

Schrödinger's Roulette

by

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SCHRÖDINGER'S ROULETTE

JESSICA: Female, between 18 and 28, nervous and jumpy, younger sister to Jennifer

JENNIFER: Female, between 18 and 28, calm and detached, older sister to Jessica

SETTING: A small, windowless room. In the room, CS, is a small table with a folding chair on the SL side of the table and a folding chair on the SR side of the table. On the table are three identical pistols.

JENNIFER enters left and slowly walks around the room, surveying the scene, she stops and briefly inspects the pistols, slightly adjusting one of them. JESSICA enters left and gives her opening line toward off-stage right; Jessica does not see Jennifer inspect or adjust the pistols

JESSICA

. . . ok, well, will ya please tell Mr. Doe that I'm real sorry about everything, and you let him know that I, well, you know, we, really don't-

Jessica is interrupted by the sound of a heavy metal door slamming shut, followed by the sound of a metal bolt sliding in to place

JESSICA (cont.)

-really don't . . . ok, fuck you too then. (to Jennifer) Hey, you think Mr. Doe's his real name even? It sounds made up, you know, like-

JENNIFER

Of course it's not his real name.

JESSICA

Nah, nah, nah, of course not, that's stupid, of course it's not his real name. It's some cold gangster-ass shit, that's what it is. John Doe. Like on the CSI when they find the body out in the woods and they don't know who it is. CSI. Cool show CSI. They always figger out who John Doe is. Science and shit, science. I guess we're not gonna. Figger it out I mean.
(beat) So, uh, what now?

JENNIFER

Now? Now we play the game.

JESSICA

I didn't think we'd really have to do it. This is some, what is it? Sadistic! Yeah, sadistic shit! (Yelling to no one in particular) Doe you sick-- (Jessica continues right through Jennifer's next line)

JENNIFER (calmly)

Jess.

JESSICA

Is this how you get your rocks off?! You twisted--

JENNIFER

Jessica! Even he can hear you I don't see what, at this point, insulting the man is going to get us.

JESSICA

Yeah, yeah, ok Jen. I see ya, I see ya. Jesus, Jen. I'm sorry as hell about this, real sorry. This wasn't your fault, nope, not at all. This had nothin' to do with you. Nothin' at all.

JENNIFER

I knew what I was getting myself into. I knew who these guys were, what they were about. Ok, I didn't know exactly who they were, or that this is what would be at the end of the road. But I knew that they weren't people you messed with. I also knew that if I vouched for you, and that if you - if we - didn't pay on time there was a good chance we'd both end up buried in a hole somewhere. Frankly, I'm surprised we didn't. I'm surprised they sold the marker. And I'm surprised that this Doe character gave us this chance to wipe out the debt he bought. Twisted as this chance is.

JESSICA

Yeah, but it was my screw-up, yep, my screw-up. And you know I tried to handle it, I really did, I did. I didn't want my big sister having to come in, again, and bail my sorry ass out of the fire. No, didn't want that.

Jessica paces around the room, not looking at Jennifer

JENNIFER

Hey, I'm the one who came up with the plan to get the money to pay the debt and the vig. And, it was my plan that didn't work. This is - look at me - this is on me just as much as it's on you.

JESSICA

Still I . . . aw fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck. Ok, so, ok, what do we do now, Jen? What do we do?

JENNIFER (indicating the guns on the table)

We play.

JESSICA

I... I really don't think I can go through with this, nope, I can't. Jen, I'm scared, really scared. I'm gonna puke, seriously puke, right here, puke. Ahh, I wish, I wish we were anywhere else, anywhere.

JENNIFER

It's a bit late for wishin' it weren't so, baby sister.

JESSICA (pacing around the room)

What if we promise double? Yeah, he probably paid less than what we owe, way less, definitely didn't pay the full juice, nope, no way, what if we . . . (to the door) Hey! Mr. Doe! We've changed our minds! Give us 48 hours and we'll pay you double . . . triple! Triple what we owe. 48 hours. On the whole nut, everything. And if we don't, well then we'll come in, real quiet like, and you can just put us away, just put us down. No fuss, no fuss at all.

JENNIFER

That's not going to work, Jess. He seemed to me like a man who gets exactly what he pays for. And he's paid for us. Full title. He owns us. We play his game, period.

JESSICA

No, but, come on. Maybe we can get the door open, you know, make a break for it, skip out.

JENNIFER

Ok, say we do get the door open. Then what? There are two guys right outside. They'll either force us back in, or just shoot us right there.

JESSICA (indicating the guns on the table)

Yeah, but, but this! This?

JENNIFER

At least this is a chance for us to get out of here alive, and out from under the debt. Yeah, it's twisted, and yeah, you're right, it's sadistic, but it is a chance. (beat) Sit down, Jess.

Jennifer sits; Jessica remains standing

JESSICA

I . . . I . . . I'm such a coward Jen, for Christ's sake, I'm a scared little coward! I'm not tough like you, no, not like you.

JENNIFER (calmly)

Sit.

Jessica sits

JENNIFER (cont.)

Do you remember when we lived with the Andersons? We were, like 5 and 9.

JESSICA

There were so many, Jen. I don't know, maybe.

JENNIFER

The Anderson's were the ones with a shit-ton of foster kids. So many we slept 6 to a room. You and I were in the attic room, bunk beds, one tiny window that looked out on the street.

JESSICA (calmer)

Did they have a dog? A big brown dog named Larry?

JENNIFER

Yeah, Jess, Larry. I'd forgotten about that dog. You probably don't remember this because you were so young, but Mr. Anderson, he liked his liquor.

Jessica shakes her head "no"

JENNIFER (cont.)

Ok, well, he did. And every once in a while he'd come home drunk. And every once in a while he'd come home stinking, reeking, stumbling drunk. And when that happened, he'd want to take the belt to someone. Sometimes it was Mrs. Anderson; sometimes it was one of us foster kids if he thought we'd disrespected him in some way.

JESSICA

No, Jen, I don't remember all that.

JENNIFER

Well, you were pretty little. So, anyway, one night Anderson comes home from one of his bad benders. He's shit faced and looking to strap somebody. And for some reason I can't remember . . . no, wait . . . I think it had something to do with that damn dog, what was his name again?

JESSICA

Larry.

JENNIFER

Larry, right. So Larry had dug something up, or crapped in the house, or something, and I guess it was my day to walk Larry or watch Larry, or . . . whatever, it doesn't matter. What matters is Anderson set his drunk-ass sights on me. And he's in our little attic room and he's cussing and yelling, and he looks fucking huge because the ceiling is so low in the room, and the other kids are crying and some of them are hiding under their beds.

JESSICA

Jesus, Jen, what was I doing? Sobbing in the corner?

JENNIFER

No. This is my point. You were just sitting on the bottom bunk of our bed. Legs Indian-style, hands in your lap, calm as could be, staring at the prick. And then he starts unbuckling his belt, and sliding it out of the belt loops, and he wraps the strap around his hand and starts swinging the buckle end around. And like I said he's screaming and cussing and his face is purple he's so worked up. And then he starts to come for me. And then you, in this voice, this voice that no five-year-old should have, you say, calm but loud: "Stop!" (more)

JENNIFER (cont.)

And Anderson stops, shocked, I guess, by the voice. And the other kids stop their crying and whimpering. And then you get off the bunk and you walk right up to him, right so you're between him and me, and you look him dead in the eye and you say, and I remember this word for word: "You leave her alone! You leave her alone! You're a bad person, Mr. Anderson! A bad person! And you leave my sister alone!"

JESSICA

Jen, I don't remember none of that, none of it.

JENNIFER

Something about what you said, or the way you said it, or the sight of this little punk kid staring him down, took the wind right out of his sails. You could see the color leave his face and he kind of, well, deflated I guess, like a tire going flat. And he turned, and he left.

JESSICA (quietly)

All this... This wasn't supposed to happen. It wasn't.

JENNIFER

I know.

JESSICA

Ok. (beat) Jesus Christ. (beat) Ok. What now, Jen? What now?

JENNIFER

We each take one of the three guns, we point the guns at each other's heads and . . .

JESSICA

Yeah, yeah.

JENNIFER

Remember, only one of the three is loaded, so two-out-of-three you live, two-out-of-three I live, better than even.

JESSICA

Ok, Jen. Ok.

They stare at each other across the table for a long moment without reaching for the guns. Then, slowly, Jessica leans across the table toward Jennifer

JENNIFER

What are you doing?

JESSICA

We can't miss. No way. We can't miss. If we miss he'll have us both killed, you know he will. You know he will. So pick a gun, lean in and put the muzzle right against my forehead. Right here.

Jennifer stares at Jessica for a long moment, then picks up the gun she adjusted at the beginning of the play. She then leans across the table and puts the muzzle against Jessica's forehead. Jessica then picks up a gun and does the same

JENNIFER

Ok, on three?

JESSICA

Ok. (beat) I love you, Jennifer. I love you.

JENNIFER

I love you too, now hush baby sister. (beat) One.

JESSICA

And I'm sorry, real sorry.

JENNIFER

Me too. More than you know. (beat) Two.

JESSICA

Three.

JENNIFER

Three.

BLACKOUT followed immediately by a single gunshot

END OF PLAY