

The Taking of Room 114

(A Hostage Drama in Poems)

By Mel Glenn

CHERISE GRAHAM (Channel 5, Local News Anchor):

(Pg 25) We interrupt our regular broadcast to bring you this late-breaking story. Police have been called to Tower High School to investigate a possible hostage situation. According to our sources, a senior history class has been taken over by a person or persons unknown. There are no reports of any injuries. There are no reports of any bombs. Police and emergency personnel are in the process of evacuating the building. As soon as we can, we will be bringing you a live update

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INTRODUCTION

Students in Mr. Wiedermeyer's senior history class are in for a shock when they attend one of their last classes of the year. They are held hostage by their teacher as police, and school administrators try to understand the puzzling notes Mr. Wiedermeyer slips under the door.

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ROGER DUNLOP (Assistant Principal): (Pg 22) *(with*

continued knocking on the door) Mr. Wiedermeyer, would you mind opening it up, please? Are you OK? Is the class OK? *(no answer)* Is any unauthorized person with you? Please open the door. Mr. Wiedermeyer.

SHERWOOD COWLEY (Principal): (Pg 23) *(on school*

intercom) Mr. Wiedermeyer. I don't know how long we can let this situation continue. Mr. Wiedermeyer, can you hear me? Mr. Dunlop, you called the police, didn't you?

GLORIA MESSINGER (Teacher's Aide): (Pg 20) I tried to collect his attendance. Mr. Wiedermeyer never keeps his door locked. Then I looked down and found this note. I think he's gone off the deep end.

MR. WIEDERMEYER (Note #1): (Pg 21)

It starts slowly:

A cough here, a cackle there,

A dropped book, a pushed chair.

Of themselves, separate moments in an ordered universe.

But in progression, measured beats to a crescendo of chaos.

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He hit me,

He took my pen,

She pushed me . .

Or, I have to go to the bathroom,

I need to see the nurse,

I gotta find my counselor,

I must talk to the coach.

Or, Can I make up the homework?

Can I make up the test?

Can I make up the term?

Yes, my children,

You all did it,

Including you, **Michael**.

You all did it.

Don't worry, it's so quiet now, you can hear an eraser

drop.

They're giving me their undivided attention.

I couldn't possibly let them go.

ROGER DUNLOP (Assistant Principal): (Pg 22) Mr.

Wiedermeyer. Who's Michael?

SHERWOOD COWLEY (Principal): (Pg 26) Thank you for

coming so quickly, gentlemen.

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Detectives Balinger and Picardi, is it?

Of course I know him.

Yes, he is hardly ever absent,

Though last year about this time,

He was out for a week, maybe two,

For some personal business, I think.

Yes, more than 20 years, a lifetime of teaching.

Yes, Ms. Messinger, what is it?

Another note?

MR. WIEDERMEYER (Note #2): (Pg 27)

You have been unruly,

And the usual punishments

That are meted out for violation

No longer work.

STUDENT: (Pg 71) Hey, man, you got my freakin' bus

pass?

What you mean, you don't have it?

I'm supposed to get it, understand?

I'm not interested in no reasons.

I told you, I want that freakin' pass.

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MR. WIEDERMEYER (Note #2): (Pg 27)

Zeroes,
Phone calls home,
Detention, suspensions,
Can't shake you out of your
Comas of indifference.
What's on your minds?

STUDENT: (Pg 71) So go call my mother,

See if I care.
The only think she's gonna tell you is
How come he didn't get his freakin' bus pass?
So where is it?

MR. WIEDERMEYER (Note #2): (Pg 27)

I think I'll keep you a while longer.
You, too, *Michael*.
Just to find out.

HARRY BALINGER (Police Captain) (Pg 29)

You read the headlines
That are forgotten the next day:
"Student Goes Berserk in Dorm"
"Teen Kills Teen for Bicycle"
"Mother's Boyfriend Drowns Tot"

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Private tortures

Ending in public spectacle.
Serpentine demons
Strangling common sense.

Mr. Wiedermeyer,

What set you off?
What memories were triggered,
What words were said
That pushed you over the edge?

KATHLEEN GENNARO (Student): (Pg 76)

You can't tell me what to do.
You can't push me around.
I'm gonna sit where I want.

JUSTIN SINGLEBERRY (Student): (Pg 139)

(raising his hand) Mr. Wiedermeyer,
Let us out of here, please.
I have an appointment.

MR. WIEDERMEYER (Note #1): (Pg 21)

I have to go to the bathroom,
I need to see the nurse,
(Note #7) (Pg 145) I speak.
Who listens?

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I teach.

Who cares.

Term after term after term.

There is little I can do to turn the tide.

There is little I have done to make a difference.

VINNIE DELVECCHIO (Parent): (Pg 160) What does he

have to complain about?

Do I get the summers off?

Do I get out at three?

As I cash my unemployment check . . .

Tell me, what does he have to complain about?

What other job is so respected?

FRANK PICARDI (Emergency Unit): (Pg 161) He mentioned

a Michael – who's that?

HARRY BALINGER (Police Captain): Someone in his class?

I'm not sure (*sound of a gunshot*)

EDDIE KELLERMAN (Student): (Pg 155)

My God, he's gonna kill us.

He's gonna kill us all.

FRANK PICARDI (Emergency Unit): (Pg 161) What was

that? Sounded like a gunshot?

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HARRY BALINGER (Police Captain): Hold your fire, I

repeat, hold your fire. If we rush in now, he might kill everyone.

MR. WIEDERMEYER (Note #8): (Pg 162)

An accident, repeat, an accident.

I'm not too familiar with guns,

Not like *Michael* –

I was just practicing loading and unloading

When it went off.

All the students are fine.

No one got hurt, but

I do believe some of the student are thirsty.

Do you think you could send a student with some water?

I was just loading and unloading the gun.

I was deciding whether the bullet was for me

Or someone else.

I really need a few more minutes to make up my mind . . .

HARRY BALINGER (Police Captain): (Pg 163)

That's it, that's our in,

I want a Nike-wearing,

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Walkman-hearing,

Slang-talking,

Pistol-packin',

Baby-faced cop.

Who can recognize both

The goodness of a man's heart and

The darkness of his soul,

And quickly decide

Whether to talk to the guy

Or take him out

We got anybody like that?

JAMES SANCHEZ (Police Officer): (Pg 167)

(speaks to audience as he re-enacts)

He was at his desk when I entered,

Lecturing frozen-in-headlights students

On some provisions of the Constitution.

MR. WIEDERMEYER: *(with gun pointed at a student)*

Michael, can you answer that?

JAMES SANCHEZ (Police Officer): No Michael, they all

knew –

I saw the gun in his hand,

Pointed first at the class, then at his head.

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MR. WIEDERMEYER: *(with gun pointed at the officer)*

What is your name?

JAMES SANCHEZ (Police Officer): A crazy thought – *(to*

Mr. Wiedermeyer) Michael. . .

MR. WIEDERMEYER: *(motioning with the gun)* Michael?

How wonderful you look.

Come here, my boy.

JAMES SANCHEZ (Police Officer): He pointed his gun at

me. *(to Mr. Wiedermeyer, gently)*

Got a present for you, Pop. Here in my bag . . .

I quickly pulled out my service revolver

And *(gunshot)* . . . shot him in the shoulder.

PATTI BENNETT (Student): (Pg 169) He was gonna kill us.

I swear he was gonna kill us.

ANDREW CURRAN (Student): (Pg 171)

Why didn't I do anything?

I was so close to the man.

I could've knocked the gun away.

I did nothing --

Yeah, I know nobody did anything.

That doesn't help me.

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COSMO GENNARO (Parent): (Pg 178)

I'm glad the bastard's been shot.
He got what he deserved.
Nobody cares what happens in there,
As long as the kids are off the streets.
My own daughter who got locked up with that maniac
Ain't learnin' nothin' she can use.
How did they let that man
Become a teacher in the first place?
Don't they screen out wackos?
I'm glad the bastard's been shot.
He got what he deserved.

FRANK PICARDI (Emergency Unit): (Pg 179)

I want to show you what we just found
In Wiedermeyer's locker:
A poem and a newspaper clipping
Dated about a year ago.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPING: (Pg 181) Police divers recovered
the body of a local man, Michel Wiedermeyer, 27, who
earlier had braved the rough water, ignoring repeated
attempts by people onshore to call him back.

EYEWITNESS: He must have been trying to kill himself.

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NEWSPAPER CLIPPING: An autopsy will be performed.

Police officials refuse to speculate on whether this was
a suicide or a tragic accident. Mr. Wiedermeyer's
parents are enroute to claim their son's body.

BYSTANDER: No parent should outlive his child. You
never recover from that.

MR. WEIDERMEYER: (Pg 180) (Poem entitled *For Michael*)

Somewhere before the end,
Somewhere between childhood and adulthood,
I lost you.
Somewhere between your first word and last work,
I did not hear you.
For other children I taught my subject.
Some listened,
Most didn't.
What did I teach them, give them?
What did I teach you, give you?
Oh, Michael,
I should have taught you how to save yourself.
I gave you everything I had.
It wasn't nearly enough.

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HARRY BALINGER (Police Captain): (Pg 182)

You read the headlines in the newspaper,
The headlines that will be forgotten by tomorrow:
“Teacher Goes Beserk; Holds Class Hostage; Shot
Down by Police; Children Safe, but Shaken.”

Private tortures

Ending in public spectacle

Serpentine demons

Strangling common sense.

Mr. Wiedermeyer,

I realize the pain you went through,

To a degree.

Yet, if I were one of the students,

EDDIE KELLERMAN (Student): (Pg 155)

My God, he’s gonna kill us.

He’s gonna kill us all.

HARRY BALINGER (Police Captain): (Pg 182)

I’d never forgive.

If I were the judge, I’d never let you out.

But, if I were your friend,

I’d say to you in your cell,

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Think of the good days

When you were younger and Michael was alive

And the world was bright with promise.

Go in soft peace, Mr. Wiedermeyer,

Go in soft peace . . .

SOURCE INFORMATION

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AWARD HISTORY

2002 National Qualifier

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