

A BIRTHDAY PRESENT

By Georgia Gaidatzi

Characters:

BILLY: the firstborn son, successful businessman, least favourable by MOTHER

JOHN: the second son, outlaw, MOTHER's favourite

MOTHER: ordinary middle-class woman, also ASSASIN

Setting: Kitchen of their house

Streets of a city

SCENE ONE

(On the stage, there are two chairs and a table. The actors are sitting. There are two spotlights on each one of them. The rest of the stage is dark.)

BILLY

(shouting, angrily)

What do you mean? Of course, I make mistakes!

JOHN

(dismissing him)

No, you don't, brother.

BILLY

And I'm sure you know about mistakes. All your life is a mistake. The lies, the stealing...you are a liar and a thief. Nothing more, nothing less. Nothing at all!

JOHN

And that's why I'm telling you! I know mistakes. You don't. That's why you are so unpleasant.

Ha! Even your own mum doesn't like you!

BILLY

(eyes and mouth wide open)

Shut your mouth-

JOHN

You see, pleasant people make mistakes. You don't make mistakes, so that makes you unlikable. If you have everyone thinking you're perfect, they want to be like you. So they long

for your perfection. And when they see that's not going to happen, they hate you even more. I speak from experience, old brother.

BILLY

So, am I to blame for all the bad things that have happened to you, brother? Am I the problem?

JOHN

(angrily)

You are a problem alright I think!

BILLY

You son of-

(enter MOTHER, another spotlight shines on her)

MOTHER

BILLY! Watch your mouth! Always swearing!

JOHN

(laughing at BILLY, ironically)

Yeah brother. Don't be mean. Mummy, your sons are calmly discussing their birthday tomorrow. Maybe I'm younger by a year but we still share the same birth date!

MOTHER

(ignoring BILLY)

How nice! And what do you want dear boy as a gift?

JOHN

Oh, mummy! I want a job, mummy. I want my dear brother to be proud of me. He's accusing me lately that I'm a lazy rat.

BILLY

I never said –

MOTHER

Billy! Shame on you! To accuse your sweet little brother! He is working so hard!

BILLY

Ha. Working hard or hardly working?

JOHN

(to BILLY)

Scumbag.

BILLY

MUM!! Now who's swearing?

MOTHER

Billy, you should help your brother!

BILLY

How about helping you find a job, John? That's a nice idea, isn't it, Mother?

JOHN

(uncomfortably)

Look Billy, I don't need-

MOTHER

Yes, yes!

(BILLY exits vigorously)

SCENE TWO

(Streets of a city. Urban scenery, streetlights, grey buildings on the background. BILLY is walking with his head down nervously. A spotlight follows him. Enter the ASSASIN.)

ASSASIN

(coldly)

Hello, Billy.

BILLY

(nervously)

Oh! He-hello.

ASSASIN

You called me. What's the problem?

BIILY

My brother is the problem.

ASSASIN

(laughs)

John?

BILLY

Yes! I want you to kill him.

ASSASIN

(laughing)

What? Come on! You're joking, right? Right?

BILLY

No.

ASSASIN

No. I've known him all my life! I can't just put 'im down.

BILLY

I have cash. Lots of it.

ASSASIN

Alright. How much do you offer for your brother's head?

BILLY

Twenty thousand.

ASSASIN

That's a pleasant surprise! The bank has money! My dear friend we have a deal! Just text me the information of the place. I'll make it happen.

BILLY

And-and how will you do it?

ASSASIN

Any preference?

BILLY

I don't know about these things.

ASSASIN

Don't worry. Leave it to me. He won't even feel it. It will be easy and painless.

BILLY

Yeah...

ASSASIN

OK...but my eyes have seen a lot. I've done jobs. Oh so many jobs. Husband kills wife for her money. Wife kills man for cheating on her. I've even made a neighbour disappear. You see he was stealing my client's apples...ha! But brother killing brother? First time.

BILLY

Is it though? (*pause*) I just-hate him. He's so awful to me. And mother-

ASSASIN

Oh! You're mummy's boy? That makes sense.

BILLY

No- no!

ASSASIN

Alright. None of my business. Just sad my old pal will be dead soon. Call me for his funeral, will you? See you soon! Don't forget to bring the cash. Just don't forget it! Don't. Forget. The. Money.

(lights out)

SCENE THREE

(The family's kitchen. On the table there is a purse. The spotlight is fixed on the purse. Enter JOHN. He approaches carefully, slowly towards the purse. He opens it and takes out a red envelope with plenty of money. Enter MOTHER.)

MOTHER

John! What are you doing?

JOHN

(surprised)

Mum! Hey! I didn't see you there.

MOTHER

Are you stealing from me? John?

JOHN

Of course not mummy! How is that even possible? From you, my own mother? What kind of person do you think I am? I'm very sad you even thought about that...

MOTHER

Then what?

JOHN

I was going to take the cash from your purse and-and-and come to find you and tell you about this wonderful idea I had just moments ago...*(pause)*

MOTHER

And?

JOHN

You see mummy... Billy's birthday is tomorrow as well as mine. So... I...decided... to buy him a present... yes a birthday present! For my brother! My amazing brother who helps me find a job. *(under his teeth)* so nice of him!

MOTHER

Oh sweet boy! Is that true? You're an angel!

JOHN

But mummy, we must be careful! It's a surprise so you must not tell him anything! Promise?

MOTHER

Oh yes! Promise!

JOHN

That's right! A very nice surprise!

(JOHN exits)

MOTHER

Oh! How nice! A surprise! I must keep my secret!

SCENE THREE

(BILLY meets with JOHN at some random street. A spotlight on each one of them. A third bigger spotlight between them.)

JOHN

Well, hello brother!

BILLY

Hello.

JOHN

So what's up?

BILLY

I- I want to talk to you about that job I found for you.

JOHN

What? You found me a job? Already?

BILLY

Yes. Yes, I did.

JOHN

(ironically)

You're joking right? You found a job for me? You spent your precious time for me?

BILLY

Yes-yes I did.

JOHN

Wow. I'm impressed.

BILLY

Cut the crap John. Do you want the job? Yes or no?

JOHN

Well I didn't need the job in the first place. My pals have me fixed for a month or so... I only said that in front of mum. But it's nice of you... I guess...

BILLY

It pays well. You always wanted some extra cash. You can meet with the boss and he will tell you the rest. If you don't like it, you can leave anytime.

JOHN

Yeah... I guess extra money won't be bad. Ok. I'll meet with him.

BILLY

He said to meet him to an alleyway next to this address. *(gives him a piece of paper)*

JOHN

What?! Tomorrow? On our birthday?

BILLY

Come on! It'll be over in a minute!

JOHN

Alright then. See you tomorrow at mum's. Now, I have a meeting to attend.

BILLY

A very serious one I guess.

JOHN

HA! Yes!

(they both move in a little closer so they're both under the same spotlight.)

Thank you Billy.

BILLY

Yeah. No big deal.

JOHN

No. It's a big deal.

BILLY

Damn right it is!

JOHN

I want you to know that whatever happened between us it's ok. We'll fix it. And tomorrow it will be our best birthday yet!

BILLY

(with disbelief)

Yeah, right...

JOHN

No really! You know... we must stop fighting all the damn time.

BILLY

I know that you aren't capable of doing anything that doesn't serve you. And, oh boy, how much you love to have pity parties in front of mum! Yes, you love making me look the bad guy!

JOHN

This isn't personal big boy. Just fun.

BILLY

That's not fun. Only your kind of people make this sound like fun.

JOHN

And what kind of people am I?

BILLY

You belong to a very special kind of people full of sh-

JOHN

OK. I see that you're very upset. Maybe some other time-

BILLY

Yeah walk away.

JOHN

It's for the best. Before you say anything stupid you will probably feel guilty about.

BILLY

You say mean things to me all the time!

JOHN

Let's say I know how to handle the English language. I always know what I'm saying and what I'm doing. Are you sure you know what YOU are saying and what YOU are doing?

BILLY

You want to upset me and you always have a high rate of success!

JOHN

Yes. Because you are unpleasant, you are unlikable and now I know you are stupid too. I had all the patience in the world for us to make up but...

(he lowers his head and starts fidgeting with his hands)

...but you just destroyed every little drop I had of it. I came here so happy you asked me to meet somewhere outside of home, somewhere we could be alone to talk...like brothers do. Like we don't do. I'm leaving. Thanks for the job.

(exit)

SCENE FOUR

(MOTHER'S house. Next day. BILLY enters angrily. Three chairs at the table. MOTHER sits on the middle one. BILLY sits on the right one. Three spotlights on MOTHER, BILLY and the empty chair.)

BILLY

Good morning, Mother.

MOTHER

Oh good morning Billy.

BILLY

It's my birthday today-

MOTHER

Yes, I know it's your birthday.

BILLY

Where's John?

MOTHER

He isn't here. I hope you didn't come to pick up a fight!

BILLY

(staring at the empty chair)

No...

(looking at MOTHER)

I found him a job, you know!!!

MOTHER

Really?

BILLY

You see? I do everything for him. He only knows how to complain about me.

MOTHER

(coldly)

Now... this is not true Billy. Your brother cares for you deeply.

BILLY

Yeah right!

MOTHER

I tell you for sure, child. I'm sure of it.

BILLY

Yeah right...

MOTHER

(yelling)

Your brother had a rough start but he's good now. I know it! A mother knows! If I'm so wrong, then why your brother prepared a surprise for you?

BILLY

What kind of surprise?

MOTHER

A secret birthday present! Oh if only you had seen, how excited he was!

BILLY

Really? For me?

MOTHER

Oh yes!

BILLY

Do you really think he has changed?

MOTHER

What do you mean 'changed'? He is always my sweet John.

BILLY

He told me he wanted to make up... he told me and I didn't listen. Oh no... what have I done!

(runs off with his phone on his ear)

SCENE FIVE

(An alleyway. It is lit very well. Billy enters terrified for the worst. JOHN is down on the floor looking unconscious or even dead. The ASSASIN stands next to him playing with her gun.)

BILLY

(runs to his still body)

No! Wait! John!

ASSASIN

You came. I didn't want you to see him but- since you came to admire my work... it was quick and easy.

BILLY

Murderer! I have been calling you all morning to tell you to stop!

(starts sobbing)

I didn't want him to die... he is my brother... I didn't want him to die... I just wanted him gone!

ASSASIN

Isn't this the same thing? Oh men! They want what they cannot have... Now... I want my money. I did the job fine. I want my money now! Or else you gonna meet your brother really soon!

BILLY

I- I don't have it with me now... I didn't want the job done!

ASSASIN

The money Billy! I warned you! Don't forget the money!

BILLY

I don't have it with me right now! I can go and get it-

ASSASIN

I don't believe it! You're saying the same things he told me you would say!

(The lights flicker and a gunshot is heard. BILLY lays down with blood all over him. He's battling to stay awake. Suddenly, JOHN gets up and looks at BILLY.)

JOHN

Well brother. Happy birthday! I told you you're stupid.

(gives the red envelope to ASSASIN)

END