

Gunplay

By Tom Reed

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In darkness, we hear the too-polished voices of a political TV commercial, with patriotic underscoring.

SOCCER MOM

It might surprise you, but I have one.

HIP DAD

Sure, yeah, I got one.

OLDER DAD

Si, verdad, tengo uno.

GRANDMA

I have one and I'm carrying it right now. A huge *machine gun*.

The others join her on the last two words creating an overlapping cascade of...

ALL

Mach/Machine/ine G/Gun/Gun/Un/N. Machine Gun.

OLDER DAD

...pistola MUY grande.

SOCCER MOM

That's why I'm a member...

HIP DAD

I'm a member...

OLDER DAD

Soy miembro...

GRANDMA

I'm a member...

ALL

Of the NATIONAL MACHINE GUN ASSOCIATION.

HIP DAD

Without machine guns - are we even America?

SOCCKER MOM

Nope!

HIP DAD

Like it says in our Constitution...

GRANDMA

“The only way to protect our freedom is if everyone has a machine gun.”

A choir sings, patriotically...

CHORUS

FREEDOM IS A MACHINE GUN!

BEAR YOUR RIGHT ... TO BE RIGHT

THE NATIONAL!

MACHINE GUN!

ASSOOOOOCIATION!

(trickling in)

PISTOLA GRANDE!

Lights up on a bright white modern office.

Marsha and Brian stare at a screen.

MARSHA

Wow, that’s a great new ad for us! So authentically inclusive! But I don’t think one TV ad is going to solve all of our PR problems, especially after that most recent tragic mass shooting.

BRIAN

Which one?

MARSHA

You know, the most recent one, so tragic, unpreventable.

BRIAN

You mean the one where one person with a legal assault rifle killed a bunch of people really quickly, but the gun had nothing to do with it?

MARSHA

Right, that one. Thoughts and prayers.

BRIAN

Thoughts and prayers.

Gloria storms in wielding graphs, also packing.

GLORIA

(yelling)

Thoughts and prayers! Did you see our latest numbers?! We are hemorrhaging support!

MARSHA

...not sure that's the best metaphor...

BRIAN

(after a quick glance)

It's like *not everyone* believes the gun lobby and these little freedom nuggets...

(referencing the AR-style NERF
weapons slung over each of their
shoulders)

...are the only thing keeping America from turning into Belgium.

GLORIA

To survive, we have to get in with the *youth* of America. It worked for big tobacco. So, our board approved a new Youth Outreach SHOW to reach kids before they're poisoned by education!

Anders backs in quickly, running into Brian. Their Nerf "guns" clatter to the ground, magazines and accessories fly off. This starts a chain reaction that ends up involving everyone and their weapons and an absurd amount of brightly-colored magazines and gun parts. They pile everything on a table, so Anders is no longer carrying his gun.

ANDERS

Sorry, first day carrying that thing. But something tells me this is the National Machine Gun Association, right? (others nod) I'm Anders!

GLORIA

Perfect timing! Everyone, this is Anders Anderson he just graduated with a Masters in Youth Outreach from Liberty Bell University. Go Bells! We scooped him up to lead our new High School Training program!

ANDERS

Hey everybody! I'm so excited! Ever since I was little, growing up on my family's humble little gun range, I've just wanted to make a difference, make the world a better place. So, when I saw your posting for a "Youth Gun Safety Trainer" posted on JobsForNaiveOptimistsWhoHaven'tDoneTheirResearch.com, I knew I was a perfect fit!

BRIAN

Especially to teach kids our basic constitutional freedoms, like carrying assault rifles in grocery stores and Baby Gap!

ANDERS

I don't think those exact words are in the constitution, but I do believe in gun rights as long as they don't infringe on people's other rights.

GLORIA

No one cares what you believe, you're one of *us* now. I was actually just explaining how our new training show addresses the fact that more and more, schools face mass shooting tragedies...

ALL EXCEPT ANDERS

Thoughts and prayers.

ANDERS

(trailing in)

...prayers.

ANDERS

That's right, so schools are doing Active Shooter Drills - to help keep students safer in case of tragedy.

ALL EXCEPT ANDERS

Thoughts and prayers.

ANDERS

(closer to overlapping)

...ghts and prayers.

MARSHA

An Active Shooter Drill is like a fire drill where instead of a fire they teach kids to run and hide from a "bear" with an AR-15, right?

ANDERS

Crazy, right?

BRIAN

Have you ever shot an AR-15? They're SO fun!

ALL EXCEPT ANDERS

So fun! The best! Blam blam blam blam, etc.

Anders is a little taken aback.

ANDERS

You know, this stuff is pretty serious. I love guns, but I love gun safety even more!

GLORIA

Serious isn't hip. And I know you haven't seen the script yet, Anders, but our messaging experts wrote this new Active Shooter Drill SHOW to be really fun. All you have to do is go into a school and teach the show to the kids and they'll perform it. It's got some hip, cool fun songs - kids love hip, cool fun songs - and just tons of general pizazz. Kids love pizazz.

BRIAN

That's certainly true.

MARSHA

Remember *Glee*? So much pizazz!

GLORIA

It's a perfect opportunity because High School Theater programs are wildly underfunded.

ANDERS

(no one really hears this)

Sadly.

MARSHA

I've never been to a theater.

BRIAN

Don't see the point. Like shooting blanks.

ALL BUT ANDERS

That's what she said!

ANDERS

(catching on late, then failing)

... thoughts and prayer...s?? Sorry, who - which she?

MARSHA

Are you kidding?

ANDERS

Oh! OH. Was that an innuendo? Sorry, I'm terrible at innuendos. Homeschooled till sophomore year of college.

MARSHA
Ok.

BRIAN
Weird.

GLORIA
Anyway... we'll give our Training Show to schools for free, the kids'll do it in place of a normal show, then we fund the rest of their theater season - West Side Story twice a year or whatever.

BRIAN
Genius! Yes! Perfect!

MARSHA
Love it. Synergy!

MARSHA
I get chills just thinking about how effective this really could be!

GLORIA
This will make or break our future as the only organization keeping America from turning into a puppet state for the kombucha industry! Everything is riding on this Anders, don't let us down!

ANDERS
I won't!

Lights shift, Anders pivots and is finishing a pitch presentation buoyantly as ever.

ANDERS
...and then the kids perform the show and everyone's safer! Thanks for your time, parents of Edison Senior High...

PARENT ONE STORMS toward Anders.

PARENT ONE
WHAT!?! A shooter drill sponsored by the gun lobby performed by our children!? Whoever came up with the idea for this show should be crucified! LEAVE>

Shift to another school...

ANDERS
...then we fund the theater program for a whole year!

VOICES
NO.

ANDERS

Two years?

PARENT TWO

Get out of here!

Shift, tail end of another pitch.

ANDERS

We'll throw in bullet proof shields for kids' back packs! Those are a real thing.

VOICES

Get outta here! No! Leave!

ANDERS

(sheepishly)

For preschoolers - bullet proof... diapers?

PARENTS

Hell NO!

ANDERS

(beleaguered now)

We'll throw in football jerseys.

FOOTBALL PARENT

Hell yeah!

REASONABLE PARENT

No way!

Other parents gather, yelling at Anders. He crumples, they disappear as lights expand back to back to NMGA HQ. Anders is slumped.

ANDERS

(distracted)

Maybe they're right, maybe it is less about preparing for a horrific situation and more about figuring out how to prevent the horrific situation in the first place? Like making these (re: his gun) harder to get ahold of.

A beat. Others look at him, horrified.

GLORIA

Have you been drinking marijuana!? Watch your mouth! Figure this out!

BRIAN

Hold on! We just got a weird email... it looks like WE GOT ONE!? A school is actually interested!

MARSHA

What!? Where?

BRIAN

(reading)

Plaineville High School, a small town in the middle of nowhere, apparently they're desperate -

Lights start shifting to Plaineville High School as Principal Terry picks up the line so both Terry and Brian say the line.

PRINCIPAL TERRY AND BRIAN

The theater program lost all it's funding.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

I'm so sorry, Laura.

LAURA

But rehearsals for my *Rent* sequel, *Mortgage*, already started! Don't you have some say over this? You're the Principal, Terry!

PRINCIPAL TERRY

I'm sorry. The referendum failed, we're hurting everywhere. We don't even have money to keep the lights on in the theater, but...

LAURA

Right, I'm running out of candles. But...?

PRINCIPAL TERRY

You saw that other proposal from the School Board meeting, right?

LAURA

You're not serious are you? It's like a gun nut fever dream.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

It kind of is, but the School Board likes it (to a student) No Running! (to Laura) and the PTA has been pushing hard for some kind of shooter drill.

LAURA

How is that even a real thing?

PRINCIPAL TERRY

I have no idea. I feel like every day that passes, even fewer things I thought I knew are still actual things that are true. Sorry, that doesn't make sense. But neither does anything else right now.

LAURA

Remember when No Child Left Behind seemed like the worst thing that could happen to a school?

They laugh weakly.

LAURA

Everything's the worst. Ugh, I've been trying to stay calm by huffing lavender oil constantly - it's not working!

PRINCIPAL TERRY

This might be beyond the power of essential oils. (to a student) Hat off! (to Laura) Look, one way or another a drill is going to happen. We may as well take their money so you can be in the room keeping an eye while some machine gun guy teaches them "Shoot For The Stars And Stripes."

LAURA

That's the name? It's like someone put patriotism in a blender with... dumb. Should've been "From My Cold Dead Jazz Hands."

PRINCIPAL TERRY

That's awful too. You'll only have to deal with this for like three and a half weeks till opening. The Board gets their training AND you get to do *your show* in the Spring.

LAURA

This feels like emotional blackmail. Why does everything come with big insulting horrible strings attached?

PRINCIPAL TERRY

(throwing hands up)

Arts funding?

LAURA

OK, I'll do it. But only to make sure it doesn't become an alt-right hitler youth horror show. Lavender take the wheel!

Using a little essential oils jar, she dabs way too much in and around her face and takes a huge breath.

Blackout.

The tones of a school PA system.
Principal Terry starts in darkness, lights may fade up as s/he continues.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Plaineville High School students. Today's varsity *girls* basketball game has been moved from Court Two to the Band Uniform Closet. Also - fall musical rehearsal starts at 3:15 in the theater and you no longer have to rehearse by flashlight. Finally - due to new funding requirements, starting today, our school's passing bell has been adjusted to comply with "firearms safety desensitization efforts." Please do not be alarmed, this is the sound of our new passing bell...

SFX: A school bell ring with gun shots in the middle plays.

PRINCIPAL TERRY (V.O.)

(off mic)

Good lord! That's really it!?

(back on mic)

Wow, yeah. Remember it's just a drill. The world is awful, have a good night, students.

Lights up on THEATER STUDENTS performing, over the top.

STUDENTS

(sung a la "Seasons of Love" from *Rent*)

Five hundred twenty five thousand, six hundred... Dollars

How do you measure? A loan for a house?

STUDENTS

(taking turns)

There's Quicken

US Bank

Wells Fargo

Or Credit unions

These lenders

Will Give you

A loan to buy a home...

(switch to like “light my candle”)

Will you pay my mortgage!?

Students are really energetic, nearly always.

DREW

We sound amazing, you guys!

LESLEY

I still think Mortgages are the least relatable subject matter ever for high school kids.

MORGAN

Using 90s show tunes to deconstruct the American Financial Services industry is an abuse of the transformative power of song.

PETER

A bunch of bohemian artists couldn’t afford to *own* anything in New York!

MORGAN

Maybe if we reset it in Omaha?

DREW

I’d rather do something that MATTERS and speaks to our generation. (beat) Like *Frozen*, the musical!

OTHERS

No way! Come on! Matters??

LESLEY

If we do *Frozen*, I’m going back to the Speech Team.

Everyone gasps, this is heresy. Laura enters, solemnly. Students attack with theater kid energy!

STUDENTS

Ms. Martin! Hello!! We love *Mortgage*! We’re getting our parts! I hit a high C. Etc.

Laura’s a bit overwhelmed.

LAURA

You guys! Oh my god, I love you all but sometimes your intensity makes me feel like I’m on the receiving end of *The Birds*.

DREW
(with a dramatic flourish)

You're so dramatic!

LAURA
(taking a silly bow)

From you, that's a compliment. Look. I heard you singing, you all really sound great...

DREW

Thank you.

LAURA
(more somber now)

...but I have some really bad news. We are going to have to cancel our fall musical. *Mortgage's* funding got pulled.

STUDENTS
(with another burst of loud energy)

No! Why! We love it! We worked so hard! Please! Etc.

LAURA

You all are amazing. Seriously, I'm inspired by your enthusiasm and your hard work and your... volume. But, it's out of my control. The... sort of ... good news is - we're still going to do *A* fall musical, it's just going to be different.

Students murmur excitement. Just then Anders backs in, very similarly to how he backed into the NMGA scene. He collides with Laura. His gun pieces (more of them than seem plausible, perhaps aided by actors playing students tossing stuff into the fray) go flying again. Similarly, little bottles drop from Laura, clattering everywhere.

LAURA

My essential oils!

They gather their bits and pieces and end up nearly bonking heads as they stand back up holding mixtures of each other's stuff. There's sudden awkwardness or chemistry or something - was this just a gun+essential oils meet cute? Yes. Actors playing students whisper "chemistry" without anyone acknowledging it.

Laura has yet to process that he's carrying a gun.

ANDERS

I am so sorry!

LAURA

No, I'm sorry!

ANDERS

No, I backed into you, so clumsy! Gahh!

LAURA

I'm just like, bluhh, wahhh, me too! Gahhh!

They both flail awkwardly, demonstrating how they're awkward.

LAURA

Are you from the fire department about the candles?

ANDERS

No no, I'm a new instructor, kind of, I'm Anders!

LAURA

I'm Laura.

ACTORS

Chemistry.

LAURA

Oh, what do you teach?

ANDERS

Sorry, here you go, I still have some of your (puzzled) tiny... dark... jars. No, I'm not a teacher, I'm here to work on the active shooter training show.

He hands back the bottles.

LAURA

(starting to realize she's still holding some of his stuff)

Oh? OH. You're *that* guy. I still have some of your... gun!? Is that a *gun*!?

Everyone reacts, but not like they're scared, just like this is wildly inappropriate.

LAURA

You can't have a gun here, this is a school! Seriously!?

ANDERS

Sorry! So sorry! My job makes me carry it, I'm not used to it!
(as he scampers to get rid of it)
But does having it here make you feel safer?

ALL

NO.

ANDERS

My bad, my bad. Sorry! Your house. Your rules.
(as he leaves to get rid of the gun)
But what if maybe we looked into changing those though rules, eh?

ALL

NO!

ANDERS

Got it!

He runs it off stage quickly.

STUDENTS

What the heck was that!? What's going on!? Who is this guy!?

LAURA

(to herself, checking her bottles)
I hope none broke, this stuff is expensive.

Anders reenters.

ANDERS

There, I locked it to my bike.

PETER

Who and WHY are you!?

ANDERS

I'm Anders Anderson.

LESLEY

That's the whitest name I've ever heard and this town is REALLY white.

PETER

Seriously, look around. Remember when we did Othello but skipped all the parts with Othello?

LESLEY

Yeah, that was messed up.

LAURA

Anyway, everyone, this is ... who are you?

ANDERS

Anders Anderson from the National Machine Gun Association!

Crickets.

MORGAN

You're the ones that think everyone should have a machine gun, right?

ANDERS

I'm told to just answer that question with "Freedom!"

LESLEY

Is he for real?

LAURA

Sorry, everyone. He's here because as I was saying, instead of *Mortgage*, our fall musical is now going to be an active shooter drill, which is for, uh... if...

LESLEY

(unfazed)

A kid comes and shoots up the school.

Laura and Anders are taken aback.

DREW

We watch the news.

LAURA

Please stop.

ANDERS

Hopefully it never happens here, but just in case we're going to put on a training show all about safety and fun called "Shoot For The Stars And Stripes!"

Crickets.

PETER

That's very bad.

LESLEY

Wow, yeah, if I were the actual flag, I think I'd set *myself* on fire.

ANDERS

It's a world premiere, so they tell me someday, it could end up on *Broadway!*

PETER

I'm in!

DREW

LET'S DO THIS!

LAURA

Ok, let's not blow things out of proportion.

LESLEY

So. Let me get this right. Your show is - a drill? You're going to have us simulate a tragedy...

ANDERS

Oh! Thoughts and prayers.

Fist pump, nailed it!

LESLEY

... a tragedy...

ANDERS

Thoughts and prayers.

LAURA

Stop saying that.

LESLEY

Tragedy...

Anders almost goes for it, but catches himself.

LESLEY

...in a school. So, what, we're going to like pretend to kill each other and stuff?

ANDERS

Haven't you ever done Shakespeare? Shakespeare is full of death, he's basically the original gangsta rapper - rhyming couplets about murder.

MORGAN

And incest.

ANDERS

I don't think you're helping my cause. But everyone loves Shakespeare, right!?

LAURA

Have you seen Shakespeare? Most of his shows are just three hour long Dr. Seuss sword fights.

LESLEY

(to Laura)

Did you sign off on this!?

MORGAN

Is this a prank? Are we being senior pranked?

PETER

I can't spend another overnight in a locker!

LESLEY

And I don't wanna do some machine gun show.

ANDERS

It's way more about safety than guns.

MORGAN

Safety from what?

ANDERS

...bad people.

LESLEY

Carrying what?

ANDERS

...bad intentions?

LESLEY

I'm not doing this!

PETER

Me either!

STUDENTS

Yeah, this sucks. No thank you. Maybe I'll go back to speech, etc.

LAURA

Everyone! If we do this, we get funding to do a spring musical. And maybe a one act too. Not that I'm telling you to sell out your artistic integrity for the promise of some future artistically fulfilling project, but... life lesson?

Students murmur - maybe?

LESLEY

Try bribe.

Students murmur - not sold.

DREW

Think about it everyone - we're *thespians*. We're not in this to perform lame easy-to-swallow drivel that doesn't challenge us or the audience. What's more dramatic than an armed killer right here? Plus, it's so realistic, our audience will absolutely relate to this.

Everyone pauses for a horrified beat. Then...

PETER

That does check a lot of boxes for me. Is there any rhyming?

ANDERS

Only in song lyrics.

PETER

Alright, I'm in.

MORGAN

Me too.

Focus shifts to Lesley.

LESLEY

Are there alto solos?

There are now!

ANDERS

Lesley nods, she's in.

ANDERS

What about you?

A thus-far silent student steps up.

MORGAN

That's Alicia, she's on vocal rest. Like, always.

Alicia nods and makes some dramatic gestures toward her throat. She drops a wet tea bag in Anders' hand.

MORGAN

That means yes.

ANDERS

This is going to be great!

LESLEY

I think I still kind of hate you.

ANDERS

That's OK. I hate Canada.

SEVERAL

Really?

ANDERS

No! I'm pro gun rights, not a total moron. Let's do this!

He passes out scripts.

LAURA
(interrupting)

Starting tomorrow!

ANDERS

Starting tomorrow.

Blackout.

Piano music starts as lights fade up, singing starts (already “in progress”) Anders and the kids are around the piano. Laura’s off to the side observing with a sense of resignation.

ANDERS

(singing)

*IF SOMEONE TRIES TO ROB YOUR HOUSE AND ALL YOU HAVE IS HAND GUNS,
RIFLES AND SHOTGUNS*

(spoken)

With me now!

STUDENTS AND ANDERS

(singing)

*ARE YOU EVEN SAFE?
NOT WITHOUT A MACHINE GUN!*

ANDERS

Wow, that’s a tangent, I really should have read this beforehand.

(to the kids)

But you sound great, keep going!

Students mime continuing. Anders goes to Laura, off to the side.

ANDERS

You have some seriously talented students here, Ms. Martin.

LAURA

Yeah, they’re great. Unless one of them gets ahold of a Red Bull. But right now I feel like you’re borrowing my Lamborghini to deliver pizza. Gun pizza.

ANDERS

Sorry. (beat) Can I ask another favor?

LAURA

Only if it doesn’t make me further question my integrity as an artist, teacher and human.

ANDERS

Fair. I don’t have wifi set up yet and my phone service here is so bad that I’m still loading a text from yesterday. So far it says “L. O.” and I know it ends in “L” but the suspense is killing me.

LAURA

Ok...?

ANDERS

Sorry, yeah, where's a good place to buy food in this town? I found a gas station, but Funyuns is no way to live long term.

LAURA

(after a little beat)

Oh, well... there's a place on Main and 3rd called Natural Winds Food Coop. You'll fit in perfectly.

ANDERS

Yeah? I've actually never been to a coop. Thank you!

She starts walking away, catches herself, turns back.

LAURA

Shhhhhiiessst. You have to be with a member to buy anything. I'll meet you there - 6:30, sharp.

ANDERS

I'll be there! Thank you!

Students put a button on the song which "continued" silently beneath the scene.

STUDENTS

(singing)

IT'S LIKE A HUG FROM A WAR OF SAFETY

Laura wraps things up for the day with the students. Watching, Anders shakes his head like "that's nuts."

Lights shift to coop. "32 Flavors" by Ani DiFranco plays.

At the Coop, Anders stands awkwardly, then tries a bulk pasta bin's chute, he accidentally opens it and it jams open - multicolored rotini is shooting everywhere! Laura pops in and comes to his aid, shutting it off and they clean up the mess.

LAURA

I see you're making friends.

ANDERS

Yeah, I'm doing a lot of that this week.

LAURA

Not packing a massive ridiculous gun tonight, huh?

ANDERS

They had a "no guns" sign - apparently machine guns don't mix well with dehydrated acai paste or Carob.

LAURA

Probably not.

ANDERS

And I only have that thing because work makes me. They're pretty hardcore about symbolically supporting liberty.

LAURA

Yeah, seems like it. Not sure it would have even *fit* in here anyway. This place used to be the bathroom for a Subway.

ANDERS

I KNEW I smelled meatballs!

LAURA

Well, here's the tour. (they spin) Over there they have decent produce for a town this size, and you're already intimately acquainted with the bulk section.

A grumpy Hippy is sweeping up rotini remains.

ANDERS

(to Hippy)

Sorry!

LAURA

If you want more options there's a normal grocery store on the other side of town. I mostly said to meet here because I didn't think you'd actually come to a coop.

ANDERS

I always come!

She gives him a look like “really, d-bag?”

ANDERS

Was that an innuendo... sorry! I’m super innuendo blind. Being a homeschooled recovering evangelical mostly-virgin does that.

LAURA

Wow. That’s a lot of information. Mostly...? Nope, not asking.

ANDERS

Yeah, my childhood was *long*. I keep thinking I’ll understand innuendos better if I just ... you know...

LAURA

Start masterbating way more?

ANDERS

WHAT!?

LAURA

Hey, it’s natural, we’re adults.

ANDERS

Haha, you think that could that work?

LAURA

I dunno, there are some problems you can’t masterbate your way out of.

They laugh.

ANDERS

I’ve tried!

LAURA

Me too!

They laugh.

ACTORS

Chemistry.

ANDERS

Sorry your show got cancelled. You must hate me.

LAURA

Yeah, I'm not your number one fan, but *you* didn't really cancel it, the tax-averse voters of Riverview county did. (a beat) So, how did you end up here?

ANDERS

I just saw a job posting about working with youth and gun safety. I grew up in a family of gun nuts - who are also nuts about gun safety - sounded kind of perfect honestly. That and I had just finished Masters in Education and I hear you need a job to buy food.

He gestures to the coop.

LAURA

I was hoping for something less reasonable.

ANDERS

I used to be less reasonable, but that's just because I was really really sheltered. (beat) So, do you hate guns?

LAURA

No, my family hunts. I just hate when guns hurt people.

ANDERS

I'm with you there. Sorry the NMGA's show is so over the top, I just keep telling myself that overall this is about making kids safer.

LAURA

Sure. Anyway, this has been... fine. But I should really get back home to continue obsessing about how my profession, priorities and gender make the world a terrible place right now. Plus, I gotta count my cats.

ANDERS

Haha, that many, really?

LAURA

None actually. But everyone assumes I have like 50.

ANDERS

I wouldn't've guessed you had any more than nine.

LAURA

Wow, so generous. (beat) See you tomorrow.

ANDERS

I look forward to it.

LAURA
(not mean, just weary)

Ah, shut up.

ACTORS

Chemistry.

Laura and Anders leave.
SFX: the bell/gunshots.
Lights shift to school.
The students are gathered, working on the show, trying silly choreo. Anders comes in and starts working with the kids, seeming to do a good job despite the content. Laura watches, sipping tea.

STUDENTS

*Lockdown lockdown lock the door
Shut the lights off say no more
Go behind the desk and hide
Wait until it's safe inside
Lockdown lockdown it's all done
Now it's time to have some fun!*

ANDERS

Oh my gosh, you all nailed that on the first try! Choreo and everything. You're doing amazing!

MORGAN

This feels a bit juvenile.

LESLEY

And terrible.

ANDERS

This part of the show is mostly aimed at preschoolers.

Laura chokes on her tea.

MORGAN

I have a question - is it true that your group lobbies to stop *any kind* of reforms related to guns?

ANDERS

Great question! I think they like to think about it more like this: Guns made America - Revolutionary War - so, limiting guns at all is like limiting how America America can be.

LESLEY

You're like an encyclopedia of pseduo-patriotic circular logic.

DREW

Let's focus on the show you all, we don't have much time and I heard *Lorne Michaels* might come!

Excited murmurs!

ANDERS

Thank you all for being so awesome! Try sight reading the next song! Just have fun with it... and try to ignore the words!

They gather at the piano, Peter strikes a chord and they sing.

ALL

(sung)

RATA-TAT-TAT, WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?

(spoken, re: script)

Oh this *is* meatier!

ALL

UH OH, CHUM-EE-OOS, SCHOOL IS UNDER ATTACK.

The kids continue silently, Anders shakes his head and wanders to Laura.

ANDERS

Hey - I tried seitan. Just cuz the name made me feel like I was getting back at my uber-religious parents.

LAURA

Happy to help, but be careful, fake meat is a gateway drug to pressing your own almond milk.

He chuckles.

ANDERS

You know, (re: students) in the last week, I've answered more very pointed questions than I have answered in the entire rest of my life combined. I love it!

LAURA

Yeah, not much gets past them. Anytime I get a haircut, even a trim, it's recognized like a national holiday. Unless it's a bad one, but I always know.

ANDERS

How are your thousands of fictional cats?

Laura laughs. Cast whispers "chemistry."

LAURA

(dry, semi-sarcastically, re: what she's watching)

They're great. Very supportive of all my life choices.

Focus shifts to students.

STUDENTS

(singing)

*And that's why we think before we run
It's overly simplistic to blame the gun
What if the shooter's already inside?
Don't cough or make a peep we might get died.*

PETER

These lyrics are not... the best.

MORGAN

It's like it was written by someone who doesn't know what words... are.

LAURA

Alright everyone, it's almost 5:00. Thank you all for being such good sports. This will all be over in a couple more weeks.

Anders leaves, followed by the others.

Lights shift to coop plus Gloria.

Gloria appears, on a phone. Anders appears elsewhere, they have a terrible connection.

ANDERS

Hi Gloria - it's Anders.

GLORIA

(the signal keeps cutting out)

Anders! How ___ as the f ___ week? I hope y _____

ANDERS

Gloria! Good to hear from you... I think we have a bad connection...

GLORIA

S _____ I thought! Counting on you! _____ ff ___ scks. Hahahah!

Laura emerges and overhears the rest.

ANDERS

I can't really... (weakly playing along) Hahahaha... Hey, um, there's some stuff in this show that is kinda problematic, can we make some edits? Edits... EDITS.

GLORIA

NOO ___ OOOO ___ OOO way. You ___ ding me?

ANDERS

What? No. Just - there's a lot of random stuff, shouldn't we focus on safety?

GLORIA

Every wor _____ Vry single _ord. Or a ___bsolutely no funding.

ANDERS

Every single word or they don't get the funding? That's not really fair...

GLORIA

Yep ___B_ C ___ P _____ D ___ M___[unintelligible, then laughter]

Anders laughs weakly. Gloria hangs up. Laura watches as Anders hangs up, conflicted, then rounds the corner into the Coop.

Bob Marley fades up.

Lights isolate to just Coop.

Anders faces the rotini. He does it pretty well and is too happy about it. Anders is wearing a new flag lapel pin, and will throughout the rest of the show. Laura enters.

ANDERS

Hey!

LAURA

Hey. Nice pin. You know people already know what country they're in, right?

ANDERS

Haha, yeah. Carrying that gun around freaks way to many people out. Don't tell my boss, but a flag pin seemed like a much tamer symbol of freedom.

LAURA

Who knew?

ANDERS

Ha, right?

Hippy walks by.

BOTH

Hey Willow!

Willow (Hippy) smiles at Laura, looks suspiciously at Anders.

LAURA

When did you become captain coop?

ANDERS

I've been here a week, I'm a member now! At school I'm still sort of considered a hostile invader - which is fair - the script is intermittently horrendous - so this and the gas station are my social life - Willow is my *best friend*.

Willow shakes their head "no".

LAURA

Aren't there local gun... parties or something?

ANDERS

I found a gun range on the edge of town. But honestly, most us *gun nuts* aren't great conversationalists. (pointing to his ears) Hearing loss. Gotta wear ear protection!

LAURA

Sometimes I wish it was socially acceptable to wear ear plugs in my line of work.

ANDERS

Nah, the students are all so great!

LAURA

Sure, but auditions have permanently scarred me. I have these nightmares where I've lost the ability to hear good music. All music just sounds like tone deaf warbling.

ANDERS

[Tone deaf warbling of a well known song]

LAURA

Yes, exactly. You are my nightmare.

They laugh. "Chemistry" whisper again, more intense. A beat.

LAURA

Look, if you're bored and not busy with Willow on Saturday (Willow shakes their head "no" again) a couple of towns over there's some objectively terrible Shakespeare in the Park.

ANDERS

A three hour Dr. Seuss sword fight?

(perhaps too sincerely)

I would love to.

LAURA

Alright, that's a lot. We're seeing Titus Andronicus. Don't get weird on me.

ANDERS

You mean like this...

He does weird physical crap that's weird and charming in a stupid way.

LAURA

What is this a rom com? Cool it. And it's more like this...

She does equally weird, equally hilariously charming physical crap.

They laugh. It's cute. Willow side eyes the whole thing.

LAURA

Alright semi-virgin gun nut, I'll see you Saturday.

ANDERS

And tomorrow, and Friday at rehearsal, hilarious fictional-cats lady.

She shoots him a look like "real subtle, doofus"

LAURA

(like before)

Ah, shut up.

Blackout.

SFX: Bell plus gunshots.

Lights up on school. The students are mid-song, things are starting to look a little more polished.

STUDENTS

Why'd the shooter do it?

Rap music, video games?

Why did the shooter lose it?

Violent movies on the brain

Watching murder! Watching murder! Lotsa murder murder murder!

[Alicia silent solo]

Everyone is especially moved by the silent solo.

STUDENTS

(spoken in time)

The gun was just in the wrong place at the wrong time!

The song continues silently. Anders and Laura stand close, their rapport is easier.

LAURA

Wow. After low budget Titus Andronicus this whole thing just feels like a spicy episode of Downton Abbey.

ANDERS

Yeah, but I'll never look at ketchup the same.

STUDENTS

(putting a final button on a song)

Just remember when you duck and cover that you're hiding not from a gun, but from a rifle of assault, but the violent media's effects on society! It's society's fault.

Pizazzy finish.

DREW

Dang that's wordy.

Laura approaches, Anders stays across the room
scowling at the script.

LAURA

(applauding)

Great job you guys! This is really starting to come together.

STUDENTS

Thank you! We really felt that one. This is exhilarating. Is my Welsh accent reading?

LESLEY

(to the other students)

Is anyone else noticing a common theme here?

DREW

What?

LESLEY

Violent video games.

PETER

Violent music. Violent movies.

LESLEY

What do they all have in common? Violence from what?

ANDERS

(from across the room)

Bad intentions!

LESLEY

How much longer till we get to go back to doing real theater?

LAURA

We open in a couple weeks then this will be done. But I have to say, you guys are really doing everything you can with this truly, remarkably bad script.

ANDERS

I'm sorry!

LAURA

Hey gun nut - you wanna help me fix this staging?

PETER

(to other students)

Gun nut?

DREW

Like they're friends now?

LESLEY

More than friends. She's dropped that pen 15 times today.

Right on cue, as Anders approaches, she drops her pen. Anders (oblivious) bends over and picks it up for her. Laura sneaks a peak. Kids roll their eyes.

LESLEY

Do you need us to buy you a frickin' lanyard?

Laura's oblivious.

ANDERS

I'm the one that ruined the blocking in the first place. Sorry, I thought you wanted me to take that cue on your move and go *upstage*, but instead do you want me to go *down* on you?

Awkward beat, everyone but him catches it.

LAURA

No. Nope. No. That doesn't mean...

ANDERS

Oh no, is that a...? I'm sorry, I really don't hear those! (a beat) Oh no, I've said some horrible things to strangers on escalators.

LAURA

Alright everyone, let's block this next section. This is the part of the show where things get pretty rough, it's going to take some serious focus.

PETER

(to students)

She's telling *us* to focus?

LAURA

Here we go, from after the song "When All Else Fails Blame Mental Health". We'll start on the top of the next page where the glass door shatters. Wow.

Laura and Anders share a worried beat.

Lights adjust to something montage-y.

Hall and Oates' "You Make My Dreams Come True" fades up till it's blasting.

The kids wordlessly act out a variety of shooter-ish scenarios. While the adults worry and watch.

Kids circle around, barrel roll etc.

A kid wields a banana like a gun. That gets cut off by the adults.

The adults chat (silently) and lean into each other for comfort while the students practice over the top deaths. One kid uses a party popper to suggest a bullet impact. The adults rush in and wave it off and say "NO." Laura instructs something tamer. The adults comfort each other while the kids run it.

The final beat is a kid has a bunch of bananas and wields them like an assault rifle. All the other kids get hit, have theatrical deaths and they stay down.

As it happens, the adults watch horrified, holding each other to get through it.

The song fades down and lights shift back to the normal theater look as all the kids are on the ground.

LAURA/ANDERS
(still comforting each other physically)

No! That's enough! We get it!

The kids sit up, unfazed and the lovers are BUSTED, though they're not feeling real romantic.

STUDENTS
(a mix of positive and not)
Are they? They are! Woooooo! Gross! It's cute, etc.

Laura and Anders snap apart and stand a plutonic distance from each other.

LAURA
Alright. That was a lot. Way to lean into the horror...?

PETER
(serious)
What chance do we really have if someone wanders in here with an assault rifle?

Students mutter agreement.

ANDERS
Let's hope that never happens, but hopefully this training would help, even a little.

LESLEY
This training is stupid.

LAURA
Hey. Even if it is, which maybe it's not all the way stupid, but even if it is. Think of it this way. Training can't *hurt*. And (steeling herself, probably faking it a bit) - keep your eye on a *fully funded spring musical*. We might get moving lights!

Students murmur excitement.

LAURA
And costumes!

More excited murmuring.

LAURA

Soon, this will all be over! Good night!

Students exit. Anders approaches Laura.

ANDERS

I'll see what I can do.

There's a lingering moment of romance that's strained by what they've just witnessed. He leaves. Principal Terry enters.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Hey Laura. You seem remarkably un-bleak lately.

LAURA

I'm trying to make the best out of the situation I guess. I think the kids are mostly having fun.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

I hear you've been "showing Anders around town", huh?

LAURA

Yeah... I guess. Someone has to.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Do they?

LAURA

He wears a pin instead of a gun now. I'm calling that progress.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Yeah, and I haven't heard him use "Freedom" as punctuation lately.

LAURA

Good point. Turns out he's also not a total alt-right psychopath. Just a little sheltered and from a gun family, but his heart's definitely in the right place.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

His heart, huh? So, you guys ...

LAURA

What!? No. He's a partial virgin.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

What? Did he take abstinence only sex ed or what?

LAURA

Right? I know. I didn't even want to ask. Apparently he used to be really religious.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Used to be? So, you gonna?

LAURA

Cool it, no way. I'm a teacher at work, I don't have time to teach someone *everything* when I'm off the clock.

(Reacting to an eyebrow raise from
Principal Terry)

Clock. I said cLock!

Principal Terry snickers. Laura joins.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Whatever you say. Please just don't get distracted by *clock* and let our students be coopted into an alt-right hitler youth horror show. We could have sold *way more* tickets to that.

Lights shift to Coop/Gutter plus Gloria.

Anders is on the phone with Gloria near the coop entrance. Reception's still dodgy.

ANDERS

No, Gloria, I'm saying we *need* to make some changes, the show has serious problems.

GLORIA

You ___te amer___

ANDERS

No, it's not because I hate America, we just need to focus on safety and at least get facts right - the declaration of Independence was not originally written on a bump stock.

Gloria laughs. Anders does not.

GLORIA

Any word ___anges and ___OOO [no] FUNDING.

ANDERS

You can't hold their funding hostage, I can't do this!

Gloria hangs up. He shakes it off.
Lights isolate to the Coop and Hall and Oates
plays again.

He brightens, deftly pours a little pasta, the actor
holding the rotini dispenser high fives him after.
Anders spins to high five Willow, then lifts an
essential oil bottle and sniffs it lovingly.
He leaves. Music cuts out.

SFX. Bell/gunshots.

Lights shift to school.

Students are gathered with Laura. Things are
tense.

LAURA

...Yeah, I understand that, but we're less than a week from opening. Maybe we can just
push through this? One time I was in a production of *Vagina Monologues* with four guys.

Anders enters, reads the room.

ANDERS

What happened?

PETER

We don't want to do this.

Students murmur agreement.

LESLEY

We're *not* doing this.

Lesley tosses the script at Anders's feet. He
looks at Laura, she won't meet his gaze.

ANDERS

Why? I'm sorry, I know I'm just not a very good choreographer.

MORGAN

You're not a good person.

ANDERS

Whoa, what, why!?

LESLEY

We looked you up, your organization, you guys got a law passed that prevents the government from even *researching the causes* of gun violence.

LAURA

How is that OK with you?

ANDERS

It's not, *I* didn't do that.

PETER

You act like it's about freedom and rights, but you won't let elected officials even have a reasonable conversation about anything related to guns.

DREW

That is so messed up!

PETER

How could you work for them!?

ANDERS

I don't make the policies. I'm not evil. I'm just trying to doing my job!

PETER

That's a cop out!

ANDERS

Maybe there's *some* good info in (re: script) there? I know there's a lot of ... stuff... I don't even agree with... but there's got to be something useful in it?

MORGAN

It says we should contemplate whether "an inanimate piece of machinery deserves blame." Really, DURING a shooting!?

ANDERS

Not literally! They're just saying it's not as simple as guns. Nothing is simple!

ALL

Are you kidding me!?! This is ridiculous!

DREW

(really furious)

The information's terrible, but the slant rhymes are EVEN WORSE!!

ALICIA

[Furious, but silent sub-whisper mouthing of words]

STUDENTS AND LAURA

Yeah!

DREW

HOW DARE YOU SULLY THE SPLENDOR OF MUSICAL THEATER WITH YOUR LIES!

ANDERS

Opening's in four days! We can figure something out! You have to do it!

STUDENTS

No! You're the worst! This is the worst! Everything's the worst! We hate you!

ANDERS

You have to do it or you don't get the funding! I didn't want to tell you.

STUDENTS

No way! Bribe! Evil!! Go away!

ANDERS

I'm sorry, I really, I can't do anything!

LAURA

You could quit.

STUDENTS

Yeah!

ANDERS

What? That solves nothing, why!?

LAURA

Because you have a conscience.

ANDERS

I can't quit, I just got out of grad school I'm less employable than I was before! Plus, you guys need this funding! I didn't know this show would have so many problems!

PETER

You knew what you were getting into!

ANDERS

I really didn't. Everyone! I'm really sorry! I just wanted to help prevent more tragedies!

LESLEY

With thoughts and prayers!?

ANDERS

No, it's obviously not that simple!

LAURA

But *you* are.

ANDERS

What? You know I'm not.

A beat.

LAURA

(really down)

I can't believe I let it get to this point. This is my fault everyone.

ANDERS

You didn't do anything except try to keep this place going. We can figure this out!

LAURA

There's no "we." Stop talking.

(a beat, sadly, but decisively)

We're cancelling the show. This is over everybody. I'm sorry I let you down. Someone tell the girls basketball team they can have their games in here now.

Student clump on Laura supportively, they exit
in a bunch as they talk.

STUDENTS

No! You didn't let us down. He's just a dick. We still love you.

MORGAN

Did you get a haircut?

Anders is all alone and devastated.

"Hitman" by Jeremy Messersmith plays.

Lights dim to be real sad.

Anders walks away. Starts snacking on raw rotini with loud crunches. He mopily walks a little ways and then drops his gun into a “lake”. An actor says “Splash.” Anders accidentally drops the rotini in too and is probably more upset about that.

He pulls out his phone. We don’t see Gloria this time, but reception is still terrible.

ANDERS

Gloria, I’m done. I quit. Quit. QUIT! Yeah, I’ll see you Saturday, but I quit.

Blackout.

Music stops.

Lights up on school (maybe just left side?)

A school bell rings - it’s just a normal bell again. Anders notes that change with a smile.

Anders waits with a somber tone, but purpose. He looks around. No one’s there, but they should be. Laura enters.

ANDERS

Hey!

LAURA

Really. Why are you here?

ANDERS

I had an idea.

LAURA

Please leave.

ANDERS

Where are the kids?

LAURA

Trying out for the speech team. It’s a small school, they’ll make it. Plus, they’re good.

ANDERS

They are. Hey, Laura, I know I don't deserve this, but can you get them together somehow? I have an idea about how to make Saturday great again!

LAURA

If that's the phrasing you're choosing, I doubt it.

ANDERS

Dangit, yeah, sorry. Really though - can I talk to them for just like one minute? Please?

LAURA

We're meeting at 4:00 to mourn by watching *Waiting For Guffman* in the Band Uniform Closet. There's a basketball game today.

ANDERS

Thank you! I'll be there.

The kids start silently assembling in the VERY CRAMPED band uniform closet, in a different part of the stage.

ANDERS

I'm not horrible.

LAURA

No one who is horrible thinks they're horrible.

ANDERS

I had blinders on that I didn't even know about. I'm sorry, I was caught up in something I didn't really stop to think through.

LAURA

I know the feeling.

ANDERS

I'm sorry. I'm going to make this right.

She starts to leave.

LAURA

Honestly, I don't see how that's possible, but you can have sixty seconds.

Lights shift (if they can) to the very cramped band uniform closet. Students are less energetic than usual.

DREW

I made the Speech team.

LESLEY

Me too.

MORGAN

I'm going to do "Informative Speaking."

PETER

So just... talking?

Laura enters. They mob her with muted theater kid enthusiasm and hugs, awkwardly in the tiny space.

Anders approaches tentatively. Lesley sees him.

LESLEY

You're still here?

LAURA

He promised he'd be quick and not horrible.

PETER

Wow, lofty goals.

Anders steps inside the "closet". It's now at capacity, everyone's squished. He and Laura are pressed very close together, no one acknowledges the cramped quarters.

ANDERS

Thank you. I'm really sorry for everything, I can go into more detail later, but for now, people are still coming Saturday night, maybe you can still keep your funding.

LESLEY

We are not doing your show!

ANDERS

No, no, *make your own* show. All those people are coming. You have a platform, use it to say whatever you want.

LAURA

And what makes you think your employer will still give us funding?

ANDERS

Well, I quit, but I think maybe...

MORGAN

You quit?

LAURA

Why didn't you lead with that!?

ANDERS

I didn't want to seem braggy like "Look at me, I've got a conscience, blah blah blah"

Everyone laughs a little. Air's back in the room.
Except literally. They're like sardines and
laughing makes the clump tighter and wigglier.
They still don't acknowledge it though.

ANDERS

You all know way better than me and WAY better than the *National Machine Gun Association* what people need to hear. And I have an idea to make sure they still have to make their donation.

Students murmur agreement/consideration.

LAURA

We have two days, do you think we can come up with something that will satisfy all sides and perfectly address the gun debate in America?

MORGAN

Seriously?

LAURA

No, absolutely not, that's ridiculous. But do you want to make *something* for Saturday?

STUDENTS

Ok. Let's do it! Sure! I have an idea. Etc. My Welsh accent!

They burst out and run into "the theater" Hall
and Oates plays again.

Blackout. Immediately the song fades and the
lights come back up to school lights.

Everyone's cheering and happy. Laura and Anders stand close again, rekindled.

ANDERS

I literally can't believe we did all that in two days!!

LAURA

I am so proud of you all! We're as ready as we're going to be. It's 7:30. Go home, hydrate! Rest! Tomorrow is going to be amazing!!

Students scatter excitedly.

ANDERS

I got you something, something small, to say sorry for everything.

He drops a tiny dark bottle, it clatters around. They both go for it, there's clunky physical stuff akin to their first meeting, but now they're totally into it. Finally, with eye contact that's too meaningful...

ANDERS

It's eucalyptus oil. Do you like eucalyptus oil?

LAURA

I love eu-calyptus oil.

ANDERS

I love eu-calyptus oil too.

Eye contact lingers, Laura leans in for a kiss, Anders doesn't register it...

ANDERS

This floor is pretty uncomfortable.

(getting up, helping her)

Still on for tonight?

LAURA

Sure, meet you there.

They smile and leave separately.

Lights shift to gun range.

Anders reenters.

RANGE GUY

You Anderson Anderson?

ANDERS

Anders Anderson.

RANGE GUY

(yelling despite close proximity)

What?!

ANDERS

Sure, yes!

RANGE GUY

Got it. Lane three's all yours till 10:00.

ANDERS

Thanks!

Laura arrives.

ANDERS

You sure you're still up for this?

LAURA

The kids are doing something they believe in now. And you're no longer employed by a legit threat to humanity. Win win.

ANDERS

Yessss. (fist pump) Right, but we're *here*. Even *I* feel weird about it.

Range guy delivers safety glasses and big ugly ear protection, they start putting them on.

LAURA

Right. They make more sense here - like a theme park.

(her ear muffs are on, she talks way louder)

It's a *gun* range.

ANDERS

Alright, but we could be slurping probiotic chia juice at a drum circle and...

(his ear muffs are on, he's way louder)

you'd still easily be in my top two favorite people in Plaineville.

LAURA

(yelling, with a joking fist shake)

Willow!

Range guy appears again with a big Nerf gun - bigger than we've seen so far. It's handled as though it's real.

RANGE GUY

(handing gun carefully to Anders, pointing down range.)

Here you go. Keep 'er pointed that way.

BOTH

Thanks.

ANDERS

Wow, I've never held one this big before.

LAURA

(innuendously, goofy)

That makes two of us...

Anders sets the gun down. They pull away from it.

ANDERS

What?

LAURA

(he doesn't get it)

Nothing. That's not yours?

ANDERS

Nah, mine's at the bottom of Lake Plaine. Rust will do the rest.

LAURA

Really? That seems environmentally irresponsible, but responsible in every other way.

Jeremy Messersmith's "It's Only Dancing"
starts quietly.

LAURA

So, what's it going to be like?

ANDERS

Well, you hold it like this.

He gently takes her arm, holds it like a gun, it's
silly and also romantic.

LAURA

Like this?

She reciprocates.

Music gets a bit louder. They try some
variations on holding each other's arms maybe
even a leg, sort of wielding them comically like
firearms. This reaches some kind of apex, then...
(still yelling with ear muffs on throughout)

LAURA

Alright - you wanna do the real thing?

ANDERS

(Looking back at the gun)

Honestly no. Not today at least.

LAURA

Good answer. But that's not what I meant by "do the real thing".

ANDERS

What?

LAURA

Of course you don't understand. I mean, *let's get out of here!*

ANDERS

And go where? The coop's closed!

LAURA

No, let's *get out of here!*

She winks, hard.

ANDERS

Why do you keep saying the same thing over and over and blinking!?

LAURA

Dammit, just, come on!

They haul ass away. Music soars.

Lights shift to her front steps.

ANDERS

(still shouting, referencing their ear protection and glasses)

Did we steal these? I think we can take off our protection now!

LAURA

Nope.

She grabs his shoulders and pulls him in for a kiss.

He FINALLY gets it.

ANDERS

OHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!! *That's* what's happening. Like *protection!* Hey, I got one! So, we're gonna..!?

LAURA

(still yelling, they're wearing ear protection still)

Assuming you want to!

ANDERS

Lemme stretch real quick.

LAURA

What!?

Blackout. Music surges louder if it can.

A beat.

In darkness...

I LOVE INNUENDOS!!!!

ANDERS

Oh, shut up!

LAURA

A beat.
School bell rings.

In darkness, the end of the ad that started the
show fades up.

CHORUS

THE NATIONAL!
MACHINE GUN!
ASSOOOOOCIATION!

(trickling in)

PISTOLA GRANDE!

Lights fade up to a fancier version of the theater.

Anders as Laura rush in, others can't hear this
conversation. He walks a bit like a newly born
foal and has a serene grin.

LAURA

Quit! You've been looking at me like you're melting all day!

ANDERS

Since last night I've felt like a lava cake inside. So many things make sense - is what we
just did for lunch "afternoon delight."

She shushes him. They join the group and stand
deliberately far apart. He's still a bit gooey.

Principal Terry, addresses the "crowd" on a mic.
Students are gathered as well. No one will
notice this, but Anders is not wearing his flag
pin.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

That was a ... special message from tonight's sponsors. Students. Parents. Faculty. Gun
lobbyists? Thank you for being here. As you know, everything, everywhere is awful, and
tonight's part of that.

The following presentation is brought to you by our own theater department, Ms. Laura Martin and the (gulp) National Machine Gun Association, who insisted we say the pledge of allegiance. Please rise and face the...

(looking around)

Ummm, we used to have a flag hanging...?

Laura whispers in Principal Terry's ear.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Apparently due to budget cuts we are now sharing the flag with the junior high, so we'll have to skip it...

ONE OF THE NMGA PEOPLE

(from the audience)

NOPE! EVERY WORD!

PRINCIPAL TERRY

...just kidding. Does anyone have a flag, please?

There's a stir, pockets are checked etc.

ANDERS

Oh, I have one! My pin!

He feels his lapel. His flag pin isn't there.

ANDERS

Uh, *had* one. Where is it? I thought I...

LAURA

(embarrassed)

Here. It's here.

She pulls the flag pin out of her shirt/bra. Both are super embarrassed.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

Great start. *I pledge...*

Everyone says the pledge staring at the tiny flag pin Laura awkwardly holds in front of her face. Anders goes over to her and she hands it to him, he continues holding it up, returning to his spot, sober now.

Everyone makes a big show of tracking it with their eyes/heads as they say the pledge.

PRINCIPAL TERRY

And now, I'm proud... ahem, I'm presenting without comment... "Shoot For The Stars And Stripes." Please applaud, you may not want to ever again.

Applause. Terry leaves. Students approach mic.

LESLEY

Hello. We were told we needed to say every word of the official script to get our funding.

DREW

And we really want our funding.

MORGAN

Please be sure to come back in the Spring for our production of *Mortgage: A new musical* with moving lights!!

Laura does a little fist pump.

LESLEY

Anyway, saying every word of the approved script will be Alicia Michelson.

They point and Alicia (vocal rest) approaches a separate mic upstage (with added light?)

She clears her throat then begins silently and incredibly rapidly reading, holding the OFFICIAL approved script we saw earlier.

ONE OF THE NMGA PEOPLE

(from audience)

DAMMIT!! You win!

Lights fade on Alicia as she continues.
Students remain chill and matter of fact, sharing the mic Terry was at.

LESLEY

While she does that. We have some quick things to say and they're going to be *hilarious*.

MORGAN

An active shooter drill can be summarized very quickly. Run if you can. Hide if you can't run.

LESLEY

But we reject the premise that we should spend a great deal of time preparing for something when we could instead be working to prevent it.

DREW

The gun lobby prevents research into even figuring out *why* we're the only country in the world where this happens regularly.

LESLEY

(leaning into the mic)

Hilarious.

DREW

The Federal Commission on School Safety - set up after 17 people were shot to death, at a school - won't look into the role *guns* play in *school violence*.

MORGAN

Something is wrong when reality satirizes itself.

LESLEY

It's almost like - guns don't kill people, an overpowered, relentless, gun lobby kills people.

MORGAN

But we don't have any research to know if that's true.

DREW

And now, please enjoy this brief, completely original song we wrote.

A piano sting.

STUDENTS

(sung)

(Les Mes) Do you hear the people sing...

(Newsies) Now's the time to seize the day!

(Chicago) The gun. The gun. The gun. Let's all research the gun. the gun.

(Phantom) That's all I ask of you

(Hamilton) Not throwing away my SHOT!

(Alicia leans into the mic on the last line,
ACTUALLY SINGING for the first
time)

(Company) (at) Being Alive!

The students end in a pizazzy

ALICIA

I can sing again!

EVERYONE

Yay! Everything worked out! I love all of you, etc.

Laura and Anders hug triumphantly, and also
like lovers. A jubilant group hug scrum forms
around them, hubbub surges, lights start to fade
and the last thing clearly heard is...

ALICIA

I have a voice!

Blackout.

END OF SHOW.