’ nonphysical aggression is called “chatty,” “crafty,” “evil,” and “cunning” (16). Simmons then goes further as to point out how these forms of female aggression are culturally insignificant and do not reach the level of violence that would elicit societal attention or aid: “Girls tell stories of their anger in a culture that does not define their behaviors as aggression.” Teenage girls are therefore at a grievous disadvantage if ever they encounter or initiate any form of female hostility owing to the societal misconception that such behavior is merely, “what girls do.”

Simmons attempts to further explain the mislead interpretations that society has placed on girlhood aggression by defining physical forms of aggressive behavior as “the hallmark of masculinity” (17). Males are culturally expected to perform their manliness with physical demonstrations of prowess or aggression. As a result, any female possessing a personality that operates and communicates in a highly physical manner and succumbs to even one incident of physical aggression is culturally ridiculed: “The culture derides aggression in girls as unfeminine...“Bitch,” “lesbian,” “frigid,” and “manly” are just a few of the names an assertive girl hears” (18). Girls are anticipated to behave in a manner that portrays them in a non-aggressive state. Any act usurping that cultural expectation immediately labels that female as an abnormal example of female development. By high-lighting these double standards existing within our culture,

Simmons attempts to cast due attention to the matter that is girlhood aggression, and thus elicit the necessary societal concern that will provide aid and support to teenage girls during their adolescent development as they encounter these issues.

Based on these two insightful approaches to female adolescent behavior, a thorough examination of *Closet Memories*' protagonist Austin Still might be conducted; however, as mentioned, the content of this study is limited based upon my own limited abilities as a psychological analyst. Also, it is worth noting that the mother/daughter relationship and societal expectations of females are only two topics among many concerning the psychological development of teenage girls; however, in constructing the character of Austin Still, I found these two particular topics the most applicable.

Austin Still is a 16-year-old girl who grew up the only child of happily married couple as is demonstrated in several brief visual inserts throughout the film; however, upon Austin reaching adolescence, her mother is no longer present in her life and her relationship with her father is distant and nearly nonexistent. The story does not dictate the nature of the mother's disappearance, but the effects of her absence are clearly seen and felt in Austin's behavior. Austin is closed-off, cold and extremely anti-social during her adolescence and her apparent motivation in life is to remain unnoticed by both her school peers and her father. Early on in the story, we discover that Austin is not suffering from a simple case of girlhood depression; instead, her malcontent has progressed to an alarming level by revealing her intent to shoot up her school. The horror of this revelation is all the more potent because of the complete lack of awareness from Austin's father, peers, or teachers who see and interact with her daily. The fact that Austin is able to contain and hide this violent nature is one of the tragedies high-lighted in this situation.

After drawing up a detailed plan of attack, Austin enters the school intent on carrying out her horrible crime; however, just before the event begins, a young man extends a small offer of friendship, demonstrating his effort in wanting to know her as a person and taking the time to do so. For brevity's sake, this single act of intentional kindness convinces Austin not to go through with the school shooting and instead she puts aside her previous reasoning and embraces the friendship offered her.

Austin Still is not unlike a typical teenage girl, and, despite normal cultural expectations, she is not abnormal for having progressed to such an extreme level of intentional violence. The character of Austin was specifically designed in such a way that kept her apart from any familiar or stereotypical personalities that our society labels as most likely to become school shooters. Austin does not suffer from home abuse or school bullying, she has no disabilities or apparent physical labels such as a geek, nerd, jock, popular, or emo, and she has no enemies of any kind that might provoke her to anger. Instead, she appears very normal; yet, her violent agenda immediately demonstrates that something, somewhere went wrong beneath the surface of normal cultural perceptions.

While the exact time, place or situation which caused this internally vicious cycle to form is not pinpointed in the story, the relevance of the absent mother plays a significant role in Austin's current state. As discussed by Pipher, being under influence from Freud's studies, a daughter must make the decision and willingly put forth the effort of separating from her mother. It is evident that Austin never had that opportunity and was therefore cut off from her mother in an untimely and harmful manner. This had a negative effect on Austin's development in two ways. First, Austin was not allotted the

opportunity to completely assimilate the positive qualities of her mother into her own personality as a young girl. Therefore, because she was not fully exposed to her mother's identity, she was not able to fully construct her own identity, which means that after her mother disappeared, she was still only partly developed and quickly became lost in who she was supposed to be without the guiding help all good mothers provide to their daughters. Second, in witnessing the positive, caring behavior her mother demonstrated, Austin most likely rejected such behaviors from her identity once her mother became absent, tearing that positive influence from her life. As a result of the painful event, Austin most likely chose to remove all remnants of those personality traits derived from her mother and replace them with a cold, apathetic approach to life. From this brief analysis, it is evident that Austin's current state as an adolescent was due largely to her relationship with her mother.

Once Austin reached this apathetic state as a teenager she eventually progressed to a level of extreme violence. The reason she progressed so far was most likely due to the lack of attention or care given her by her surrounding environment. As Simmons has previously pointed out, because Austin was not physically demonstrating any form of aggressive behavior and because she superficially met all societal expectations of what was considered normal, her development as a female teenager went largely unnoticed by both her father and peers. Out of this long-standing lack of acknowledgement, we discover that Austin's motivation in shooting up the school is to "wake up" the people around her because she believes that everyone has sunk into this uninvolved and uncaring existence; therefore, she deems it her responsibility to break the cycle. Austin, like all teenage girls, demonstrates her frustration and aggression in ways that are easily

overlooked and do not elicit the kind of alarm that physical displays would accomplish. Therefore, Austin's cold and anti-social behavior and her distance from her father were all signs of her internal unrest, but because they went unnoticed and failed to raise any cultural red flags, Austin came to the assumption that no one cared. Austin was the victim of an under-developed identity in an environment plagued with cultural misperceptions of female behavior. As mentioned, the moment Austin was offered even the smallest hint of interest and kindness, her entire thought process changed in a dramatically positive way.

However brief these two analyses were, they proved incredibly helpful insight during the construction of the character of Austin Still. Her motivations and behaviors and the avenues by which she came to possess such extreme and violent intentions can be outlined with a basic understanding derived from the examples of real teenage girls who experienced similar situations. Overall, the reasoning provided by the studies helped to create a unique and believable character that drives the idea of *Closet Memories* to a satisfying and sobering end. It is a puzzling and tragic event when a youth is driven to express his or her frustration, anger and pain in such vicious ways; therefore, it is my hope that through this study and the continuing and progressive studies of female development, teenage girls will be allotted the intimate care and attention they require without the burden of expectation from a culture that does not understand them.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Product of *Closet Memories*

The following link provides the product of all previously described conceptual construction, content research and analysis and finally, production of *Closet Memories* as a thesis short-film.

Sabin, R. (Director), & Sabin, R. (Writer) (2013). *Closet Memories* [Narrative Short Film]. Hansen, C. (Executive Producer) *Closet Memories*. United States: Film and Digital Media Department, Baylor University. <link>.

CHAPTER SIX

Self-Evaluation and Critiques

The process by which *Closet Memories* progressed from concept to completion was a long and varying course that required my constant development as a filmmaker and extensive flexibility as a means to bring the project full circle for all members involved. That process advanced from one stage of development to another at a rapid pace. Each stage, writing, pre-production, auditions, rehearsals, production, and editing, presented its own unique challenges and circumstances. Admittedly, in facing the challenges of organizing and completing a short-film production on a professional level, I discovered both areas of weakness and strength in my abilities as both a writer and director.

This self-evaluation is an analysis of my abilities as a writer and director, though primarily the latter. It is a detailed, unfiltered examination of the problems I had to face and my reactions or solutions to those problems. It is important to note, that as a first-time director, my knowledge of the position was limited, though at the end of this evaluation I hope I can demonstrate that both my knowledge and abilities progressed as the production advanced.

The following critique will present each stage of development with a description of its inner-workings, including a detailed account of the overall process as it was conducted for this particular production, as well as a brief overview of notable challenges and situations faced within each stage. Each stage will then be followed by examples of both weakness and strength I personally demonstrated in response to those situations. It

is my hope that through this detailed account, the making of *Closet Memories* would be viewed as a successful experience.

The Writing Stage

As mentioned in previous chapters, the concept of this story bloomed from my personal response to the Columbine shooting in 1999. The development of the story itself, however, took place in five progressive steps. First, I wrote a brief synopsis of the story and pitched the idea to my chairman and peers, gauging their responses in order to determine the quality of the story itself. Second, I wrote a rough outline of the story to personally aid me in the progression of each scene. Third, I wrote character descriptions and analyses in an effort to build these characters into full and believable personalities. Fourth, I wrote the rough draft of the story itself and issued the finished copy to a few select professors and peers to whom I requested their honest critiques. And finally, fifth, I took all the notes I received from my selected critics and made changes and re-writes based on those responses I felt most benefitted the story.

Weakness: Story Change

Upon receiving notes and critiques from various peers and professors over the structure, characterization and overall story of *Closet Memories*, I discovered that one of my personal difficulties was changing the story. I had the story a certain way in my mind and I found it difficult to think of it in any other way, despite the suggestions I received from others. One of the primary changes I faced was the length of the script; 37 pages was far too long a short-film and I knew it. I struggled to shave the story down to its barest essentials and at the end of the process I still felt as though length was a burden. I

was condensing sentence structure and action description, but was not changing the story itself. I then gave the script to a fellow writing peer and asked him to condense the script to his own satisfaction, to chop things up and hand me a version with fewer pages. With his help, I was able to produce a satisfying 27-page script with a streamlined story.

Strength: Organization

During the writing process of *Closet Memories*, I never felt overwhelmed or under-prepared in the development of the story, owing to the preparations I took prior to writing the script itself. I was able to swiftly and easily come to a workable rough draft from which I could receive proper feedback because I had created a step outline that enabled me to see the story from start to finish. Organizing the creative process of writing allowed me to see manageable and achievable goals throughout the process, which lead to the eventual success of a final draft.

The Pre-Production Stage

The pre-production stage included completing a variety of wide-ranging tasks including casting auditions, crew selection, budget calculation, finding locations and equipment needs. Naturally, because of the overwhelming responsibility involved in each of these tasks, I quickly selected the people whose help I was going to need to see this project through. I asked one of my graduate student peers to be the Director of Photography (DP) and another to be the Producer. With these two key roles in place, crew selection and equipment needs fell to the DP (pending my approval), and budget and locations fell to the Producer. This left me to focus on casting.

However, about two months into this pre-production process, the Producer was unable to continue in her role because of personal conflicts. Thus, for a period of about two months, I was without a producer and had to assemble a workable budget on my own. As production approached, however, I realized that my main focus needed to remain on the actors, which lead me to select an undergraduate student as our new Producer. She more than satisfactorily fulfilled that role despite having limited time to accomplish the needed tasks. Also, with the DP's guidance a fine crew was selected for the overwhelming job of on-set production, which boosted my confidence in the success of the project itself.

Weakness: No Back-Up

During the pre-production phase, I quickly discovered how essential it was to have a back-up plan. For example, when the first producer dropped out, I literally did not know how to respond except to take the responsibility of producer myself. This was clearly the wrong course of action. Instead of operating without a producer, I should have started the process of selecting a new one immediately so that my focus could have remained where it was most needed. The fact that the second producer was even available for our production at such short notice was nothing but luck and not the result of good planning on my part. As the director, I should have had a back-up producer in place, should the need have arisen, as it did, to move that person into place.

Another example of a lack of planning on my part was the loss of our Steadicam operator. As the DP and I developed the look and feel of the film, the preliminary shot design was made with the intention of making heavy use of the Steadicam and the style

of shooting associated with it; however, when we lost our camera operator, we also lost the use of the Steadicam because no one else was available who had the requisite experience to use it effectively. We were therefore forced to re-design much of the shot selection. Because I relied so heavily on the Steadicam in my planning, I did not factor in a contingency for not having that luxury. This caused us to lose precious time when we had to rethink the shooting style.

Strength: Delegation

As the director, I am required to be involved at least to a minimal level on all major production decisions, even if only to approve or disapprove the method or decision; however, I need to be able to trust the individuals to do the jobs that I give them. When I brought the DP on board, I was relieved to be able to entrust the look of the film and the management of the crew to his hands, and afterwards never felt inclined to control either of those aspects myself. Also, when the replacement producer was selected, I opened the account for our budget and gave her full access to all our funds, trusting her with the task of keeping up with every receipt and purchase. I realize that it helps to rely on another when that person is reliable in the first place, but I believe the success of the overall production is owed in part to everyone being trusted and expected to complete the job they were given. I believe that people, when trusted and when worthy of that trust, will rise to the task.

The Audition Stage

For the audition stage of the production I had the privilege of interviewing and interacting with several talented actors and actresses. Most of the participants were from the Baylor Theater Department, while two actors were from Dallas and Austin. The interest level in the production was encouragingly high for auditions, seeing as there were multiple participants for each offered role. First round auditions took two days to complete, followed by one day of callbacks the following weekend.

For each person that auditioned, I attempted to select scenes within the script that required the actor to interact with another person. Additionally, I avoided scenes in the first rounds that entered into areas of extreme or high emotion. Every participant read the same scene as the person before them, and seeing as they were cold reads for the most part, I would allow the actor/actress time to warm up the scene with their partner before starting the official audition. After seeing the scene once through, I would offer direction to the actor, then ask to see the scene again in order to gauge how easily the actor followed instructions. At the end of the first round auditions, I carefully considered the options available to me and emailed everyone who participated, either with an invitation to callbacks or with a sincere thank you for their interest. For callbacks, those returning were asked to read for specific roles, some of them multiple roles, and each of them were given in advance the scene that we would be rehearsing to give them time to memorize the lines and actions. During callbacks, I interacted with the actors on a much more personal level, giving them more complex instructions and pushing them to sometimes uncomfortable emotional levels within scenes. I wanted to see how far some of them could take a scene, or how far they were willing to go. I asked personal questions about

their methods and their understanding of the character they were portraying openly in front of those watching. Also, unlike how I handled the first round auditions, here I allowed the other actors to sit in on the auditions of those with whom they were competing for a role, rather than having them wait outside. By doing this, I wished to demonstrate the competitive nature of the roles and to provide the actors with ideas fed from one performance to the next. At the end of callbacks, I interviewed each participant one by one and asked them a variety of questions regarding the character for which they auditioned. By the end of this process, I was able to deliberate and come to happy conclusions for each character in the script. Based on the final product, all of the actors fulfilled their roles satisfactorily in my opinion.

Weakness: Indecision

During auditions, I was faced with a very challenging situation. One of my closest friends was auditioning for the main role of Austin Still. Going in to this situation, I did my best to lay aside any prejudices towards her as an actress and instead endeavored to select the actress who I felt would most benefit the film. I gave no favor towards my friend and treated her as any other participant. After intense consideration, she did make callbacks for the main role alongside another actress from Dallas. During callbacks, it became apparent to me that my friend's inexperience and inconsistencies were problematic, even though she had a greater emotional range than the other finalist. On the other hand, her competitor had much more experience as an actress and provided a very consistent performance from one scene to the next, though her levels of emotion were much more contained.

At the conclusion of callbacks, I was still undecided on which actress was better for the role of Austin Still and asked for the two actresses to appear a third time for callbacks; however, because of scheduling conflicts, a third round of auditions did not occur. Instead, I decided to find out which actress wanted the part more and had individual conversation with each of them over the topic. My friend won the role by convincing me that despite her lack of experience, she had the emotional range to achieve what the character needed. In the end, the situation took far too long for me to decide because I did not have a strong vision for the Austin character, and I believe I was internally conflicted because of my knowledge of the personal investment my friend had put into the role. Despite my attempts to keep my decision-making objective, I had become invested in my friend's desires, and it made the decision much harder than it should have been had I remained completely objective throughout.

Strength: Trust

In the process of casting each role for the film, I soon realized the amount of trust that was attached to each casting decision I made. When I took a character and offered it to another person to portray, I was literally giving up control of that character to another artist, and thus was forced to trust each person I cast to not only accurately portray their character, but to take that character beyond even my own expectations as the initial creator.

While I certainly experienced anxiety in giving up these characters to other people, I believe that real test of my trust came in my decision to give the main role of Austin Still to my friend. The main reason for my hesitance in offering her the role

initially was her lack of experience as an actress. But when she clearly won the role, I knew that my inhibitions or doubts in her abilities had to be laid aside in order for her to successfully play the part given her. She had to believe that I trusted in her abilities as an actress, as did the entire ensemble; thus, with each part given I attempted to demonstrate my confidence through affirmation and enthusiasm, which bled into my personal feelings until I completely and fully trusted each of the actors to fulfill their roles. Thus, by demonstrating my willingness to take a risk on an actress with little experience, I proved my trust in my ensemble and, I believe, aided them in their confidence to see the project through.

The Rehearsal Stage

The rehearsal stage of production began two weeks prior to our first scheduled shoot day. I wanted to give my cast enough time to explore their characters thoroughly and also to give myself enough time to determine how to best approach each actor and their methods of taking direction. For nearly two weeks and a minimum of four hours a day, I worked with the actors in their varying roles to bring out the performances I was looking for, scene by scene. I would run entire scenes, starting with basic movements; then I would help build the goals for each character with the direct input of the actors; finally, I would explore the emotions present within the beats of the scenes.

The process itself was long and detail-oriented. It was crucial not only to the development of the characters, but it also served to bond the ensemble into a harmonious unit. Additionally, the time and work during rehearsals gave me insight into each individual actor and his or her process and thus enlightened me as to the best way to

communicate my direction to that person. Each actor receives direction differently, just as each actor approaches their roles differently; thus, based on my interpretations and observations, I attempted to mold my direction to suit each person. Without the luxury of two weeks of rehearsals, I do not believe that the performances would have sufficiently fulfilled the expectations I had for the project.

Weakness: Talent over Looks

As a filmmaker, I have always been inclined to consider the talent of an actor as my primary concern over and above their looks or physical appearance; however, I discovered in one of my casting decisions that such a stance is not always beneficial.

During the rehearsal process of the film an unexpected opportunity presented itself when I was contacted by a young actress of twelve-years-old interested in the film, begging for an audition even though all the roles had been filled. During this process, I had been playing with the idea of adding a young Austin Still to the visual telling of the story for a small flashback. Eventually, I agreed to audition the young actress without any real intention of giving her a part; however, the young girl demonstrated considerable talent, and I immediately wanted to include her in the project. She became the younger version of Austin Still, which might have seemed like a good move for the overall project, except that the young actress did not resemble her older counter-part in any way. I believe I allowed the talent of the young actress to influence me and cause me to cast her for a role that she did not physically satisfy.

I believe that I made a mistake in casting the young actress and as a result, audience confusion may result and hinder the effectiveness of the film. Honestly, before

an audience views the film, these predictions cannot be proven, though I am of the opinion that the physical discrepancy certainly did not aid the film.

Strength: Character Development

As mentioned previously, part of the rehearsal process was establishing the goals of each character and as such, deepening their motivations, behaviors and overall characteristics. I believe that for an actor or actress to become their character, they need to add small idiosyncrasies to make their character a believable individual. Thus, I would delve into each character along with the actors playing them, and I would ask questions about how their characters would react in different situations outside the confines of the story itself. As a result, not only did the actors develop a better understanding or relationship to their characters, but the characters themselves began forming layers of individuality.

For example, the Austin Still character wears a necklace that she received or inherited from her mother. In an attempt to bring Austin's character to life, we determined that there needed to be a physical representation of her inward thoughts, a twitch she unconsciously demonstrates when something external to her changes or causes her to shift her thinking. That twitch became her touching her mother's necklace around her neck. It is a very small piece of her character that reveals itself throughout the story enough times for the audience to recognize it as a distinctive trait. In this way, Austin Still becomes more of a person, rather than simply a role that the actress portrays.

The Production Stage

The production of the film itself was scheduled to be a two-week long endeavor, set to take place at the beginning of August. Our locations for shooting included our original producer's house for two days and then Robinson High School for the remainder of the film. As agreed, the DP took control of the crew, the Producer handled all paperwork and meals, and I focused my energy on the actors. Also, with the help of our First Assistant Director, the production was set-up for success, despite the fact that new challenges arose every day on set. We endeavored as a crew to adhere to safety and etiquette guidelines, and everyone attempted to behave professionally within their specified assignments. Even though we moved at a solid pace and stayed on schedule, every day was a challenge simply because of the amount of content we were required to shoot in a single day. Thus, efficiency and professionalism were of high importance, and, even though I rarely interacted with the crew outside of lunch hour, it appeared that the DP conducted all of them with strict efficiency and the expectation of excellence.

As the director, I felt it important to show the crew that I trusted the DP and thus, I gave him a lot of room to be creative in his role and listened to his input on shot selection and design, often agreeing with his approach rather than imposing my own. I liked the DP's design style for the film and only found a few instances where we disagreed on the design. In those cases, I attempted to quietly change the shot rather than challenge him in front of his crew. Additionally, I attempted to demonstrate my trust in both the DP and the crew by avoiding the monitor in favor of watching the performances of the actors up close and personal. In this way, I tried to lead by example and tell everyone that to focus on their job and not worry about someone else's. In some cases,

this was unavoidable, but overall, I felt most comfortable watching the live performance of my actors rather than trying to focus on them through the monitor where much more is going on that could pull my attention. I tried to stay positive and interact with as many people as I could during breaks, just to show my gratitude and commitment to the project. Most crew members, I believe, felt appreciated for their hard work and bonded quickly with their peers.

There were two instances of unexpected challenge that we faced during production. The first was the loss of a location, which required me to re-write the script overnight just before the production began. It changed the story little, but the logistics and re-arrangement of something that had been in place and counted on was difficult to adjust. The second unexpected set-back was the loss of a squib expert that I had hired out of Houston. I had to discontinue his services because he could not provide me with what he had guaranteed when I initially hired him. As a result, we were forced to rely on digital insertion of blood blasts, and I had to assign to crew members who already had their own responsibilities the additional task of rigging a squib explosion. Fortunately, because of their positive attitude and adaptive problem-solving, the squib was constructed in time for the scene in which it was needed. More importantly, it worked.

An additional challenge that was constant throughout the production was the need for extras to portray students within the film. We were fortunate enough to befriend the Assistant Principal of Robinson High, who gladly gave us access to any area of the school we required. He also agreed to help us advertise and assemble extras for the film itself, reassuring us that students would be happy to participate. He was confident that the required number could be assembled for the days they were needed. This proved not

to be the case. Every day that extras were needed, we struggled to assemble even ten students who had the time or interest to participate. As a result of our difficulties, we assigned the task of extras to our Second Assistant Director and hired two additional students to gather their friends and bring them as extras to set. While those measures helped somewhat, we were forced to design our in-camera movement with fewer extras than previously intended. Also, because of our lack of extras, we had to improvise our design of the green-screen gym mattes of crowds, which took more time than we were expecting and put us behind schedule.

Weakness: Compromise

As the writer of the story, I had formed in my mind a specific ideal or expectation within each scene involving both the shot design and the performance of the actors. I often found, however, that my vision did not line up with what was being presented to me, and instead of asserting myself, I compromised my vision for the sake of gaining more ground on the production itself. For example, a constant challenge that I faced as a director was insuring that the performance of those actors that originated from the Theater Department was appropriate for a film. Theater actors are trained to project and be animated in their performances and for that reason their performances onscreen can sometimes become unintentionally comic or over the top. It fell to me as director to insure that did not happen, though I believe I was only partly successful. There were instances of intense emotion where I attempted to bring the actors' performance down to a more manageable level, but when faced with time crunches and the need to move on to the next shot, instead of insisting on doing another take to try and get the performance

that I was digging for, I compromised and accepted performances that were inadequate. Performance suffered because of my lack of assertion and willingness to compromise on an area that can either make or break a film. If the performances are not believable, then the film will be a failure, and that responsibility falls solely to the director.

Strength: Communication

Despite some frustration in finding the performances I was looking for during intense emotional sequences, I was pleased with the overall response both the DP and the actors demonstrated towards my instructions. I would attempt to communicate my vision of the upcoming shot to the DP and then leave it him to set it up. Often, when I returned to approve the shot design, it was exactly as I had imagined it. Then I would communicate the nature of the scene to the actors and bring them into that appropriate emotional state through verbal cues. As an introverted personality, I had to purposely drive myself to communicate my thoughts and visions verbally and use creative descriptions to get those messages across. I believe that my attempt at communicating effectively was a success.

The Editing Stage

The editing stage was a five-month long process during which my direct input was not needed until the final month of development. For the first four months of editing, I only received verbal or email updates on the progression of the film from the editor. The editing process itself included picture cutting, color grading, sound design, and soundtrack creation. Color grading fell to the Director of Photography, and

soundtrack design fell to two composers we enlisted for the job. As the editor made progress from scene to scene, we would send digital copies of the scenes to our composers to enable them to begin prepping the score. Meanwhile, as the visuals of the story began to lock down, the editor and I worked on nearly a daily basis to finalize the picture. I would sit in his editing room and give input or suggestions as he tweaked scene by scene. This provided an interesting way to bounce ideas and possibilities off each other, which strengthened the film significantly.

Once picture was locked and the editor prepared to enter the sound design phase, I came to the realization that the antagonist was not present enough in the film for it to work effectively. As I have mentioned, as a result of the loss of a location, the script was re-written overnight and though I did not recognize it previously, the antagonist lost significant screen time and character development, causing him to be diminished as a character overall. In an attempt to correct this situation, I requested that the editor add an additional shot to the already locked picture and then took the situation to my committee chair to solicit his opinion, from which we determined yet another shot was needed in the film. As a result of these last minutes changes, the sound design process was delayed, but I believe it strengthened the story of the film overall and was therefore worth the effort.

For the sound design effort, I was asked to assemble several of the actors, who had by now all been on a six-month long break from the story, and bring them in to do some ADR work. Because several lines of dialogue were not properly recorded onset, we needed to record those lines and sync them with the visual, a process that took several hours, but eventually worked incredibly well, satisfactorily fixing several audio issues.

Finally, the soundtrack process proved to be an interesting situation because the two designers did not work together on the soundtrack. I met with both of them and described the mood scene by scene directly from the script. They took notes and began preliminary designs, which I rarely heard. However, once they received the rough cut, they took the film, separate from one another, and agreed to design the music according to their personal interpretations. Because of their different styles, I had two options: a more classical approach to the film scored with classical instruments, and a more modern approach. As a result, two very different soundtracks were designed and I had to take elements from both styles that I thought best represented or matched with the film. Overall, the modern soundtrack worked better for a majority of the film because I felt that it better captured the personality and mood of the story.

So, even though I was not directly involved in the editing process, my input and direction was vital in the visual and soundtrack development.

Weakness: Impatience

As a result of the editing process, both the editor and I were required to watch scenes over and over again in order to fix certain flaws or tweak certain aspects of the visual storytelling. As this repetitive process continued, I became more jaded in my viewing of the film and eventually came to a point where I simply wanted the film to be finished. So, we locked picture and declared the visual editing complete; however, because of the nature of my jaded state and my impatience to complete the story, I was unable to see the aforementioned story flaw in the film concerning the antagonist before making the decision to lock. Fortunately, I realized the problem after several days of contemplating

the current story structure and asked the editor to go back and add a few shots to correct the error, but the result was a delay in valuable editing time during which the editor could have been working on mixing the sound. Overall, I was too impatient, which resulted in a mistake that not only could have weakened the effect of the film, but which also could have been easily avoided.

Strength: Endurance

During the editing process, it became necessary to change certain aspects of the film by either cutting out lines to provide a needed effect or to help the pacing of a scene, or by adding shots in places throughout the film to get across a certain point. As a result the original script changed drastically in the editing room; however, my first intention of the film endured in spite of each change made. I insured that despite any change made to story, the original intention of the film would remain the same.

At one point, the editor and I were faced with the possibility of combining two completely different scenes into one, being the scene in which the character Austin is planning the school shooting and the scene in which she hallucinates the actual shooting. The result of combining these two scenes would have dramatically changed the nature of the film in that it would have done away with the anxiety of whether or not Austin was actually going to go through with the shooting. The hope of her choosing rightly would have never been a factor in the audience's reactions. The feeling of hope we would have lost by combining those scenes was, in my opinion, such a pivotal element to the story because it was to be the last emotional beat of the film, indicating that there is always

something positive to believe in or root for despite the negative possibilities that loom just out of sight.

Therefore, instead of attempting to combine the two scenes, we searched for other solutions and cut the scene in multiple ways, trying to make it work. Eventually, we were successful, and were able to preserve the nature of the story itself. The process took a lot more time and effort, but paid off and for the betterment of the film at large.

Conclusion

Per the examples put forth throughout each of the major stages of production, it is evident that this production was an encompassing test of my abilities as both a writer and especially a director. With each situation faced, I was presented with solution options from varying sources, but it ultimately fell to me to arrive at the solution that best benefitted the film. The main takeaway I gleaned from the overall experience that will serve to improve my abilities as a filmmaker include the pre-planning process of possessing back-up plans and not relying on any one individual to produce a vital element of the film, but rather relying on the team as a whole. From aforementioned examples, it is clear that several difficult situations could have been avoided or minimized if a back-up plan had been in place. In this way, the rule of contingency becomes a prominent method of conducting all stages of production in order to prepare for and predict problems and therefore avoid them.

An element that I believed worked in favor of this production was the dependency and trust that each team member had on one another. There was not one person on the cast or crew that failed to rise to the challenges presented them in their individual roles.

As a result, we experienced a team effort that was focused, organized and strove for excellence every day of the production process. Allowing people the freedom to critically accomplish their specified task is vital to creative success; however, it is also my job as the director to insure that each element assigned to others contributes to a unified understanding and does not stray or diminish the essence of the film. The director is the guide to every procedure of the filmmaking process and the ultimate voice on the outcome of each element; however, because of our high expectations of one another, I was able to lean on the team around me and trust them to solve and create in direct benefit to the vision of the film.

Challenge, is a word that does not completely capture the experience of this production. From beginning to end and within each stage of development, we were faced with problems, deviations, compromises, personal conflicts, weariness, frustrations and surprises all requiring us to adjust either our method or thinking and then continue on the course that remained ahead of us. The will to continue despite the set-backs was sometimes an effort that even I, as the director, was unable to find without the aid of my team behind me. I emphasize again, this film is the end product of a unified vision accomplished by the combined effort of a dedicated group of people who possessed excellence in their attitudes and approach. In my personal assessment of this production, I am convinced that it was an experience that grew all members involved and demonstrated the importance of approaching filmmaking with a supported vision by people with whom you can entrust that vision. *Closet Memories* is both a product and an experience that I am proud to have been a part of and created.

APPENDIX

Closet Memories Script

CLOSET MEMORIES

By

Ruth Elisabeth Sabin

1 I/E. BLACK SCREEN

1

AUSTIN (V.O.)

Apathy is contagious. Spreading,
infecting through blank stares and
empty smiles. You don't care, so I
don't care and pretty soon, no one
is left who does. Like suicide
sedation...once there, the world
could burn and you wouldn't blink -
it makes me wonder just what it
would take to wake up again...to
wake everyone up again.

A GUNSHOT reverberates with a chilling ring.

FADE IN:

2 INT. HIGH-SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - DAY

2

A smoking gun SIZZLES from a recent blast - held in a firm
grip - AUSTIN a 16-year-old girl, staring ahead in quiet
horror

BANG!

A pair of metal doors CLANG open and a rush of light pours
into the stagnant gym, a dozen OFFICERS dart into the space
armed with weapons.

OFFICER #1

Go, go, go!

OFFICER #2

Drop your gun!

Austin turns - gun still in hand.

OFFICER #1

Drop your gun!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

A spray of gunfire vibrates through the air, the crowd
scatters, their shock melted to pure panic.

THU-THU-THUNK!

Metal connects with flesh - Austin gasps in a quick breath -
surprise and pain flashing in her eyes.

She staggers back and begins to fall - time slows with the
finality of the act.

3 INT. HIGH-SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - DAY - 2 MONTHS EARLIER 3

Austin stumbles back, trips, and hits the ground with a hard THUNK!

She closes her eyes against the pain and slowly pushes herself up on her elbows.

LACEY trots to her side and scoops up the loose volleyball.

LACEY

Sorry.

Austin timidly looks up - her hair tangled and lop-sided.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Didn't see you.

COACH (O.S.)

Let's keep it up!

Austin drops her eyes uncomfortably as Lacey trots back to the waiting group of girls - ball in hand.

Austin raises herself from the floor.

4 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 4

Austin sits alone amidst several rows of empty desks, the door cracked open, echoes of CHATTING, LAUGHING and feet SHUFFLING down the hall filter into the small space.

She bends down close to the desk, making quick notes on the pages of a spiral notebook. Pencil scratching paper in furious strokes.

MACE (O.S.)

Hey, is this calculus?

Austin's head shoots up, her hand falls across her notebook almost defensively.

MACE (CONT'D)

Whoa, sorry. Didn't mean to intrude.

MACE stands in the door-frame, book in hand, backpack over one shoulder with an amused expression.

She takes him in with a quick, cautious glance.

AUSTIN
It's lunch hour. Classes don't
start for another ten minutes.

She folds the notebook closed and slides it to her bag.

MACE
(shrugging)
Just getting my bearings. Wouldn't
want to be late the first day.
(pause)
Looks like you had the same idea.

She hesitates at the jest, but yanks out a second book from
her bag. She holds it up - English Lit.

AUSTIN
I had some reading to finish up.

MACE
(nodding)
Have fun with that.

He moves away.

MACE (CONT'D)
I'm Mace, by the way.

She looks up, meeting a warm smile. She falters for a moment,
then swallows.

AUSTIN
Austin.

He smiles satisfactorily.

MACE
See ya around school, Austin.

He shoots her one last grin then strides down the hall.

Austin stares after him a long moment, her hand on her open
book, her eyes lost in contemplation.

MR. NATHAN (V.O.)
Wrong book.

5 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - LATER

5

Austin glances up into the irritated expression of a burly
MR. NATHAN, looming over her desk in superior contempt.

MR. NATHAN
 Wrong book, Miss Still. This is
 calculus, not poetry reading.

The surrounding STUDENTS chuckle.

She closes the book and slides it into her bag as the teacher
 takes the floor with a heavy sigh.

BOOM!

Mace suddenly throws open the classroom door - puffing from
 running down the hall.

Mr. Nathan shoots him an impatient glare.

MACE
 Sorry.

Mace makes his way to the back - Austin watches his progress
 from the corner of her eye.

Mr. Nathan continues an equation on the smeared chalkboard
 with some mumbled instructions.

She forces her attention forward taking in the dusty
 blackboard - trying to ignore Mace behind her.

RING!

Austin flinches from the sudden shrill call of the end-of-day
 bell blasting through the rooms and halls.

She grabs her bag from under her feet.

6 INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

6

Austin weaves through the mass of filing students - all
 headed for the large front exit in an expectant rush.

An announcement reverberates through the inattentive mass.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Don't forget about our back-to-
 school pep rally on August 24th.
 Bring your spirit and your
 smiles...!

She lowers her head, mumbling to herself with each step as
 the announcements continue to ring through the halls.

AUSTIN
 Thirty-four, thirty-five, thirty-
 six...

She reaches the glass wall exit and pushes through the swinging door.

7 EXT. FRONT SCHOOL EXIT - CONTINUOUS 7

Austin steps outside the building and quickly ducks away from the stream of students.

She pulls out her notebook and pens down "39 steps" next to the phrase "Right Wing to Entrance."

RAP! RAP!

She jumps and rams the book under her arm.

Mace is on the other side of the glass door wearing a satisfied grin.

MACE
 I owe you.

AUSTIN
 For what?

MACE
 Making me late for our first day of calculus. I think I've earned Mr. Nathan's wrath for the rest of the year.

Austin tucks a loose strand of hair behind her ear, trying to hide an uncomfortable blush.

MACE (CONT'D)
 Keep your guard up. Pay backs are my specialty.

She stares back - at a loss for words. He winks with a chuckle, moving into the filing mass.

She watches him weave through the crowd to the parking lot, then hoists her bag and joins the crowd.

8 EXT. CAR GARAGE - DAY 8

Austin pulls up in her little corolla, parking inside a small, cluttered garage.

MONTE STILL glances up from the engine of an old 1965 maroon bronco, his hands and shirt greasy from several hours work. He turns back to the engine, intent on his task.

MONTE
Hey. School today?

AUSTIN
Yeah.

MONTE
(distracted)
Well, how was it?

Beat.

AUSTIN
I'm gonna go do some homework.

RING! RING!

Monte mutters a curse - wiping his hands as he pulls out his phone.

MONTE
Yeah?

Beat.

MONTE (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
No, no, Elliott, the semi-auto shipment was for twenty.

Beat. Austin hesitates, slowly grabs her bag, listening to the conversation.

MONTE (CONT'D)
Did you check the back? Well, it didn't just walk off.

Beat.

MONTE (CONT'D)
Dammit. Just double check that count would ya? I'll be right over.
(he hangs up)
I have to run to the gunshop.

She CLAPS the door shut, heads for the entrance.

AUSTIN
Fine.

He turns to face her, dirty rag in hand.

MONTE
(calling)
Austin.

She stops - turns around.

MONTE (CONT'D)
Is that back-to-school rally thing
this week?

Beat.

AUSTIN
Friday.

MONTE
Do parents come to that?

AUSTIN
No. Just students.

He nods, unsure of what to say. Both pause - a bit uncomfortable.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
I'm gonna go.

MONTE
Yeah, yeah, I'll be back later.

She pushes open the door and disappears inside.

9 INT. AUSTIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS - SERIES OF SHOTS 9

Austin enters her room mechanically, dropping her bag on the ground. She checks the time - her clock reads 4:27pm.

She goes to her closet, pulls out a black bag. She sits on her bed and unzips it.

She rolls out a large map, grabs a pen and her notebook.

She takes a deep, steadying breath, then begins to scratch in notes at a rapid pace.

AUSTIN (V.O.)
(rapid thoughts)
Pep rally commences at three PM.
Anticipated length - thirty
minutes.

(MORE)

AUSTIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Four possible exits, lock doors ten minutes past three as dance team comes on stage insuring minimal suspicion or movement within audience.

INSERT slamming doors shut. INSERT family picnic.

AUSTIN
 Head-coach begins speech at 3:15.
 826 students and staff - 97% of student body present, remaining 3% senior ditchers and pot-heads.
 Custodian presence minimal.

INSERT looping chain around doors. INSERT family picnic.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Target one - security guard, male, mid-forties, 5'10'', two-hundred pounds. First shot fires at 3:17.
 Panic ensues. Weapons ability, two Jericho 9mm - semi-auto.

INSERT snapping pad-locks shut. INSERT family picnic.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Two clips each, four rounds total.
 Two to one, shot to kill ratio - expected casualties - eight per clip - thirty ideal kills.

INSERT family picnic.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Anticipated length - six minutes.
 Last shot fires at 3:23 - twenty-four dead, six wounded, SWAT team three minutes away. Commence hostage lock-down - personal death...inevitable.

INSERT family picnic.

Austin stops - a deliberating moment passes.

She takes a large black marker and slowly writes out a word with care.

She CLICKS the marker shut and lays it to the side, looking down at the detailed sketch of a HIGH-SCHOOL with the date "AUGUST 24th." Guns, clips, chains and bullets surround her.

Through all the information she stares at the name "Mace Burning" - a thick question mark scribbled at the end.

She lets out a breath, touches her necklace - losing herself in thought.

A picture of her MOTHER on the table next to her.

RAP! RAP!

MONTE (O.S.)
Austin, you hungry?

Austin looks at the clock - it reads 7:13pm.

She doesn't answer. Monte finally moves away - she listens to his feet CLICK down the hall.

She closes her eyes - CLICK, CLICK, CLICK...

10

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

10

CLICK! CLICK!

The lock snaps open in Austin's hand, she opens her locker door and places a thick book inside.

She hears a ring of LAUGHTER down the hall - turns her head. Lacey is draped over Mace's neck - both wearing big smiles. Liz is leaning on the lockers, rolling her eyes.

A PAIR OF GIRLS brush past Austin's shoulder, stopping at a nearby locker - she overhears.

GIRL #1
He's so sweet.

GIRL #2
I know! Where was Mace Burning last year when I needed a prom date?

GIRL #1
You'll have to keep looking. Lacey already has him claimed.

GIRL #2
(sighing)
Just my luck.

GIRL #1
Besides, he's a senior.

GIRL #2

He transferred the start of his senior year? That's weird.

GIRL #1

(nodding)

For his sister. He wanted to be close to her his last year.

GIRL #2

Why wasn't he here before? I mean, how many siblings go to separate schools anyway?

The locker CLAPS shut.

GIRL #1

Separated parents, I think.

The two girls move away, their conversation fading down the hallway.

Lacey tiptoes up and pecks Mace on the cheek - mouthing "see ya later." He releases her with a grin.

She pulls out her black bag and SLAMS the locker shut.

She stops and looks up - surprised.

ELLIOTT is standing there, hands in his pockets, nervous and out of place. He swallows and approaches her.

ELLIOTT

Your dad sent me. He, uh, needs me to drop some stuff off at your house.

Beat. She doesn't answer.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

I need your key.

She pulls out her keys, unhooks one and hands it to him. He pauses, then takes it.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

Thanks.

She turns to leave - A YOUNG MAN brush past her.

YOUNG MAN

(calling)

Elliott, whatcha doing here?

He claps Elliott on the shoulder, Austin moves around the corner.

11 INT. HIGH-SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - DAY - LATER 11

The crowd ROARS their excitement as the cheerleaders pep up the mass of students flooding into the gym. Music blaring off the walls.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome! To the back-to-school pep rally!

12 INT. ENTRANCE TO GYM - CONTINUOUS 12

Austin stands to one side, watching the students file past her. Her hand clinching her black bag..

MACE (O.S.)

Austin!

She turns into a grinning Mace.

MACE (CONT'D)

You wanna sit with me?

Austin stares, unable to find words. His phone RINGS and he holds it to his ear - he plugs his other, trying to hear.

MACE (CONT'D)

I'm coming, Liz! No, I won't miss your dance. I promise!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And here's our lovely dance team!

AUSTIN

You go ahead, I think I forgot something at my locker.

She shuffles away without waiting for an answer. He hangs up and sees her leaving.

MACE

(calling)

See ya inside!

He hurries into the gym - the crowd CHEERS!

13 INT. OUTSIDE GYM - CONTINUOUS - HALLUCINATION 13

CLICK!

Austin checks the door - locked.

She hurries to the next door. Shuts it.

CLICK!

Next door - CLICK!

She approaches the last door. The crowd HOOTS and SHOUTS - the music fades out.

ANNOUNCER

What a performance! Liz Burning
everyone! Captain of yooour dance
team!

Austin stops at the final door, looks inside and watches the dancers hustle off the court.

LIZ BURNING trots into view - a large "C" on her shoulder - her eyes rake the crowd of students - searching, then waves excitedly.

Austin unzips her bag and steps into the gym.

14 INT. HIGH-SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - CONTINUOUS - HALLUCINATION

CA-CLICK!

Time slows as Austin raises her weapon - BOOM!

The head-coach crumbles to the ground.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Austin litters the crowd with a round of shots. Panic erupts! The crowd scatters for the doors - locked, all locked.

She fires into the maddening mass. Students drop, blood splatters across the floor.

Austin sees Liz huddled against the wall in panicked sobs. She approaches with slow intent, looks down at Liz and reloads her gun.

Liz begins to cry, begging and pleading as Austin pulls her to her feet. Pressing the gun to her stomach - her eyes cold and uncaring.

BOOM!

Liz gasps, pain in her face as she slides to the ground. Her hand clinches to Austin's necklace, breaking it free as she falls.

Austin stops - frozen in place. She turns around - Mace stands behind her, panting, angry - staring in disbelief as his sister lies dead on the floor.

She lowers the gun, realization in her eyes - the bag slips from her fingers to the ground...

15 INT. AUSTIN'S ROOM - LATER

15

THUNK!

The black bag drops to the ground beside Austin's feet. She crumbles to her knees beneath the dim light, unzips the bag with trembling hands and pulls out the weapons.

She throws them on the table and yanks out the first clip, her fingers fumbling - it's full.

Second clip - full.

She presses a shaky hand to her neck, finds her necklace - it's intact, unbroken.

She closes her eyes - relief washing over her face.

With an angry shove Austin backs away from the spilled contents.

She stumbles back, hitting the opposite wall. She slides down the wall - tears forming in her eyes as she slumps down to the ground in quick pants.

She buries her face in her arms and quietly begins to cry.

FADE TO BLACK.

16 INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

16

FADE IN: 2 MONTHS LATER

Monte is bent over the engine of his maroon bronco, the hood up, blocking out the rest of the garage.

He pulls back and closes the hood - Austin enters at the truck's edge - watching with interest.

MONTE

Hey.

AUSTIN

I wanted to say bye, before heading
off to school.

MONTE

You got any study-group stuff
afterwards?

Austin opens the door to her little Corolla and tosses in her
bag.

AUSTIN

With Mace, yeah - calculus.

MONTE

(leans down)

Seems like a nice fellah.

She looks away, hiding her reaction.

AUSTIN

Dad, we're just friends.

MONTE

I know, I know.

(beat)

It's just...nice, that you have a
friend and all.

Austin looks up into his face and returns a small smile. He
closes the door with a subtle grin.

She buckles up and reverses. Monte watches her leave - he
waves goodbye.

17

INT. HIGH-SCHOOL HALL - DAY

17

Austin follows behind the small GROUP, a curious grin in her
eyes as she listens to the ongoing argument.

ERIC

It'll be fun!

Lacey is holding onto Mace's arm, Liz on his other side,
another couple ERIC and JORDAN amble just behind and next to
Austin.

RING!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Please make your way to the gym for
our Halloween costume competition!

A flow of students pick up the pace with anticipated excitement, several decked out in Halloween decor.

MACE
(playing with Liz)
You said that last week and we
spent four hours digging tires out
of the mud.

JORDAN
It's just camping.

LIZ
Until the bear shows up and it
turns to
(tickles Mace)
crash course survival training.

Mace turns to Austin, walking backwards.

MACE
You wanna go?

Beat.

AUSTIN
I'll handle the bear if you cook
the hotdogs.

Eric leaps forward, draping an arm around Austin's shoulders.

ERIC
It's a date!

Mace rolls his eyes and throws an amused grin at Austin.
Lacey notices and takes Mace's hand. Austin diverts her gaze.

18 INT. ENTRANCE TO GYM - CONTINUOUS

18

Austin slinks out from Eric's arm as they turn the corner -
she looks ahead down the hall.

She falters mid-step - SOMEONE catches her eye - his face in
a mask, his movement too intentional as he weaves through the
crowd.

She grabs Mace's arm almost without realizing it, bringing
the group to a halt - her face ashen.

MACE

Austin?

Everyone looks - curious.

AUSTIN

We can't go in there.

LACEY

Why not?

JORDAN

Do you need us to save you some seats?

AUSTIN

We have to go.

MACE

What? Why?

She looks up at Mace - pleading.

AUSTIN

Please, come with me.

He pauses with a quizzical look and finally nods, pulling Liz forward as she and the others protest.

19 INT. EMPTY SCHOOL HALL - CONTINUOUS

19

Austin brings the small group to a halt just around the corner - the crowd filters past.

LIZ

(annoyed)

Mace, I'm late, I can't---!

MACE

(interrupting)

Austin, what's going on?

AUSTIN

I don't know yet. I just need you to stay away from there.

LIZ

You're not making sense.

AUSTIN

It's not safe.

MACE

Safe?

AUSTIN

Stay - just for a few minutes.

LIZ

I'm already late and I have a dance to run.

The hall lights suddenly go dark.

AUSTIN

Liz, wait!

She turns the corner - BOOM!

Time slows as Mace watches Liz fall back - a bloodied hole passing from her chest and out her back. A spray of red hits him across his face and chest - he doesn't move.

Austin clamps a hand over Lacey's mouth before she lets out a scream and yanks Mace back with the other - his face white with shock.

She opens a closet and shoves the group into the tight space.

20

INT. JANITOR CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

20

Lacey and Jordan start to yell in a panic. Eric and Mace press their hands over the girls' mouths - tears in their own eyes.

Austin listens at the door.

The muffled sound of several SHOTS and rising SCREAMS seep through the closed door.

ERIC

(whimpering)

Oh, my god...

They sit in silence, listening to the horrors for a long moment - their breathing frantic, their bodies trembling.

Suddenly, the noise dies, leaving them in a black SILENCE.

Austin risks a look at Mace - his head bowed, his face pale against the spots of Liz's blood.

MACE

She's dead isn't she?

Beat.

AUSTIN
(softly)
Yes.

Mace suddenly leaps up from the ground, trying to force his way to the door.

MACE
I just stood there! Watched!

AUSTIN
(grabbing him)
Sometimes it's all we can do!

Austin blocks the door - he stops, panting, angry.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
Liz wouldn't want you dead too.

He stops and slowly steps away from the door - his jaw clinched, his eyes dark.

LACEY
(crying)
What are we gonna do?

AUSTIN
(listening at the door)
I think I can get us out.

All eyes train on her - She notices and shifts uncomfortably.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
(hesitantly)
They're not just randomly shooting people - they want hostages.

ERIC
They? How the hell do---!

AUSTIN
(interrupting)
The shots earlier - they overlapped. I'm not sure how many, but their focus will be maintaining the crowd in the gym.

JORDAN
We can call the police.

AUSTIN

The police are on their way by now.
But the shooters know they have
time - so long as they have
hostages. They'll try to prolong
the event, make an impression, so
to speak.

Mace suddenly interjects.

MACE

How do you know all this?

Beat.

AUSTIN

It's what I would do.

Mace jumps forward, pinning Austin to the wall.

MACE

(heated)

And what the hell does that mean,
Austin? You sound as if you had
this planned - like your best
friends with those fucking---!

(he punches the wall)

My sister is dead!

(pause)

What's really going on?!

Austin swallows, trying to maintain her composure.

AUSTIN

The police have to organize - if we
get out, we can give them the
information they need to end this.

She looks around the cramped space, searching for support. A
long moment passes - Mace finally nods.

MACE

Anyone rather stay?

No one answers. Austin rises to her feet.

AUSTIN

I'll have a look. Stay here.

MACE

(grabs her arm)

I know you're not telling me
something...but I'm gonna trust
you.

A moment passes as Mace studies her face. Austin nods and slips out.

21 INT. EMPTY SCHOOL HALL - CONTINUOUS 21

Austin slips out the door, pressing herself up against the wall after checking left and right - both empty.

She tiptoes to the corner, crouching low.

BANG!

She peeks around the corner - two SHOOTERS are on the prowl, kicking open classroom doors - searching.

BANG!

Her eyes fall on Liz - a pool of blood spread across the floor - her hand lying limply in the shiny glaze. She presses her eyes shut, pushing past the grim image.

BANG!

An unseen GIRL screams out. Austin watches the shooters enter a classroom - guns raised.

GIRL (O.S.)
No! Please, don't---!

SHOOTER #1
Shut up!

BOOM! BOOM!

Austin flinches from the blasts, haltingly glancing down at Liz - she slowly reaches out her hand to the red liquid, her breathing deep and shaky - horror flooding her eyes as though reality were settling in.

Suddenly, a hand extends to her shoulder, yanking her back with a fierce jerk!

Austin jumps to her feet with a gasp of shock and fear - it's Mace.

She looks back - a shooter coming up the hall.

Together they race forward, diving inside a classroom - the shooter sprints around the corner right on their heels.

22 INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - MEANWHILE

22

Jordan covers her mouth, trying not to scream as she CLICKS the door shut from looking down the hall.

JORDAN
Something's wrong.

LACEY
Were they seen?!

ERIC
SHHH!

Muffled shouts leak through the door - they all stop, anxiously pressed to the door - listening.

SHOOTER #2 (O.S.)
Get up! I said get up!

BOOM! BOOM!

The group flinches back. Tears jump to Lacey's eyes.

LACEY
Oh, god, Mace...

Beat.

WHOOSH! The door swings open, Eric leaps up ready for a fight.

Austin squats at the door - Mace just behind her. Lacey scrambles forward, grabbing his neck.

LACEY (CONT'D)
(crying)
I thought it was you...I thought...

He hugs her, trying to comfort - his dark look still on Austin.

MACE
It's OK.

ERIC
What happened?

AUSTIN
The halls are too guarded.

JORDAN
Then what can we do?

AUSTIN
The custodian's entrance.

ERIC
By the gym? Are you insane?!

AUSTIN
All the other exits are locked and being watched. That one is small enough, they probably missed it.

Mace takes Lacey hand.

MACE
Let's go.

23 INT. EMPTY SCHOOL HALL - CONTINUOUS

23

Austin in the front, crouched low, silently leads the small group down a long hall. They halt at a corner - she peeks around to the exit at the end - empty.

AUSTIN
This is it. Straight down the hall.

She moves aside, but Mace grabs her arm, pulling her close.

MACE
What are you doing?

AUSTIN
I'll be right behind you.

A lingering moment passes between them. She looks past his shoulder - a SHOOTER turns the corner towards them.

AUSTIN (CONT'D)
Go, now!

Eric leaps forward, Jordan at his side - Lacey then Mace skirt by in a sprint. Austin darts after them.

Eric slides to a halt at the end of the hall.

ERIC
Get back!

A second SHOOTER steps out in front, blocking their way - gun at the ready.

Austin halts - they're trapped. She watches them raise their guns - poised to shoot.

She takes in the shooter's masked face - recognition flashes in her eyes.

24 INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY - FLASHBACK 24

A young man brushes by her in the hall. She watches him pass - he know Elliott.

25 INT. EMPTY SCHOOL HALL - DAY - PRESENT 25

SHOOTER #1

Well, well, here at last, just like
a game of cat and mouse.

Mace steps protectively in front of Austin - a gun rises to his face. Austin leaps forward.

AUSTIN

(desperate)

I know what you're doing.

All eyes turn to her - the gun barrel hovers threateningly.

SHOOTER #1

(amused)

He said you were a smart bitch.

AUSTIN

Smart enough to know that you're
not supposed to kill me. And if you
hurt any of them, you won't get me
to that gym alive.

The gun lingers a moment longer, the two shooters exchange a silent nod.

SHOOTER #1

Well then, after you.

With the wave of two guns, the small group is herded towards the gym.

MACE

(whispering harshly)

What the hell was that?

She doesn't answer - doesn't look up.

26 INT. HIGH-SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - CONTINUOUS 26

Austin marches forward, face like marble as hundreds of frightened faces stare up at her - hope leaving their eyes.

Mace and the others are shoved into the waiting mass - Austin is pulled away.

Three gunmen stand guarding the crowd - firearms at the ready - another is crouched, holding his gun - almost bored.

He looks up, sees Austin and immediately stands. He approaches her and takes off his mask - Elliott.

Austin doesn't blink.

ELLIOTT
 (shakes his head)
 Of course you're not surprised.
 (he comes behind her)
 It is you after all. It's all about
 the details.

27 INT. AUSTIN'S ROOM - FLASHBACK 27

Elliott enters Austin room, surveying the setting.

He goes to the closet, pulls out the black bag.

He unfolds the map.

He sets out the guns.

He runs his fingers over Mace's name.

28 INT. HIGH-SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - CONTINUOUS 28

Elliott takes a few steps toward the crowd and waves his gun with a flippant attitude.

ELLIOTT
 Ladies and gentlemen, I would like
 to introduce you to Austin Still.
 The mastermind behind this
 memorable day.

MACE
 (disbelief)
 What?

ELLIOTT

That's right. Austin gave me
everything - the school diagrams,
details,
(he looks at Mace)
Even names.

Mace suddenly lunges at Austin! Yelling and cursing as Eric
and a few other hostages try to restrain him.

A gun COCKS! A black barrel presses against Lacey's temple.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

Temper, Mace.

Mace stops struggling, his black glare on Austin - she meets
his eyes - her face unreadable.

Elliott steps close to her - speaking low and intimate.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

I know what it's like, not to be
seen.

29 INT. SCHOOL HALL - FLASHBACK 29

Austin brushes past Elliott, not lifting her head on her way
to the exit. He watches her pass.

30 INT. HIGH-SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - CONTINUOUS 30

Austin looks up into Elliott's face.

AUSTIN

You did this for me?

He smiles and takes her hand, pressing a gun into her palm
and enclosing her fingers around the hilt. His eyes locked on
hers.

ELLIOTT

(stepping back)
For you.

A long moment passes - she moves towards Mace, her eyes
pleading.

AUSTIN

I wish you could know.

MACE
(seething)
I know all I need to. Liz is dead
and you killed her.

Beat.

She CLICKS back the hammer and suddenly turns on her heel, aiming for Elliott - his eyes widen in shock.

BOOM!

The nearest shooter turns - caught off guard by the blast.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

He falls dead.

Lacey bites her captor and kicks away as he throws her to the ground, raising his weapon to kill.

BAM! Mace hits him from the side. They fall into a struggle.

The third shooter rushes through the crowd, but is quickly tackled to the ground - he lets out a wild shot into the air.

BAM! Mace hits the ground, his opponent towering over him.

BANG!

A pair of metal doors CLANG open and a rush of light pours into the gym - a dozen OFFICERS dart into the space armed with weapons.

OFFICER #1
Go, go, go!

OFFICER #2
Drop your gun!

The final gunman raises his weapon, eyes on Mace - he's going to die.

OFFICER #1
Drop your gun!

BOOM! The gunman crumbles to the ground. Austin stands behind him - the gun SIZZLES in her firm grip.

A spray of gunfire vibrates through the air.

THU-THU-THUNK!

Metal connects with flesh - Austin gasps in a quick breath - surprise and pain flashing in her eyes. She staggers back and falls to the ground.

Mace forces himself through the crowd, scrambling to his knees beside Austin's limp form.

MACE

Austin! Oh my god, I'm sorry! I'm
so sorry---

She takes several unsteady pants, her face cringed in anguish. Mace tries to smile, holding back tears as he leans down close to her face.

MACE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you do it?
(She touches his arm)
Why didn't you?

Austin tries to say something, but the light goes out of her eyes and her body falls completely still.

The frantic crowd rushes past the two figures on the gym floor. Mace ignores the chaotic mass, a pair of salty tears silently slide down his face.

31 INT. ENTRANCE TO GYM - DAY - FLASHBACK

31

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And here's our lovely dance team!

The crowd shoves Austin forward involuntarily and she presses into Mace - he grins down at her.

MACE

Save you a seat?

She looks up into his face - caught off guard. A small smile comes to her eyes.

AUSTIN

Yeah, I'll be there soon.

MACE

(hurrying away)
See ya inside.

She watches him go, deliberates a moment and zips up her bag. Turning around and leaving the gym untouched.

FADE TO BLACK:

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