

For Their Own Good

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A Short, One Act Play

By Kit Thornton

Contact:

Kit Thornton

1-18 Pasaje Rio Cuenca y

Rio Jadan, Cuenca, Ecuador

010204

+593 99 855 5128

[kit@kitthornton.com](mailto:kit@kitthornton.com)

## THEIR OWN GOOD

The dining room of a middle-class household.  
Religious art of petty bourgeoisie taste adorns  
the walls.

FATHER, MOTHER, DAUGHTER and SON  
are gathered around the table.

The mood is somber. They sit in silence for a  
long moment, not looking at each other.

MOTHER

This is a real opportunity for you. It's important to your future, and to all of us. You  
have to make the most of it.

FATHER

It...I'm sorry, Son. I really am. None of us wanted this to...

MOTHER looks at FATHER . He breaks off  
abruptly.

MOTHER

(looking at SON, attempting to speak gently) Don't talk as if...don't look as if we're  
sending you somewhere. This is no one's fault but your own. You're lucky...really lucky  
we found them before you...oh, God, I can't even think about it.

DAUGHTER

You are sending him somewhere. Somewhere he doesn't want to go. Don't pretend that...

MOTHER

This is for his own good. You know what the law is. He could have been arrested. Could  
have been sent to prison with perverts and criminals. Is that what you want for your  
brother?

FATHER

It's not illegal to be...that way. Just to do those things. We don't know if he ever...

MOTHER

It's always just a matter of time with them! A matter of time, and finding another ...boy.

DAUGHTER

What I want...do you know what goes on in those places? Does anybody know? I've heard that...

FATHER

Keep your voice down, for God's sake. You never know who...

MOTHER

You're both paranoid. Just paranoid! Those books your brother had...books by perverts and...horrible people! People living outside the will of God. The Bible says...

FATHER

We all attended the sermons. We know what the Bible says. And what the law says. (to SON) Son, we don't want...we love you. You're our son, no matter what. But this...

MOTHER

We love the sinner, but hate the sin. We hate the sin.

DAUGHTER

What does that even mean?! You love him, but you hate who he is? That doesn't...

MOTHER

This is the last time I'm going to tell you to keep your disloyal, god-hating talk to yourself. You are not going to put this family...

FATHER

Just...keep your voice down.

MOTHER

I talked to the Preacher. He says that these places are just...places, like summer camps. There are activities and schools and...there were brochures. Nobody there looked like they were suffering. There's discipline, but its all...therapeutic. He showed me a letter from the Thompson girl. She's been there six months now. She says she's grateful that the instructors taught her to respect God's plan. She's not one of...those people anymore. She prays every day to be protected from unhealthy, unnatural...

FATHER

Has anyone ever come back? From those places, I mean. Mister Camfield, the music teacher...he's been gone for three years. I've heard...

MOTHER

These things take time. And as far as I'm concerned, they can keep all the perverts and pedophiles for as long as it takes to make sure they don't hurt any more children. We need to be protected! The children need to be protected from people like them!

DAUGHTER

People need to be protected from people like my brother? Paranoid? Who's being paranoid? He never hurt anybody!

MOTHER

We don't know that. We don't know what he...would do! They all do! They recruit children! They can't have kids of their own, so they force children to...

FATHER

That's enough. (to SON) Go finish packing. They'll be here soon.

MOTHER

And take your medicine! Remember, no books!

SON leaves

FATHER

I've heard some disturbing rumors about these places. And no one comes back. Why would the Thompson girl write to the preacher, rather than her family? I think maybe we should take some time to...

MOTHER

You read the brochure. Direct communication isn't allowed. It interferes with the rehabilitation.

There is a knock at the door. FATHER goes off stage and returns with DEPUTY.

DEPUTY

Morning, Ma'am. God bless and keep you.

MOTHER

And you, too, Deputy. My, you've sure grown up! And look at you! You're doing so well, doing the Lord's work! Your parents must be very proud.

DEPUTY

Yes, Ma'am.

SON returns, carrying a duffle bag. DEPUTY takes it from him, and removes items

DEPUTY

No clothing with messages or pictures on them. No short pants. No clothing with patches. No books, good. Don't worry about your meds, you'll be given new ones at the center. No writing materials, you'll be given those when you need them.

FATHER

(to DEPUTY) Didn't you go to school with my son?

DEPUTY

Yes, Sir.

MOTHER

Well, it's a shame that our son...it's wonderful that you made better choices. I see you in the choir every Sunday.

DEPUTY

Yes, Ma'am.

FATHER

Mister Camfield used to direct that choir. Hear anything from him?

DEPUTY

No, Sir. And I don't expect I will.

There is a long silence as the duffle is sorted out and re-packed.

MOTHER

Before he leaves, Let's pray together for our boy, and for our faithful, God-fearing family.

They stand together, holding hands in a circle. DEPUTY waits, his head bowed, but keeping an eye on SON

MOTHER

Oh sweet Lord and Savior, be with our son, and let him receive instruction with gratitude. Let it remove the perversity and sin that abides within him! Guard him from unclean thoughts! Let him learn to love the rod of correction and the staff of your holy guidance, and to submit to the authority you have, in your wisdom, put over us! Break his stubborn and sinful spirit! Make him worthy to return to us, and to the society you are cleansing of all perversion and immorality! Bless our leaders, and keep them in your will always.

FATHER

Lord, bless our son, and keep him. Bring him back to us. Protect him from any who would harm him.

SON

Lord, forgive my parents for what they are doing, today. I don't think they know...how it hurts, or what...

MOTHER

(interrupting) AMEN!

She drops their hands. DEPUTY begins putting handcuffs on SON

FATHER

Is that necessary. He's not being arrested, he's just going to...

DEPUTY

Regulations, Sir. Insurance requires whenever a ...patient is transported...it's for their own safety, and ours.

MOTHER kisses SON on the cheek

SON

"...betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

MOTHER looks at him angrily

MOTHER

Don't you see what you're doing to this family? Don't you see it? Jesus can't bless a home where some of the family are defying His will? Anything that happens from here on is your own fault! Your own fault! I hope they break your sinful will, no matter what it takes! I hope they...

FATHER

That's enough.

DEPUTY

God bless you all. (to SON) Let's go. We've got a long drive ahead of us.

They leave.

MOTHER turns on FATHER

MOTHER

You couldn't bring yourself...you couldn't say a word, could you? Couldn't denounce sin, even in front of the deputy, could you? What must he be thinking of us?

FATHER

I don't know. I don't know what anyone thinks, anymore.

DAUGHTER

(crying) We'll never see him again. Never.

She leaves.

MOTHER

That's enough of that talk! We'll see him when the stubborn spirit of sin and perversion is broken in him! (to FATHER) What did you want? Did you want our son to become a pervert and a pedophile? Did you want him to hurt children? Don't you want to protect children?

FATHER

I want to protect our children. I'm just not sure who I should protect them from.

He leaves.

MOTHER sits back at the table. After a few moments, she bows her head, and silently prays.

END

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