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First Person Shooter

A drama in one-act

By Don Zolidis

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One-act Drama

4-10M 4-10F, flexible

After a horrific school shooting, a community is left to pick up the pieces. Why did this happen? The only friend of the shooter, Tad, who managed to stop the killer early in the rampage, blames himself. What's it like to be the best friend of a killer? Tortured and guilty, Tad is forced to examine his life and his relationship with his best friend—and where it went wrong. Could he have stopped the shooting before it happened? Could he have talked his friend out of it? First Person Shooter is a difficult and complex look at emotional abuse, bullying and the tragedy of being an outcast.

Cast of Characters

CHARLIE, 17, awkward. GT. (Gifted and Talented)

TAD, 17ish, also awkward. GT.

CHARLIE'S MOM

JESSICA, 18, editor of the high school newspaper. Very smart.

All of the other characters may be played by a group of actors who form the Chorus. These characters include, but are not limited to:

GARRETT, an athlete.

SUSAN, 13, a popular girl.

MELANIE, 13, her friend.

MR. BLIX, a high school counselor

TAD'S MOM

Setting: A high school in the Midwest. Winter.

(Music.)

(Gunshot.)

(Gunshot.)

(Sirens wail.)

(Sirens and music fade.)

(Lights up on a prison cell. Night. CHARLIE TREMBLEY is sitting on a bench, head down.)

(TAD is opposite, in his own light. He speaks to the audience.)

TAD

When I sort through my favorite memories, the happiest times were always outside. Before my Dad died. We lived on the edge of the greenbelt. In the winter you could go sledding out there. In the summer I used to disappear for most of the day – I made my own maps, tried to imagine the trees as some kind of vast forest – there was even a stream I could go swimming in.

(short pause)

Any decent psychologist will tell you that context is vital. So… the context: It's about first or second grade when you figure out who the outcast is. One kid on the playground not joining in with the others. One kid standing alone, trying not to be noticed. When he comes around, maybe a kick to the shins is enough to send him back to the shadows.

It was probably fifth grade when it really began, though.

(lights change.)

(The sound of a playground. Kids playing. CHARLIE stands apart.)

TAD

That's Charlie. Of course I knew who he was. We were in GT together. That's Gifted and Talented if you don't know. You can tell it from looking at him: real gifted.

(CHARLIE stands with his back to the wall.)

See that? You know why he stands like that? So no one can get behind him.

(Other boys enter, led by GARRETT.)

It started with kickball. It started with Garrett.

GARRETT

No way I'm taking that kid.

BOY 1

He's not on my team.

GARRETT

Dude. There's no way he's playing.

BOY 2

He doesn't even want to play. Who cares?

GARRETT

Hey! Hey you! What's your name?
(CHARLIE doesn't respond.)

BOY 1

He doesn't even know his name!

BOY 2

He doesn't have a name!

TAD

It's Charlie.

GARRETT

What are you friends with him or something?

TAD

No.

GARRETT

Charlie! Are you deaf? Are you stupid?

BOY 1

What a freak.

GARRETT

Hey check this out.
(GARRETT drops the imaginary ball. He backs up and kicks it directly at CHARLIE.)

(WHAM. CHARLIE ducks.)*
*(*One good way to make this noise is with a slapstick backstage.)*

BOY 1

Oh! Totally missed him!

GARRETT

No fair moving! You can't move!

BOY 2

If you move we'll kill you!

(GARRETT gets the ball back. He winds up another kick. WHAM! This one hits CHARLIE in the shoulder. The boys cheer.)

BOY 1

My turn!

(BOY 1 gets the ball, lines it up. Freezes.)

TAD *(to the audience)*

Once you know they won't fight back –

GARRETT

Target practice!

BOY 2

Tad's turn!

GARRETT

Come on nail him!

(TAD lines up the ball. He stops.)

Dude you are friends with him.

TAD

No.

BOY 1

If he's not gonna do it I want another turn.

TAD

No I'll do it.

(TAD kicks the imaginary ball. WHAM! CHARLIE is hit in the head. Everything stops. TAD speaks to the audience.)

Every day. Every day was target practice. Why would you go back out there? I mean that's the question, right? Why didn't he fight back? Why not defend yourself?

(GARRETT has a basketball. He's dribbling it. We hear the sounds of the basketball hitting the pavement. He advances on CHARLIE, dribbling.)

GARRETT

Hold still.

(He dribbles deliberately. Slowly.)

You waiting for it?

(he keeps dribbling. The sound of the basketball hitting the pavement fades out and is replaced by music.)

TAD *(to the audience)*

I think about this a lot.

(TAD steps away from the group. CHARLIE steps outside of himself away from the wall, looking back at the spot where he was. GARRETT flings the ball at the wall. The other boys cheer silently. TAD speaks to CHARLIE.)

TAD

Was this the moment? Was it here? Was this when it began?

(Lights change.)

(TAD's house. His MOM is waiting for him.)

TAD'S MOM

How was school today?

TAD

Fine.

TAD'S MOM

What'd you do?

TAD

Nothing.

TAD'S MOM

You learn about anything?

TAD

Yeah.

TAD'S MOM

You're always so quiet.

(TAD steps out to speak to the audience.)

TAD

After a bit I stopped going outside for recess. I just couldn't be that kid any more. I mean, you rationalize things, you say, if it wasn't him, they'd be going after me. But one day someone hit him so hard with the basketball he got a concussion. Snapped his head right against the brick wall of the school. Had to go to the nurse's office. So then I stayed inside. And I could feel them turning against me too. To be honest, I kinda forgot about Charlie. I had my own problems. The bus. Sixth grade. On the way back from an automotive plant.

(SUSAN enters and sits next to TAD.)

SUSAN

Hey.

TAD

Hey.

SUSAN

Pretty awesome today, huh?

TAD

I guess.

SUSAN

You guess?

TAD

Sure.

SUSAN

Anybody ever tell you you're cute?

TAD

No.

SUSAN

You are. You're gorgeous.

TAD

Shut up.

SUSAN

You probably get that all the time. Do you? Are people always coming up to you?

TAD

No.

SUSAN

They should.

TAD

Something is wrong with you.

SUSAN

You wanna kiss me?

TAD

No.

SUSAN

Why not?

TAD

I don't like you.

SUSAN

Ouch. I just said you were cute.

TAD

Cause you have brain problems.

SUSAN

You're scared of me, aren't you?

TAD

No I'm not.

SUSAN

I can tell. The way you're sitting. Are you scared of me?

TAD

No.

SUSAN

Then you should kiss me. Go ahead. I'm not going to bite you.
(She leans in and kisses him.)
See? Was that so hard? Was that the best kiss you've ever had?

TAD

You're crazy.

SUSAN

Was it the best kiss? It was, wasn't it? You've totally never kissed someone, have you?

TAD

Well I haven't kissed like eight hundred million people like you have.

SUSAN

But that was probably the best for me. Out of all of them. You know what? I know where you live.

TAD

Shut up.

SUSAN

I do. I know where you live. I think I'm going to come over to your house every day in the summer.

TAD

No you're not.

SUSAN

You don't want me to come over? Would you like hide if I came over?

TAD

No.

SUSAN

You probably would. You'd probably hide. Cause you're scared of me.

TAD

I'm not scared of you! I'm disturbed by you!

SUSAN

I'll probably embarrass you. I'll probably like go up to your Mom and be like, "I want to see some baby pictures!"

TAD

There is probably a clinic for you, you know?

SUSAN

What's your phone number?

TAD

I'm not giving you my phone number.

SUSAN

I'm going to get your number and I'm going to call you all the time.

TAD

What is wrong with you?

SUSAN

You know what's wrong with me, Tad? Nothing. I gotta go. This has been the best day of my life, by the way.

TAD

Freak.

(She leaves. TAD speaks to the audience.)

Later it occurred to me that a girl had actually kissed me. In my sixth grade brain that meant we were now going out and destined for marriage. I was surprisingly okay with that. I called her that night.

(TAD is on the phone.)

Skipping Forward

Hi.

MELANIE

You're really stupid, aren't you?

TAD

What are you talking about?

MELANIE

You think someone like Susan would go out with someone like you? Come on. Be serious.

TAD

Well –

MELANIE

I mean, honestly, take a good look at yourself, and then think – does this seem like reality?

TAD

She kissed me.

MELANIE *(sarcastic)*

Oh my God. Really? She kissed you on the bus?

TAD

Yeah – so -

MELANIE

I bet her five bucks she wouldn't do it.

(Pause.)

Do you really think she just suddenly fell in love with you and decided to make out with you on a field trip? And now you're like going out? Like boyfriend-girlfriend? Really?

(Pause.)

What? I didn't hear what you said.

(to SUSAN)

He's not talking now. He's just breathing. This is too funny. It's like his heart just broke.

(TAD hangs up.)

TAD *(to the audience)*

I could tell you about seventh grade. I could tell you about eighth grade when one of the kids wrapped a bike chain around my neck and was choking me until a stranger drove up and threatened to call the police. I could tell you about the people who didn't care what happened to me along the way – I could tell you about all of that. And you say – who did it? Who did it to those kids that made them be that way?

(Three of the BOYS surround TAD.)

BOY 1

Hey you got something on your back.

TAD

No I don't.

BOY 1

I'm just telling you to help you.

TAD

I don't have anything on my back.

BOY 2

Yeah you do. Oh man. It's pretty funny.

TAD

Shut up.

BOY 1

Why are you telling me to shut up? I'm trying to be nice to you.

TAD

I'm going home. See ya.

BOY 1

You gonna cry?

TAD

I'm not crying, I'm just going home.

BOY 2 *(re: back)*

Man that's funny.

BOY 3 *(looking too)*

Ha.

(BOY 2 slaps TAD on the back.)

BOY 2

Now you definitely got something there.

(BOY 3 laughs.)

(TAD tries to reach around and grab whatever it is that's on his back.)

BOY 1

Man there's nothing there. You're such an idiot. Typical GT kid: so smart in the classroom, so dumb everywhere else.

TAD

All right I'm going.

BOY 1

I didn't say you could leave.

BOY 2

Who said you could leave?

BOY 3

I didn't hear anybody say that.

BOY 1

You gonna fight? Is that what you're gonna do? You're gonna try and fight me?

(BOY 1 shoves TAD.)

CHARLIE

Hey idiots!

(They turn around.)

I see you answer to that.

(They aren't quite sure what to make of him.)

Are you acting out some sort of sublimated revenge fantasy here, is that what's going on? I'm just wondering. Do you not get enough attention at home? Is that why you're acting out? I mean – honestly – what kind of life skills are you learning here? Do you really think that years from now this ability of yours, to find the weakest member of the herd, is going to come in handy? Honestly, is algebra so hard for you that this is your response? Beating on that kid isn't going to make school any easier, guys. You're still not going to be able to spell or count. And I have other news for you – I mean, I received this in a letter so I know it has to be true – there isn't really a big job market out there for chest-pounding morons. I mean, that's not really a profession you can go into. So I suggest you soothe your little Neanderthal forehead crests and go back home to being a disappointment to your parents.

BOY 2

You're a freak, you know that?

CHARLIE

I've heard that before, actually. But thanks for reminding me.

BOY 1

Let's go. This is lame.

(They leave.)

TAD

Thanks. You didn't need to do that, though. I was totally handling that.

(TAD is about to leave. CHARLIE stops him.)

CHARLIE
Yeah. Hey did you go to Grant Elementary?
(short pause)

TAD
Yeah.

CHARLIE
I thought I recognized you.

TAD
I remember you.

CHARLIE
Yeah I was hard to miss.

TAD
Yeah.
(Pause.)
Uh…

CHARLIE
So what did you do to incur the wrath of the morons?

TAD
I think their major problem with me is my continued existence.

CHARLIE
Yeah.

TAD
I also took Kevin McQueen's art project to the belt sander.

CHARLIE
Why'd you do that?

TAD
Revenge.

CHARLIE
That's good. Revenge is good.
(The sound of a basketball.)

TAD *(to the audience)*
Did he remember me? Did he remember I was one of them?
(The sound of a basketball.)

If he did, he didn't say anything about it. It was like it never happened.

(CHARLIE sits to the side of the stage. TAD looks at him.)

But every once in a while… I'd catch this look in his eye…

(The sound of a basketball.)

TAD *(to CHARLIE)*

What are you thinking about?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

TAD

Okay.

(CHARLIE goes back to staring. TAD talks to the audience.)

I gotta say that at this point Charlie's Mom practically adopted me. She was just so happy that he had a friend, I guess. She invited me over for everything – for Halloween, for Thanksgiving – you see my Dad had abandoned my Mom when I was ten, and now she worked two shifts, so we didn't really have any money for anything. Charlie had it a little better, but not much.

CHARLIE'S MOM

I hope you're not gonna be like this in high school.

CHARLIE

What do you mean?

CHARLIE'S MOM

Lurking all day long. You need to get out and do something.

TAD

I do do something. I come over here.

CHARLIE'S MOM

You should try out for a sport.

CHARLIE

Not gonna happen.

CHARLIE'S MOM

What about golf? You could do the golf team. That's just free golf.

CHARLIE

The people on the golf team are demons.

CHARLIE'S MOM

You probably don't even know the people on the golf team.

TAD

You really think it's a good idea for other kids to be around us with golf clubs?

CHARLIE'S MOM

Fine. Don't go out for sports. You can't just sit here and play video games though. What about Yearbook?

CHARLIE

No. Nobody cool does Yearbook.

CHARLIE'S MOM

That's not true. In my high school all the popular kids did Yearbook.

TAD

Yeah and they wore MC Hammer pants and thought Vanilla Ice was awesome.

CHARLIE'S MOM

Well you have to do something.

(Lights up on JESSICA.)

JESSICA

You're going to love newspaper. It's really the best of both worlds.

TAD *(to the audience)*

That's how we met Jessica.

JESSICA

I'm really on a Kundera kick right now. Unbearable Lightness of Being? The Book of Laughter and Forgetting? Great stuff. He went downhill after Eastern Europe was liberated though. I don't think he had any subject matter if he wasn't being oppressed.

TAD *(to the audience)*

Her Dad was a counselor at the school. She had been home-schooled until age fourteen, which made her stranger than us. If that was possible. I kept on expecting her to say just kidding – someone bet me money to hang out with you, but… no.

JESSICA

Right. Right. But that's what I think Dostoevsky is reacting to. You can't take the Underground Man or Raskolnikov and say, this is what he believed. Those are embodiments of a philosophy that plagued him, you know? Like – these were his demons. And he had to get his demons onto paper. Cause I mean this is somebody who was consumed, you know? So what does he do? He invents part of himself that carries the disease and he writes manifestos. It's one step away from the Unabomber.

CHARLIE
That's a stretch. Just because he was creating a disturbed individual doesn't mean he was disturbed.

JESSICA
We're all disturbed, aren't we? Some part of us?
(The sound of a basketball.)

CHARLIE
Yeah.

JESSICA
That's what Crime and Punishment is about. Can you take an ordinary person… and make him a killer?
(The sounds of a basketball.)
Even more than that… do we have the choice to become killers?
(The sounds of a basketball.)
Anyway, I love dead Russians. Writers. They fight about ideas the way we fight about football teams.

TAD
The best Russian is a dead Russian. Writer, that is.

JESSICA
You're weird.

TAD
You're weird-er.

JESSICA
I'm trying to have a serious conversation here Tad.

TAD
No no go ahead. Explain how we become killers.

JESSICA *(she looks at him)*
It's easy. It starts with thinking you're better than everyone else.
(TAD steps out.)

TAD *(to the audience)*
To be honest, high school wasn't as bad as middle school.
(JESSICA leaves as groups of other kids enter.)
There was very little threat of physical violence at this point. The violence they inflicted was more subtle –

(TAD stands off to the side. Watching. CHARLIE is in the middle of everyone. The kids walk past him, ignoring him.)

GIRL 1

Yeah so that's what I'm talking about –

BOY 1

Dude it was awesome.

GIRL 2

I can't believe him he's such a jerk.

BOY 2

GT kids – so smart in the classroom, so dumb everywhere else.

(The continue to walk past him, conversations continuing – CHARLIE stares at the audience.)

TAD

Charlie started experiments. First, he tried standing in the hall, not moving, to see how long it would take before someone said something to him.

(CHARLIE stands there. The people move around him.)

Took three days. Then he tried to walk down the hall and make eye contact with everyone, just to see what would happen.

(CHARLIE makes eye contact with a few kids – a few of them look away. BOY 1 stops.)

BOY 1

What is your problem?

CHARLIE

What?

BOY 1

Is there something wrong with you?

CHARLIE

No.

BOY 1

Why are you looking at me?

CHARLIE

Is that a problem?

BOY 1

I don't like it when you look at me.

Skipping Forward

CHARLIE *(reading)*
Here's my admissions essay - `I used to think I was a victim. I used to think there was something wrong with me. Other kids knew what to wear, other kids figured out how to get their hair to look the right way without even trying – I spent thirty minutes in front of the mirror with a comb and I couldn't manage to get my cowlick to lay down for more than thirty seconds. And, as a pack of hyenas will catch the weakest gazelle and devour it, my classmates in elementary school tried their best to devour me.'

JESSICA
That's good.

TAD
Yeah.

CHARLIE
It goes on like that for a while and then ends in a series of uplifting clichés. My past has made me stronger. My hardships made me stronger.

JESSICA
That's true though, right?

CHARLIE
Well… I guess.

JESSICA
I think I'm going to write about becoming the next Spike Lee.

TAD
You're crazy.

JESSICA
What's crazy about it?

TAD
You're going to be Spike Lee?

JESSICA
I'm going to be the next Spike Lee. Do the Right Thing. Insanely good movie. Malcolm X. Genius.

TAD
All right.

JESSICA

Oh so now you're dissing on Spike Lee?

TAD

I'm not dissing on anyone, I just think that's a bit of a stretch.

(TAD steps out.)

It took a while, but the responses started to come in. Harvard.

VOICE 1

The talent pool this year was rich and diverse and we were forced to make some very difficult choices. Unfortunately, we cannot offer you a spot in the incoming Freshman class.

TAD

Yale.

VOICE 2

An extraordinary number of applicants… blah blah blah…. We cannot offer you a place

TAD

Cal Tech:

VOICE 3

We cannot offer you –

TAD

MIT.

VOICE 4

Due to the extraordinary number of applicants…

CHARLIE

No. No. No. No.

CHARLIE'S MOM

Why didn't you apply to a safety school?

CHARLIE

I'm not going to go to a state college, that's just like high school all over again –

CHARLIE'S MOM

This is ridiculous. You applied to four schools?

CHARLIE

Like you were paying attention.

VOICE OF BOY 1

GT kids – so smart in the classroom, so dumb everywhere else.

(Lights change. CHARLIE is slumped in the basement.)

CHARLIE

What about you?

TAD

My Mom can't afford anything. I'm probably going to end up at the community college.

CHARLIE

That's a waste.

TAD

Yeah. Sorry about um…

CHARLIE

All of them?

TAD

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Not as smart as I think I am, I guess. You know… it doesn't take much – the narrative starts to unravel so easily – Although tormented in his youth, Charlie Trembley overcame amazing odds, graduated with highest honors for one of the most prestigious institutions in the nation, and went on to do something extraordinary. What a lie. Delusion.

TAD

No it's –

CHARLIE

You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna be some drone. I'm gonna work in a software company – live alone in some rat-hole apartment.

TAD

Come on man you can go –

CHARLIE

Remember seventh grade? Before I met you – one time I saw these kids – they had found a stray kitten – stuffed it into a paper bag, and then they would take turns spinning the bag around and dumping the little thing onto the pavement to watch it stumble around. Why? Because they could. I bet that kitten thought it was destined for greatness too.

(TAD speaks to the audience.)

TAD

Charlie got worse. He stopped coming to school. He stopped trying in his classes. I tried to talk to him but…

ANNOUNCEMENT
We're pleased to announce that Garrett Wilson has chosen to attend Stanford next year on a full baseball scholarship. Let's hear it for Garrett!
(In the basement.)

CHARLIE
Would've been better if it had been a basketball scholarship.

TAD
Yeah. Don't worry about it, man.

CHARLIE *(snorts)*
Don't worry about it.

TAD
So what? It's not your life. Who cares what happens to him?

CHARLIE
I don't care. I don't, except for the fundamental unfairness of the universe.

TAD
Yeah, well we knew that a while ago.

CHARLIE
Jessica got accepted at Dartmouth, by the way.

TAD
Good. She deserves it.

CHARLIE
Yeah... I was thinking about applying there too.

TAD
Hasn't their deadline passed?

CHARLIE
Sure – I mean – you know what I mean. For the year after. Just to…

TAD
Just to follow her?
(CHARLIE nods.)

CHARLIE
I think I'm gonna tell her.

TAD

Oh.

CHARLIE

You don't want me to tell her?

TAD

Well it's just there's – you know there's three of us –

CHARLIE

I've had a huge crush on her for a long time.

TAD

I know that.

CHARLIE

So –

TAD

I'm just thinking that things might get weird.

CHARLIE

Yeah?

TAD

And… I guess I just don't see it happening. You and her.

CHARLIE

Why not?

TAD

I don't know.

CHARLIE

Why not?

TAD

It just doesn't –

CHARLIE

You don't know anything. I'm gonna tell her.

TAD

Charlie, look – you're not – this has been an ugly semester – I don't think you want to make things worse by getting your heart stepped on.

(TAD steps out. To the audience.)
He told me about it later. They worked at the library together -
(Lights change to the library. JESSICA has a cart with books on it.)

JESSICA
Sorry about Harvard.

CHARLIE
You heard about that?

JESSICA
Yeah.

CHARLIE
Who told you?

JESSICA
I don't know. Some kids were talking about it. I think it's cool that you even applied.

CHARLIE
Yeah.

JESSICA
It's like some people just aren't meant for high school, you know? Like you're too… good for this place. I mean, I bet when you get to college you're just going to be great – life will be great –

CHARLIE
It just won't be Harvard.

JESSICA
Who cares? Go somewhere else awesome. You probably got like nine zillion on your SATs, you can go just about anywhere. Go somewhere far away from here. And like reinvent yourself, you know? Be who you want to be instead of the person these people think you are.

CHARLIE
Thanks.

JESSICA
It'll get better.

CHARLIE
Thank you.

JESSICA
I should go. I'm supposed to alphabetize the children's section.

CHARLIE

That must be impossible.

JESSICA

It is. It's Sisyphean. By the time I'm to letter G, the kids have destroyed everything I've worked for.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

(Pause.)

JESSICA

You okay?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

JESSICA

You can talk to me if you're not, okay?

CHARLIE

All right.

(Pause.)

I'll talk to you later.

JESSICA

Okay.

CHARLIE

Can I ask you a question?

JESSICA

Sure.

(The sound of a basketball.)

CHARLIE

Nothing.

JESSICA

All right. See ya.

(She leaves. He watches her go.)

(The basketball continues.)

Skipping Forward

CHARLIE
Offered him something like eight hundred thousand dollars as a signing bonus. Just goes to show: act like a jerk, take steroids, abuse girls… life works out great for you.

TAD
Terrible.

CHARLIE
It's a shame, you know? All the crap he's pulled? It's like he has impunity. His actions have no consequences.

TAD
I know.

CHARLIE
It's not even that, his actions are endorsed.

TAD
Right.

CHARLIE
This is supposed to be our education, you know? This is what they're teaching us. That there are certain people who are glorified, ignorant people who are glorified, and the rest of us, who are forced to slave and live by a different set of rules.

TAD
Ridiculous.

CHARLIE
In the meantime you can't even afford to go to college.

TAD
And you didn't even get into college.

CHARLIE
I mean what kind of travesty is it that your family can't even afford to send you to the school of your choice, but had you been able to shoot a basketball or some nonsense you'd be fine. Is that the point? Is that what we're doing here?

TAD
You can't think about that Charlie -

CHARLIE
What are we even capable of doing about it?

TAD

I don't know.

CHARLIE

I guess we just roll over, right? This is how it works. You'll take it and you'll like it.

TAD

It sucks.

CHARLIE

You're not going to do anything about it, right?

TAD

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

Like if there was some way to get back at them – you wouldn't even be capable of doing that.

TAD

What are you talking about?

CHARLIE

You ever think about it?

TAD

Think about what?

CHARLIE

You know what I'm talking about.

TAD

No I don't.

CHARLIE

Yes you do. We were just talking about it.

TAD

What were we talking about?

CHARLIE

That stuff about the electricity.

TAD

I was just kidding around.

CHARLIE

I mean you talk about that –

TAD

What are you talking about?

CHARLIE

I'm just saying that if you had the opportunity for action, would you be the kind of person to take the action?

TAD

What action are we talking about?

CHARLIE

What action do you think we're talking about?

(Pause.)

TAD

Are you talking about doing something crazy?

CHARLIE

You know what's crazy? Getting beaten on again and again, and doing nothing. That's crazy. That's like being a slave, you know? Like… let's say if every day at recess someone was bashing your head in, and every day at recess you kept going outside… that's crazy. That's the act of an insane person, right?

TAD

Charlie I don't like talking about this.

CHARLIE

Or is it crazy to be the person bashing someone in the head?

(TAD can't say anything.)

You think I don't know what you did? You think I didn't remember you?

TAD

That was a long time ago.

CHARLIE

Just hoping I'd forget? Forget that you hit me in the head every day at recess for a month? Forget that you were going along with the rest of them -

TAD

I was a stupid kid. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

CHARLIE

I thought you were one of the smart ones.

TAD

I was just going along.

CHARLIE

I'm just saying – that when I come up with an idea to stand up for ourselves, you're saying that's crazy, but when it comes to inflicting damage on some geeky awkward fifth grader, you were fine with that.

TAD

What do you want?

CHARLIE

I want you to tell me who you are.

TAD

I'm sorry I did that to you. Okay? I don't know – I don't know why I went along with them.

CHARLIE

Yeah you do.

TAD

I mean yeah I know why I went along – I didn't want to be the one getting hit. I was glad that at least I wasn't at the complete bottom… there was at least one person beneath me – so yeah…

CHARLIE

You enjoyed it.

TAD

No.

CHARLIE

You did. Just admit it.

TAD

I didn't want to do it.

CHARLIE

Man, I was there. I remember this.

TAD

I didn't want to.

CHARLIE

You were usually the first one.

TAD

That's not true, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Just admit that – I don't understand how you can sit there and try to reframe the past like you weren't a complete jerk and a bully and a tormentor – how you can sit there and think your conscience is clear of this stuff –

TAD

Fine.

CHARLIE

Fine what?

TAD

Fine I tormented you. And I enjoyed tormenting you. But I was eleven years old. Kids are evil.

CHARLIE

Right. And now you're civilized.

TAD

What are you even talking about?

CHARLIE

I want to show you something.

(CHARLIE goes to a closet door.)

End of Excerpt.
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