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## DISTRICT COURT

CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA

THE STATE OF NEVADA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

JEREMY STROHMEYER,  
#0018909

Defendant.

CASE NO. C144577  
DEPT. NO. XII  
DOCKET: "R"

## DEFENDANT'S SENTENCING STATEMENT

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**RECEIPT OF COPY**

RECEIPT of copy of the foregoing DEFENDANT'S SENTENCING STATEMENT is hereby  
acknowledged this day of October, 1998.

STEWART BELL, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

BY \_\_\_\_\_

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You cannot imagine a life more barren of consolation than that which I have lived since the tragic morning of May 25, 1997. It is my resolution that you should know the extent of my despair, sorrow, and guilt. I hope that through these inadequate words you may come to appreciate at least some measure of the shame and regret that I carry because of what I have done. I am haunted daily by the fact that I am to blame for the death of Sherrice Iverson.

Nobody could even begin to understand the depth of my despair and sadness, except perhaps Sherrice's family or perhaps my own grief stricken parents. No one should ever have to experience pain such as what Yolanda Manuel and Leroy Iverson have experienced in losing their daughter. Words cannot bring Sherrice back, as much as I wish they could. All the same, these are some words that need to be said.

I am sorry. I am sorry for my part in the tragedy that took place that early morning. The tragedy that resulted in little Sherrice's untimely death. I do not know if any apology from me will ever have any worth for Sherrice's family but whether they will be able to accept it or not, I must apologize. Let it be known to Yolanda Manuel, to Leroy Iverson and to every person who ever knew and loved Sherrice Iverson: I am truly sorry.

If I were given the opportunity to exchange my life for Sherrice's and bring her back, I would not hesitate, not even for a second, to do so. Not a day goes by that I don't feel the crushing weight of my guilt and sorrow for her loss. Sherrice would still be alive today if not for me, and I have got to live with that truth for the rest of my life. I am a condemned man: not only by the state but by my own conscience as well.

I know nothing I am about to say can change the outcome of these proceedings. Even so, I want this court and anyone who has heard of or read about this terrible crime to know the truth of what happened that devastating morning and why it happened. Even though there is no guarantee that I will be believed, I feel it is important that the truth be known in order to alert others to how this horrible event came to pass.

Nothing I am going to say about these events is offered as an excuse for my own conduct. I accept full responsibility for the crimes committed against Sherrice Iverson. But if people can understand, as I have come to understand, why this happened then, perhaps, a tragedy such as this can be averted and children like Sherrice and myself might avoid the destruction of their lives.

### **The Tragedy Itself**

That morning to me is terribly uncertain. Looking back I can see that the horror that occurred that day was due to a convergence of malignant forces, of which I was one. It was malevolent providence which brought together myself, David Cash. and Sherrice Iverson in that arcade on that tragic morning. Although I have and have always had only an obscure, partial recollection of the events what I do know is this:

On the morning of May 25, 1997 I was drinking beer and wandering aimlessly through casinos and arcades with David Cash. Everything I saw was through a drunken and drugged haze. I remember playing video games in one arcade where a little boy and girl were running around chasing each other. Dave and I spent several hours playing video games while waiting for Dave's father to finish playing poker so we could leave. When the little kids started playing with me, I began playing with them. I know that on the arcade video tapes it shows me chasing Sherrice into the ladies room. I then leave. Cash also shows up, going in after I leave and then Sherrice runs out. That is the first time the chasing game we were playing involved the ladies bathroom. But in truth, I don't remember that first time.

What I do remember is following Sherrice when she next entered the bathroom. When I followed her in, it was only as part of the game. I never meant

her any harm. I had no plan, no intentions, nothing. Inside the bathroom, I saw Sherrice near the Sinks. I thought she was getting some wet paper towels to throw at me as part of the game. Suddenly she picked up a wet floor sign and swung it at me, hitting my arm. I remember feeling irrationally enraged at this and remember picking her up. That is the last thing I can remember until later on. I believe I blacked out for a period of time. When I came to, I was in a bathroom stall with this little girl, who was unconscious, lying on her back on the toilet. I could hear two young female voices outside the stall.

Can you imagine what it would be like to open your eyes, not knowing where you were or how you got there. To find yourself looking down on a half-naked, dying little girl? Can you imagine the fear, the panic, the sickness that rushes over you as you realize that somehow, you have done something to this little girl to cause her to be dying, yet you don't remember doing anything? This is what happened to me. The panic overcame me, and I couldn't think straight. My only thought was to hide the fact that Sherrice was there. I sat down on her to cover her up from view. After the two girls left I had a feeling of total unreality and terror. I wanted to get out of there as soon as I could, but in my drunken and drugged-out panic, I crazily felt that I couldn't leave the child in her suffering state. In this panic, I tried to stop her pain and then I tried to get away from that horrible scene, as fast as I could. But

I haven't been able to escape it. That scene is etched in my memory and will haunt me every day for the rest of my life.

It is no comfort to me that I cannot remember all the details of what happened. I want to remember, I want to know and I have tried to bring it back but I can't.

I have learned that the arcade videos show that eight females entered and left the restroom while I was in there with Sherrice. I was totally unaware of six of them. As I told the police, I only remember two young girls being there -- I am told that they are the last two who came in -- and that I left within two minutes of their leaving. For twenty of the twenty two minutes I was in that stall with that little girl I have no memory of what happened. But I am certain of the knowledge that but for me - Sherrice would still be alive. There is nothing I wish for more than a miracle which would allow me to change that awful truth. I wish I could go back and save Sherrice.

### **Why I Made False Confessions**

After that morning, nothing made sense. I was stricken with guilt and sick with remorse because I knew that this little girl was dead because of me. Yet my best friend at the time, David Cash, was repeatedly showering me and himself with

accolades for what we had supposedly gotten away with. I have been told that as recently as this August he was still talking about this monstrous murder as something to be proud of. He may be proud of what he did that morning but he makes me sick. Even that day I knew full well the evil of what I had done, yet there Dave was offering me praise for the part I had in what had happened. It was strange and confusing. I didn't know what to think. It didn't matter though because it wasn't long before the guilt enveloped me.

While we were still in Nevada Dave talked about how we should hide the facts of what had happened. He told me that he had been in the women's restroom with me and Sherrice, although I have never remembered him being there with us. He talked about the video cameras and that we might get recognized and how we should deal with that.

After I got back to California, all I could think about was that this little girl was dead because of me, and I deserved to die. I wanted to die, but also wanted to conceal from my parents what I had done-- the monster I had become. I felt I could never face them if the truth became known. There were only two thoughts in my head: Should I try to run away or should I die. On May 28th, I decided to die.

I didn't know whether the police were on their way to my house to arrest me or not. All I knew was that I could not live with the shame and the guilt of having



taken the life of an innocent little girl. So I took my bottle of Dexedrine, an amphetamine that had been prescribed to me less than a week earlier, and I proceeded to eat every pill in the bottle. I washed them down with beer and whiskey, to help the pills dissolve faster -- so as to speed the process up.

After I had finished eating all the pills, I sat down and wrote a note to my family saying how sorry I was. Then I sat down and waited to die, but it wasn't my fate to die that day. My mother came home unexpectedly, and I ran from the house before she could see me because I could not bear to face her with all the shame I carried in my heart. I didn't get far before I was arrested.

I was brought to a hospital where my stomach was pumped. I didn't start feeling the effects of the pills that I had swallowed until after the doctor and nurses had finished pumping my stomach. At that point in time, I remember feeling disconnected from the real world - everything seemed to be happening to someone else. I did realize that there were two police officers there in the same room as me, next to my bed. They were asking me questions and telling me how it would be easier on myself, my family and everyone else if I would just confess to everything. So I began to tell them everything they wanted to hear, or at least what I thought they wanted to hear, based on their questions and remarks. I told them what little I remembered and what I didn't remember I made up based on things I had read in

the papers, things that Cash had told me and things that seemed to be suggested from the officer's questions. I later learned that some of the things I said didn't make sense given that eight females entered the bathroom during the twenty two minutes I was in there and would have seen or heard some of the actions I described to the police, but since I felt responsible for Sherrice's death, I didn't think the details mattered.

When they brought me to the police station, I was tired and depressed. I knew that I had failed in my attempt to end my life. I still wanted to die. But that wasn't my only priority at that point. Given the influence that he had had on me for the previous year, I felt a misplaced loyalty towards David Cash and, as we had discussed and planned, I protected him by making sure that I took the blame for everything whether I knew that I was really to blame or not. I did this because he was my best friend, and he had begged me to leave him out of it.

So with that in mind and my eagerness to end my life, I confessed to all the wrongs, both real and imagined, that were committed against Sherrice. I confessed to things remembered and not remembered. I latched onto every little bit of information that I had been fed earlier by the police and the newspaper and David and incorporated all those bits into my story and made them my own. With the mind set that I must take all the blame and with the subtle intention to make sure the

destruction of my life was irrevocable, I told my truths and lies. By the time the detective from Las Vegas had turned on his tape recorder, I had already rehearsed the story several times with the detectives from Long Beach.

### **What Brought About/Led to the Tragedy**

The question I have asked myself many times since that horrible, fateful morning is: “Where did I go so wrong?” If someone had told me on the day before this happened that I was capable of killing someone, let alone an innocent child and would end up spending my whole life in prison for murder, I would not have believed them for a second. I would never have thought that I **was** the type of immoral, unfeeling person who would do so evil a thing to anyone, let alone a vulnerable little girl. So I ask myself “How did I ever get to the point in which I caused a little girl to die?”

In trying to answer these questions, I have had much help from my lawyers, my family, and psychiatric experts. I’ve learned a lot about the risks of so-called closed adoptions, about genetic risk factors for inheriting mental illness and addiction, about the inadequacy of using a person’s intelligence alone as a measure of whether that person is good or evil, about the difficulty of getting competent help for emotional problems, about the lethal effect of drugs and alcohol. This

knowledge came too late to save Sherrice and too late to save me. But my whole purpose in speaking out today is in the hope that it is not too late for other children, children like Sherrice, children like me.

For some of us who were adopted, not knowing whom or where we came from can wreck our lives. It can make us walking time bombs, full of rage we don't consciously experience, full of the false belief in a dark and evil nature that we may unwittingly set out to prove the existence of.

For some of us who have birth families, like mine, with long histories of alcoholism, not knowing leaves us unprotected. What happened to me that morning was a culmination of all the unsuspected risk factors in my life that I did not know how to recognize or address. On that horrible morning, it was my alcohol abuse and dependency on methamphetamine, coupled with a drug prescribed for a non-existent condition that caused my brain to go haywire resulting in a violent explosion that I either can't or won't remember. But it was my embracing of what I thought was my dark side that caused David Cash to be the person who I was with, the person who would not lift a finger to save an innocent child from the drunken, drugged out mess that I was. I know what he is now and was then, an arrogant, unfeeling hater. Had I known who I truly was I would have seen him for what he was and I would never have spoken to, let alone befriended so morally corrupt an individual. I have done a

monstrous thing and am prepared, indeed willing to be punished for it for the rest of my life, however inadequate that may be for Sherrice's sake. But it did not have to end this way.

Six months before that tragic morning, I was an honor student -- a senior in high school, looking forward to graduating from that school and moving on to college. I was going to be an officer in the Air Force, serving my country. I was going to fly airplanes for a living for the rest of my days. I had my whole life ahead of me, and I knew exactly what I was going to do with it.

For most of my life I thought of myself as a normal, caring sensitive person. A good guy. But that last year I started to have crazy thoughts. I was filled with anger and rage that I couldn't understand and an obsessive dependence on a constantly rejecting, deceitful girl. I do not know if the circumstances of my birth made my fate a foregone thing. I know now, too late, that my birth mother is a schizophrenic with a long history of alcohol abuse and drug addiction. The reason I didn't know this was because the Los Angeles County Adoption agency, which arranged my adoption, concealed the truth of my birth parents' backgrounds from my adoptive parents, on purpose. I know that had my parents known about the high risk I was at of running into emotional problems and addiction that they would have been more alert for signs of trouble and sought qualified help earlier on in my life,

before the warning signs began. But just knowing the truth about my birth parents could have prevented my addictions. My recently found half brother, who knows our biological mother and grew up seeing what addiction and illness has done to her has avoided the pitfalls of drug and alcohol use. But our other brother, my full biological brother, has been having some of the same problems that I was having in the year before May 25. I can only hope and pray that his adoptive parents will come to understand how important it is for him to know the whole truth of where he came from. My family and defense team have all the information that he needs. I beg them to use it to help my brother.

I knew I was falling apart and I knew I needed help even if all the causes were not known to me. I thought my darkening depression, which led me to abuse drugs was caused by the torment that my girlfriend was putting me through. Adoptive kids like me, I now know, seek out rejection, believe on some level that no one will keep them. In Agnes Lee I found the perfect tool for my self hatred, a pathological liar, who claimed she was incapable of genuine feelings for people, I was going to teach her to love. Instead she taught me the pain of being rejected, of having my offspring aborted, of using methamphetamine to mask pain. It was for her that I first purchased speed. I tried it for the first time, and it made me feel good, so I began to use it on a regular basis.

This usage quickly turned into an addiction. This addiction soon ran over into every aspect of my life. I started ditching classes at school almost every day. I quit the school volleyball team that I had played with at the varsity level. My life began to fall apart around me. My behavior began to change. I became an aggressive, violent person. I began to fight with my parents more and more.

My parents noticed the change as did my coach and my fiends. My parents knew something was wrong, so they took me with them to see a family counselor. This counselor, whom it turns out was not licensed, told my parents that I suffered from attention deficit disorder, which I didn't. He, in turn, sent me to a psychiatrist. I met with this psychiatrist for about 20 minutes. At the end of these 20 minutes, this doctor gave me a prescription for a drug called Dexedrine, a form of amphetamine. I began taking the drug the next day. When I ran out of the illegal speed I used the dexadrine as a substitute.

It was two days after meeting with the psychiatrist that Dave Cash called me on the phone and invited me to travel to Las Vegas for the weekend with him and his father.

When we arrived at State Line that evening around midnight, I was coming down from my speed and trying to reverse the effects of the crash with my newly prescribed Dexedrine. This seemed to stop the downward spiral. But it wasn't

enough. So I started drinking as soon as I got the chance. While I was buying my first drink of the night, I had the same thought that I would have almost every time I began to drink: "I must get drunk or I'll go mad." Every time I would get drunk, I would forget about all my worries and problems. I would just be happy. So I drank.

It is sickening to me that all these things coming together provoked me to such brutality.

I was raised by parents who are moral and ethical people who deplored violence. They were more than good to me and they taught me to be a moral and ethical person as well. As a teenager I gave in to my weaknesses without even knowing what they were. The teenage culture I was part of was full of the language of violence and hatred. I didn't think it affected who I was. Maybe I was wrong about that. My fixture plans at the time did not include criminal activity, let alone such brutal behavior. Although I feel responsible for what happened that night I also believe that it cannot be understood as merely the evil act of an evil person. It could have been prevented by me had I been armed with the knowledge I have now but also by others had they done the right thing. Had I received competent treatment when I was seeking it, like the residential alcohol treatment program I expected to enter only to be turned away. Had I not been misdiagnosed by an



unlicensed therapist and prescribed drugs by a careless psychiatrist who was relying on that misdiagnoses. Had any of the three mental health professionals I sought help and advice from even raised the issue of adoption, they might have treated me for the complications it caused in my life. Had we known where and who I came from and what the risks were. Has David Cash been a human being instead of a callous brain without a heart or soul. Had the casino not sold alcohol repeatedly to an 18 year old. Had the gambling interests not lured families to their casinos for all night activities. Had David Cash Senior kept his promise to leave by 3:00 a.m. . If any of those things had been different, would that have saved Sherrice? I believe so. But none of us will ever know.

### **What Good I Want to Come of This**

That any of this happened is indeed tragic. But to me, it would be even more tragic if nothing is learned from this horrible occurrence.

In letting the circumstances of my life and how it led to this tragedy be known I'm not seeking sympathy or forgiveness or a lessening of my own guilt. My only desire is that parents and kids alike will learn from my life and Sherrice's death how to detect problems such as I had and prevent their escalation into tragedy.

I robbed Sherrice of her happiness, of love and laughter and learning and

accomplishment. It doesn't matter what she would have been, she was like anyone's daughter or sister or niece or cousin, an innocent child, who deserved better than she had in her short life. What happened to her is every good parents nightmare. But other children won't be protected so long as people believe in stereotypes and caricatures. I am not a monster, a pedophile, a delinquent, a sociopath. I was not a predator waiting to snatch this child from her family. If I were all these things, it would be that much easier to understand and explain. I am not that different from other people's sons or brothers or nephews or cousins. I was a high performing, likable kid with a bright future, a sense of duty and a sense of honor. What happened to me could happen to others kids. Like Sherrice I expected a long life surrounded by a loving family. It is not in my nature to crawl off into some hole and be forgotten without speaking out against those things that could be changed to protect other kids, kids like Sherrice and kids like me.

What needs to be understood is that being adopted is not the same as being born into a family. Things are different now then when I was adopted. There are a lot of open adoptions now where the adoptive parents know all about the biological parents and can give their children the vital information the whole family needs to understand each other. Many adopted kids, don't go through the confusions and doubts about who they are like I did. But a lot do. Don't get me wrong. This

doesn't mean that adoption is bad. What's bad is not knowing who you are, what your genetic history is, or why you were given up for adoption in the first place. For people like me who were part of a closed adoption it shouldn't be as difficult as it is to find out about your roots. If there are good reasons not to give out the names of birth parents then at least mental health, medical records, criminal records and ethnic identity information should be readily available to adoptive families. Had my parents not been led to believe in the false popular myth that adoption is a non-issue in the adopted child's mind, they might have suspected the existence of a secret shameful self inside of me. They might have seen how serious my struggle with it was. At the very least, knowing my genetic history might have tipped them off to my propensity for drug abuse and my easy addiction to alcohol. Closed adoptions are dangerous. Mine is only one such example.

Second, we shouldn't let our culture raise our kids. Parents, whether adoptive or birth, or even foster, need to watch their children more closely, spend more time with them, come to know them. It's too easy to let the television, the peer group, or the school raise your kids. Especially with teenagers, who are trying to be independent and rebel, communication is everything. It can't be all that hard to detect drug abuse if you really watch your kids closely and understand how prevalent drug abuse is in teenage culture. It's amazing how many kids I knew who

were using drugs whose parents didn't have a clue.

Another issue is drugs, both illegal and prescribed. I don't know what can be  
- -  
done about the proliferation of drugs in today's society but it's obvious that what  
the government is doing now, isn't working. But a lot can be done about  
incompetent psychiatric doctors and the proliferation of so-called "therapists" who  
do more harm than good. The psychiatrist I saw knew that I had abused speed.  
Nevertheless, he relied on an unlicensed trainee for an erroneous diagnoses and  
proceeded to prescribe a drug for me of the same type that I had been abusing.  
There must be a tighter rein on the dispensing of mind altering and mood altering  
prescription drugs.

As for psychopathic girlfriends and morally reprehensible, sociopathic  
friends, not much can be done there. But the teenage culture that stresses early  
sexual experiences, that promotes violence and encourages hatred and rivalries  
makes the choice of such friends too likely, even for kids who have been raised to  
be good.

I know better than to take on the gaming industry in the State of Nevada but  
neither Sherrice nor I belonged in that casino at 4:00 in the morning. I've heard that  
some of the casinos have made changes in the hours that kids can be in the arcades  
but its obvious that the gaming industry still wants the family business and have

attractions for kids at the hotels and casinos. You can't blame parents for bringing their kids to places where they have clearly been invited. But what are kids doing around gambling and drinking and nudity period? I had no trouble getting drunk at casino bars or playing casino slots in Primm and Sherrice was not the only little kid running around that arcade that night and morning.

Finally, I want to address the Internet and child porn issues that were raised in my case. I've been labeled a pedophile because I had so called kiddie porn pictures and video clips in my computer. Here's how they got there. Seven days before May 25 I was E-mailed a zip file - I didn't know what was in it until I used a program to unzip - or open it. It contained a lot of erotic pictures, only a few of which were of children and none of which were extreme or of real sexual acts.. I didn't seek out this material or ask for it to be e-mailed to me. I never had and do not have any sexual interest in children. I saw this stuff as a curiosity. Teenagers are curious about weird and taboo things. I had been sent adult porn before that and many of my friends collected porno and erotic pictures and magazines and movies. None of us thought it was a big deal. At the time I got the stuff I was using speed dial and was up all night most nights. I spent these nights organizing stuff in my computer, creating file after file of the same material. The computer expert we hired confirmed that most of the data in my computer, including the e-mails I was sent of

porno was moved around over and over into files with different names. One of the effects of speed is to make you want to arrange and organize things. I did not and do not believe that moving around this child porn material changed my sexual orientation. Much has also been made of an alleged chat-room dialogue. Everybody lies to everybody else on the Internet. Why such unreliable junk would be allowed to be used against someone on trial for his life I will never understand but So be it.

If people really believe that seeing child porn makes you a pedophile or seeing violence makes you a killer then we should have laws punishing AOL for allowing this stuff to be sent over their service. I guess we should also have laws punishing movie producers for every drop of blood shed in their films. I think its a bad idea to let your kids stay glued to their computers and have their social life take place on-line. It too unreal and isolating. I did it in the depths of my isolation. That isolation and lack of real relationships and communication with your family is the real destroyer, not dirty pictures.

### **A Look at My Future**

The bitterness of my punishment is great, but it is a fitting retribution for the evil I have wrought. I stand on the brink of a vast obscurity, I am about to

disappear from a public view that I never sought and never enjoyed. But I owe it to my family and to Sherrice to try to do something meaningful with the opportunity for reflection and study that lies ahead. Many people believe that life in prison without the possibility of parole is an utterly hopeless and futile existence. This is not the case. Spending the rest of one's life in prison is far greater than being executed. If a person convicted of a crime is put to death, that person will not have the chance to maybe one day make it up to society for his wrongs.

I do not plan on withering away inside of a prison cell. I always wanted to make a contribution to the world, and to the extent I am allowed to do so, that is still my plan. There is more to understand about what happened here than I yet know. I can't let Sherrice's death be in vain. I can't let the love and support my parents have given me and grief and fear that they had to go through on my behalf be in vain. I know that whatever I learn and however I strive to do something meaningful with my life, it can never make up for another human being's death but if through my efforts lives can be saved, then I have at least made a beginning.

I owe my parents and my sister far more than I could ever give for all the support they have given me throughout all of this, both financially and emotionally. If not for them, I would have given up my life to be disposed of by the state. So to my mother, my father. and my sister, I must profess my deepest thanks. Thank you.

I will do everything I can and work hard to make you proud. One day I will be something and someone that you will be proud of. I love you.

Thank you for your patience.