Introduction

TW: discussions of ableism, suicide and mass violence

This is an excerpt of several scenes from a larger project entitled “Ouroboros”, which is a fictionalized account of a high school shooting from the perspective of the parents of one of the shooters. In these scenes, we examine the relationship between the two perpetrators and the parents.
Scene 1

A FRIEND, dressed in a trenchcoat, a t-shirt that has “Kill Them All” written on it, blue jeans and white shoes, walks out in a spotlight with a shotgun. His face is blank as he stands in silence for a moment too long.

A FRIEND

My favorite president is Theodore Roosevelt. In middle school, I was assigned to learn about him for our Social Studies unit on U.S. presidents. There were some things I learned about him that were pretty cool. He wanted to preserve nature and, as a boy scout, I fucked with that sentiment. I became a vegetarian for a month to go through what Teddy did after reading the Upton Sinclair book, “The Jungle”. I read biographies about him for years afterwards. (beat) What I remember most about him was a phrase that he used in a speech. It was in September of 1901 and he was addressing the Minnesota State Fair in Falcon Heights, Minnesota. He was outlining his foreign policy. He used this old proverb, which he credited from Africa. He said “Speak softly and carry a large stick”. (looks at the shotgun, racking it in the process, then smiles at the audience).

Lights out.
Scene 2

SON sits at a table. He looks out to the audience. He looks uncomfortable.

SON

I’ve always had problems making friends. I always get really sweaty palms whenever I talk to people and my breathing stiffles. It’s caused a lot of problems. (beat.) I hate feeling this way though. I get mad at myself all the time because of it, not being able to handle myself in social situations well. It bums me out, which then makes me mad, making this a whole cycle. It became a problem in my house because I would swear at myself whenever I didn’t get something like a bad grade or I was being chewed out for something like not doing my dishes before my mom came home from work. I try hard not to do stuff like that because of my parents, but it gets the best of me. But, as I was saying, if I haven’t known you for years or through one of those church things my mom sent me to on the weekends, odds are I wouldn’t approach you. That being said though, I have people who I talk to. I’m not alone or anything. I have this one really good friend though-

A FRIEND, dressed in a flannel, t-shirt and jeans, walks onto stage and daps up SON.

SON

We met a couple years ago-

A FRIEND

During freshman year-

SON

I was-

A FRIEND

15.

SON

14. It was during Earth Science and there was that one kid-

A FRIEND

Oh, the retard?

SON

(laughing) HA! Yeah, yeah, that one kid.

A FRIEND

Walking around with one T-Rex arm and not being able to say anything correctly-

A FRIEND stands and does a mocking impression of someone with cerebral palsy.
A FRIEND
I-i’tsch not a lisshp. I ha-ha-have cer-cer-erbal-

A FRIEND and SON are dying of laughter at this point.

SON
Yeah, it was when that kid and I were paired for a science project-

A FRIEND
But he fucking pissed himself in class and left-

SON
And I needed a new science partner.

A FRIEND
*flashing a huge grin* That’s when I showed up late to class.

SON
From then on, we have been really close.

A FRIEND
Friday night sleepovers watching “Natural Born Killers”-

SON
Tons of school projects-

A FRIEND
Going to tons of concerts too-

SON
Especially those concerts-

A FRIEND
Bummed we didn’t get to see Nine Inch Nails though.

SON
I mean, they’ll be back soon, hopefully.

A FRIEND
Yeah, but in terms of school, we’ve taken...how many classes together now?

SON
I think it’s been 8 classes over the past 3 years. We are seniors now.
A FRIEND
Yeah, and not to mention, working at Angelo’s Pizzeria.

SON
That’s also true. He got me a job there during sophomore year.

A FRIEND
I am a shift manager.

SON
But like a cool one.

A FRIEND
I give free slices if you know you and you’re cool or if you are hot.

SON
Some nights, when it’s really slow, we’ll go up onto the roof and launch fireworks into the woods behind us.

A FRIEND
Damn, we have spent a lot of time together.

SON
That’s what you get with friends.

A FRIEND goes and sits back down as PHOTOGRAPHER walks up

PHOTOGRAPHER
Hey guys!

SON
Oh, hey man.

A FRIEND
What’s shaking, dude?

PHOTOGRAPHER
Oh, nothing. Just getting some photos for a project.

SON
Nice.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Yeah, did either of you play that new level of Doom that Henry set up?
A FRIEND
    Oh, the one with the-

PHOTOGRAPHER
    Yeah!

A FRIEND
    That level was awesome!

PHOTOGRAPHER
    Totally, dude. (beat.) Hey, would you guys mind if I could get a photo of you two?

SON and A FRIEND look at each other

SON
    Sure.

PHOTOGRAPHER steps back and SON and A FRIEND pose with finger guns pointed directly at the camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER
    Ok. 1...2..3!

PHOTOGRAPHER snaps a photo.

PHOTOGRAPHER
    Thanks guys!

PHOTOGRAPHER walks offstage. A FRIEND and SON watch them walk off and then start talking to each other

SON
    Anyway-

A FRIEND
    How’s the building going?

SON
    I’ve made a couple of them, but I keep having problems with the shrapnel.

A FRIEND
    What are you using for them?
SON
   I thought nails would work fine, but I don’t have know if-

A FRIEND
   Nah, man. Use screws and a mason jar. You then attach them to the-

SON
   Oh shit, you’ve been using screws?

A FRIEND
   Yeah, they’re smaller, so you can really pack them. More damage can be done.

SON
   Shit, man. That’s crazy.

A FRIEND
   Outside of that, do we have everything?

SON
   Well, there are two things we do need to go over.

A FRIEND
   What’s left?

SON
   We might need more shells.

A FRIEND
   Oh, good call. What’s your schedule looking like on Saturday before work?

SON
   Nothing that can’t be moved around.

A FRIEND
   Ok, I can pick you up at noon and we can make the drive across the state border to grab some more.

SON
   Very nice.

A FRIEND
   What was the second thing?
SON
    My mom wanted to know if you were going to come over for dinner tonight?

A FRIEND
    I can’t tonight, my dad wants me to see another of his military buddies to convince me to join after graduation.

SON
    Shit, alright, I’ll tell her.

A FRIEND
    What are you having?

SON
    I think she said Chicken Parm.

A FRIEND
    Oh shit, Chicken Parm?!

SON
    Yeah, man. You’re missing out.

A FRIEND
    Ok, well, are we still on for Sunday?

SON
    Yeah, come over and we’ll finalize everything.

Silence for a moment.

A FRIEND
    What did you think?

SON
    Of what?

A FRIEND makes a mimic of PHOTOGRAPHER taking a picture.

SON
    OH! (beat.) Uhhh...I wouldn’t, but if you want to-

A FRIEND
    I don’t know. Has he been cool with you?
SON
    Yeah, he’s nice enough.

A FRIEND
    Yeah. (beat.) Doesn’t seem like he’d be worth the bullet. You want to cut and get Wendy’s?

SON
    Lead the way.

Lights Cut as SON and A FRIEND walk off stage.
Scene 3

On one side of the stage, MOTHER and FATHER are sitting together on the couch. On the opposite side of the stage, SON and A FRIEND are standing behind the bed, looking at a massive amount of weapons.

ALL
   Let’s go over the plan.

MOTHER
   We should-

SON
   Move everything into position-

FATHER
   Have a conversation-

A FRIEND
   Collect all the last materials.

SON and MOTHER
   Show that we-

MOTHER
   Care-

SON
   Mean business-

FATHER
   Want what’s best for him-

A FRIEND
   Are going to become gods.

FATHER and A FRIEND
   The best course of action is to-

MOTHER
   Give him a moment to explain himself-

SON
   Set up the stuff in the cafeteria first-
FATHER
Illustrate that we are disappointed with him-

A FRIEND
Grab the rest of the stuff from the closet by the girls bathroom in the basement.

FATHER and A FRIEND
Don’t be afraid to-

MOTHER
Be honest with how we feel-

SON
Be selective-

FATHER
Be harsh but fair with him-

A FRIEND
Have fun.

SON and MOTHER
I just wish that we-

MOTHER
Can grow past this-

SON
Had more time to plan-

FATHER
Wouldn’t make a pattern of doing this-

A FRIEND
Had more people involved.

SON and A FRIEND
Together, we are going to-

FATHER and MOTHER
I hope that we can-

EVERYONE
Be heard.
Lights out.
Scene 4

The stage is dark before MOTHER walks into the spotlight, dressed in professional attire.

MOTHER
The last thing I heard him say was-

SON
(offstage) See ya.

MOTHER
I was standing in the doorway of my bedroom. I thought “it was too early for him to be up and leaving”. I left a note for my husband, saying that we should speak to him tonight instead of the weekend.

FATHER walks onto the stage, talking on a landline.

FATHER
Yeah, I can have those reports in by Thursday. (beat.) No, I’m working from home now. (beat.) I mean, it’s different but I don’t necessarily hate- (beat.) Hol-hold on, I’m getting a call on the other end of the line. Can I call you back in a minute? Thanks. (beat.) Hello? Hi, Andrea. (beat.) Andrea, you need to slow down, I can’t hear you. (beat.) No, he isn’t home. He’s at school. (beat.) Wait. Wait. What’s happening at the high school? (beat.) Shooters wearing what?! (beat.) Trench Coats.

FATHER realizes and runs offstage.

MOTHER
I was about to go to a meeting when I got the call. I can remember the urgency in his voice when he called from our bedroom and said-

FATHER
(from offstage, in a hoarse and almost in tears yell) You need to get home now! Something is happening at the high school!

MOTHER
(losing composure) My heart sank. He was out of bed and leaving the house before the coffee was made.

FATHER
(from offstage) Oh dear god, you need to get here now!

MOTHER
He only said one thing: “See ya”.
FATHER
(from offstage) It’s on the news! They are talking to the students! They are talking to fucking kids!

MOTHER
(Almost completely breaking down) I drove home, going 30 above the speed limit. Hoping and wishing, praying that he was ok. (beat) That he wasn’t hurt.

FATHER runs onto the stage

FATHER
(grabbing MOTHER) They are saying that the shooters were wearing trench coats and his isn’t here!

MOTHER freezes for a moment and just staring at FATHER, until it all clicks.

MOTHER
(in tears) N-no. (beat) It can’t be. Not him. Oh-. Oh please god, not him.

The distant sound of police sirens can be heard.

MOTHER and FATHER crumple onto the ground as the sound grows louder

MOTHER
(wailing and screaming) Please God, kill him! Make him stop! Make him stop! Make him stop!

Lights cut out on MOTHER as she screams and cries on stage with FATHER for the rest of the scene. A spotlight falls on SON and A FRIEND, standing behind her as the song “Pinion” by Nine Inch Nails plays. They are dressed in their trench coats, t-shirts and blue jeans.

A FRIEND
Time for Plan B.

SON
Guess it’s time.

They check the ammo in their guns, then give each other a headnod.

A FRIEND
How many did you get?

SON
I didn’t keep count, how about you?
A FRIEND
    I think 12. Maybe

SON
    Oh nice.

They both give each other a final forearm handshake.

A FRIEND
    It’s been an honor.

SON
    Likewise.

As the song builds to a climax, they place the guns to their heads.

SON and A FRIEND
    1...2..3!

Lights and music cut out suddenly.