

The Good Boy Game

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Setting:

Bedminster, New Jersey
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"It's one of the richest towns in the country, and yes, it's in Jersey, but not the Jersey you know.
Think Greenwich, CT on steroids. " - Urban Dictionary Definition of Bedminster

The house of the Schroeders.

The Bernardsville office of Judith.

Characters:

Mary-Beth Schroeder - Early 50s
Sam Schroeder - Late 50s
James Schroeder - 16
Judith - Mary Beth's Age - A Therapist

SCENE 1

The dining room of the Schroeders.
Sam and Mary-Beth, sit in chairs opposite of
each other. They look very stressed out.
On the table in front of them is:
An old shoe box
A worn black notebook
And a hand gun.
They avoid eye contact.
Then:

SAM

We should probably call the police.

MARY-BETH

We should. Yes.

SAM

You don't want to?

MARY-BETH

No, I don't *want* to.
I don't *want* to have my son taken away from me.

SAM

I know. Me neither. But.
He's dangerous.
This isn't something you can just ground the kid over.

MARY-BETH

Well, obviously.

She opens the notebook.
She flips through the pages.

MARY-BETH

This isn't anything like him.
When did this happen?
When did we lose him?
He was such a sweet kid.
And now...Planning to shoot up his school.

She grazes the gun with her finger.

SAM

The Internet. Video Games.
He spends a lot of time in his room.
I was willing to believe he was an introvert.
But this hateful shit.
I thought we taught him better.
I thought we *were* better by example.

MARY-BETH

For Godssake, we're about as anti-gun as parents can be.
Is he rebelling?
Did we breed this?

SAM

And he wants to kill us.
While we're asleep.
Did you read that part?

MARY-BETH

Yes, I read that.

SAM

The fucking-Killing us?
We fucking raised this kid.

Silence.

Sam gets up and grabs his phone.

SAM

So.

MARY-BETH

Do you remember that Malcolm Gladwell essay?
About school shooters.
And the one they found in Waseca, Minnesota.
He didn't even know why he was doing it
He just had all this hatred
And there was a template.
Set by school shootings in the past.
I think that's what it is for James.
He's not a mastermind.

School Shootings are so common.
 This is not him inventing-
 Or crafting an evil plan-
 It's following the template.
 He got lost and hurt
 Maybe bullies
 And he's following a template.

SAM

Template or not.
 It's pretty fucking evil.

MARY-BETH

No. It's not evil.
 That's missing the point.

SAM

Mass shootings aren't evil?

MARY-BETH

Of course they are-
 But he hasn't done that.
 He's only considered it.
 There are evil actions and forces-
 Performed by other boys who look just like him
 And were maybe even feeling what he was feeling.
 But those influences aren't his fault-
 And besides:
 He's already pushed the date back once.
 He might not want to actually do it.

SAM

He bought the gun.

MARY-BETH

Maybe someone gave him the gun.

SAM

Are we calling the cops or not?

MARY-BETH

Well.

SAM

Well. What?

MARY-BETH

Why haven't you called them?

SAM

I was waiting for you.

MARY-BETH

Waiting.

Why?

If there was a fire would you wait?

SAM

Please don't take this the wrong way.

But

It would look bad. For this to make the news.

To our family.

My work

~Our Work~

Is very political. Very left-leaning.

MARY-BETH

Is this about your fucking book?

SAM

My book will pay for our retirement.

I mean this book is meant to be a political anecdote for our era.

And gun control is a big part.

If my son goes to prison.

For something like this-

MARY-BETH

If your son DOES something like this-

SAM

I know, I know

I sound like a fucking idiot.

If we're the authors whose son ends up being a right-wing killer

Neither of us will sell a book again

Maybe,

There's a rehab center or something.

Some kind of facility we can send him to?
Maybe we downplay what we tell the police.

MARY-BETH

I think. We don't call the police. At all.

SAM

Really?

MARY-BETH

Yes.
I'm thinking.
What can jail, a trial, institutionalization do?
Besides traumatize him and make him resentful.
What can it teach him
That we can't?
If we call the police. That's it.
He might as well have already done it.

SAM

But. How do we----
Broach the subject.

MARY-BETH

We just sit him down and talk to him
I mean. How many situations like this-
Did people, especially parents-
Wish they knew ahead of time?
Wish they could have just talked to the violent, hateful person for a few minutes?
Nothing has been set in stone.
We can get him to therapy.
Maybe get him on anti-depressants.

SAM

You really think Judith would see him-
Hear everything he has to say-
And not call the police?

MARY-BETH

I think we can navigate that carefully.

SAM

And you still want him in this house?

We can throw out the gun.

But knives? Bats?

You want to sleep ten yards away from the person who wrote this?

MARY-BETH

He's 16.

We'll put locks on the cabinets.

SAM

We didn't even know anything about this an hour ago.

MARY-BETH

We know now.

His notebook said April 20th.

That's three weeks.

We have time.

A door shuts in the other room.

Sam and Mary-Beth freeze.

James enters.

He doesn't look at his parents.

Instead he goes to the fridge and takes out a refreshing can of Diet Coke.

SAM

James?

JAMES

'Sup.

Mary-Beth and Sam look at each other.

James looks at them.

JAMES

What?

MARY-BETH

We thought you were going to Tyler's.

JAMES

Nah.

James walks over. He sees the gun and the box.

Honey.

MARY-BETH

Fuck.

JAMES

James runs out of the room up the stairs. Mary-Beth and Sam stand up. Mary-Beth looks at Sam.

Go get him!

MARY-BETH

Sam runs up the stairs.
A commotion.
Sam runs down the stairs.

He has another gun!

SAM

James enters.
He aims the gun at Sam and **shoots--**
He misses. Sam runs into the other room.
He turns to Mary-Beth who
For some reason, instinct, probably,
Puts her hands up.
Nothing.
Nothing.
Then:
Sam runs back in and tackles James to the ground.
Mary-Beth walks over.

Sam- Careful!

MARY-BETH

Sam holds James down.
James bites Sam, causing Sam to recoil.
James jumps up.
He runs upstairs.
Leaving both guns behind.
Sam rolls over.

MARY-BETH

We have to go get him.

SAM

What if he has third gun?

MARY-BETH

Then he'll come back down and shoot us anyways.

SAM

We have to call the cops.

MARY-BETH

NO! Not yet.

We've got this.

SCENE 2

James' Room (littered in cans of Diet Coke)
 He's pushed his bed against the door.
 He finds the can he brought up earlier and
 opens it. He chugs the whole thing.
 He finishes.

JAMES

God fucking dammit.

He throws the can hard at the wall.
 He punches himself in the head.

JAMES

Fuck.
 FUCK FUCK FUCK.
 Shoulda hid them better.
 Shouldn't of been in my fucking ROOM.
 They'll die for that.
 How long has it been?
 Half hour? Longer?
 No cops yet, but let's be real.
 They probably called the pigs.
 Guns are downstairs.
 What do I do?
 It's a prank.
 A school play?

Except you already shot at him you fucking- IDIOT.

Fuck.

Okay.

Now or never.

I have to kill them.

With what?

James looks around his room.

He reaches under his bed.

He pulls out a bin.

He shuffles inside.

He draws a Swiss Army Knife.

A knock at the door.

MARY-BETH

(O.S.)

James. Sweetie? We just want to talk.

JAMES

Did you call the fucking pigs?

MARY-BETH

No, honey.

JAMES

Prove it.

MARY-BETH

I don't know how to do that.

JAMES

I don't want Dad in here.

MARY-BETH

He's downstairs.

JAMES

Promise?

MARY-BETH

Of course.

JAMES

Open my door.

Toss me one of the guns.

MARY-BETH

I don't know if that's a good idea.

JAMES

You can keep one.
Give me the other.
That way, it's fair.

MARY-BETH

Okay.

Sounds of Mary-Beth walking down the stairs.

JAMES

(To himself.)

Do I still have this?
I might actually have this.
Unless she's stalling.
For the cops to come.
I can go out the window.
But then risk arrest.
And a bodycount of 0.
Unacceptable.
Least I can do is kill them.

James moves the bed out of the way.
He puts the knife in his back pocket.
He opens the door.
Mary-Beth is waiting there.
James almost swings but Mary-Beth
Puts a rag to his face.
He slowly
Falls down.
To the ground.

MARY-BETH

(In tears.)

I'm sorry, honey.
I'm so sorry.

James passes out.
Black out.