

From Cincinnati to Scranton

a one act play

by

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CAST:

Pete Townshend – Guitarist and songwriter of the Who
Bill Curbishley – Who manager

Cincinnati, Ohio

Mother – 40s

Son – 18

Joyce Allen – family friend. 40s

Scranton, Pennsylvania

Mary Malone – 16

Joey Malone – 18

Mrs. Malone – their mother. 40s

TIME:

December, 1979

VOICE IN THE DARK:

Jacqueline L. Eckerle, 15

Karen L. Morrison, 15

Bryan J. Wagner, 17

Peter Douglas Bowes, 18

David J. Heck, 19

Stephen McGhee Preston, 19

Phillip K. Snyder, 20

Connie Sue Burns, 21 (mother of two)

Walter H. Adams, Jr., 22

James Theodore Warmoth, 21

Teva Rae Ladd, 27 (mother of two)

*On December 3rd 1979 18,500 people went to see The Who at the Riverfront Coliseum.
Eleven of them never came home.*

It remains the worst concert tragedy in US history.

SCENE I (Cincinnati, Ohio) – A mother looks anxiously out her window. She has the news on the radio, which is reporting the tragedy of that evening. After a moment, headlights from outside come through the window. She runs for the door. Her teenage child enters. He is crying...hysterical. His clothes are torn. He wears no shoes. He collapses into the arms of his Mother.

BOY: Karen didn't make it out...

MOTHER: What?! What?!

BOY: She's gone. I had a hold of her. And then she was gone! I saw her....

MOTHER: Ok ok. I'm here. I'm here. Let me look at you. Are you ok?

BOY: She's gone! I had her....and I must have let go.

MOTHER: It's ok. Your're home now. It's Ok
(she holds him tight)

Voice: The wind whipping off the river that night was brutal. Thousands of fans huddled outside, waiting for the doors to open. Finally, two doors were opened. Two. Ten thousand people pushed forward.....trying to enter through a space the length of an electric guitar.

SCENE II (Scranton, Pennsylvania) – JOEY MALONE, age 18, is sprawled across his bed. Who posters line his walls. He's listening to the song 5:15 from Quadrophenia on his headphones....and singing out loud...

“Out on my brain on a 5:15!!!! Out of my brain....on....the train!”

(His sister MARY enters. She is 16.)

MARY: Did you hear?
(he can't hear her with the headphones)

Hey! Did you hear?
(she knocks on the side of his head)

Did you hear?

JOEY: Hear what?

MARY: What happened in Cincinnati at the Who concert last night.

JOEY: No.

MARY: 11 kids died.

JOEY: What?

MARY: They were crushed

JOEY: What do you mean.....crushed against the stage?

MARY: No. Crushed outside. Trying to get in.

JOEY: What do you mean?

MARY: I mean they're dead. You know. Dead. What part don't you understand?

JOEY: Eleven kids?

MARY: Yea. Can you believe it?

JOEY: No. You're full of shit.

MARY: Yea? If you ever took those headphones off maybe you'd hear about it.

JOEY: Are you sure?

MARY: It's all over the news. What are ya....stupid?

JOEY: Don't call me stupid.

MARY: What's your problem?!

JOEY: Shit. Does Mom know?

MARY: Not yet I don't think.

JOEY: You know what I had to go through to get these Philly tickets?

MARY: I know.

JOEY: They didn't cancel did they?

MARY: What? Philly?

JOEY: Yea.

MARY: No. They're playing Buffalo tonight.
JOEY: (*surprised*) It happened last night and they're playing Buffalo tonight?
MARY: That's what they're saying.
JOEY: Jesus Christ. How many?
MARY: How many what?
JOEY: How many died?
MARY: Oh. Eleven. Mom is never gonna let us go now.
JOEY: I'm going.
MARY: What if she says no?
JOEY: Maybe she won't find out.
MARY: It's all over the news. She's gonna find out.
JOEY: Where is she now?
MARY: Still at work.
JOEY: Shit....she'll hear it on the radio on the way home.
MARY: What are we gonna do?
JOEY: We gotta talk her out of it.
MARY: Do you still want to go?
JOEY: Are you nuts?
MARY: It's kinda scary.
JOEY: Just a freak thing. Who knows what happened. *Hey (he sings a the famous lyric from "My Generation")*
"Hope I die before I get old"

LIGHTS

SCENE III (Buffalo, New York) – Who guitarist Pete Townshend sits alone in his hotel room, nursing a bottle of brandy and staring at a TV with the sound turned down. There is a knock at the door. "Pete....it's Bill". Townshend is clearly drunk. He doesn't want to see anybody. The shades in his room are drawn. "Pete....it's Bill".

PETE: What?
BILL: Open the damn door.
(*Townshend gets up and opens the door. He slumps back down in a chair as the Who's manager Bill Curbishley enters*)
You look rare-ing to go.
PETE: Bloody hell...
BILL: We gotta deal with the press eventually.
PETE: Not now.
BILL: When?
PETE: Just not now. What the hell are we supposed to say?
BILL: Something. They're not gonna go away.
PETE: (*looks up at him bleary eyed*) Why didn't you tell us when it happened?
BILL: And what if I did? The show gets cancelled....and then what? A worse riot? More dead? I don't want that on my fucking shoulders.
PETE: So you sent us out there like performing monkeys while they were scraping 11 kids off the sidewalk outside.

BILL: They weren't all kids. A few were Mothers with kids of their own.

PETE: You trying to make me feel better?

BILL: Just watch what you say when you do say it. Your mouth has a habit of making bad things worse.

(beat)

PETE: Bill...what the hell are we doing?

BILL: You want to cancel the rest of the tour?

PETE: *(really hurting)* Does that help things? Hurt things? What? Tell me. *(exploding with all the responsibility)* Somebody tell *me* something for a change instead of waiting for me to fucking tell them.

(non-plussed. clearly used to Townshend's moods)

BILL: I don't know. But the more I think about it....the more I think that if you *don't* go on tonight...you'll never go on again.

PETE: If it had happened inside, I couldn't. But is that what I'm supposed to tell these families? One side of the mirror...it's my responsibility. The other side...it's yours?

BILL: We'll get through this.

PETE: Yea Bill....that's the problem. We *will*. We'll go out and play tonight. They'll scream for us like we're the fucking Bay City Rollers, right? Then we'll grab our groupies and booze...jump on the private plane, and head to Philly to do it all over again. *(oozing cynicism now)* You know, we're a *rock and roll* band....right? We don't fuck around worrying about 11 people dying. What's that....\$15 a ticket. \$165? Shit. They didn't even make it inside to buy t-shirts! We *have* to reduce it....don't we Bill? If we ever actually *admitted* to ourselves the true significance of what happened last night...11 people dead. At one of *our* concerts. I gotta go home eventually and face my own girls. What do I tell them? Daddy's Home! This is the circus Bill. Kids aren't supposed to *die*.

BILL: I don't know Pete. *(he looks around)* We barricade ourselves in places like this. We trash them when we're bored and nobody bats an eye. It's only rock and roll...right? We go from the car to the stage and the stage to the car and bring along our own dope dealers to save time. *(beat.....sticking the knife in)* You guys have been laying the groundwork for something like this for years.

PETE: *(with contempt)* You've padded your pocket in the meantime 'aven't you mate?

BILL: *(grabs the bottle and takes a swig)* Look at yourself Pete. What are you....34 years old? Shit. Living like some country squire in between pounding stages singing songs about jerking off you wrote 15 years ago. Preachin' to 18,000 drunk arseholes, pretendin' that it matters. The only thing you got in common with these kids is you're both gonna be hung-over in the morning. All your trashed hotel rooms and smashed guitars.....your fucking pills and your booze.....this is what *you* asked for mate. Pity Moon's not around to see it. Where is Moon anyway? Oh that's right, he's fucking dead isn't he.

PETE: *(furious, jumps up and drills Curbishley in the mouth....it has little effect)*

BILL: You still punch like a bloody girl. What are you gonna do without a guitar? You got nothing else.

PETE: *(slumps back down)* Bill, just fuck off out of here and leave me alone.

BILL: *(motioning to the bottle)* You got a show to do tonight. Try to do it finish it standing up will you? *(he starts to leave)*

PETE: (*lurches at him drunkenly as if to hold him back*) You don't think it matters to these kids? I got this letter from this kid one time. Says...."I spend all day looking at your picture and listening to your music and watching your movies and all I get is a bleedin' autographed picture. You don't know how much time I spend thinking about you lot." And I write him back. "You don't know how much time I spend thinking about teenagers." Used to be when you walked off the stage you walked *off*...you know. You didn't step *down*. You got too close Roger might dent you with his microphone. What happened? When did all that change?

BILL: When you stopped playing the fucking Goldhawk to 100 people and started complaining about the backstage hookers at Madison Square Garden....you cunt. (*Bill slumps....grabs the bottle off the table and takes a drink.*) Jesus Christ Pete. It's just a rock and roll show 'innit? (*He breaks down and cries*)

PETE: (*strangely remote*) I can't get it out of my head. Those kids. You know what? Everything is telling me to stop. My body. My head. My kids. My wife. My liver. *Everything.*

BILL: Well then why don't you?

PETE: I got a show to do.

(*they stare at each other, bleary eyed*)

SCENE IV (*Cincinnati, Ohio*) – Teenage boy lays on the couch. He's alone. His mother walks in.

BOY: Did you talk to Mrs. Allen?

MOTHER: She's not home. She must be on her way down there. You just rest now. What do you need?

BOY: I had a hold of her....I really did.

MOTHER: Shhhh.....that's enough now. It's not your fault. Try to sleep. I'll sit up with you if you want..

BOY: (*manic*) It was like being hit with a wave. It just swept you. You had no control. We were holding hands.....but they were pinned to our sides. I kept screaming to her..."hold on...hold on". I couldn't look down but it felt like I was standing on somebody. It wasn't the pavement anymore. Then my feet weren't on the ground at all. We were lifted up.....and swayed back and forth. I could see people going down. I could seem some of the stronger guys flipping out....throwing elbows, trying to create some space so they could breathe. You could hear the people from the back yelling...."push! push!".....there were no damn doors open. I don't know what happened.

MOTHER: It's over....it's over. You're home. That's all that matters.

BOY: (*tearing up again*) I had her.....I did....

MOTHER: Stop now...why was everybody there so early anyway? You had your tickets.

BOY: It was festival seating. Everything on the floor was first come first serve.

MOTHER: So what....?....they open the doors and everybody runs towards the stage?

BOY: Yea

MOTHER: That's insane!

BOY: That's the way they do it.

MOTHER: How many doors are there?

BOY: I kept hearing they only opened 2. I couldn't see.

MOTHER: What happened to your shoes?

BOY: They just got ripped off You lost control of everything. There were shirts and pants all over. Coats. Hats. When it was over some guy with a broom just swept everything into a big pile. That when I saw them all.....the bodies. I saw Karen.....I don't know how she ended up where she was. So far away. She looked asleep I kept trying to wake her but they told me to stop. She was gone. They were pushing me away.

MOTHER: My God...what kind of people are these?

BOY: What?

MOTHER: What kind of people do something like this?

BOY: What do you mean? People like *me*. It was all people like me. You don't understand. That's what kills me. It was people like me. And it just happened.

MOTHER: No! Things like this don't just happen. People just don't go to hear a band and then DIE!

(Mrs. Allen barges in through the front door. She is wearing a winter coat over her nightgown. She looks crazed. She starts screaming at the boy.)

MRS. ALLEN: Where's my little girl?! Where is she? You were supposed to take care of her.

(Mother gets up to try to calm her down)

MOTHER: Joyce....I'm so so sorry. Really

MRS ALLEN: Well he looks fine to me! Not a mark on him. What happened to Karen? What did you do?!

BOY: *(pleading)* Mrs Allen.....I had her by the hand. I swear. I was holding on. And then she fell....and I couldn't get to her.

MRS ALLEN: Saved yourself though didn't you!? Didn't YOU! It was your idea to take her to see those animals. I trusted you. And now....she's gone.

MOTHER: Joyce....he did everything he could. Everything. He's lucky to be alive.

MRS ALLEN: You think you're lucky to be alive? Is that how you feel? Huh? That's not how I feel. My girl is gone. And I'm still here. I'm not lucky to be alive. Do you hear me?! And for what? Some cheap thrills? Why did you have to take Karen anyway? Why her? She'd never been to a concert before.

BOY: *(pleading)* She wanted to go. We both did. We talked about it for a long time. We stood in line for hours for the tickets. I didn't force her. She wanted to go. You said it was Ok.

MRS ALLEN: She's DEAD!

MOTHER: What are you saying Joyce? That you want him dead too? Is that what you're saying?

MRS ALLEN: *(breaking down)* Why couldn't you save her? Why?

BOY: I tried. I swear to God I tried.

MOTHER: Joyce....let me get you some coffee. C'mon in the kitchen.

MRS ALLEN: *(she hugs the boy)* Oh God I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. My little girl....

BOY: I'm sorry too.....I had her....I swear I had her....

MOTHER: Joyce...c'mon. It's Ok. C'mon in.

SCENE V (Scranton, Pennsylvania) – JOEY and MARY sit waiting for their Mother to get home. They see the car pulling up.

JOEY: She's here.

MARY: What are we gonna say?

JOEY: Knowing her.....we're not gonna have to say anything.

(their Mother walks in....home from work)

MOTHER: You're not going.

JOEY: *(to Mary)* See?

MOTHER: My God....what kind of band is this you want to go see?

JOEY: Ma, it's not the band. It happened outside the arena. They had nothing to do with it.

MOTHER: Yea? Well that sort of thing doesn't happen outside at a Barry Manilow concert.

MARY: Oh God.

MOTHER: Don't "Oh God" me. Kids dying? No way. I didn't scream my way through labor with the both of you to have you crushed by some animals at some rock and roll concert.

JOEY: It's not "just a rock and roll concert" Ma. It's The Who.

MOTHER: Well, I don't care if it's the Boston Pops. You're not going.

MARY: *(to her brother)* I told you.

JOEY: Ma.....do you know how long I've been waiting for this? This is the greatest band in the world. They're pasted all over my room. I listen to them all the time.

MOTHER: Yea? Well I don't even want you *listening* to them anymore. What kind of music makes kids act that way?

JOEY: It's not the music. It just happened. Too many people crammed in too small a space...waiting to get in. That was Cincinnati. It can't happen here.

MOTHER: Which part of "no" don't you understand? And you want to take your sister with you?

MARY: I want to go.

MOTHER: How old are you?

MARY: I'm 16.

MOTHER: Uh huh. I shouldn't even let you out of the *house*, and you're going to the Philadelphia Spectrum to see a bunch of British thugs with your deaf brother?

JOEY: How'd you know they were British?

MOTHER: Hey, I'm hip. I know who the Who are.

MARY: You do?

MOTHER: I've heard them before.

JOEY: What have you heard?

MOTHER: I don't know. Stuff on the radio.

JOEY: And?

MOTHER: And what?

JOEY: Did you like it?

MOTHER: Sounds like the nuns used to when they scraped their nails on the chalkboard.

MARY: *(to her brother)* She must have heard "My Generation".

MOTHER: Yea...that's the one. And the pinball thing.

JOEY: Pinball Wizard.

MOTHER: Yea. See? I'm not an old lady.

JOEY: (*singing*) "I hope I die before I get old"

MOTHER: That's lovely. I'm sure their mother's are all proud. Forget it. There probably won't even be a concert. They can't keep playing after 11 kids die.

MARY: They're playing in Buffalo tonight.

MOTHER: Jesus, the bodies are still warm.

JOEY: What do you want them to do? It's not their fault. It happened outside. They had nothing to do with it.

MOTHER: (*knocking their heads together*) Hello? Anybody home? You know what my job is? It's you. Since your Father died, I get no help. You guys remember going through that? It wasn't pretty was it? You think I'm going to risk losing you over something as...*insignificant* as a rock and roll concert?

JOEY: But Mom....that's where you're wrong. To us.....it's not insignificant. I don't know how to explain it....but these songs.....they *help* me. Pete Townshend....the guy who writes them. It's like he's in my head. He finds the words to say what I can't.

MOTHER: And Pete Townshend is so affected by this tragedy, and cares so much for what he puts in your head, that he's willing to risk killing the both of you in Philadelphia? Is that what you're telling me?

MARY: Ma....we'll be fine. It won't happen here.

JOEY: Can you at least think it over?

MOTHER: (*ending the discussion with a thud*) Sure kids. I'll think it over. Get Mr. Townie....

JOEY: (*annoyed*) Townshend.

MOTHER:Townshend on the phone. If he agrees to be your chaperone, you can go.

MARY: Deal.

JOEY: What?!

MARY: Let's call him.

JOEY: What....we gonna look him up in the Scranton phone book?

MARY: They're in Buffalo tonight. How many hotels can there be in Buffalo?

JOEY: Geez, I don't know Mar. Maybe 150?

MARY: There's not that many people who would want to *go* to Buffalo. There can't be that many hotels there.

MOTHER: Start dialing. And I'm not paying the long distance bills either. Better call collect. He cares so much about you guys? I'm sure he'll be glad to personally guarantee your safety. (*she leaves the room*)

JOEY: (*sarcastic to his sister*) Deal?

MARY: It's either that or sit in your room with your headphones.

JOEY: Get your coat. Let's go.

MARY: Where?

JOEY: To the library. We gotta find Buffalo hotel phone numbers. And how many dimes you got? We're gonna need a whole pile. Jesus Christ. Calling Pete Townshend for a ride to a Who concert.....

SCENE VI (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) – Townshend and Curbishley are in a Philly hotel room, arguing. It's a week later.

BILL: Are you nuts? Where the hell is Scranton?
PETE: About 2 hours down the turnpike they're saying.
BILL: You just rented a car?
PETE: Yea. What time is it?
BILL: It's about noon.
PETE: Plenty of time.
BILL: Plenty of time for what?
PETE: I gotta pick up these kids.
BILL: What fucking kids?
PETE: Jesus Christ Bill, it's a long story and I don't have much time.
BILL: Well we can't have you driving around the state of Pennsylvania today. We've got a show tonight. Why don't you take one of the security guys with you?
PETE: No....it's.....it's like that's not part of the deal.
BILL: What fucking *deal*?
PETE: What side of the road do they drive on around here?
BILL: Oh Christ. You've cracked up completely.
PETE: I promised their mother I'd take care of them at the show tonight.
BILL: You promised their *mother*? Who's mother?
PETE: These kids.
BILL: Peter....get a hold of yourself. What are you on anyway?
PETE: I'm not on anything. Listen Bill. She won't let them come unless I pick them up.
BILL: Won't let them come where?
PETE: To the show tonight.
BILL: So you have to pick them up?
PETE: Yes.
BILL: They gonna walk home?
PETE: I gotta bring 'em back home after the show too.
BILL: Pete...we're going right to DC after the show tonight.
PETE: I'll meet you there.
BILL: Pete....you want to start from the beginning here?
PETE: Bill.....this is the kind of thing I need to do. These kids....these parents. Cincinnati scared everybody. I have to do *something*.
BILL: Send fucking flowers.
PETE: No. This is what their mother said I have to do.
BILL: Why are you taking orders from some kid's mother from Scranton Pennsylvania?
PETE: She was very insistent. I quite like her actually. A straight shooter.
BILL: Really? You don't have to paint her house too do you?
PETE: I gave her my word her kids would be safe tonight. (*he packs up his stuff getting ready to leave....then stops*) You know what I've been thinking? For the last week. I'm saying to myself....."I just don't care anymore. I just want to do my job, and then go home to my wife and kids. I don't want to wave the rock and roll flag anymore. I don't want to be anybody's standard bearer. I just don't *care*." My own daughter calls me on the phone....and says "Daddy, I don't want you to die too." Like I'm at fucking *war*. Look at the wreckage we've left behind Bill. Just look at it.
BILL: Pete....you're responsible for your own kids. Not somebody else's.

PETE: No no Bill.....that's where you're wrong. These kids.....do you know the power they give us.....me? We can change their lives. Or *save* their lives. Bloody arrogant we are. But it's true. You know how many have come up to me...."Oh Pete....your music saved me. I was going to kill meself and then I listened to Quadrophenia...." You know.....how the hell am I supposed to react to that?

BILL: (*sarcastic*) So the Quadrophenia record is saving lives is it? What's "Tommy" doing then eh? Promising them eternal life?

PETE: Sod off you stupid git.

BILL: (*trying to reason with him*) Look....I know these kids too. But you can't save them one at a time. Nobody has the strength for that. Not even the Who.

PETE: No....but why can't I do *this*? You tell me? What's stopping me from doing this one thing?

BILL: Pete.....you can't bring the dead back to life. You can't do it. Cincinnati happened. But it's over. The dead are gonna stay dead.

PETE: No Bill. They're not gonna stay dead for me. No fucking way.

SCENE VII (Cincinnati, Ohio) – Boy sits on the edge of his bed. He's listening to the Who song "Naked Eye". He stares into space....hollow eyed. His mother enters.

MOTHER: You got a letter. It's from the band.

BOY: The band?

MOTHER: From the Who.

BOY: (*bitter*) What's it....a get well card?

MOTHER: Something like that I guess. They sent flowers to Karen's.

BOY: Flowers?

MOTHER: For the funeral. I saw them at the viewing tonight. Everybody was asking for you.

(*he doesn't reply....she motions towards the letter*)

There's a handwritten note in there from Pete Townshend.

BOY: What does it say?

MOTHER: That he's thinking of you....

BOY: He's thinking of me?

MOTHER: Yea.

BOY: You think he's thinking about her?

SCENE VIII (Scranton, Pennsylvania) – Pete Townshend sits on the Malone's couch. The kids are there with him, as is their Mother. He looks uncomfortable. The kids are star struck.

MOTHER: Eleven dead.

PETE: Yea M'aam.

MOTHER: More tea?

PETE: Uh...no M'aam. We really need to be going to beat the traffic.

MOTHER: (*ignoring this*) Ever been to Scranton before?

PETE: No M'aam. I've been lots of places but never here.

MOTHER: Tell me....how did they (*meaning her kids*) get in touch with you? I never thought they'd actually do it.

PETE: Well uh....they're very resourceful....(*to Mary*) It's Mary isn't it? (*she nods*)

Mary told the front desk that her name was Emma.

MARY: That's his daughter's name.

MOTHER: (*to Joey*) How'd you pick the right hotel?

JOEY: We just started at the A's and worked our way down.

MOTHER: What made you agree to do it?

PETE: Well.....I guess I couldn't think of a good enough reason *not* to.

MOTHER: Being a big rock and roll star isn't reason enough to ignore 2 pesky kids?

JOEY: (*embarrassed*) Ma!

PETE: Well, I've actually make quite a nice living writing about pesky kids...so...

MOTHER: You feel guilty about what happened?

(*long pause*)

PETE: Actually Mrs Malone.....I'm still trying to work out how I feel.

MOTHER: Do you feel responsible?

MARY: Ma!

PETE: (*towards the kids*) No no....it's Ok. My own mother asked me the same thing.

JOEY: She did?

PETE: I called her that night. When I heard about it. I called her from backstage actually.

Told her what I knew. We weren't sure of the number. But we knew that kids had died. I

just needed to hear her voice I guess. Every kid needs him Mum....

MOTHER: What did you tell her?

PETE: Honestly?

MOTHER: Yea. Honestly.

PETE: Well....when I play the guitar sometimes I play so hard that my hand starts to bleed.

MOTHER: What's that got to do with the price of tea in China?

PETE: Well.....I'm quite used to having *literal* blood on my hands, right?. But this was different. That's what I told her.

MOTHER: Did she ask you to stop?

PETE: No. She knew I wasn't going to do that.

MOTHER: Why not?

PETE: (*motions to the kids*) Because of them.

MOTHER: They're all I've got you know.

PETE: They're all I've go too.....

SCENE IX (Cincinnati, Ohio) Bedroom. The boy lays on the bed listening to "They're All in Love"

MOTHER: Hey....you hungry?

BOY: Nah.

MOTHER: You gotta eat.

BOY: Yea, I know.

MOTHER: Your father called today.

BOY: (*bitter*) Gee....that was nice of him.

MOTHER: He's worried about you.

BOY: He'd be here if he was so worried.

MOTHER: He's still your father.

BOY: Why are you always sticking up for him?

MOTHER: Because he's still your father. We're both stuck with that.

BOY: I had a dream last night. That it was me and him at the concert. And he had a hold of me when the crowd started swaying.....and then he let go. On purpose. He let go. And I went down. And everybody just kept coming. Trampling over me. And I couldn't breathe. And when you can't breathe, you can't scream. Did you know that? I tried...but nothing came out.

MOTHER: You'll get past this. You're a tough kid.

BOY: I thought I was. I really did. When he left.....I didn't feel a goddamn thing. I really didn't. I wasn't just holding things in. And in the midst of that crowd. I saw some kids....they looked scared, you know? But I was so calm. When the pushing started....I was laughing even. You know.....this was a good, rowdy *Who* crowd. Karen wasn't nervous either. 'Cause she knew I was there. It was like a lark to me. That's what it was when Dad left. It was like a lark. But then you fall....or somebody you love falls....and there's nobody there to help them up anymore. What do you do then?

MOTHER: (*not wanting to go deeper into this*) The first thing you do is eat. You haven't had anything in days.

BOY: (*ignoring this*) Mom.....that's where the music comes in. Townshend. The Who. It's like a hand in the dark sometimes. But what about Karen? Maybe I can find my answers. But I can't find hers.

MOTHER: They're not yours to find. Now I gotta run to the store. You gonna be ok up here?

BOY: Yea.

MOTHER: Ok.....see you in a bit.

(she leaves. he puts on a new song. "Blue Red and Grey". He grabs a bottle of pills out of his top drawer, and pours them all into his mouth, washing it down with a can of coke. he then lays back down on the bed)

SCENE X (*Somewhere on the Pennsylvania Turnpike*) – Pete is driving. Joey is in the front seat with him. Mary sits in the back.

JOEY: Got any tapes?

PETE: Just the radio.

MARY: Do you listen to your own music?

PETE: (*laughs*) I try not to. It hurts my ears.

MARY: Do your daughters listen to the Who?

PETE: Well....they're a little young.

JOEY: I still can't believe you're doing this for us.

PETE: What's the matter? You don't think you're worthy?

JOEY: Well.....you *are* Pete Townshend.

PETE: Just some skinny geezer with a big nose is all.

JOEY: Have you talked to any of the parents from....

PETE: From Cincinnati?

JOEY: Yea. If you don't want to talk about it that's ok.

PETE: No....that's fine. I wrote letters to them all.

MARY: What did you say?

PETE: What would *you* say?

MARY: I don't know. I'm sorry I guess.

PETE: I did say that. It just seemed like I should have said more.

JOEY: (*looking out the window....nervous*) Pete, you know the speed limit is 55 right?

PETE: It is?

JOEY: Yea. You're going about 90.

PETE: Well, we are in a bit of a hurry.

(*Blurting it out*)

MARY: My Mom's a blabber mouth.

PETE: C'mon now. She's a nice lady.

MARY: I don't want to have to tell 20,000 Who fans that the show is late because of my Mom.

PETE: Who fans are pretty forgiving.

JOEY: Who By Numbers is my favorite album.

PETE: Yea? How 'bout you Mary?

JOEY: I like the one with Pinball Wizard on it.

PETE: Tommy.

MARY: Yea....you gonna do that song tonight?

PETE: I'll do it especially for you.

JOEY: (*to his sister*) They do it every night, so don't think you're special. What's your favorite one Pete? (*suddenly nervous*) Can I call you Pete?

PETE: What else would you call me?

JOEY: I don't know. Mr Townshend I guess.

PETE: Oh please....

JOEY: I don't know. This is kinda weird.

PETE: (*joking*) Well you bleedin' started it!

JOEY: She's the one who called.

MARY: You told me to!

PETE: Listen....I'm just Pete. My favorite Who album? For me it's Quadrophenia.

JOEY: (*blurts out without thinking*) I love the songs but the sound is shit.

MARY: Joey!

JOEY: What?

MARY: That's not nice.

PETE: (*to Mary*) No....the rest of the band agrees with him. And the critics too I'm afraid.

MARY: (*to her brother*) Well you could have put it in a nicer way.

PETE: (*laughing*) That was pretty nice compared to what others have said.

(*long pause here....awkward*)

JOEY: Do you remember what it was like being 18?

PETE: Yea....thank God. I wouldn't have anything to write about otherwise.

JOEY: All it does it make me wanna be older.

MARY: Did you mean it when you wrote that you hope you die before you get old?

PETE: (*laughs*) You sound like a journalist.
JOEY: You probably get asked that all the time.
PETE: Sometimes I wish I never wrote the line.
JOEY: Did you mean it?
PETE: When I wrote it....I wasn't much older than you. So....at the time, yea....I meant it. But now it's too late.
MARY: What do you mean?
PETE: I'm already bloody old!
JOEY: You're younger than my Mom.
PETE: Rock and roll ages you faster than time does.
MARY: (*blurting*) When I told Joey about Cincinnati he didn't believe me.
JOEY: (*to his sister*) Why do you keep bringing up Cincinnati? You probably don't even know where it is!
MARY: It's in Ohio. And I don't keep bringing it up. This is the first time. You brought it up first.
PETE: It's Ok guys. We don't have to ignore it. It's why we're here. And it's a long drive.
JOEY: I just think it's wrong that people blame you...that's all.
PETE: Well who else should they blame? It's my name on that ticket 'innit?
JOEY: Well it's not like you were outside pushing everybody.
PETE: Maybe I was though. Tell me.....why do you want to come see the Who? I mean...we're not even the Who anymore really...
JOEY: You're my favorite band.
PETE: But why?
JOEY: I don't know. It's like.....it's like *you* could be *me* up there.
PETE: I used to feel the same way about you.

SCENE XI (Cincinnati, Ohio) – The mother is laying across her dead son's chest....

MOTHER: No!!!! Oh God NO!!!

SCENE XII (Scranton, Pennsylvania) – Mrs. Malone is anxiously peering out the window, awaiting the return of her children. She see's lights pull into the driveway, and is visibly relieved.

Outside in the car, Mary is asleep in the backseat. Pete and Joey are parked in the driveway.

PETE: She still asleep?
JOEY: Yea...she conked out around Allentown.
PETE: (*looks towards the house*) Lights are still on.
JOEY: She won't go to sleep until we get inside. Wild crowd tonight.
PETE: Yea....good crowd. You get nervous though....looking out. A lot of pushing and shoving.
JOEY: You ever gonna be able to forget it?

PETE: Well.....all I know is that it'll be easier to deal with.....*with* Rock n Roll than without it.

JOEY: Sounds like you'r saying rock is the problem *and* the solution. No wonder you're so fucking mixed up. (*Pete laughs*)

PETE: Well, I can't get rid of me problems but I can dance all over 'em. (*he reaches in the back and gently nudges Mary*). Mary. You're home.

MARY: What? Where are we?

PETE: You're home. (*she sits up and stretches*)

MARY: Yea? What time is it?

PETE: Almost 4.

MARY: You're gonna drive to DC now?

JOEY: Why don't you come in and sleep for a few hours first?

PETE: No.....it's too early for bed. I'm a rock star....remember?

MARY: Oh yea.

PETE: I can't sleep after a show. My ears are ringing.

MARY: Yours too?

JOEY: Promise to stay in touch?

PETE: Yes.

JOEY: Can I tell you something? And don't take this the wrong way.

PETE: Ok.

JOEY: I'm worried about you.

PETE: Well you know what? I'm *not* worried about you. And that makes my fucking night. No go inside and tell your Mom I said goodbye.

(Pete hugs both kids goodbye and watches them enter their front door. As they do, their mother is waiting for them....with hugs. He smiles, and then slumps his head on the steering wheel and starts to weep. The lights come up on the Cincinnati mother, who is still weeping over the body of her dead son. The song "The Real Me" is heard in the theater)

LIGHTS

The End