

Ela

by

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Cast:

DAVID – Male, 32. David is dressed very fashionable, but not expensive, in a checked sports coat, tie, and nice slacks. He is clean shaven. David was written to be English speaking and Latino, but that ethnicity is not necessary.

Setting:

An empty stage in Texas

At rise, David is alone on stage.

DAVID

I'm not used to talking like this. I mean – in person, one on one, I'm good. But gotta be honest – I'm really nervous. I spent an hour this morning trying to figure out what to wear. I'm used to dressing up. Always been confident about that. People come up to me and say -- David, you look goooooood! There's no secret – all it takes is trying. People think I spend lots on clothes, but my mom taught me you don't need to spend much. When I was a kid, she'd take me and my older sister, Gabriela – we called her Gaby -- thrift store shopping couple of times a month. Sometimes we'd have to do some sewing ... that's right, I know how to sew ... but in the end I'd always look sharp. In high school, friends would tease me, but I didn't give a fu ... sorry, I'll try to keep this clean ... I didn't care that they teased. I knew they were jealous. Even my wife, Sofia, makes fun of me – I'm the only husband in town who takes the larger closet. If we're out in public, I wear a fly looking coat and always a tie – don't matter how hot it gets here in the lone star state.

My daughter, Gabriela – she notices. Yeah, we named our daughter after my sister after she died in the car accident. Back when Gabriela was in kindergarten, I'd take her to and from school every day. I worked the night shift then and Sofia was working days at the hospital, so that was my job. One September day it was really hot, and I didn't put on a tie to pick her up. She said daddy, "you look funny." I said don't I look like all the dads, and she said "I don't want you to look like them, I want you to look like MY daddy." So that became a thing – I dress up when we were out together because she wants me to look good, and that makes me want to dress up even more. She got my sense of fashion. That's one thing really special about her. Another thing is her name. People try to shorten it like my sis did. Call her Gaby or Gab, and she'd

gets maaaaaaaad! She'll stand up straight, glare at the person, speak very slowly, and say ... "My name is Gabriela, please." No one who gets that look will ever forget. I'm the one exception. When it's just the two of us – me reading her a story, or fixing her breakfast, I can call her Ela.

When she was in second grade, I got put on the day shift, which was better, but I missed taking her to school. We had neighbors who would watch to make sure she took the bus, and got in the house after the bus dropped her off. That's all there is by the way, just Ela. No other children. I told Sofia that I was worried about money for a second kid, but truth is ... I just wasn't sure I could love a second child like I love Ela.

I always tell her, she's the best little girl in the whole state of Texas. Once she said, oh daddy, you don't know every little girl in Texas. (Pause) But you can say I'm the best little girl in Uvalde.

Long Pause

I was asked to talk about Ela and the shooting. I guess that's what I'm saying. I haven't bothered about putting on nice clothes since. But you want me to talk about her, so I need to think about her – it seems right for me to dress up. These counselors tell me to give it time – they talk about the five stages of grief. It has stages? All I know is pain -- the pain isn't going away. Not one god damn ... sorry ... not one bit.

Who am I angry at? (pause) Who ain't I angry at? The counselor said one of them stages is anger. I'm never going to be done with that stage. That day, I get to the school, and the cop in charge tells me and other parents to wait behind the ropes – (*slowly*) everything ... is ... under ... control. Then I hear shots, and I break for the

school – some fat ass trooper tackles me, separates my shoulder. And still I try to get to the building. Then I see some mom who also tried to get there – four cops are dragging her back in handcuffs. Brave – four cops taking down an unarmed woman – better than confronting an armed shooter.

After they finally take the guy out, they order buses and move all us parents to the community center. Some parents get to see their kids right away. For the rest of us, for hours, we get no information. Nothing. Then they start taking DNA from us – after eight hours, they start the DNA? They go to some parents and talk to them – and they leave. We ask what's going on, and they say to be patient. Now it's been 12 hours. If we were prisoners of war we'd be treated better. At midnight, they call me and my wife into a room. (*pause – slowly*) They tell us Ela died at the scene, and how sorry they are. Why are people sorry after they haven't done anything to help? Why aren't they sorry when it could have made things better – when they could have made sure the school was safe, when they could have rushed the shooter, when they could have not let us rot in a community center for 12 hours waiting to find if the love of our life had been massacred.

Who do I blame? Of course, I blame that whacked out monster who decided his problems were worth running the lives of everyone else. My priest tells me he's in hell. That's no comfort – hell's too good for him. I got visits from people in survivors' groups. One mother said she found peace in understanding the mental problems of the guy who shot her son – she gained (*air quotes*) "forgiveness." Forgive? My mom taught me a lot of things, including to forgive sinners, but if mom was still alive she'd agree with me – except for having my Ela back with me, the thing I want most is 10 minutes alone with that ass hole. He'd be begging to go to hell.

I also blame the fuc ... sorry – I blame the NRA, and all of those protestors, who claim its about the second amendment. There weren't 30 school shootings a year in 1776 or whenever they wrote that damn thing. I blame Congress for not doing anything. I blame the reporters who treat it like its some type of TV show, and not caring about helping. You know every time there's a school shooting in the news, it's more likely there will be another shooting soon. Some professor from Austin interviewed me and she told tell me that, she said the news reports give the next shooter "permission." I also blame that professor. She doesn't give a damn about Ela – she's just a part of her research.

But I really blame all those people who send posts or tweets saying thoughts and prayers. I don't give a shit about their thoughts and prayers. It don't mean nothing. It's like saying "have a nice day" or having a fucking smiley face sticker. They can feel better for writing that post, and their friends can put a heart symbol next to it – and tomorrow there will be another little girl killed.

And I blame ... you. (*points to the audience*) Every fucking one of you. You listen to us and watch us and you might even tell us about your outrage, but ... you ... don't ... do ... anything. Maybe you contribute to your "feed the children" or nature conservatory, and you protest about some pipeline or that some group might not have the same rights as others. Ya know, I agree with you. Every person should have equal rights, and the air should be able to be breathed in 20 years. But what's more important? If we have good air and equal rights, my Ela won't be able to experience them. She'll still be dead. Your protests don't matter – your money don't matter. If we can't protect Ela and her classmates, nothing else fucking matters.

END OF PLAY