

## **If Only**

**By: Emma W.**

### **Mark**

My life is just a series of failures after failures after failures. My dad left when I was only a year old. My mom became an alcoholic. My brother could care less about me. Heck, I'm failing every single one of my classes. Not that I care, really.

I mean, I used to care. I used to be the nice guy who would let everyone copy off my homework. The guy who would help old people cross the street. The guy who would sit with the new kid at school. The guy who spent so much time at the homeless shelter people thought I was homeless too. I kind of was, in a way.

But was there any use being kind? Will kindness mend relationships or make my father come back or make my mom stop drinking? Will compassion make the jerks stop stealing my lunch or pushing me down the stairs or make my brother care about me or stand up for me? No. So what's the point?

What's the point of being nice when people are just going to be jerks to you?

What's the point of convincing myself that I'm going to do good in the world or be successful, when I know that I'm just an insignificant coward?

I'm tired of feeling powerless and defeated and afraid. I'm tired of living in a world of darkness, loss, terror, and pain. I'm tired of being treated as if I didn't exist and. What if earth was really hell? It sure feels like it.

I keep trying to convince myself that this world is worth living in, that one day, everything will be normal. I've been waiting for that day since I was born. I've waited for eighteen years. I don't want to keep waiting for the endless cycle to repeat, or for the world to keep turning its back on me. The world is just cruel and harsh.

I have no reason to stay in this world, but I have a thousand reasons to leave. I have no reason to keep being nice to people, but I have a thousand reasons to hurt them. Just as they have hurt me.

### **Mark**

I fired the first shot at 7:15 AM sharp.

I had walked into the school with rifles slung over my shoulder and two handguns in my pocket and a ski mask over my head.

No one noticed me.

The hallway was clear except for a few janitors. I checked the time: 7:15:00

I started shooting at the janitors. I didn't put a silencer on any of my guns because I wanted people to hear. I wanted people to be terrified. I wanted people to be paralyzed with terror. I wanted people to feel trapped and lost and hopeless.

I turned the corner and started for the classrooms.

A few kids had already begun to figure out what was happening.

They watched me with their mouths hanging open as they switched off the lights and locked the doors. I shot off the door handle and pushed open the door. It was complete chaos.

Everyone started screaming and running. I fired another round of bullets. Red sprayed everywhere. People started clambering into cabinets and begging and sobbing. If they had acted like that before I shot them, maybe I wouldn't hate them so much.

I knew better than to pity them.

### **Alec**

Everyone was folded and cramped under desks and inside cabinets. The lights were off; the doors locked. It was supposed to be a normal day at school. Everything should have been

fine; but it wasn't fine. Everytime the silence was interrupted by gunshots and shrieks, the air filled with terror, eyes welled with tears. I wished everything would stop, that everything would end soon. But this was only the beginning.

I sat in a cabinet with my knees curled up to my chest and buckets of colored pencils and paint thrust against my head. I closed my eyes and leaned my head against the wall.

The shooting had suddenly stopped. There were no more hurried footsteps in the hallways, no more gunshots, no more screams for help.

I heard sirens blaring. A loud voice came over the speaker. "We are all clear, the threat has been removed and the ambulances are here. Teachers may unlock their doors; please keep all students inside classrooms until further notice." I had survived a school shooting.

I stood up and made my way to the door along with the others. There was a wave of murmurs and people craned their necks to get a closer look at me.

"Yeah, that's him"

"His brother's the shooter"

My blood turned to ice. This wasn't possible. I knew Mark had been bullied and that he'd make finger guns at people, but he would never actually shoot anyone. At least that's what I thought.

Later that day, I found out that Mark had killed himself.

It's all my fault. I let other people bully and mock him. I didn't want to look like a wimp or a loser. I didn't want to end up like him. I had always told him I hated him and acted like I didn't care, but really, I did care. I didn't really hate him either.

If only I had told him. Maybe he wouldn't have left.