

Jason dropped to the floor and crawled closer to the window. By raising his head just a bit, he was able to make out a dark figure standing in the gazebo and pointing a rifle at the crowd. He wore a mask which hid his face and long gloves that covered his hands. As if in slow motion, Jason watched him choose his next target and fire.

By this time the store owner had made it across the causeway and taken cover behind a bench. Unable to merely stand by and watch, Jason saw that the shop door had been left open. He moved cautiously to the doorway, took a breath and then dove through it. He scrambled forward and huddled behind a vending kiosk while he caught his breath. Risking a glance around the machine, he made eye contact with the shoe merchant, who was still kneeling behind the bench. In an unspoken agreement, the two decided they would try to disarm the shooter. They moved at the same time, with Jason running for the bench while the salesman pushed forward, trying to reach the cover of the bushes surrounding the gazebo. Jason was only feet from the bench when he saw the shooter turn the gun toward him. He dove, painfully scraping his hands and knees on the pavement as he landed hard behind the bench. A shot sounded and the report from it echoed through the rapidly emptying square.

Frantic, Jason tried to plan his next move. He craned his neck, trying to see the store owner but the bench blocked his line of sight. From his hiding place, he could only just see the edge of the bushes near the gazebo. He licked his lips and made a decision; he would run toward the bushes and try to regroup with the merchant once he reached them.

Across the square a tall woman burst from a hiding place and ran desperately for the safety of a side street. The shooter whirled, the barrel of his rifle tracking her movements. He seemed to wait, then fired just before she reached safety. She dropped without a sound and did not get up again.

The woman's escape attempt had distracted the shooter and Jason realized that the man was now looking away from him. Fighting back his terror, he seized the opportunity and ran forward blindly. Upon reaching the bushes he threw himself to the ground and lay still, making himself as flat as possible. In light filtered by the low branches overhead, he felt a layer of gritty twigs and leaves, and the smell of dirt filled his nose. As his eyes adjusted to the dimness, he froze. The shop owner lay only a foot away. He was dead, having been killed by a single shot to the head.