

"Spring Gun"

A ten-minute play

By Eric Berg

"SPRING GUN"

The front entrance of "Bob's Guns and Ammo" store, a non-descript standalone retail establishment.

Seated in front on folding chairs are JOSH, 35, and SARAH, 30, in "Sunday clothes", smiling and chatting amongst themselves. Beside them are a roller board suitcase and a cardboard box.

TYLER, a 27-year-old, enters, holding a manila envelope. He spots Josh and Sarah, takes a deep breath and steels himself. He tries rushing past them to the entrance.

JOSH
Good morning, sir!

SARAH
Good morning, citizen!

TYLER
(too late)
Good morning to you!

Josh and Sarah leap up from their chairs and accost Tyler.

JOSH
Hi! We're Josh and Sarah, from the Church of Christ the Peacemaker. It looks like you're on your way to purchase a death weapon.

TYLER
A firearm. Yes.

JOSH
(correcting)
A death weapon.

SARAH
Let's face it. A gun is a weapon, yes? And one that is intended to cause death, right?

TYLER

That's--

JOSH

Which type of death weapon are you purchasing today?

TYLER

Bushmaster AR-15.

JOSH

The most deadly of all!

SARAH

Is this your first death weapon to own?

TYLER

No. I have a Glock and a Heckler and Koch.

SARAH

Handguns. For hunting, I assume.

TYLER

Of course not.

SARAH

Course not. Two more weapons of death.

JOSH

Easily concealed, too. So you can surprise someone before killing them instantly. Are you using all of these death weapons for personal protection?

TYLER

Yeah, as a matter of fact. There have been a lot of break-ins in my neighborhood.

SARAH

Maybe you should put a better lock on your door. Do you leave your door unlocked? How is your house decorated? A lot of ostentatious decorations, maybe?

JOSH

I saw you drive up in a F-350 Super Duty. That's a nice truck. What did that set you back? Bout a hundred big ones?

SARAH

Kind of truck that just says "steal me."

JOSH

Got a good lock on the garage, too? Or do you just leave the door wide open, letting the whole neighborhood get a good look at the chrome and the hemi?

TYLER

Uh, aren't you guys supposed to keep your distance, or something?

JOSH

Distance? In a public forum?

TYLER

Front of a store is a public forum?

SARAH

Yes! Twenty feet is too short a distance.

JOSH

(indicating)

We can stand anywhere in this semicircle. Right in front of the door.

SARAH

And you know what?

JOSH

We're practicing our religion, too.

SARAH

Friend, are you a religious person?

TYLER

Of course.

JOSH

Of course you are. I saw all those stickers on the back of that F-350, so everyone knows how much you believe in God.

SARAH

I know every word of the Bible is inspired by God. That is my bedrock faith. I bet it's yours, too.

TYLER

Yep.

SARAH

I believe in the literal truth of every word, don't you?

TYLER

You're asking me to confess my faith?

SARAH

Yes. I am. Do you believe every word is literally true and either the word of God, of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, or inspired by God?

TYLER

Yes. Of course.

JOSH

(pouncing)

Remember Matthew 26:52: "'Put your sword back in its place,' Jesus said to him, 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.'"

TYLER

I'm not looking to buy a sword. I'm buying a--

SARAH

Death weapon. Jesus didn't have guns in his day, did he?

TYLER

No.

SARAH

No, of course not.

JOSH

In fact. The worst weapon anybody carried--

SARAH

--for everyone to see--

JOSH

Was a sword, right?

TYLER

Uh--

JOSH

(pressing)

Right?

TYLER

Right. But I need a sword, uh, gun. My neighbor's house--

JOSH

"And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well." Matthew 5:40.

SARAH

Literally true, sir.

TYLER

(brightening)

Ah, but no one has sued me for my shirt. Or anything.

JOSH

So, you're going to shoot someone who's trying to break in to your house, but if they walk up to your front door and ask for a handout, you'll give them whatever they ask?

SARAH

Whatever they ask? Literally true, remember.

TYLER

Nah. It all depends. If someone walks up to my front door . . . If they make me uncomfortable . . . A man's home is his castle, right?

SARAH

"A man's home is his castle." Where is that in the Bible, sir?

JOSH

Can you give us chapter and verse?

TYLER

I'm sure it's in there somewhere.

JOSH

It's not, sir. We checked.

SARAH

We checked. You may not know your Bible as well as you think you do .

TYLER

So if someone breaks into my house, takes all my stuff. Beats me up. Tries to kill me and my family. I'm just supposed to sit there and let it all happen?

SARAH

"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."

JOSH

Matthew 5:38. Riiiiight before Matthew 5:40.

TYLER

I'm sorry, guys. It's my right. Second Amendment.

JOSH

How's your militia doing?

TYLER

My what?

JOSH

Your militia. Is it well-regulated? It is put together by your state?

SARAH

What state are you from?

TYLER

Next state over.

SARAH

Couldn't buy a death weapon there, could you?

TYLER

Nope. The religious nuts like you got them all banned. So I had to come here.

JOSH

We're not nuts. We just believe in the same things as you. The Bible is literally true.

SARAH

(reaching into the cardboard box)

And we're exercising our First Amendment right to freely practice our religion.

Sarah shows a poster to Tyler.

SARAH

Here's a picture of what a Bushmaster AR-15 does to the human body.

TYLER

Put that shit away.

SARAH

(pulling out another photo)

Here's another one.

JOSH

(reading from an iPad)

"A single bullet lands with a shock wave intense enough to blow apart a skull and demolish vital organs. The impact is even more acute on the compact body of a small child."

SARAH

(reaching for another picture)

Oh, I have one of a small child, too.

JOSH

(continuing)

"It literally can pulverize bones, it can shatter your liver and it can provide this blast effect," said a trauma surgeon at Johns Hopkins Hospital. "During surgery," he said "body tissue literally just crumbled into my hands."

Tyler is averting his gaze.

Unable to look at the photos. He looks back, letting it sink in.

SARAH

Can I talk to you as an American?

TYLER

Yeah.

SARAH

Last year, I was at a Fourth of July parade. There with some friends. I love Fourth of July. My favorite holiday. Everybody always says, "I thought it was firecrackers at first." That's exactly what I thought. And then everyone around me started falling. The cement from the building behind me was being chipped off and bouncing off me. I looked down, and I was bleeding. I thought it was weird that concrete could be doing that. So I tried brushing it off. Then I saw I was trying to brush off bullet fragments--shrapnel, I guess--that was under my skin. Bleeding like . . . And I couldn't brush it off.

TYLER

And your friends?

SARAH

Safe. Praise God.

JOSH

Praise Jesus.

SARAH

But the lead is not coming out. It's in there forever. So I'm being slowly poisoned. And I can't have children.

Tyler shakes his head.

SARAH

Nope. The risk of miscarriage. Birth defects. Premature birth. Even if the pre-born human is delivered to term, he could have damage to his internal organs. His brain. Learning disabilities.

TYLER

You could find out, though. Before the birth. If the baby is going to have major birth defects. And then you could--

SARAH

Could what?

TYLER

You could . . .

Sarah and Josh stare at him,
unblinking.

JOSH

Many years ago I had a cabin up in the U.P. Beautiful place. On a lake. Mosquitoes were as big as blue jays, but nice and quiet. I had a problem with some local kids breaking in and emptying the place out in the off season. Three years in a row. So I rigged up a spring gun. You know what those are?

Tyler nods.

JOSH

Yep. Course you do. All's that has to happen is for one of those kids to open the door--

TYLER

To pull a string that's attached to the trigger. Yeah, I get it.

JOSH

The shotgun I'd rigged up worked like a charm. Only it wasn't some local crack-head punk who was trying to break in. It was a young couple. Their car had broken down in a blizzard and they were just trying to find a place to wait out the storm. They--

Josh chokes up. He can't go on.

SARAH

(continuing)

That wasn't the worst part. The woman was pregnant. All three of them died.

JOSH

(deep breath)

All because I didn't want the local kids to have my flatscreen TV.

SARAH

Now. Do you still want this death weapon?

Beat.

TYLER

You don't know a thing about me. Why I need that gun. I just need it. It should be up to me whether I buy it or not. Your religion isn't . . .

SARAH

(desperately; her last chance)

Well, guns don't kill people. People kill people. And you're a person, right? I'm sure you could find some other way.

Tyler enters the store. The screen door slams behind him.

Josh and Sarah take their seats.

Beat.

SARAH

He's going to go in there, buy a death weapon, and come out here and kill us, isn't he?

Josh doesn't reply.

End of Play.