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*Dramatic Publishing*

# First Person Shooter

Drama  
by  
Don Zolidis

# First Person Shooter

**Drama. By Don Zolidis.** Cast: 5 to 10m., 4 to 10w., up to 10 either gender. After a horrific school shooting, a community is left to pick up the pieces. Why did this happen? The only friend of the shooter, Tad, who managed to stop the killer early in the rampage, blames himself. What's it like to be the best friend of a killer? Tortured and guilty, Tad is forced to examine his life and his relationship with his best friend, and where it went wrong. Could he have stopped the shooting before it happened? Could he have talked his friend out of it? *First Person Shooter* is a difficult and complex look at emotional abuse, bullying and the tragedy of being an outcast. *Minimal staging.* Approximate running time: 40 minutes. Code: FE8.

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# First Person Shooter

A drama in one act by

DON ZOLIDIS



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DON ZOLIDIS

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I think this play works best with minimal scene and set changes. For most scene changes, I have included only a description of a change in lighting. Directors are free to add whatever pieces of scenery they deem necessary, but keep in mind that this play should be fast moving. Under no circumstances should the action stop so that large set pieces can be rolled in and out. For most scenes, a piece of furniture or two should suffice.

# First Person Shooter

## CHARACTERS

CHARLIE TREMBLEY: 17, awkward. GT (gifted and talented).

TAD: 17ish, also awkward. GT.

CHARLIE'S MOM

JESSICA: 18, editor of the high-school newspaper. Very smart.

OTHERS

GARRETT: an athlete.

TAD'S MOM

SUSAN: 13, a popular girl.

MELANIE: 13, her friend.

VOICE 1 – 4

ANNOUNCEMENT

MR. BLIX: a high-school counselor.

STUDENTS

BOY 1 – 3

GIRL 1 – 2

## CHARACTER NOTES

Please feel free to be flexible with casting the show. Any of the smaller roles could be double cast. Likewise, feel free to add extras to ensemble scenes as desired.

## SETTING

A small town in the Midwest. Winter.



# First Person Shooter

AT RISE: *Music.*

*Gunshot.*

*Gunshot.*

*Sirens wail.*

*Sirens and music fades.*

*Lights up on a prison cell. Night. CHARLIE TREMBLEY is sitting on a bench, head down.*

*TAD is opposite, in his own light. He speaks to the audience.*

TAD. When I sort through my favorite memories, the happiest times were always outside. Before my dad died. We lived on the edge of the greenbelt. In the winter you could go sledding out there. In the summer I used to disappear for most of the day. I made my own maps, tried to imagine the trees as some kind of vast forest—there was even a stream I could go swimming in.

*(Short pause.)*

TAD *(cont'd)*. Any decent psychologist will tell you that context is vital. So ... the context: It's about first or second grade when you figure out who the outcast is. One kid on the playground not joining in with the others. One kid standing alone, trying not to be noticed. When he comes around, maybe a kick to the shins is enough to send him back to the shadows.

It was probably fifth grade when it really began, though.

*(Lights change.)*

*(The sound of a playground. Kids playing. CHARLIE stands apart.)*

TAD *(cont'd)*. That's Charlie. Of course I knew who he was. We were in GT together. That's gifted and talented if you don't know. You can tell it from looking at him—real gifted.

*(CHARLIE stands with his back to the wall.)*

TAD *(cont'd)*. See that? You know why he stands like that? So no one can get behind him.

*(Other BOYS enter, led by GARRETT.)*

TAD *(cont'd)*. It started with kickball. It started with Garrett. GARRETT. No way I'm taking that kid.

BOY 1. He's not on my team.

GARRETT. Dude. There's no way he's playing.

BOY 2. He doesn't even want to play. Who cares?

GARRETT. Hey! Hey you! What's your name?

*(CHARLIE doesn't respond.)*

BOY 1. He doesn't even know his name!

BOY 2. He doesn't have a name!

TAD. It's Charlie.

GARRETT. What are you friends with him or something?

TAD. No.

GARRETT. Charlie! Are you deaf? Are you stupid?

BOY 1. What a freak.

GARRETT. Hey check this out.

*(GARRETT drops an imaginary ball. He backs up and kicks it directly at CHARLIE.)*

*WHAM! [One good way to make this noise is with a slapstick backstage.] CHARLIE ducks.)*

BOY 1. Oh! Totally missed him!

GARRETT. No fair moving! You can't move!

BOY 2. If you move, we'll kill you!

*(GARRETT gets the ball back. He winds up another kick. WHAM! This one hits CHARLIE in the shoulder. The BOYS cheer.)*

BOY 1. My turn! *(Gets the ball, lines it up. Freezes.)*

TAD *(to the audience)*. Once you know they won't fight back—

GARRETT. Target practice!

BOY 2. Tad's turn!

GARRETT. Come on, nail him!

*(TAD lines up the ball. He stops.)*

GARRETT *(cont'd)*. Dude. You are friends with him.

TAD. No.

BOY 1. If he's not gonna do it, I want another turn.

TAD. No I'll do it.

*(TAD kicks the imaginary ball. WHAM! CHARLIE is hit in the head. Everything stops.)*

TAD *(cont'd, to the audience)*. Every day. Every day was target practice. Why would you go back out there? I mean that's the question, right? Why didn't he fight back? Why not defend yourself?

*(GARRETT has a basketball. He's dribbling it. We hear the sounds of the basketball hitting the pavement. He advances on CHARLIE, dribbling.)*

GARRETT. Hold still. (*Dribbles deliberately, slowly.*) You waiting for it?

*(He keeps dribbling. The sound of the basketball hitting the pavement fades out and is replaced by music.)*

TAD (*to the audience*). I think about this a lot.

*(TAD steps away from the group. CHARLIE steps outside of himself away from the wall, looking back at the spot where he was. GARRETT flings the ball at the wall. The other BOYS cheer silently.)*

TAD (*cont'd, to CHARLIE*). Was this the moment? Was it here? Was this when it began?

*(Lights change.*

*TAD's house. TAD'S MOM is waiting for him.)*

TAD'S MOM. How was school today?

TAD. Fine.

TAD'S MOM. What'd you do?

TAD. Nothing.

TAD'S MOM. You learn about anything?

TAD. Yeah.

TAD'S MOM. You're always so quiet.

*(TAD'S MOM leaves. TAD steps out to speak to the audience.)*

TAD. After a bit, I stopped going outside for recess. I just couldn't be that kid any more. I mean, you rationalize things, you say, if it wasn't him, they'd be going after me. But one day, someone hit him so hard with the basketball he got a concussion. Snapped his head right against the brick wall of the school. Had to go to the nurse's office. So then I stayed inside. And I could feel them turning against

me too. To be honest, I kinda forgot about Charlie. I had my own problems. The bus. Sixth grade. On the way back from an automotive plant:

*(SUSAN enters and sits next to TAD.)*

SUSAN. Hey.

TAD. Hey.

SUSAN. Pretty awesome today, huh?

TAD. I guess.

SUSAN. You guess?

TAD. Sure.

SUSAN. Anybody ever tell you you're cute?

TAD. No.

SUSAN. You are. You're gorgeous.

TAD. Shut up.

SUSAN. You probably get that all the time. Do you? Are people always coming up to you?

TAD. No.

SUSAN. They should.

TAD. Something is wrong with you.

SUSAN. You wanna kiss me?

TAD. No.

SUSAN. Why not?

TAD. I don't like you.

SUSAN. Ouch. I just said you were cute.

TAD. 'Cause you have brain problems.

SUSAN. You're scared of me, aren't you?

TAD. No I'm not.

SUSAN. I can tell. The way you're sitting. Are you scared of me?

TAD. No.

SUSAN. Then you should kiss me. Go ahead. I'm not going to bite you.

*(She leans in and kisses him.)*

SUSAN *(cont'd)*. See? Was that so hard? Was that the best kiss you've ever had?

TAD. You're crazy.

SUSAN. Was it the best kiss? It was, wasn't it? You've totally never kissed someone, have you?

TAD. Well I haven't kissed like 800 million people like you have.

SUSAN. But that was probably the best for me. Out of all of them. You know what? I know where you live.

TAD. Shut up.

SUSAN. I do. I know where you live. I think I'm going to come over to your house every day in the summer.

TAD. No you're not.

SUSAN. You don't want me to come over? Would you like, hide if I came over?

TAD. No.

SUSAN. You probably would. You'd probably hide. 'Cause you're scared of me.

TAD. I'm not scared of you! I'm disturbed by you!

SUSAN. I'll probably embarrass you. I'll probably like go up to your mom and be like, "I want to see some baby pictures!"

TAD. There is probably a clinic for you, you know?

SUSAN. What's your phone number?

TAD. I'm not giving you my phone number.

SUSAN. I'm going to get your number and I'm going to call you all the time.

TAD. What is wrong with you?

SUSAN. You know what's wrong with me, Tad? Nothing. I gotta go. This has been the best day of my life, by the way.

TAD. Freak.

*(She leaves.)*

TAD *(cont'd, to the audience)*. Later it occurred to me that a girl had actually kissed me. In my sixth-grade brain that meant we were now going out and destined for marriage. I was surprisingly OK with that. I called her that night.

*(TAD is on a phone.*

*SUSAN enters, also on a phone.)*

SUSAN. Hello?

TAD. Hello, is Susan there?

SUSAN. Yeah? Who's this?

TAD. Tad.

SUSAN. Tad?

TAD. You know? Tad from school?

SUSAN. Oh. Ohhhh. Hey.

TAD. Hey.

*(Pause.)*

SUSAN. What do you want, Tad?

TAD. Um ... So—what are you doing?

SUSAN. Nothing.

TAD. Oh.

SUSAN. This is a fascinating phone call, Tad.

TAD. So do you wanna do something later?

SUSAN. With you?

TAD. Yeah.

SUSAN. No thanks.

TAD. Oh. It's just that I thought—now that we're going out—that maybe—

SUSAN. You think we're going out?

TAD. Well ... you know on the bus ...

SUSAN. Oh my God, seriously?

TAD. Yeah ... I mean, I was kind of a jerk to you—

SUSAN. Are you kidding?

TAD. No.

SUSAN. You know what, do you know Melanie?

TAD. Yeah.

SUSAN. I'm going to give you to Melanie right now, OK?

TAD. Wait um—

*(MELANIE enters. SUSAN hands her the phone.)*

MELANIE. This is Melanie.

TAD. Hi.

MELANIE. You're really stupid, aren't you?

TAD. What are you talking about?

MELANIE. You think someone like Susan would go out with someone like you? Come on. Be serious.

TAD. Well—

MELANIE. I mean, honestly, take a good look at yourself, and then think—does this seem like reality?

TAD. She kissed me.

MELANIE *(sarcastic)*. Oh my God. Really? She kissed you on the bus?

TAD. Yeah—so—

MELANIE. I bet her five bucks she wouldn't do it.



*(Pause.)*

MELANIE *(cont'd)*. Do you really think she just suddenly fell in love with you and decided to make out with you on a field trip? And now you're like going out? Like boyfriend-girlfriend? Really?

*(Pause.)*

MELANIE *(cont'd)*. What? I didn't hear what you said. *(To SUSAN.)* He's not talking now. He's just breathing. This is too funny. It's like his heart just broke.

*(TAD hangs up. SUSAN and MELANIE leave.)*

TAD *(to the audience)*. I could tell you about seventh grade. I could tell you about eighth grade when one of the kids wrapped a bike chain around my neck and was choking me until a stranger drove up and threatened to call the police. I could tell you about the people who didn't care what happened to me along the way—I could tell you about all of that. And you say—who did it? Who did it to those kids that made them be that way?

*(Three of the BOYS surround TAD.)*

BOY 1. Hey you got something on your back.

TAD. No I don't.

BOY 1. I'm just telling you to help you.

TAD. I don't have anything on my back.

BOY 2. Yeah you do. Oh man. It's pretty funny.

TAD. Shut up.

BOY 1. Why are you telling me to shut up? I'm trying to be nice to you.

TAD. I'm going home. See ya.

BOY 1. You gonna cry?

TAD. I'm not crying, I'm just going home.

BOY 2 (*regarding TAD's back*). Man, that's funny.

BOY 3 (*looking too*). Ha.

*(BOY 2 slaps TAD on the back.)*

BOY 2. Now you definitely got something there.

*(BOY 3 laughs.*

*TAD tries to reach around and grab whatever it is that's on his back.)*

BOY 1. Man, there's nothing there. You're such an idiot. Typical GT kid—so smart in the classroom, so dumb everywhere else.

TAD. All right, I'm going.

BOY 1. I didn't say you could leave.

BOY 2. Who said you could leave?

BOY 3. I didn't hear anybody say that.

BOY 1. You gonna fight? Is that what you're gonna do? You're gonna try and fight me?

*(BOY 1 shoves TAD. CHARLIE enters quickly.)*

CHARLIE. Hey idiots!

*(They turn around.)*

CHARLIE (*cont'd*). I see you answer to that.

*(They aren't quite sure what to make of him.)*

CHARLIE (*cont'd*). Are you acting out some sort of sublimated revenge fantasy here, is that what's going on? I'm just

wondering. Do you not get enough attention at home? Is that why you're acting out? I mean—honestly—what kind of life skills are you learning here? Do you really think that years from now this ability of yours to find the weakest member of the herd is going to come in handy? Honestly, is algebra so hard for you that this is your response? Beating on that kid isn't going to make school any easier, guys. You're still not going to be able to spell or count. And I have other news for you—I mean, I received this in a letter so I know it has to be true—there isn't really a big job market out there for chest-pounding morons. I mean, that's not really a profession you can go into. So I suggest you soothe your little Neanderthal forehead crests and go back home to being a disappointment to your parents.

BOY 2. You're a freak, you know that?

CHARLIE. I've heard that before, actually. But thanks for reminding me.

BOY 1. Let's go. This is lame.

*(They leave.)*

TAD. Thanks. You didn't need to do that, though. I was totally handling that.

*(TAD is about to leave. CHARLIE stops him.)*

CHARLIE. Yeah. Hey did you go to Grant Elementary?

*(Short pause.)*

TAD. Yeah.

CHARLIE. I thought I recognized you.

TAD. I remember you.

CHARLIE. Yeah I was hard to miss.