

Blood Guilt

A one-act drama

By Jane and Jim Jeffries

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DEDICATION

To Ann and Lou Recine, whose Forgiveness Project planted the seed for the plot of this play.

We also thank Ryan Liddell and Ali Abraham for pushing us to write this play and for bringing it to life.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Trying to start over after a recent tragic loss, Nicholas has just moved to a new school. He is socially awkward and just needs a friend, so he reaches out to the girl in the corner, who silently writes in her journal. Slowly, they begin to build a friendship. Though it takes time to open up about it, a school shooting has taken the lives of each of their siblings. But when the girl, Ali, reveals her last name, Nicholas realizes her brother was the shooter. This play does not have easy answers but explores the anger and loss in the aftermath of a shooting and how to start a conversation toward forgiveness.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

“Blood Guilt” was produced at the Minnesota Fringe Festival in August of 2019. It was produced by CSOC Company, LLC. It starred and was directed by Ryan Liddell and Ali Abraham.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 M, 1 W)

NICHOLAS STEWART (M) Socially awkward loner. Still lives with his mother.

ALI VASCO (W) Suffers from food and shelter insecurity. She has a very hard shell.

SET PLAN

Set is simple: An isolated section of a high school cafeteria. You can have several empty tables around their table to suggest their isolation. Banners can help suggest the high school setting.

COSTUMES

After each lights down, the actors change articles of clothing to signify the passage of time, Ali less so. She should appear unkempt and wears mostly the same clothes. The implication is that she's not always sleeping at home. Small changes can suggest passage of time: wearing a hat, hair pulled back, hair down, throwing on a sweater or hoodie, etc. Nicholas wears khakis.

PROPERTIES

1 backpack (ALI)
1 notebook and pen (ALI)
Various brown bags (NICHOLAS)
1 hunk of cheese
5+ Slim Jims
1 5-hour Energy Drink
1 shank button
1 can of Pringles
1 granola bar
Little Debbie Swiss Cake Rolls
Oatmeal creme pies
Graphic novel (NICHOLAS)

Blood Guilt

(AT RISE: ALI sits at a table with two chairs. A backpack and a brown paper bag are on the table. She writes in a notebook. NICHOLAS enters and pauses before Ali, staring at her. An awkward pause before Ali feels Nicholas's stare. She slowly looks up and their eyes meet. Beat. Nicholas lowers his gaze and exits quickly. LIGHTS down.)

(LIGHTS up. ALI sits at the same table situated the same way. NICHOLAS enters and again stares at Ali. She feels his stare more quickly this time and looks up from her notebook.)

NICHOLAS: Hi. *(Points at a chair.)* Is this seat taken?

(ALI stares at HIM. Awkward pause. Ali pushes her backpack slowly off of the table until it lands on the empty seat. Nicholas lowers his gaze and exits quickly. LIGHTS down. Ali exits.)

(LIGHTS up. ALI enters and sits. She looks at chair then moves it to another location. She then sits at the table situated the same way. NICHOLAS enters, and Ali ignores him, writing in her notebook.)

NICHOLAS: Is this seat ... *(Sees there is no chair. Crosses to get the chair at the new location and brings it back to the table.)* Is this seat taken?

(ALI shrugs. NICHOLAS sits down, opens his sack and starts eating his lunch, a hunk of cheese. He is a mouth-open, noisy eater. Ali slowly looks up and stares at him. He stops chewing.)

NICHOLAS: *(Cont'd.)* What? *(ALI raises her eyebrows.)* It's cheese. *(ALI stares.)* Squeaky cheese. *(ALI stares.)* And I have allergies. So, you know, I have to alternate between chewing and breathing, since I can't breathe through my nose. I call it "choothing."

NICHOLAS: *(Cont'd.)* It would be weird if I called it “brewing,” since that’s already a word. I have to chooth because if I try to chew and breathe at the same time, I choke. I do know how to self-administer the Heimlich maneuver. And ... I’m leaving now.

(NICHOLAS lowers his gaze, wraps up his lunch, and exits quickly. LIGHTS down. ALI exits.)

(LIGHTS up. ALI enters and sits, looks at chair, starts to move it to another location, then decides to leave it at the table. She sits at the same table, begins writing in her notebook, scans the area, and continues writing. NICHOLAS enters.)

NICHOLAS: Is this seat taken? *(ALI shrugs without looking up.)* Sorry I’m late. *(ALI looks up, confused.)* Well, we meet at the same time every day. *(ALI rolls her eyes and continues writing.)* You see, my appointment with Mrs. Jenkins, I mean, Dr. Jenkins, my psychiatrist, went late. She’s concerned that my graphic novel has taken a dark turn. Which leads me to believe she lacks a fundamental understanding of the nature of graphic novels. *(Opens lunch bag and pulls out an energy drink. He takes a huge breath and drinks it all down.)* Hah! Five hours of energy in one breath. Talk about your power lunch. And no choothing.

ALI: *(Without looking up from notebook.)* Fresh out of Gorgonzola?

NICHOLAS: *(Looks around, surprised at first. Then realizes that ALI spoke.)* Gorgonzola?

ALI: It is a blue-veined cheese. That’s what you had last time for lunch.

NICHOLAS: Oh. You noticed? Actually, it was just plain old cheddar. I guess I should have scraped the mold off first.

ALI: *(Looks up from notebook.)* Seriously?

NICHOLAS: Mold can be good for you. Penicillin is made from mold, you know. And since it’s the cold and flu season—

ALI: Get a flu shot. And scrape your cheese.

NICHOLAS: Mom doesn't believe in shots. She believes that all those shots tear down your natural resistance to disease. Thus, my asthma.

ALI: Huh?

NICHOLAS: My mom blames herself for not getting a dog.

ALI: How did you get from flu shots to asthma to a dog?

NICHOLAS: If your immune system doesn't have germs to fight, it fights your own body out of sheer boredom.

ALI: Wait—

NICHOLAS: It's the same reason national governments pursue foreign wars.

ALI: What?

NICHOLAS: You don't want your army to get antsy from inactivity.

ALI: But—

NICHOLAS: And since most human diseases mutate from domesticated animals, a dog would have provided lots of opportunities for my immune system to fight viruses. But since I don't have a dog to exercise my white blood cells, they react to a pollen speck like it was a Mongol invasion. That's why I have to chooth my food.

ALI: *(Long pause while ALI stares at NICHOLAS.)* And this whole conversation started with—

NICHOLAS: Moldy cheese.

ALI: Right. *(Another long pause.)* I don't want you to talk any more.

NICHOLAS: But—

ALI: Shh!

(ALI returns to her notebook. NICHOLAS looks at his energy drink bottle. LIGHTS down. Ali and Nicholas exit.)

(LIGHTS up. ALI enters, sits at the same table, and opens notebook. She looks up and scans the area. NICHOLAS enters; Ali studiously writes in her notebook.)

NICHOLAS: Is this seat taken?

ALI: Why do you keep—

End of Freeview

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