

CRIES FROM THE CLASSROOM

A One-act Play

**by
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AUTHOR'S NOTE: Cries From the Classroom can be staged as simple or as complex as the director desires. All of the characters can be played by either male or female actors. Using a male character to play the part of THE NEW VOICE will require some word changes within the lines but this is perfectly permissible. The play's remedial suggestions for the prevention of violence in schools are by no means comprehensive. It is essential that a respect for human life and the importance of positive role models is highlighted as the theme of this play.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

The Voices: student victims of school violence.

The new Voice

Voice #1

Voice #2

Voice #3

Voice #4

Voice #5

The Last Voice

SCENE: A bare stage, a classroom, a gym floor, or anywhere in Anyschool, USA.

TIME: The present.

SETTING: We are in the Hall of Voices. The hall consists of a bare stage with a desk and chair up center stage. The desk is facing down stage. There are a number of stools or boxes placed in a semi-circle stage left and stage right of the desk. The seating arrangement takes on the appearance of a discussion group.

AT RISE: The stage is dimly lighted except for the area surrounding the desk. The VOICE KEEPER sits at the desk leafing through the pages of a thick ledger. The VOICE KEEPER is a quiet man or woman, boy or girl, of any age. There are two empty stools, the rest of the stools have students sitting on them. These students are THE VOICES. The area of THE VOICES is dimly lit and THE VOICES sit quietly facing out. THE VOICES are students of various ages and sex. A faint voice is heard calling tentatively from off stage.

THE NEW VOICE: (softly) Hello? Hello...is anyone here?

VOICE KEEPER: (rising) Come in, we've been waiting for you.

The New Voice crosses into the area of light by the desk and addresses the Voice Keeper.

NEW V.: Where am I?

KEEPER: (Quietly) You are in the Hall of Voices. You are our latest member.

NEW V.: (Frightened) I don't understand. I...

KEEPER: You will. Allow me to explain.

NEW V.: Who are you?

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KEEPER: I am the keeper of the voices...the Voice Keeper, if you will.

NEW V.: The Voice Keeper?

KEEPER: Yes, I keep records of all the voices that are sent here. Voices like yourself.

NEW V.: Me?

KEEPER: Yes, you are the newest voice.

NEW V.: What voice? What are you talking about!?

KEEPER: It's what is left behind, after you've gone. All that remains is your voice crying out for change. You are the latest voice. You have been sent, like thousands before you, to the Hall of Voices. The Hall of Voices is a special place where all the victims of violence in schools can be heard. Their voices are sent here.

NEW V.: Why?

KEEPER: So their cries for reform and increased respect for human life will not be lost. Here they share their experiences, with hopes that those hearing their pleas, will strive to work harder at peaceful coexistence with their fellow students. That caring and patience will replace violence. That someday, even the weakest student, will be able to walk down the hallways of any school... anywhere...without fear.

NEW V.: But, what good are the voices if there is no one to listen to them?

KEEPER: But, there is.

NEW V.: Who?

THE Voice Keeper takes the hand of the New Voice and they walk down stage as the lights come up.

KEEPER: Them.

NEW V.: I don't see anyone.

KEEPER: Nor do I. But, they are there.

NEW V.: Who's there?

KEEPER: Everyone and anyone. Anyone who ever heard accounts of school violence on the news, read about it in a newspaper or experienced it first-hand...and anyone who is about to hear your voice and the voice of the others. They're all there...waiting.

NEW V.: But, will they listen?

KEEPER: Who knows? Maybe....We can only hope. If the Voices can get one person to rethink an act of violence or perform an act of kindness, then it's a start. We should join the others and get started, there is a lot to be said.

NEW V.: What others?

KEEPER: The other voices. (Indicating those on the stools) They've been waiting for your arrival.

The remaining stage lights come up on the students seated on the stools. The students on the stools stop looking straight ahead and begin looking around once the lights come up. The Voice Keeper takes The New Voice to an empty stool stage right.

KEEPER: This is your seat.

NEW V.: Are these all of the voices of school violence?

KEEPER: Heavens no! This is only the latest session. There have been hundreds of sessions and thousands of victims. The hall isn't nearly large enough to hold all of the voices.

The Voice Keeper crosses up stage to his desk. Voice #1 crosses stage right to The New Voice.

V. #1: So, what happened to you? How come you're here.

NEW V.: I fell down a flight of stairs at school and hit my head.

V. #2: You fell? That's rich.

NEW V.: All right, I was pushed.

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---