

The Mayor Will Make a Brief Statement, and Then Take Questions

by David Nickle

“Good afternoon.

“The death of a child affects all of us deeply. We are a community of parents, of brothers and of sisters, of friends and neighbours. Any child lost is a loss for us all.

“We feel the loss of little Nicholas Fletcher especially keenly. Who among us does not recoil in horror, at the echoes of the squealing tires of the car that cut short Nicholas’ brief, brilliant life? Who among us does not, in the early hours of these dark mornings, awaken clenched, bathed in sweat, eyes fixed unwillingly on Nicholas’ unforgiving, uncomprehending stare?

“I have spoken with the Chief of Police, and he has assured me that his detectives have made the hunt for Nicholas’ killer their highest priority. Make no mistake, it is a challenge, for homicide detectives are no different from any of us. They weep for Nicholas too; they feel his cool fingers on the napes of their necks, hear his soft, wordless whispering in their ears. The dreams he conjures wake them also. But with diligence and fortitude, I am confident they will apprehend the coward responsible for this travesty—and so, we pray, end this terrible chapter in our city’s history.

“At this time I would like to thank the eyewitnesses who have come forward already, and urge others with any information that might help the investigation to do the same. And I would again like to speak to that motorist among us, who has so far remained silent.

“Come forward; admit to your crime. You will, in a very meaningful way, be saving your city; your community; your family.

“Yourself.

“As for the rest of us: what can we do to quiet our grief? We can recall that we are citizens of a fine, brave city—a great city, with brightly-lit boulevards and fine restaurants and theaters, museums and

stadiums; a kind city, with many strong and mutually supportive faith communities. Our city.

“Nicholas speaks to us from the dark corners, the cold spaces—but they are shadows amid light, a chill draft by a glowing hearth.

“It is from this place—the warm nest of our homes and communities, the cherished receptacle of our dreams . . . our sanity . . . that we must send a clear message:

“Nicholas—we grieve for you. We offer our comfort to your mother and your baby sister in their pain. We yearn to see the driver who killed you brought to justice.

“You truly do live on in our hearts, truly . . . truly . . . as no other boy, living or dead, ever has.

“Now please. Release those hearts. They are not yours to inhabit.

“As Mayor of this city, I beg you. Rest in peace, son. Please Nicholas. Just stop.”