

WEAPONS
A Play

by

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(The front door opens in a darkened living room. Bill enters and quietly closes the door. He sits and slouches on the couch. Paul shortly appears in sweatpants and tank top sneaking up on the living room, armed with a pistol. Bill hears something and looks back. He stands up.)

Bill. Paul? (*Paul seems dazed as though not realizing that his name is being called and that someone is close to him. Paul continues to approach, almost menacingly, toward Bill.*) Paul? Paul! (Bill becomes increasingly alarmed. Paul flicks a switch illuminating the stage.) *Paul, what the hell?*

Paul. (*dropping the pistol to his side...moans and sighs.*) Bill? (*alert now*) Bill?

Bill. Sorry, I was just gonna sleep on the couch until morning. (*pause*) Jesus Christ, you prick! What's going on? You sleep walk with a fucking gun?

Paul. No, no, I heard something...(*trails off and pauses*) Why didn't you call? We have the room ready for you. We were expecting you earlier. We called your cell.

Bill. I didn't hear it. It must be buried in a pile of stuff in the backseat.

Paul. Your clothes in the car?

Bill. Yeah.

Paul. Let's go get 'em.

Bill. Hold it. Let's just sit here a minute. I'm tired.

Paul. (*sits on the edge of the coffee table and slaps his brother's leg*) I'm glad you could drag your ass up here. We haven't seen you in a long time.

Bill. Last time was, uh...uh....

Paul. ...a year ago...That was the last time you were here...the funeral.

Bill. Oh, yeah. That long? (*pause*) I see by that "thing" (*points to gun*), you're still a cop at heart. Imagine what people would say if you shot your younger brother.

Paul. *(looking at the pistol in his hand, clicks on the safety and places it on the coffee table)*
You gotta call, man.

Bill. You said I could keep a house key when you bought me out. Maybe I should have knocked on the door,,,sorry. Old habits die hard.

Paul. Fuck, you know you're welcome anytime. Your old bedroom still has the BB hole in the window you made as a kid with the Daisy. Since Sarah left, the room is all yours.

Bill. *(gingerly touches the pistol for a second)* It's still hard to believe you left the police department. I remember how proud I was when you got out of the academy. I couldn't wait to hear about your first arrest.

Paul. Irish civil servant to businessman: It ain't a natural career change.

Bill. You'll make it.

Paul. Hey, Lara always looks forward to you coming up. You're still her idol...still shining in those Hollywood Klieg lights. She tells her friends all about you. You know those parts you had on that TV show? She's always replaying them on the Internet.

Bill. I know. She texts me about things. But I haven't really answered her like I should. I've been...well...

Paul. In a fucking funk.

Bill. A money fucking funk. Money from that TV job ran out long ago. *(gets up and wanders aimlessly)* I heard about Sarah...about her marriage.

Paul. Yeah.

Bill. I hear she's not talking to you.

Paul. Yeah. I had to hear it from Lara...from my own daughter, about my own daughter.

Bill. Who's the guy?

Paul. A young lawyer from the DA's office...ex-cop...so I hear. I may have even seen him at the Hall a few times...I don't know.

Bill. Have you tried to get in touch with her?

Paul. Hundreds of times. I've given up.

Bill. Should I try and talk to her?

Paul. You can try. Good luck. She's as stubborn as her mother was...more so. Sarah still blames me for something. I'm not sure what.

Bill. She got real angry at Judy's funeral when uh, uh....showed up.

Paul.May.

Bill. Yeah, sorry....when May showed up and....

Paul. She got over that.

Bill. Well, if she's over that, what is it?

Paul. How the fuck do I know!?

Bill. Well, what do you think it is?

Paul. The trouble with being children is that they have parents. They shouldn't have them. Nobody should have parents. Just pop right out into the slippery world and see the starkness. It's funny, despite all that sewage that whirls around them in movies, TV, and online, they're still so damn naïve. Bill, were we like that? No fucking way! They live in fairytales. They won't even take a streetcar anymore...that's how spoiled they are...ohhh the bogeyman will kidnap them. They need to be chauffeured everywhere...squired around like royalty.

(Pause)

Bill. Well, I'm glad I got here while you're in a good mood.

Paul. Sorry for the rant. I don't know. I guess I've been dying to say something to somebody. That marriage news threw me.

Bill. And the bar...how's the saloon business?

Paul. Being a businessman is...I don't know...you're on your own, that's all.

Bill. Saloon business is usually good in this town...San Francisco's a good drinking city.

Paul. Yeah. Anyway, I'm glad you're here.

Bill. Do the guys from the Department saddle up to the bar?

Paul. At first. But a lot of the guys I knew coming up in the Department, aren't the drinkers they used to be. Even killed a few...Shocky Smith...dropped dead walking to his car...and

Pete...Remember Pete Gomez? He was at Mission Station with me...Did undercover with me when I first got in. Three heart attacks...too much booze...fragile as a twig. The young guys...Well, they don't know me from shit.

Bill. What kind of customers do you get?

Paul. Neighborhood dregs, the Siberians, I call them...well, there not all dregs. I made a deal with local restaurants. Most of them don't have liquor licenses. They send their customers to me while they wait and then call when the table's ready. What do they call that...a symbiotic relationship?

Bill. You making money?

Paul. It was supposed to be an investment for retirement.

Bill. You making money?

Paul. Of course.

Bill. I remember Judy didn't like the idea...of the bar.

Paul. She could be a real ice-age Catholic. Thought I drank too much. Hated the bar-flies. As artsy as she was you'd wouldn't think she'd be so prudish, but she could be as belligerent as one of those old temperance bitches with an ax. Guy's gotta make a living. It's what I know besides being a cop.

Bill. If it's not making money...sell it. You got the cop retirement.

Paul. The money's all right. (*walks nervously around*)

Bill. Look at me...a nobody-from-nowhere actor giving financial advice.

Paul. (*abstracted*) You know, I went to Confession the other day.

Bill. (*laughing*) You're shittin' me?

Paul. I did. First time in...40, 45 years...I don't know.

Bill. I hope you paid the padre overtime.

Paul. Uhhh, I ain't going crazy or anything...It was just one of those spur of the moment things. I was walking past the church on Saturday afternoon. Went inside for the hell of it and...right away I floated back to when I was a kid there...the scent of the church, the cool dark...the chandeliers with the amber moth lights. There were people there who were going to Confession. The priest came out of the confessional. He thought he was done...saw me and

thought I was there to confess...so he went back inside...he was expecting me to go in...so...I obliged him.

Bill. Did it make you feel better?

Paul. Naaa. It was the same old thing. I didn't tell him anything...a few chicken-shit sins to make him think I was doing it for real. He gave me some prayers to say. But, you won't believe this...kneeling in the pews for a few minutes I got so...horny. I shit you not. It was just like the 8th grade...watching Patricia Faulkner kneeling near me during Mass. She was so sincere and devoted and sexual... her eyes closed...worshipping her God...like some ancient vestal virgin. Her breasts fascinated me. Their daily development haunted me through the 7th and 8th grades. More than anything in the world, I wanted to lie on top of her. That's all I could think of for two years. Honest, I ain't shittin'. I couldn't stop staring at her in class. At night, I went to sleep imagining the scene. That's what I should have confessed when I was a kid.... not fucking missing Mass or swearing after a bad throw to first base.

Bill. You bastard, you. If only....

Paul. It was always the same scenario: We'd be on Ocean Beach at night. The cold waves would be thundering in the dark just over a bluff of sand we'd be lying on...and I would roll on her like a frisky belching sea lion.

Bill. How romantic. Did you ever try it with her later?

Paul. No. She died in the 8th grade just before graduation...fell and hit the rocks at Land's End...rolled up on old Sutro Baths. She was walking there at night with some friends. We heard she'd been drinking. But who knows. When Sister Mary Justine told us in class, it was the first time I knew anybody who died.

Bill. How did you kids take it?

Paul. It probably confused us. But, for me, it didn't seem that sinister. I was kind of...awed by it... by her. She became even...more mysterious, more attractive in a way. The sister assured us she was in heaven. But I could never imagine heaven. Patricia Faulkner's body...that was heaven!

Bill. (*lightly laughs*) What's with all the nostalgia?

Paul. I don't know. Midlife crisis I guess. (*pause*) Fuck it. I'll get your stuff. Give me the keys.

Bill. Paul... my acting career ain't going so well lately

Paul. Hey, what did you come up here for, money?

Bill. Come on...no, I wanted to see the family again. I wanted to breathe the clean windy air of the city. LA's heat smothers me...the air dries your flesh like a fucking mummy.

Paul. I'm just fuckin' with you. The last money I sent you, I hope it did you good.

Bill. No, no. That was very generous. I just can't seem to get past auditions the last year.

Paul. You're a great actor, Bill. You're in a slump that's all.

Bill. Lori left me.

Paul. I figured that.

Bill. How did you figure that?

Paul. You didn't call for a while. And she ain't here with you. So, I figured it was a woman. You didn't want to admit it right off. That's your real funk...you got dumped. You don't think I know my own brother?

Bill. Well, I don't want to whine. At first it was a relief...when she left. The quiet in the apartment felt fresh. But it got lonely fast. I couldn't sleep. I kept going over and over my mistakes with her...they kept re-cycling in my brain through the night. Then, it got worse...especially when I couldn't find work. Maybe she cursed me.

Paul. She wanted to get married and you didn't?

Bill. I did...but out of desperation...only when I knew she was thinking of leaving. The more she backed off, the more I loved her. I was sick for a long time after she left...nauseous...I couldn't eat. I only just got my appetite back.

Paul. How you getting by for money?

Bill. Doing under the table labor for this handy man. I can put in AC units real good.

Paul. Things will come around for you. You know the acting life...feast or famine. Now, give me the keys and I'll get your stuff.

(Bill gives him his keys. Paul leaves. Bill wanders toward the kitchen entrance when May comes out from the hall. She's in a bathrobe. He's surprised to see her.)

Bill. Oh, hi! I'm sorry...I didn't know you were here. I'm Bill. *(shakes her hand)*

May. Yes, I know.

Bill. How are you?

May. I'm fine. (*sees the gun...is about to pick it up...but can't*) We waited for you until midnight.

(*Paul re-enters with a large gym bag.*)

Paul. I had to move your car out of the driveway. (*notices May*) Oh, you know May.

Bill We were just talking.

(*Paul carries the bag into the back and returns*)

May. (*to Bill*) You want something to drink or eat?

Paul. Sorry. I should have asked. Want a beer or a sandwich?

May. Maybe some coffee?

Bill. Naaa. I guess I'll just settle in.

May. Well, I'm going back to bed. (*gives Bill a cautious hug*). Goodnight.

Bill. Goodnight. (*May exits*) She's staying here?

Paul. Technically, no. She has a place in the Richmond. She and Lara get along great, so...

Bill. Nothing wrong with female companionship.

Paul. (*patting Bill on the back*) Glad you're here. (*begins to walk away but returns*) May left a towel on your bed. (*picks up his pistol*) Turn off the lights in here when you go to bed, will ya?

(*Bill wanders about the living room gazing at some photos on the mantle. We see Lara tip-toeing barefooted down the hallway toward the living room. She's dressed in sweatpants and T-shirt. Paul starts to leave for his room, when he spots her. Lara hurries forward and hugs him.*)

Lara. (*excited whisper*) Uncle Bill!

Bill. Lara...How are you?

Lara. I heard you out here. But I waited until Dad and May left.

Bill. Sorry I wasn't here earlier. I left later than I wanted.

Lara. I'm glad you came.

Bill. You emailed me about a problem with your dad.

Lara. Yes. I didn't want to tell you over the phone or in an email. I wanted you here.

Bill. What's the mystery?

Lara. Something is up with Dad.

Bill. What?

Lara. He acts weird.

Bill. He's a little high strung about things...the retirement, the bar and....Sarah. But, that's the artillery of life, I guess.

Lara. I know, Uncle Bill. But there's something more. I think he's losing money. That is, I think he's broke. And, he's well...sadder...or something

Paul. Maybe he still thinks about your mom. It's only been a year.

Lara. It's different, Uncle Bill. Last month he had a couple of wisdom teeth taken out...

Bill. Yeah...

Lara. ...The dentist had to knock him out. So I drove him there and waited for him. On the way back, as soon as we drove off, he suddenly started laughing...or I thought he was laughing. But when I looked at him he was really sobbing...like a child. (*sobs a little*) I didn't know what to do. I never saw him at that way before. Even when Mom died, he didn't cry like that.

Bill. (*touches Lara's arm*) Sometimes the knockout drugs make you sad.

Lara. There's more. Last week, twice, he came into my room in the middle of the night. He had his gun and was asking me if I'm all right...did I hear something... to stay in bed...that he heard a noise...that I should stay still. I don't know, but I think he was walking in his sleep because when I answered him, he didn't hear me. That scared me. That's when I decided to ask May to stay here.

Bill. It's always tough to see a rock like your Dad in a weak moment. He'll be all right.

Lara. Do you think he can go back to the police department?

Bill. No. Did he say he wanted to?

Bill. He's too old. No, no more being a cop. I can see he's upset about Sarah getting engaged and finding out through you.

Lara. I thought he knew when I said something about it. I'm so pissed at Sarah. She won't talk to him.

Bill. What's going on? What about the boyfriend? What's he like?

Lara. He's an Assistant DA...former SF cop. I only met him once.

Bill. Your dad should love the guy.

Lara. I guess. (*Bill nods. Lara's eager now to change the subject*) Uncle Bill, tell me about your acting. Your show's online. I keep reading your biography on IMDB. Any new roles?

Bill. I'm in a little dry spell right now.

Lara. We all watched it when it was on TV...on "Shepherd's Pie".

Bill. I was hoping they'd keep the character beyond the four episodes I was in. But... hey, listen, why don't you and I go to a movie? Haven't been to a movie for months. It'd be fun.

Lara. Oh yes. Let's go. There's a new theater on Van Ness.

Bill. Lara, what's up with Sarah? He won't tell me. You must know something.

Lara. She says she wants him to apologize.

Bill. For what?

Lara. I don't know. I hung up on her when we talked last. She called back and we didn't talk about Dad. She knows I get too angry if she bad-mouths him. Now, she says she just wants to talk to him.

Bill. Talk to him?

Lara. She says she's coming over.

Bill. Coming over to the house?

Lara. She wants something from him before she can get married. I wanted you to be here when it happens. I don't know what's going to happen. She's getting as weird as Dad...since Mom died.

Bill. When is this thing supposed to happen...this meeting?

Lara. She didn't tell me. Soon, I guess. I know it has something to do with Mom. It was all very...very...tense around here after the funeral. I don't know how to describe it. It was very quiet and ominous...I don't