

LAST BEST PLACE

Written by

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INT. DINING ROOM - FIRST FLOOR

An empty dining table. Four empty chairs.

A family of three walk into the dining room, one by one.

The father, the attentive JOEL SLATER (mid-40s) places a plate of chicken firmly on the table with one hand.

The daughter, the innocent LACEY-MAY SLATER (17), delicately sets a plate of leftover ham down with both hands.

The son, TRE SLATER (18), cautiously places a bowl of mashed potatoes down, like it's a priceless artifact.

The family sits down. An empty seat remains between Joel and Lacey-May.

JOEL

Oh, hey, Tre. Could you tell him
dinner's ready?

TRE

(casually)
Sure.

Tre leaves his seat and runs up the stairs to the--

HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR

A wall of white doors line the hallway, with one situated at the very end.

With a little kick in his step, he races up the stairs and heads to the end door.

He knocks it a couple times.

TRE

Dinner's ready!

Before there could be a response, Tre heads back downstairs.

With no one watching, the door opens slightly ajar.

DINING ROOM - FIRST FLOOR

The family fill their plates with whatever they can snatch, except for the mashed potatoes, which have been barely touched.

Out of view, footsteps are heard walking down the carpeted stairs onto the wooden floor. Nobody cares to notice.

A man with rugged clothes walks in the room and sits at the last remaining seat, looking like the real life Pig-Pen. This is BRODY PIKE (18).

Joel and Lacey-May both slightly turn their noses to Brody's vigorous body odor.

TRE

Hey, Brody. You want some mashed potatoes?

BRODY

(a slight smile)

Sure.

Tre picks up the bowl and hands it to Brody over the table.

Brody is about to put some on his plate when--

JOEL

Brody, can I get some when you're done?

BRODY

Oh. Yeah.

He puts some potatoes on his plate and hands the bowl the Joel.

Curious, Joel dips his pinky finger in the bowl and tastes it.

He smacks his lips at the taste and looks up, thinking.

Beat.

Without hesitation, Joel gets up from his chair and--

--**THROWS THE BOWL AT THE WALL!**

The glass bowl shatters on impact.

At the table, Lacey-May and Brody flinch and duck their heads away from the noise, scared.

An agitated Tre slightly looks away from Joel.

With a look that speaks volumes, Joel glares at Tre.

JOEL
 (with a forcibly soft
 voice)

Tre.

Tre slowly turns his head to him.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 I need to speak with you in the
 other room.

TRE
 Can it wait until after di--

JOEL
 (interrupts)
 When did I say you had a choice?

With no other option, Tre gets up and exits the dining room with Joel. Brody and Lacey-May remain seated.

Beat.

Loud, angry muffled screaming is heard nearby. The two slightly tense their shoulders upon hearing it.

It's Joel's voice yet what is being said is unclear.

The two slowly lower their shoulders.

Brody turns to Lacey-May, a petrified look in his eyes.

Lacey-May puts her hand on his shoulder and rests her head on his forearm. A sweet moment until--

--she mistakenly inhales through her nose and quickly lifts her head back up.

The screaming stops. Joel and Tre walk back to the table and sit down.

Back in his seat, Joel takes a couple big deep breaths through his mouth.

BRODY
 Mr. Slater?

Joel turns to Brody.

JOEL
 Hmm?

An awkward beat.

BRODY
 (with some hesitation)
 Did they show up again?

JOEL
 Yeah. They're still looking for
 you. Fortunately, they don't know
 you're here.

Joel sports a complicated smile. Brody doesn't notice the subtlety.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 You're going to be just fine.

Brody smiles, too, this time it's genuine.

BRODY
 Thanks, Mr. Slater.

JOEL
 No problem, buddy.

Joel looks down at his plate. There's only a couple slices of ham on it.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Not eating much today?

BRODY
 Nah. Not hungry.

JOEL
 You wanna go back up?

BRODY
 Actually, I was thinking about
 taking a shower first, if that's
 alright with you.

JOEL
 That's fine. Get on it.

LACEY-MAY
 I'll go with him.

Brody gets out of his chair and leaves the dining room, followed by Lacey-May.

Joel and Tre stay seated.

TRE
 (pouty)
 Why doesn't he come down here more?

JOEL

It's his choice. This is the only time he wants to leave the room. Nothin' wrong with that.

TRE

At least he's finally taking a shower.

JOEL

Yeah. But he'll never be clean.

There is an incessant knocking.

INT. FRONT DOOR - FIRST FLOOR - **ONE MONTH EARLIER**

Joel runs towards it and swings it open to see--

--Brody collapsing through the front door onto the wooden floor, hyperventilating, tense.

Without a second thought, Joel helps him up.

JOEL

Oh my god! Are you alright? What's going on?

He helps Brody up, looks into his eyes with a worried stare.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Take a deep breath. Take a deep breath and tell me what's going on.

Brody takes a few deep breaths and blurts out--

BRODY

I think I shot someone.

JOEL

What?

BRODY

(vulnerable)

Please don't make me leave! I can't go back home this way. If I go back, I'm done for. Please let me stay here.

JOEL

(stuttering)

Uh-- we got a spare guest room upstairs. You can stay up there.

BRODY
 (out of breath)
 Oh my god. Thank you.

Joel looks above him to the ceiling.

JOEL
 (screams)
 LACEY!! TRE!! GUYS, GET DOWN HERE!

He looks back at Brody, puts both hands on his shoulders.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 You're gonna be fine, alright?
 Chances are, it was just an
 accident, right?

Brody quickly nods in approval. He looks like he's about to break down crying.

BRODY
 (emotional)
 I had a gun. It went off. I heard a
 scream and I ran.

His voice is filled with guilt and shame.

JOEL
 You're gonna be fine, Brody.

Tears run down Brody's face.

BRODY
 I didn't mean to do it.

JOEL
 I know you didn't mean to do it.

Nearby, Lacey-May races down the stairs.

LACEY-MAY
 What's going on?
 (sees Brody; surprised)
 What's Brody doing here?

JOEL
 He got involved in an incident.
 He's gonna be staying here for a
 while. Could you please take him to
 the guest bedroom?

LACEY-MAY
 (unconfident)
 Sure.

(MORE)

LACEY-MAY (CONT'D)
(to Brody)
Come on, Brody.

Brody saunters to Lacey-May and they walk up the stairs together. Joel watches them walk up until they go out of view, concerned.

KITCHEN - LATER

Joel stares point blank at an electronic clock sitting on the kitchen counter. The date says "**November 4th**".

Next to him, his phone buzzes on the counter. Someone is calling him.

He picks up the phone.

JOEL
Hello?
(beat)
This is him.
(beat)
Yeah, I know him. He's dating my
daughter.
(beat)

Joel looks up the flight of stairs

JOEL (CONT'D)
No, I haven't seen him. What
happened?

On the phone, Joel's expression turns from calm to worried to terrified.

He takes a big deep breath.

JOEL (CONT'D)
No, I'm still here.

Joel looks around, thinking, his thoughts racing.

Then--

--he sports a cold look on his face, a blank visage.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I just got to do something real
quick then I'm on my way.

He hangs up the phone.

Starting with a slow walk, he trudges up the stairs. With every step, his speed gets faster before he reaches the--

HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR

--and sprints towards the guest room door. He tries to turn the doorknob but to no avail. It's locked.

JOEL
 (through the door)
 Brody! Buddy, open the door. I just want to talk to you about something.

He jiggles the doorknob some more.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 (about to cry)
 Brody, for GOD SAKES, open the door!

He hangs his head, defeated.

Beat.

In a fit of rage, Joel slaps his palm on the door.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 You killed Olivia, Brody!
 (slams palm again)
 YOU FUCKING KILLED HER!!

He slams both hands on the door.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 This isn't funny! None of this is funny.

He paces around the area in front of the door, furious.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 We cared for you! We saw SO MUCH!
 And you threw it away! Her life meant more to us than you would never imagine and you thought it was a good idea to run here!?

INT. LACEY-MAY'S ROOM - SECOND FLOOR

Scared beyond belief, Lacey-May sits in a fetal position on her bed, helplessly listening to her father's revealing rant.

JOEL
 (a little muffled)
 What kind of game are you playing
 with us?! WHAT KIND OF GAME ARE YOU
 PLAYING WITH ME!?

INT. TRE'S ROOM - SECOND FLOOR

Not taking this well, Tre sits on his bed and plays around with a butterfly knife.

He Kubrick stares at an old photo of him and Olivia when he was a kid. Tre is now a man on a mission.

JOEL
 (muffled; even louder)
 I hope you feel good about yourself
 in there! I hope you feel
 FANTASTIC! Terrific! Wonderful!
 Cause I know Olivia is.

INT. KITCHEN - FIRST FLOOR - **THREE DAYS LATER**

The electronic clock reads "**November 7th**".

INT. LIVING ROOM - FIRST FLOOR

From the couch, Joel stares at a family photo perched on a mantle directly in front of him.

Beat.

Faint footsteps plop down the carpeted stairs onto the wooden floor.

Joel turns his head towards the noise and covers his nose with his shirt collar upon inhaling a foul stench.

He sits completely still.

The footsteps walk into the kitchen and stop.

Beat.

Still covering his nose, Joel gets up and walks into the--

KITCHEN

--and finds Brody standing in the middle of the room, his clothes dirty and rugged.

He turns towards Joel and gives him the thousand-yard stare.

BRODY
(monotone)
Can I have some food please?

INT. KITCHEN - FIRST FLOOR - **ONE MONTH LATER**

The electronic clock reads "**December 7th**".

INT. BATHROOM - SECOND FLOOR

Behind the curtain, Brody washes himself in the shower.

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR

Muffled sounds from the shower emanate from one of the white doors.

Tre walks upstairs up to the hallway upon hearing the noise.

He walks into his bedroom and closes the door.

Beat.

Across the hall, Lacey-May walks out of her bedroom and stands by the bathroom door.

She knocks on the door.

BRODY (O.S.)
Yeah?

LACEY-MAY
You close to being done in there?

BRODY (O.S.)
About to.

Lacey-May hears the shower being turned off.

Unbeknownst to her, Tre's bedroom door cracks open a tiny bit. Too small to notice.

Tre peeks through the crack, his single eyeball stays steady on Lacey-May and the bathroom door.

Beat.

Brody exits the bathroom. He wears a bathrobe and holds his dirty clothes in his hands.

BRODY (CONT'D)
Here you go.

He hands Lacey-May the dirty clothes.

LACEY-MAY
They shouldn't take long in the
wash. I'll let you know when
they're done.

Beat.

BRODY
Lacey?

LACEY-MAY
Yeah.

The two look into each others' eyes. Intimate.

BRODY
You know I never did anything,
right?

LACEY-MAY
Of course. But there's nothing we
can do right now. Let's just ride
this out and go from there.

Brody gives a comfortable grin.

BRODY
Okay.

Curious, Lacey-May leans closer to Brody, sniffs him.

LACEY-MAY
You smell better.

BRODY
Yeah, you're telling me.

The two make eye contact once again.

They lean closer with every slow, passing second. Brody and
Lacey-May are about to kiss.

But before their lips connect--

--Tre, with a mask on his face, emerges from his bedroom door
with a knife in his hand.

TRE
 (through the mask)
 GET THE FUCK OFF OF MY SISTER!

Immediately, Brody and Lacey-May embrace each other in fear.

Within seconds, Tre grazes Brody's arm, forcing him to let go of Lacey-May.

Upon splitting, Tre pushes Lacey-May to the floor. He sets his sights on Brody. The fight is on.

He lunges at Brody, swings his knife at him...

---and misses both times.

Brody lowers his head and wraps himself around Tre's waist...

---forcing him to let go of his knife upon impact.

Brody pins Tre to the wall behind him...

---but Tre head-butts Brody in the face...

---and knocks him to the ground.

This time Tre has the advantage. He throws haymaker after haymaker at the now-defenseless Brody.

TRE (CONT'D)
 Who the FUCK do you think you are?!
 No murderer is going ANYWHERE near
 my sister! You are NOT going to--

Out of nowhere, Lacey-May blindsides Tre and tackles him to the ground like an agile linebacker.

LACEY-MAY
 (to Brody; tears in her
 eyes)
 Brody, get back to the room! NOW!

Now free, Brody quickly gets up and runs back into the guest room, closes the door behind him.

Tre pushes Lacey-May off of him and gets himself on his feet.

TRE
 (yelling)
 Lacey, what the fuck are you doing?

LACEY-MAY
(still crying)
What do you mean 'What am I doing'?
You're trying to kill Brody!

TRE
Damn right. That little prick has
it coming. He killed Mom. Why do
you not see this as an issue?

LACEY-MAY
Because he didn't kill mom.

TRE
Oh yeah? What proof do you have of
that?

LACEY-MAY
What proof do you have that he did
it?

Joel races up the stairs and catches his two kids in the
midst of their shouting match.

JOEL
HEY!

His booming voice silences the both of them. He has their
attention.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(nothing but serious)
What happened?

INT. LIVING ROOM - FIRST FLOOR

A scared Lacey-May and a smug Tre sit on the couch and look
up at Joel, who rubs his temple in frustration.

He takes a big deep breath.

JOEL
(as calm as he can
possibly be)
Okay. There's no way to really
bring both of you together so I
might as well go one at a time.
Lacey-May Slater.

Lacey-May straightens her posture and keeps her eyes on Joel
out of fear.

JOEL (CONT'D)

If we were not in this situation, I would've had no problem with you and Brody. Honestly, it might've been the easiest decision I could've made in my eighteen years as a father.

A little pessimism sneaks in through Joel's snarky tone.

JOEL (CONT'D)

But there's just one simple problem with this path today. Right now. At this moment. Do you know what it is?

As quick as she could, Lacey-May shakes her head.

JOEL (CONT'D)

It's because your "boyfriend" killed. Your. Mother! **DEAD! GONE!** Never coming back.

Joel resorts to full-on screaming towards his daughter.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(screaming)

We have just gotten over a month through this new life and you haven't forgotten how much of a monster he is? What if I wake up tomorrow morning and find out you snuck into solitary confinement and got yourself killed?! There's a reason why he's kept up there and it's not so he can be your sex toy for whatever fucking fantasy you have with him!

Lacey-May collapses on the couch behind her in shock. The last line hit her deep.

Tre's smugness dissipates at the same moment. He looks at Joel, then Lacey-May with a concerned glance.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(to Tre)

And Tre.

Tre jumps a little in his seat upon hearing his name.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Did you remember anything I told you in the back room earlier? Huh?!

Joel points to a door behind him.

JOEL (CONT'D)

How now we can't have as much as some cleaning products in our cupboard without you lacing our food with them? You remember that? I told you what was gonna happen. And then--

Joel pulls out Tre's knife from his back pocket. The same one he dropped during the fight upstairs.

JOEL (CONT'D)

You just can't stop, can you?

He looks at the knife, then at Tre before putting it away.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Look, Tre, it's one thing if I was looking at this from an outside perspective. But I'm not. I loved your mother as much as you did. I cherished her as much as you did since the day you were born. If I only got the surface level amount of information, I would be on your side. I would say 'kill the bastard'. But I'm not.

Joel looks at both his kids with piercing looks.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I am your father. He has locked himself in a room in *my* house therefore it's *my* decision and I decide he GETS TO LIVE! Given what we know he's done, we don't want him to die. We want him to live so he can suffer on his own time and sit with what he's done.

He points at Tre.

JOEL (CONT'D)

If I find out you killed him...

Joel is unable to continue talking. He looks away, clenches his face, fighting back tears.

Beat.

He is about to say something until--

--someone knocks on the front door.

Joel diverts his attention to the door and takes a few big deep breaths. Closer to calm.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(to the kids)
Stay here.

He walks over to the--

FRONT DOOR - FIRST FLOOR

Joel opens the door to see--

--a police officer standing outside.

JOEL
Hi. What's going on?
(a short beat)
You found them yet?

OFFICER
No, we haven't. We aren't here for that.

JOEL
Oh, is everything alright?

OFFICER
Your next-door neighbor called in. Said there was a bad stench coming from here and it's seeping into their place.

Joel gives the officer a genuinely confused look.

JOEL
Are you sure this was recent? I'm sure whatever it was we got it taken care of.

OFFICER
I don't know. I walked to the side and even I could tell. It's bad, man.

JOEL
Where is it coming from?

OFFICER

They said it's worse when they went up to the second floor so chances are that's where it is.

JOEL

You mind if I go check there really quick?

OFFICER

(casual)

Oh, no worries. Take your time.

JOEL

Thank you.

Joel closes the front door.

INT. HALLWAY - SECOND FLOOR

In a complete turnaround of emotions, a desperate Joel races to the guest room door and jiggles the doorknob. Still locked.

JOEL

Brody? Brody! Buddy!! OPEN THE DOOR! I'm not mad at you. I just need to check something!

While still jiggling the knob, Joel takes out Tre's knife and sticks the blade in between the door and the frame.

Joel pushes the knife down through the lock, his hands nervously shaking.

A stressful beat.

After some tinkering, Joel pushes the knife through the latch and opens the door to a dark room.

A miasma of stench ambushes Joel like a stink bomb, forcing him to turn away and cover his nose with his shirt collar.

He coughs through the collar.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Brody! Brody, are you there?!

Joel walks into the--

GUEST ROOM

Without looking, he reaches for the light switch on the wall next to him.

He turns on the light to discover--

--BRODY'S DECOMPOSING CORPSE HANGING FROM THE CEILING FAN WITH A LINE OF ELECTRICAL WIRE!!

Joel loudly yelps upon seeing the body and falls to the ground in shock and terror.

While processing this, Joel spots a piece of paper right next to him. He grabs it and slowly gets himself up.

HALLWAY

Tre and Lacey-may run up the stairs and see Brody's body from the hallway.

Tears well up in Lacey-May's eyes. Niagara Falls.

LACEY-MAY
(crying)
BRODY!! NOOOO!!!

Devastated, she hugs Tre and cries on his shoulder.

While hugging her, Tre stares at the body with a nihilistically complicated look.

Joel turns around upon hearing her scream.

JOEL
Tre, get her in her room. Now!

Tre escorts Lacey-May into her room, closes the door behind him.

He looks down at the note, reads to the bottom. It's a suicide note.

There's a date written next to his signature: **11/7/xx**.

He squints his eyes at the date, then looks up at the body, thinking.

FRONT DOOR - FIRST FLOOR

Joel opens the door, his skin pale as a ghost.

The officer notices this.

OFFICER

Woah. What happened? Are you
alright?

Joel looks away, thinking as he talks.

JOEL

(through quick deep
breaths)

Yeah...yeah. I'm good. I
just...didn't expect to see what I
saw up there.

OFFICER

What was it?

He looks up to the officer.

JOEL

An animal. It was a dead animal. I
don't know how it got in but...it's
a dead animal.

OFFICER

You gonna call an exterminator to
get it out?

JOEL

(responds quickly)

Yeah. Yeah, we are. As soon as
possible. We are. Yeah.

OFFICER

Alright. Glad you got this taken
care of. Have a good night.

JOEL

Y-you too.

Joel slowly closes the front door, stares into its blank,
white paint, thinking. *What the hell is happening?*

He is about to turn around when--

--he hears faint footsteps plop down the carpeted stairs onto
the wooden floor.

Once more, Joel turns his head towards the sound.

The footsteps walk into the kitchen and stop.

Joel gets up and walks into the--

KITCHEN

--and finds Brody standing in the middle of the room again, his clothes dirty and rugged. **Just like as he was the month before.**

He turns towards Joel and gives him the same thousand-yard stare, like nothing has changed.

BRODY

(monotone)

Can I have some food please?

THE END