

Interview with A Shooter

By Marilyn Reeves

Even though the young convict was handcuffed to an iron ring mounted on the table, I experienced a moment of fear walking into the interview room as he stared at me with those cold, penetrating eyes.

“Shane? Shane Cartwright? I’m Amanda Sorensen. From the *Tribune*? I was told you agreed to give me a final interview before your sentence is carried out next Friday.”

Shane shrugged and looked away. Finally, he said, “So, what do you want to know?”

“I guess I’d like to hear your side of it. What happened to you that brought you to that fateful day? Why did you decide to take that rifle and shoot up those kids at school?”

“Why? Well, I thought it would be a good way to get people to notice me. Get the last laugh before checking out. ‘Suicide by cop’ they call it.”

“Yes, I know. But instead, you survived and had to go to trial, didn’t you? Tried as an adult, even though you were only fourteen at the time. Just so you know, I don’t think any kid should be tried as an adult, no matter how horrendous the crime he’s committed. I remember Dr. Phil once said that part of the brain that governs judgment isn’t even fully developed until somewhere around age 25. But they not only tried you as an adult, they gave you the death penalty!

“Anyway, what can you tell me about your childhood, so I can understand? So the world can understand.”

“Well, first my dad hit me over the head with a bottle of Jack Daniel’s – see that lump on my head? Gave me a concussion and damaged my brain. Then he smashed it over my mom’s head. Blood and pieces of glass flying everywhere! I watched my mom bleed to death, right there on the kitchen floor.

They carted my dad off to prison and sent me to live with my grandma. Which would have been fine, except that she was just as mean as he was – she’s the one who raised him, and look how *he* turned out! Her idea of punishment was to lock you down in the cellar – sometimes for days without food or water. My uncle found me down there one day and took me to the hospital. I was half starved and darn near died of dehydration. I was nine at the time. Then the child protection people placed me in foster care. But when the wife would leave for her night shift at the hospital, the husband would sneak into my bedroom and start ... messing around. You know what I mean?”

I nodded.

“Then they sent me to live with another couple. Nice enough people, they just basically ignored me, told me to stay in my room so I’d be out of the way. The man kept a case filled with hunting rifles hidden out in the garage, but one day I found them.”

“So, why did you take out your anger on the kids at school?”

“Oh, them. Well, they all treated me like dirt under their nails. Made fun of me 'cause my dad was in prison. Looked down on me because I failed fourth grade and had to be held back a year. So yeah, I hated every damn one of them and decided to take a few of 'em out with me.

“And now the State’s finally gonna put an end to me and my wicked ways. Lethal injection. The only problem I have with that is ... I hate needles.”