

NOTES

The Witness is a fictitious narrative, and it may be used in either Prose Interpretation or Dramatic Interpretation. This selection is perhaps *best* performed by a mature female; however, a mature male may choose to perform this selection by changing “*sisters*” to “*brothers*” in the first paragraph, and instead of saying, “the *lead* in *The Diary of Anne Frank*,” say “one of the *leads* in *The Diary of Anne Frank*.” Also, a male would need to *cut* all of the lines about being searched in the prison. If used as a Prose Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer where to turn her/his pages. This selection is about *love* and must be performed with 100% *honesty*. This character is conservative, smart, and unconditionally loves her/his brother. The performer should also be very aware of the necessity *visualization* plays in the believability of this presentation. *Visualization* is an important performance technique that will take the audience on an emotional journey, as the performer makes us *believe* she/he actually *witnessed* an execution. The performer must see the things described throughout the selection. The audience should see the performer *looking* at the brother in the courtroom, in his cell, and in the lethal injection room. See Daniel on the gurney. See the myriad of people and equipment in the lethal injection room. This is a powerful piece of literature. If this selection is performed with honesty and respect, the literature, itself, will do most of the work for the performer.

My childhood hero has always been my older brother, Daniel. We lived in a pretty rough area, and like many youth his age, Daniel joined a neighborhood gang by the time he was fifteen. And as is the case with younger sisters who idolize their older brothers, I found myself wanting to hang out with Daniel; however, if there were any gang members around, Daniel would yell, “Get out of here!” Naturally upset, I would retreat inside the house, go upstairs to my bedroom, and cry for hours. Daniel wasn’t one for overemoting sentimental statements. I can only assume he didn’t want to chip away the facade of his tough guy image; however, one night, Daniel came into my room and told me that when he yells, “Get out

of here!” what he is really saying is “I love you.” He said it would be our special secret.



Anyone who knows anything about gangs knows that being in one has risks. You might as well have a tattoo across your forehead that says *I'm looking for trouble*. Daniel and his friends didn't have tattoos across their foreheads, but trouble found them anyway. At first, it was just petty shoplifting. Then things escalated. One night, Daniel and his friends tried to rob a convenience store. The store owner had a pistol, and according to Daniel, he was going to shoot them. Daniel somehow wrestled the gun away from the store owner, and in a panic, shot and killed him. Daniel and his friends were arrested, and Daniel's trial was set for three-and-a-half months later. During the trial, just before the guards would take him back to the county prison, Daniel would look at me sitting with our parents and say, “Get out of here.” I would look back at Daniel and mouth the words, “I love you, too.”



The trial lasted four and a half days, but it took the jury less than three hours to come back with a guilty verdict for first-degree murder. During the sentencing phase of the trial, the prosecuting attorney brought in Daniel's accomplices, who, in exchange for a lesser sentence, testified that Daniel's actions were premeditated. They said Daniel had boasted that if anything were to go wrong during the robbery, he would take care of it. This, coupled with the fact that protestors outside the courthouse were demanding stricter penalties for violent crimes, somehow justified the judge sentencing Daniel to death by lethal injection.



Mother and Dad were very bitter. They felt that their lack of financial resources had helped lead to Daniel's demise through ineffective court-appointed counsel at his trial. Daniel was sent to the state penitentiary and placed in a holding cell on death row. Mother and I would visit Daniel twice a month. During one visit, Daniel asked me if I would be willing to witness his execution. He told me that at any time I could change my mind, and he would understand. I told him that this was not an option. He had chosen me to be in attendance, and I was willing to indeed be a witness at his execution. Being there for him would be the last gift I could give him.

