

... IN THE LIBRARY WITH THE KNIFE

by
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CHARACTERS:

JAMES – 30, The good son.

SUE - 28, His brother.

SETTING:

Family library

/ = A point of overlap by the following line

≠ = Pause in overlapping line until previous line's end

JAMES and SUE sneak on to the stage. They are dressed in all black, each with a backpack and a small flashlight. They are robbing the place.

JAMES
Come on. The safe is still in the same place.

(*Sue stops.*)
Come on.

(*Nothing.*)
What?

SUE
You know.

JAMES
Don't... please. Not right now.

SUE
I'm not moving until you say it.

JAMES
This is ridiculous.

SUE
Oh! So now I'm ridiculous!

JAMES
That's not what I said.

SUE
You did! You just said / I was ridiculous!

JAMES
Lower your... come on... can we discuss this later?

SUE
(*Standing his ground.*)
Say it.

JAMES
Come on...

SUE
Now.

JAMES
(*beat*)
Come on... *Sue.*

SUE
Was that really so hard?

JAMES
Yes.
(To himself.)
My brother's a damn Johnny Cash song.

SUE
(Sitting.)
Jimmy. Sit. Let's discuss.

JAMES
Excuse me?

SUE
(patting the chair next to him.)
Come. Sit with me.

JAMES
You do realize what we are doing, right?

SUE
Bonding. Reacquainting.

JAMES
I... no. That's not what I meant.
(Sue pats the chair again and gives him a 'come on' look.)
We only have a few minutes. / They're expecting us at seven / and if we're late, we'll never hear the end of it, so...

SUE
Jimmy. ≠ Jiiiiimmmmy. ≠ James.
(James stops, annoyed.)
We can't go on like this.

JAMES
Go on... like... What the hell are you...

SUE
We need to talk about this.

JAMES
Not right now. We don't have time. Look, I'm helping you get this so you can... do... *that whole thing* so can we just get it over with so we can cut into the fatted calf she is, no doubt, slaving over for you?

SUE
(Smelling the air.)
 I think it's lamb, actually.

JAMES
 Funny.

SUE
 It really is.

JAMES
 Whatever. Can we get this done, please?
(His phone rings. He pulls it out, juggles it trying to get control of it.)

Shit! Holy...
(Answering. Whispering.)
 Hello? ... No. There's no one here by that name. What number were...
(The other party has hung up.)
 Don't listen, asshole. Now, you're gonna call back...

SUE
 Turn off the ringer.

JAMES
 I can't.

SUE
 Yes, you can. Just flip the doohinky on the side there.

JAMES
 I can't. I need to be able to answer. Mandy could go into labor any time and / the vibrate stopped working.

SUE
 You're havin' a kid?!

JAMES
 Like you didn't know. / Come on. I need to go pick her up and bring her tonight.

SUE
(More to himself.)
 Wow! Never would've thought... ≠ A baby! / What *are* the chances?

JAMES
 Yes. A baby. Now can we... What does *that* mean?

SUE
 Nothin'. Just didn't know, that's all.

JAMES

If you had bothered to call sometime in the last five years...
(The phone rings again.)

Dammit!

(While answering the phone.)

Go check the door. / Make sure they're still in the kitchen.
(Sue doesn't budge. Into phone.)

Yeah...

(To Sue.)

Go! Check it!

SUE

I'm not your lucky! ≠

(To himself while crossing to check door.)

Order *me* around.

(To James.)

We are not done here.

JAMES

(Into phone.)

Look, I told you last time... If you had let me ask... Okayokayokay... This is 8-6... *(beat)* Fucker hung up on me again.

SUE

They're still in the kitchen but I think we better hurry.

JAMES

(Deadpan.)

Ya do, do ya?

SUE

Yep. But first we need to clear a few things up.

(James, exasperated, falls into a chair.)

This is gonna happen whether you want it to or not.

JAMES

You have to live your life, I guess.

SUE

What would you know about it?

JAMES

What? Living life? or, Living *your* life?

SUE

Never mind.

JAMES

No. Tell me. What do you mean?

SUE
You don't really wanna hear what I have to say.

JAMES
Sure I do.

SUE
(*beat*)
Alright. I think you should try living your life for once. You have always been the one who did what would make *them* happy. Always lived for someone else. When you exhausted their praise, you moved on to Mandy. Now you have little... *whoever*, to live for.

JAMES
Yes, I have responsibilities. People to whom I am accountable.

SUE
Accountable. Ha!

JAMES
You are such a child.

SUE
Some things never change, huh. Those are the last words you said to me five years ago.

JAMES
Still valid.

(*beat*)
Why did you even come back?

SUE
I missed you guys.

JAMES
Right. Are you just here to take the old man's cash and run?

SUE
(*beat*)
No... *no.*

JAMES
M hm.
(*Pause. Listening. Bennie and the Jets can be heard faintly from the other room. The song repeats until the end of the play.*)
The music's started. She must be setting the table.
(*Singing.*)

JAMES

*She's got electric boots a mohair suit
You know I read it in a magazine
Bennie and the Jets.*

SUE

*She's got electric boots a mohair suit
You know I read it in a magazine
Bennie and the Jets.*

JAMES

(beat)

That's your song, huh? You and her.

(No answer.)

What was it like to have that kind of relationship? *(beat)* I never did, but you already know that.

SUE

Boo hoo.

JAMES

(Mockingly.)

Some things never change.

SUE

Some things will.

JAMES

You know, you can wrap yourself in some different package. Call yourself by another name. It won't fix your rotten personality or your narcissistic attitude.

SUE

This was a mistake.

JAMES

Was it? *Really?!*

SUE

Including you? Yes, it was.

JAMES

(Laughing mockingly.)

God!

SUE

You can go. I'll do this myself.

JAMES

Right! Like you've ever done *anything* yourself. If you could have done this yourself, you wouldn't have asked me to help.

(They fall silent.)

Exactly.

SUE

(*beat*)
Why *are* you helping me.

JAMES

I'm not. Now.

SUE

Fine. Why did you? If you think *so* highly of me why were you willing to help me.

JAMES

Forget it. Let's just get...

SUE

(*In his face.*)
No. Tell me. You think I'm such a worthless piece of shit, why are you here?

JAMES

(*beat*)
I thought if I helped you, you'd leave sooner.

SUE

Nice.

JAMES

Accurate.

SUE

(*beat*)
What happened to you?

JAMES

I grew up.

SUE

If that's growing up, you can keep it.

JAMES

I'll have to, won't I.

SUE

You made your bed...

JAMES

Made my bed... You know, things were great 'til you decided to crawl out from whatever rock you were under.

SUE
And it must really chap your hide to lose the spotlight.

JAMES
Go to hell.

SUE
(Sarcastically.)
I mean, you haven't really had it very long.

JAMES
You know what...
(He crosses to the safe, opens it, and takes out a stack of cash.)

I'm done with this shit.
(Thrusting it into Sue's hand.)
Here! Take it and get the...
(His phone rings AGAIN.)

Dammit!

SUE
Told you to turn it off.

JAMES
Get out.

SUE
(Turning to leave, waving the cash at him.)
Fine. I got what I need.

JAMES
(Into phone.)
What?! ... No! There is no one here by that... Yes, this is... yes, 7-5-3-0-9...
(Under his breath.)
God, I hate this fuckin' number!
(Back to phone.)
This is the number, but there is no "Jenny" here. I told / you that before...

SUE
Oh! That's for me! / It must be Tommy.

JAMES
What?! Who?!

SUE
I gave him your number in case he had to get a hold of me.

JAMES
Jenny?

SUE
(Motioning for phone.)
 I was trying it out last week. / 's not me, y'know?

JAMES
 God, you're an ass!

SUE
(Motioning more vehemently now.)
 Gimme the phone!
(James hangs up.)
 Well, that was rude!

JAMES
 Shut up.
(Paces, thinking. Finally:)
 You don't seem terribly worried about getting caught.

SUE
 Huh?

JAMES
 Getting caught in here. You haven't exactly been cautious.

SUE
 I don't know what you mean.

JAMES
 Yes you do.
(He studies Sue's face.)
 She knows.

SUE
 Huh?

JAMES
 Mom. She knows.

SUE
(beat)
 Maybe.

JAMES
 God! What the hell is wrong with you people?!

SUE
 I thought this would be more fun.

JAMES

Fun?

SUE

And, I wanted to know where you stood. What you really thought of me, as if I didn't already know. *(beat)* You know... it's a little bit funny, this whole thing. She said you wouldn't do it. She thought you were too chicken. I told her, "He'll do it to get rid of me." She thought you'd try to play peacemaker, let bygones be bygones.

(Melodramatically.)

She thinks you can actually feel love, forgive, but I know the truth: you only feel duty. Responsibility. Well, there you have it, what that'll get ya, all that duty and shit. Anyway... dinner? Should be about time and I think pop went and picked up Mandy.

JAMES

Wait a minute. What's going on... wait... what?

SUE

Dinner. Let's go.

(He starts for the door.)

JAMES

Hold on! What the hell is going on here?! / Are you even... you know?

SUE

What? ≠ Oh, that? Nah. Just fuckin' with ya.

(Stops at door.)

Ready?

(He exits. James doesn't know what to do. He starts for the door, stops. Looks about the room, stops. Finally, he collapses in a chair, shakes his head, looks out.)

BLACK.