

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-it'sch 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 stares 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.