

KENT STATE

The title 'KENT STATE' is rendered in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. The word 'KENT' is on the top line and 'STATE' is on the bottom line. Several light-colored, stylized leaves are scattered around the text: one is tucked under the 'E' in 'KENT', one is inside the 'A' in 'STATE', one is to the right of the 'T' in 'STATE', and one is below the 'S' in 'STATE'.

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You are new here,
and we don't want to scare you away,
but we want you to know the truth,
so we will start by telling you what is most important:

They did not have to die.

*But they did die.
They were sacrificial lambs,
coldly, deliberately slaughtered.*

No, they weren't—it was a mistake.
A tragic mistake.

*It was calculated!
Planned!
They were lambs!*

It was a tragic mistake.

You don't have the whole story.

And you always think you do.

I know what I saw. I know what they did. I know that those kids will never wear tat sleeves or gauges or listen to Mötley Crüe or watch Star Wars or read Harry Potter or talk on a cell phone or use a computer or play video games or realize the Vietnam War is over and their unwilling, unknowing, unplanned-for sacrifice helped it come to an end.

Yes. It's a tragedy.

*And now there are other wars! More wars.
War after war after war.*

War is never over.

It's over if we want it to be.

War is never over.

*John Lennon said it was. "War is over if you want it."
It's in a song he and Yoko wrote in 1971.
Too late for Allison, Bill, Sandy, and Jeff to hear it.*

Are we going to argue again?

Yes. We always argue when we speak of the killings.

Let's try not to argue.

Let's tell it the way we remember it, all of us.

Because, look, we have someone new here,
someone new to listen to us.

I see that.

Hail, young friend . . . you are a feast for heartsick eyes.

I can tell, you are about the same age that Allison was.

Allison and her “flowers are better than bullets.”

*That’s what she said to the National Guard soldiers,
the day before they killed her.*

I think our new friend looks like Bill. Bill was an Eagle Scout.

Or Sandy—I loved Sandy.

She was wearing a red sweater that day.

Or maybe Jeffrey. Jeffrey went to Woodstock!

And then, on May 4, 1970,

less than a year later,

he was shot through the mouth and killed

instantly.

I loved Jeffrey so much. I loved them all.

I did, too, of course.

Nine were wounded. Don’t forget them.

I can’t forget them.

Or us.

We were all wounded that day.

Yes. We all bear the scars of that day.

Our country bears the scars of that day.

We are forever heartsick.

Yes. So let's tell the story
one more time,
for our new friend.
Let's try not to argue.

I can try not to argue, so long as you don't invite the others.

The others will come.
They always come when we remember.
I tell them they are part of the story,
even when they disagree with me.

**I* disagree with you.*

We won't be able to stop them from coming.
The ones who think those four deaths were justified.
The ones who think more kids should have been shot.
Killed.

I hate them.

There is no place for hate here.
Not anymore.

I hate them.

The ones who want us to forget—
they will come, too.

The ones who tried to erase the fact that

*grown-up America
killed its children in 1970
and never apologized for it.*

I hate them.

Tell the story, then.
This is a place for remembrance.
And for sharing what we remember
so it won't happen again.

But it WILL happen again. It always happens again.

It doesn't have to.
You start.
I promise not to argue until you've finished.
You start.

*I'll try.
But don't expect me to agree with you.
I don't even like you.*

You don't have to like me.
Just tell our new friend what you remember.

I like it better when you tell it and I disagree.

Then I will start.
Let me make room for our new friend.
We don't want to scare you away, friend.
Take the most comfortable chair.
Sit. Listen.

Make up your own mind.

Open your heart.

Here is what is most important:

They did not have to die.