

My Only Son

A short play

By Rodrigo Baumgartner Ayres

rodrigo@directorayres.com
directorayres.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SAM, flashy and gay, depressed, alcoholic, mid 20s

WALT, sickly, gun shop owner, cowboy, NRA, mid 70s

SETTING

Sam's apartment

TIME

The present

SYNOPSIS

After the death of his eldest son in a gun related incident, Walt comes visit his last living son Sam in order to connect with him for the first time in his life. But Sam blames Walt for the death of his brother and is not willing to forgive him. Sam has plunged into a life of alcoholism and drugs abuse and blames Walt for all the mishappenings in his life, accusing him of neglect, homophobia and murder. The mood in the room heats as Sam keeps getting drunker and drunker, and the revelation that Walt carries a gun might bring everything to a tragic end.

MY ONLY SON

Loud punk-pop music plays.

An 'Andy Warhol style' bachelor's living room with art and fashion posters on the walls, extravagant furniture, clothes scattered on the floor, bottles of liqueur, cigarettes in ash trays...

SAM (25) is passed out on the floor.

The door bell rings, followed by knocks on the door and more rings. The sound of keys on the keyhole.

WALT (75) enters leaning on his cane with a shaky hand.

WALT

Sam?

(WALT finds the portable stereo connected to a laptop. He turns it off and the music ceases. He finds SAM on the floor.)

WALT

Son. Wake up.

(SAM slowly regains consciousness.)

SAM

No Charlie... I'm not in the mood.

WALT

There's no Charlie here, only your father.

SAM

What's going on? How did you get in?

(SAM clumsily get on his feet.)

WALT

This is still my property, isn't it?

SAM

What are you doing here? This is not a good time.

WALT

I came to see my only son, what's wrong with that?

SAM

No, I'm sorry, but I need you to leave.

(SAM is looking for something.)

WALT

I'll be quick. I was just worried about you-

(SAM finds his phone.)

SAM

Oh my god! My phone is dead! I must be really fucked up.
Where's my charger?

WALT

You see, that's why I'm here. You don't answer your phone-

SAM

Hello? I blocked you!

WALT

You blocked my e-mails too? How the hell am I suppose to know
if you're even alive?

(SAM sits with his laptop and
checks the time. He bangs on the
keyboard.)

SAM

Fuck!

(SAM types. WALT sits on a chair.)

WALT

Here, I found your charger.

(Sam gives up on typing.)

SAM

Fuck it...

WALT

What's wrong Sam?

SAM

What's wrong?

(SAM lowers his voice and smiles.)

SAM

Nothing much, just work. I had an appointment today with a huge client, but I missed it. Aren't you proud?

WALT

Can't you call them and explain what happened? Not the part that you were passed out on the floor, but at least apologize to remedy the situation?

SAM

The master has spoken. Thank you sir for your great advice. But you don't understand, you never have and you never will.

WALT

If experience has taught me anything is that most businesses are the same, except that some pay better than others.

SAM

Right, and that explains why you kill people for a living- I'm sorry, let me rephrase that, the guns you sell, not you, your just the messenger.

WALT

I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear that-

SAM

Sure let's pretend. I'll play along. Tell me, how long has it been since you last came here? Did you know I have a new boyfriend? Did you know I had an old boyfriend who broke my heart and I nearly killed myself? No?

WALT

I... don't-

SAM

Did you know I hate dogs because of you? Because you let them die when I was a kid? Do you know how bad that is on the gay world? And in all worlds, but specially the gay world, a guy who hates dogs? I'm fucked! Who's gonna want to be with me? I'm sorry, those are way too intimate, I wouldn't expect you to know that. How about... my job? Do you want to help me with my job? Tell me, what's my job? Do you know that one?

WALT

You used to be a writer. You wanted to get into politics.

SAM

Hmm... No. That's not what I do.

WALT

Whatever it is looks like you won't be having it for long.

SAM

That's okay! I have money now.

WALT

What money?

SAM

Listen cowboy, I read your e-mails, all of them. And believe it or not I do check my bank statements, even more often than you. There's this thing called an app, have you heard?

WALT

Yes, I have an Iphone.

SAM

So what, do you expect me to thank you?

WALT

I expect you to reply.

SAM

I wonder if Hank had ever written a will if he would have actually left YOU anything. I am most definitely curious, but we'll never know... But I'll be honest, I did expect you'd give me half his wealth, now that you're old and don't need it anymore, my 'facilitator' who only took fifty per cent commission on the deal. How generous of you.

WALT

I could have taken all the money.

SAM

Then why didn't you?

WALT

Because your brother would-

SAM

Have left me everything?

WALT

We can negotiate.

SAM

You don't get it Buffalo Bill. I don't want to see you and I definitely don't want anything from you, even if it's coming from Hank which is mine by right. You have overstayed your welcome, please show yourself out.

WALT

I'm not going anywhere, not before we talk about our situation.

SAM

Then I'm going out. But feel free to hang out, it's your property anyway.

WALT

Don't you need to charge your phone before you leave?

SAM

Nice try, but I'm just going for some air. Don't wait up for me, I might not come back, ever.

(WALT blocks the door.)

WALT

Sam please.

SAM

Get out of my way.

WALT

Or what? Are you going to hit your own father?

SAM

I swear to god I'm gonna fucking kill you-

WALT

C'mon then. I might be old but I can still kick your ass.

SAM

I can't believe I just said that. I'm not like you. You are a poison, you bring the worst out of people.

WALT

Let's just calm down. Let's talk like civilized people.

SAM

Civilized people? That's hilarious.

WALT

Please.

SAM

You are a monster. You should pay for what you did.

WALT

You're drunk, Sam.

SAM

I will never forgive you.

WALT

Have some water.

SAM

Don't tell me what to do cowboy.

(SAM is emotional. He walks over to the bar.)

WALT

Clearly we have a lot to talk about.

SAM

Of course, and what better time than happy hour!

(SAM raises a couple bottles of liqueur and mixes them in a shaker.)

WALT

Why didn't you come to the funeral?

SAM

Because I don't want to see you. Can't you take a hint?

WALT

But you didn't come to the repast either, you didn't come to the hearing. Your brother-

SAM

My brothers are dead, I don't see why we have to keep seeing each other.

WALT

You're my only son.

(SAM shakes the drinks.)

SAM

All of a sudden you run out of kids and have a crisis of consciousness? Now that's hard to believe.

WALT

Sam, please.

SAM

What? What do you want?

WALT

I want my son back.

SAM

What does that even mean?

WALT

It means I want you to take care of yourself. You look awful, you're gonna end up dead and I can't bare to lose another son.

(SAM pours two drinks.)

SAM

I'm young John Wayne, that's what young people do. Get over it.

WALT

No Sam. Not anymore. We're gonna get you in line.

SAM

You're funny Walter. You've always sounded like an old man, and now you get to be one.

WALT

I wasn't old. I should have taken care of you.

(SAM puts little umbrellas in the drinks and walks over to WALT.)

SAM

Appletini?

WALT

No, thank you.

(SAM places the appletini on the table.)

SAM

A toast? To Hank, for bringing us together again.

(SAM toasts with himself and choughs the entire drink.)

WALT

Listen son-

SAM

Another one?

(SAM quickly walks away to pour himself another appletini.)

WALT

You're right. I don't need the money. I'm too old and sick and one of these days I'll be dead.

SAM

No, you're not. People like you live for hundreds of years because the Devil keeps you alive so you can keep tormenting everyone.

WALT

You don't believe me?

SAM

You're like a super bug. Bad karma itself. You're like the Chinese that keep shrinking until they're like 'this tall' and like... three hundred years old. But in your case I'm worried that when you can't shrink anymore you might start growing again.

WALT

I'm seventy five years old, my heart is weak, I can't breathe. I'm diabetic, which you are going to get soon enough if you don't quit drinking. I'm in pain all the time because of the fucking Parkinson's. I'm dying son.

SAM

Anything else? Perhaps something I don't already know this time?

WALT

I'm leaving the company to you. Hank's money, the house, all of it. But under one condition, that is if you straighten your self up.

SAM

Haha. Me? Straight? How flattering.

(SAM strike a 'macho' pose.)

WALT

You haven't been holding up which is perfectly understandable. How about we get you professional treatment? A psychologist, AA, rehab, whatever works best for you.

SAM

Really?

WALT

The best that money can buy.

SAM

I love it how you break people apart so you can put them together again. Tell me, how did that work out for Mark and Hank?

WALT

You're different Sam.

SAM

Because I'm gay?

WALT

Because you're smart and have a chance to be someone.

SAM

You can't buy me Walter, I'm not a politician and I'm not a judge. Now how about I leave this fucking place for good and you don't ask me where I'm going.

WALT

You're just gonna run away?

SAM

How about you mind your own business?

WALT

You are my business, aren't you? I pay your bills.

SAM

Not anymore.

WALT

You won't get far with what Hank left you.

SAM

Your threats are empty.

WALT

You need me.

SAM

I did. We all did. But it's too late now. If you want to give me your blood money, I'll take it. I see no shame in that. I'm not like you, I'm not a proud man. Besides, you're gonna leave everything to me anyway. Because you have nobody. Who would you leave it to? One of your 'Johns' at the NRA?

WALT

I'll give it to a fucking charity, I'll promise you that.

SAM

No you wouldn't.

WALT

Yeah I would. I'll give it to Jesus or something.

(SAM finds that amusing, he almost spits his drink.)

SAM

How about gay rights?

WALT

Sure, gay rights, dog rights, women rights. Any of that crap!

SAM

And one would wonder how I'm so fucked up.

WALT

I'm a man of my word, am I not?

SAM

I will allow it-

WALT

I always fought for this family. I put a roof over your head and your brothers'. I gave you food, clothes, education. It's unfortunate that things have turned out the way they did. And I'm very sorry. I'm a broken man and so are you.

SAM

Don't you think it's hilarious that both your sons died because of you?

WALT

C'mon Sam, don't do that.

SAM

You made the gun that killed Hank, and were that irresponsible to sell it to a known criminal.

WALT

No...

SAM

Do you deny it?

WALT

That's not why he died-

SAM

Because he was shot by a lunatic with one of your guns?

WALT

You know damn well Hank was unstable.

SAM

Of course, who isn't 'unstable' when they have you around?

WALT

I tried to help him, just like I'm trying to help you.

SAM

So it was his fault then?

WALT

Yes it was his fault. People make their own decisions, Hank was a grown man, and so was Mark and so are you. C'mon, we come from a small town, everybody there buys from me-

SAM

Right. And so many others, just so you can make money out of it.

WALT

A violent and intoxicated person committed a crime, but you don't blame the liqueur store for providing the poison. You don't blame the car companies for all the traffic deaths.

SAM

What if people want a gun?

WALT

What if people want a gun?

SAM

How do they get one?

WALT

Just come to my shop.

SAM

Don't you think that's wrong?

WALT

It's the law.

SAM

The law said I couldn't get married just a few years ago.

WALT

There is a lot that is wrong in this world but who are we to judge?

SAM

You never could tell right from wrong. That has always been your problem. Look where it led you. Look what it did to your family.

(SAM choughs the rest of the appletini.)

SAM

Too sweet, ugh.

(On impulse SAM pours himself a whiskey neat.)

SAM

Scotch?

(SAM sips the whiskey.)

SAM

Ugh. How can people drink this?

(SAM puts rocks on the whiskey and mix coke in it.)

SAM

Hum. Yummy.

(SAM choughs the drink.)

WALT

And how is drinking going to help? That's what kills people, not guns.

SAM

So tell me lawman, has anybody else been killed on the southern front lately? Business is blooming?

WALT

I made men out of those kids, yes I did. But I didn't force Hank to become an arms dealer, and I didn't force Mark to join the marines either.

SAM

I was ten. Mark was my hero. But I didn't blame you back then, I blame you now for what you've become. Guilty but too proud to admit. You couldn't stop, not until you killed another son. Now you are just an empty shell. You deserve to die sick and alone.

WALT

You little prick, do you think I'm afraid of ending my days alone? You're wrong. I'm giving you a chance, to have a life of your own, to be somebody.

SAM

Because I'm your only son, right? Look into my eyes and tell me that you love me.

(WALT hesitates.)

SAM

I wouldn't have believed you even if you said it. That's an alien word to you. To you there's only the law, responsibility, right? But how about neglect? Prejudice? Narcissism? When did you ever teach me anything?

WALT

I don't have to teach you anything, people learn by themselves.

SAM

You're a piece of shit, you're scum. You're no better than the lowest criminal.

WALT

I always place my self above the rest. Does that make me a bad person? People can do whatever the fuck they want, I don't care. I try to make things how I want them to be, otherwise, I accept the world the way it is.

(SAM pours himself a whiskey neat.
He sips it but doesn't like the
taste.)

SAM

Ugh.

(SAM pours ice and coke on his
drink.)

WALT

This is pointless. You're not yourself.

SAM

(singing)

Oh, but I am. This is me dad. Nice to meet you. Mr. Crazy!
But here's my number, so call me maybe.

WALT

I'm done. I won't debate with a ranting mop.

SAM

For you it was always about duty, but me, I loved him... more
than anything in the world. And when he died a big part of me
died with him. Hank was the only person who ever accepted me
for who I was. And the worst part is that you fucking look
like him. Just the sight of you makes me want to die.

WALT

I'll come back, with help.

SAM

I don't want to be part of a world where people like you are
free to do as they please.

WALT

Just don't do anything stupid.

SAM

Where do you think you're going? You're home! Party is just
getting started!

WALT

Stay away Sam.

SAM

Why do you care about leaving a legacy anyway? What difference does it make? You're going to be dead, and you said it yourself, we become dirt. Nothing.

WALT

Are you going to drink yourself to death just so you can prove a point?

SAM

I do whatever da fuck I waaant nigga!

WALT

Do you think you're brave? You're not. You're just reckless because you're drunk. In fact, you're a coward, a scared little boy. I could never understand you, I couldn't tame you, but at least I didn't try to cure you of your gayness, you gay little fucker. Out of my way!

(SAM advances. WALT takes a step back and his hand makes an involuntary move towards the back of his belt.)

SAM

Why are you afraid all the sudden? I thought you were going to kick my ass...

(SAM curves his head to peek at WALT's belt. He notices WALT has a gun.)

SAM

Is it the gun that makes you fear? Of course you brought a gun, why wouldn't you?

WALT

Stay away.

SAM

It's for your own protection... and this is your house... although, I thought it was suppose to give you confidence, instead, you seem afraid. Why? I can take it if you don't want it.

WALT

You don't have any training. Please Sam-

SAM

Then show me how to use it. C'mon, teach me something for a change.

(WALT tries to limp away leaning on his cane.)

WALT

Not now son.

SAM

Why? Do you think I'm crazy?

WALT

No. I think we should just calm down.

SAM

I'm proud of you Walter, you're a man of your word. You really have no shame!

(SAM lounges drunkenly. WALT takes him down. They struggle on the floor.)

WALT

Calm down Sam!

SAM

Get off me bitch!

(WALT can't restrain him. SAM snatches the gun and crawls away. WALT is down and can't get up.)

SAM

Look at you go old man. You've become weak.

(SAM inspects the gun.)

SAM

I've always hated these things.

(SAM takes aim randomly around the room.)

SAM

Boom... Bang...

(SAM points the gun at WALT.)

SAM

This is loaded isn't it?

(WALT slowly stands with his cane. He limps towards the bar and pours himself a whiskey neat. He sips on the whiskey.)

SAM

You never trusted me with a gun, although you didn't think twice before putting one in Mark's and Hank's hands. Why? Because you thought I was crazy? Crazy gay little fucker that can't be trusted?

(WALT finishes the glass of whiskey and pours himself another one.)

SAM

But none of it was your fault right? Mom left us, your sons are dead. But you did a good job. You did your best. You're doing your best right now, right? It's not your fault that the gun ended up in my hands. Or if I shoot you? Or if I shoot me?

(SAM points the gun at this own head.)

WALT

Please put the gun down son. You were just too young, I didn't want you near guns.

SAM

Liar.

WALT

You were special. I was afraid for you.

SAM

You were afraid for yourself. And you were right, I am crazy.

WALT

No, no, no. Sam, no. Please. It's my fault. It's all my fault. Just put the gun down.

SAM

I don't believe you.

WALT

I'm so sorry.

SAM

For what?

WALT

For everything. I belong to a different world and a different time, can't you forgive a silly old man?

SAM

For what?

WALT

For your brothers. For what I did to you.

SAM

What did you do?

WALT

I killed them. They are both dead because of me.

SAM

You don't mean that.

WALT

I am so sorry. I love you Sam.

SAM

I don't believe you.

WALT

No, Sam. No, no.

(WALT tries to make his way towards SAM but he is too slow.)

SAM watches WALT slowly approach. SAM holds the gun at his own head. Sam hesitates, he can't pull the trigger. WALT goes for the gun. SAM allows him to take it. WALT falls on his knees and removes the bullets out of the gun.)

SAM

Wow. That was crazy.

(SAM looks at WALT who is still on the floor.)

SAM

Are you okay?

(No reply. SAM paces around.)

SAM

C'mon Walt, get off the floor. Do you need help?

(WALT slowly stands.)

WALT

I'm okay.

SAM

I'm sorry I got a little carried away. It's not the first time I try to kill myself. I guess I don't have the balls for it... I mean, I still have balls, just so you know... We are all just waiting to die, dad...

WALT

I hope you'll wait for me, I won't be long.

SAM

Nah, you're like Clint Eastwood, you'll be shooting guns when this whole world goes to shit and becomes the old west again.

WALT

I don't want to have to deal with your funeral... too much work.

SAM

Well, if I go first you can bury me next to Hank, this way we'll all be in once place if you would like to visit.

WALT

That' not funny.

SAM

But it is practical!

WALT

For god's sake Sam, you have your entire life ahead of you. And I won't be around anymore, if that means any good. It takes courage to stay alive, to live with yourself and your mistakes.

SAM

Then you're definitely very courageous.

WALT

I've made a mistake or two...

SAM

And here I stood thinking you were the omnipotent center of the universe.

WALT

No. That doesn't sound right.

SAM

You told me so!

WALT

I'm not the center of the universe. I am the universe.

SAM

LOL.

WALT

But once you grow old something changes in you. You get a little soft around the edges. You don't want to 'make it' anymore, you can't... you just want to be recognized for what you have already done. But what have I done? Only I know... Forget about it, you're right. You don't need a sickly old man in your life, let's be practical. In my will there will be only one name, and that is yours.

You can do with the company as you wish, sell it, burn it, I don't care. I want out... I'm too tired... I can't ride, I can't fuck. I sit around all day watching westerns and Investigation Discovery. That's all I'm good for nowadays. The world's changed, there's no part for me, there will never be an 'old west' again. I'll leave you to your 'Facebooks' and 'Instagrams'. I don't want any of that crap.

SAM

I'm going to shut down the company, I promise you that.

WALT

Good.

SAM

Really? What about the ten decades of family tradition?

WALT

It will be a new chapter for our family history, told by you, and I won't be around to see it. And that's okay, I believe we all get what we deserve, now I'm paying for my sins. I raised you all wrong, all of you. I... I lived my life. And I'm sorry if I wasn't much of a role model for you.

SAM

Ok. Just stop, I can't handle this right now.

WALT

All right.

(They just stand there for a brief moment.)

WALT

All right. I'm gonna leave you to it. I'll call you.

(WALT limps his way to the exit door leaning on his cane. He notices the bottle of whiskey laying on the counter. He takes it and takes a chough straight from the bottle. WALT is about to leave.)

SAM

Where are you going?

(WALT doesn't know.)

SAM
Party is just getting started.

WALTER
Sure.

SAM
Just have a drink before you go.

WALTER
Yeah.

(SAM walks over to the bar and pour
himself a whiskey neat.)

SAM
I drink so I can forget, you know?

(SAM takes a sip of the whiskey. He
doesn't like the taste.)

SAM
Argh. Honestly, how can you people drink this? I'm fucked up
and I still hated it.

WALT
You really shouldn't be drinking.

SAM
Right back at you... Have you ever made friends over a glass
of milk though?

WALT
Never.

SAM
Do you have any friends?

WALT
Do you?

SAM
I think I do. A couple. They might be after my money though.

WALT

Cheers to that.

(They both sip on their drinks.)

SAM

I guess I did learn from you after all... not to trust anybody... to not have kids... What are friends good for anyway? I'm always alone even when I'm with them.

WALT

Have courage son and keep on living. Leave a legacy of your own. One day it will be all you have left.

SAM

You were a shitty father and I've hated your guts from the bottom of my heart, but... it's not your fault that they are dead.

[From this point SAM and WALT keep sipping on their drinks whilst engaged in a conversation.]

WALT

Thank you. I wish that were true.

SAM

It's not your fault that mom left us either. It took me years to realize that but, she was a coward.

WALT

She was a bitch.

SAM

Nope, she was a coward, and you were a pig.

WALT

Right, I was courageous.

SAM

Yes. And you cheated on her which I completely covered for you.

WALT

Except you needed a bigger blanket for that.

SAM

Yep, much bigger.

WALT

The wrong man married the wrong woman and lived miserably ever after with their three kids. Until she left... and they died.

SAM

Nice. That was a nice little story, I might even use it.

WALT

What?

SAM

On a novel or something, or your biography. I have so much stuff on you it would be a shame if it went to waste.

WALT

I thought you quit writing.

SAM

I did, but I scribble every now and then. Got a lot of your pearls locked away in my Mac.

WALT

Really? Like what?

SAM

Just jokes, you know... You arguing with mom, like, trade her for a bag of shit and you lose the bag, kind of thing.

WALT

Hum.

SAM

Your 'extravagant' disciplinary strategies. I remember this one time you were really pissed at me, but I totally outran you. Gosh you were already old back then. But you convinced me to come back, that you wouldn't hit me, so I did.

WALT

And I hit you anyway.

SAM

Later you told me that I should have known, that I should have trusted my feelings.

WALT

I'm sorry.

SAM

Yeah, for a while I wanted to destroy you, and when I say 'a while' I mean 'my whole life'. But I was too busy... drinking and... interior design-

WALT

Right. I knew that! I actually did know that...

SAM

Yep. But I'm retired now, thanks to Hank.

WALT

(looks around)

Good, because I don't think you were very good at it.

SAM

It's actually a pretty difficult job.

WALT

What's so difficult about arranging some furniture? Making it look pretty?

SAM

Being the one who gets to arrange it.

WALT

Aha!

SAM

But I could be better...

WALT

Most definitely a better writer than a designer.

SAM

I could only put so much into words though.

WALT

I've always liked your writing... until you quit.

SAM

News flash for you, that's when I used to write about boyfriends and ponies. If I write your book all your gonna get is dark stuff, specially because it's you. Dark as a black hole-

WALT

Your writing might be dark but it's also beautiful.

SAM

Dark as the hairy hole in your ass.

WALT

It's sad and truthful. It would be an honor to have my story written by you. But don't take too long, otherwise I won't be around to read it.

SAM

I never knew you liked my writing.

WALT

That's another one of my mistakes right there, I should have supported you more. I hope it's not too late for that. Although I'm afraid I have nothing much to teach you.

SAM

I guess... I would want to hear your story if you would like to share it.

WALT

Would you really write a book about me?

SAM

In a way everything I ever wrote was about you, mostly from my point of view though, but yes, life stories from older men are a great source of material. I might have a shot at writing something meaningful, and if this ever gets published, you get to have a legacy of sorts. Everybody wins.

(WALT coughs after sipping on his drink. He brings a hand to his chest.)

SAM

Dad, are you okay?

(WALT is not okay. SAM helps him sit down on the couch.)

SAM

Just breathe. Here have some water.

(WALT can't take the water. He struggles to breathe.)

SAM

I'm calling 911.

WALT

No, I'm okay. I'm okay...

(SAM ponders for a quick moment. He then collects his phone, plugs his charger and makes a call.)

SAM

(on phone)

I need an ambulance please. My name is Samuel Winston. 392W, 86th street, apt: 23. It's for my dad, he is having a heart attack. Walter Winston. He is sitting on the couch. Yeah, he's conscious. We were drinking more than we should. Ok. Thank you.

(SAM hangs up. SAM paces around the room. He sits on a chair opposite WALT.)

SAM

It's going to be okay dad. Just breathe.

END PLAY