

# **Basement Folly**

A Comedy

By David Datz

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### Synopsis

A couple ponders what to do when they discover that an unknown person is living in their basement. Call police? Kick the person out, with so many people homeless? What if it's their unstable relative? Give priority to an old family friend who appears, homeless and needing shelter? What about their adult daughter, who wants a temporary place? What's moral? What's safe? And who's down there, anyway? All fodder for the family's greatest talent: bickering.

### Production History

*Basement Folly* has not been produced. It has had several Zoom readings.

### Author Biography

David Datz is a writer and actor in Los Angeles. He has written three full-length stage plays and several shorter plays. He has also written three novels, and has self-published a sci-fi novel, *Scalies*, which can be found by searching for "David Datz" at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Smashwords, and the Apple book store.

### Cast

All cast members can be of any race or ethnicity.

- Aubrey: Female, wife of Adrian, old enough to have a child aged twenty-something to early thirties.
- Adrian: Male, husband of Aubrey, old enough to have a child aged twenty-something to early thirties.
- Alex: Female, daughter of Aubrey and Adrian, twenty-something to early thirties.
- Ray: Male, old friend of Aubrey and Adrian and aged about the same as they are. Homeless.
- Kim: Female, Alex's lover.

### Time

The present, after dinner.

### Setting

The living room.

**Note:** More details about setting, costumes, props, and sounds, appear after the script.

Start of Play

*At lights up, ADRIAN is entering from the kitchen, followed by AUBREY, who chases him, grabs his shoulder and jumps in front of him to stop him.*

ADRIAN

I'll just get my tools, it'll only take a minute.

AUBREY

Honey, it's late. You don't have to fix it now.

ADRIAN

We need to clean up the kitchen.

AUBREY

I'll get a bucket of water from the bathroom, you can fix it tomorrow.

ADRIAN

I won't have time tomorrow.

AUBREY

So? It'll keep till tomorrow night.

ADRIAN

I'm telling you, it's simple. I'll have it done in a half hour, tops.

AUBREY

But honey, I don't want you to work on it now.

ADRIAN

Why not?

*AUBREY starts running her hands over Adrian's chest.*

AUBREY

Because I'd rather you do other things right now.

*She moves one hand below his belt and the other to his face.*

ADRIAN

Right now?

AUBREY

*(Seductively commanding.)* Yes. Right now.

ADRIAN

*(Surprised and amused.)* I'd like nothing better, but . . .

AUBREY

But what?

ADRIAN

But it's just not something you ordinarily do.

AUBREY

*(Sexily.)* Ordinarily?

ADRIAN

*(Enjoying what she's doing but thinking it must be a joke.)* Uh, well, not right after dinner on a week night. At least not recently.

*She moves her body into his, kisses him once on the mouth, becomes even more seductive.*

AUBREY

I'm nothing if not surprising.

ADRIAN

*(He puts his arms around her.)* Lately the two of us have been about as surprising as a hot day in August. *(He realizes the implication.)* But that doesn't mean you're nothing. Nothing could never describe you. No way.

AUBREY

But?

ADRIAN

But usually you're all over my case to fix things right away. What's different now?

AUBREY

I don't know. Your masculine presence has just triggered my feminine desires.

ADRIAN

*(Torn between his desires and his suspicion that something is wrong here.)* My masculine presence?

AUBREY

Yeah. Your extremely masculine presence.

ADRIAN

There's something else going on here, isn't there?

AUBREY

My love, what else would I ever need?

ADRIAN

*(Thinking about it.)* Are you on drugs? A little legal recreational pot, maybe?

AUBREY

You're the only intoxicant I need.

ADRIAN

*(Still thinking.)* Wait. Is there something in the basement? You hiding something?

AUBREY

*(Faltering.)* In the basement? Whatever are you talking about?

ADRIAN

*(Decisively.)* Alright.

*He removes her hands from his body and sets her in place.)*

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

I'm going down there to get my tools.

*ADRIAN starts to move toward the exit leading to the basement stairs, but AUBREY runs and gets in front of him and stops him again.*

AUBREY

*(Decisively.)* Remember what happened the last time you got your tools?

ADRIAN

The last time? What are you—

AUBREY

You were going to fix the radiator in our bedroom.

ADRIAN

So?

AUBREY

So you broke a pipe and we had to call a plumber. Plus we had to pay double because it was at night.

ADRIAN

But that was a much more complicated job—

AUBREY

I don't want to have to call a plumber again.

ADRIAN

I don't think that's really what's bothering you.

AUBREY

And then there was the time you decided to adjust the timing on the car. What a mess that was.

ADRIAN

Speaking of timing.

*He once more starts for the basement door.*

AUBREY

*(Pleading a little.)* Honey, no. Please don't.

ADRIAN

What the hell is down there that you don't want me to know about?

AUBREY

*(Giving up.)* I'm sorry. Can we talk?

ADRIAN

Instead of doing whatever it was you said you wanted to do before?

AUBREY

Please.

ADRIAN

*(Even more suspicious.)* Of course.

*AUBREY goes to couch and sits and pats the cushion for him to join her, which he does.*

AUBREY

Well.

ADRIAN

Well?

AUBREY

It's not a what. It's a who.

ADRIAN

*(Considering.)* A who?

AUBREY

Yes.

ADRIAN

There's somebody down there?

AUBREY

Yes.

ADRIAN  
Somebody you don't want me to know about?

AUBREY  
I was going to tell you.

ADRIAN  
You were going to tell me?

AUBREY  
Of course.

ADRIAN  
For how long were you going to tell me?

AUBREY  
For how long? For as long as it takes to tell—

ADRIAN  
No. You were planning to tell me, right? So for how long have you been making this plan? In other words, how long has this been happening?

AUBREY  
You mean how long has there been a who down there?

ADRIAN  
Aubrey, please don't play games with me. It's your no-good sister, isn't it.

AUBREY  
No. Not her.

ADRIAN  
But there's somebody.

AUBREY  
Yes.

ADRIAN  
Who?

AUBREY  
I'm not sure.

ADRIAN  
You're not sure?

AUBREY  
No, but I can explain. Really.

ADRIAN  
Start.

AUBREY  
For about three weeks.

ADRIAN  
That's not an explana—three weeks?

AUBREY  
Yes.

ADRIAN  
(*Nonplussed.*) Three weeks.

AUBREY  
Give or take a couple days.

ADRIAN  
Go on.

AUBREY  
(*Brightly.*) Would you like a little more wine?

ADRIAN  
Aubrey.

AUBREY  
I'll go get it. Please promise not to go down there while I'm gone.

*Without waiting for an answer, AUBREY exits to kitchen. ADRIAN rises, drifts toward the basement door, looks back toward kitchen. He's at the door when AUBREY enters, glasses in one hand, wine bottle in the other. When she sees him, she stops.*

ADRIAN  
I was just thinking about it.

AUBREY  
Alright, go.

ADRIAN  
What?

AUBREY  
Go. That's an order. Go.



ADRIAN  
An order?

AUBREY  
Yep. Do it.

ADRIAN  
*(Considers.)* You know I don't take orders.

AUBREY  
*(An order.)* Then come over here and have a little wine.

ADRIAN  
Is that an order too?

AUBREY  
Oh for god's sake.

ADRIAN  
Alright. Wine it is.

*ADRIAN meets AUBREY at the couch, where they resume sitting. AUBREY puts glasses and bottle on the coffee table and pours. She hands him a glass and raises hers.*

AUBREY  
To, um.

ADRIAN  
Yes. To?

AUBREY  
To us.

ADRIAN  
To us.

*They clink and drink. They look at each other, smiling. AUBREY puts a hand around ADRIAN's neck and plants a kiss on his mouth.*

AUBREY  
We're good, aren't we?

ADRIAN  
We're great, hon.

AUBREY  
Maybe we should just go upstairs.

ADRIAN

I'm still thinking about downstairs.

AUBREY

Oh, that.

ADRIAN

Aubrey.

AUBREY

Well. It's hard to explain.

*Seeing she needs comfort, ADRIAN softens and puts his arm across her shoulders and draws her close.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

I know it's weird.

ADRIAN

You can tell me.

AUBREY

Promise you won't be angry?

ADRIAN

How can I promise that?

AUBREY

*(Kittenish.)* You have to promise.

ADRIAN

*(Exasperated, withdraws his arm, puts his glass down.)* For god's sake, Aubrey, we've been together for a couple centuries. You're not acting right. This isn't you.

AUBREY

*(Getting angry.)* Now you're getting angry.

ADRIAN

*(Angry.)* I never promised not to. Crap, I'm going down there.

*ADRIAN rises, strides purposefully toward basement door.*

AUBREY

*(A command.)* Don't.

*ADRIAN stops, turns back toward her.*

ADRIAN

*(A command.)* Tell.

AUBREY  
Can't it wait until morning?

ADRIAN  
Tell.

*AUBREY puts her glass down, takes a big breath.*

AUBREY  
There are lots of people out there, needing shelter.

ADRIAN  
(*Not liking what he hears.*) Right.

AUBREY  
Homeless. Undocumented.

ADRIAN  
Right.

AUBREY  
We always talk about how bad life is for them.

*ADRIAN starts slowly moving back toward the sofa.*

ADRIAN  
We do.

AUBREY  
How lucky we are.

ADRIAN  
We are lucky.

AUBREY  
How we'd like to do something about it.

ADRIAN  
Uh-huh.

AUBREY  
I mean, besides give money to shelters.

*ADRIAN has arrived back at the sofa but does not sit.*

ADRIAN  
Sure.

AUBREY

So, I decided to do something.

ADRIAN

Without consulting me?

AUBREY

Yeah. It came up suddenly, the chance to do something, and I decided to jump on it.

ADRIAN

You decided to let someone stay in our basement?

AUBREY

I thought, it's cheaper than donating to some organization, and it's more efficient, you know? No administration costs, no waiting period, no bureaucracy, nothing like that.

ADRIAN

So you donated part of our house, as lodging, without so much as asking me?

AUBREY

You don't always ask me.

ADRIAN

Ask you?

AUBREY

You don't.

*Beat while ADRIAN thinks about this.*

ADRIAN

What are you talking about?

AUBREY

The car, for starters.

ADRIAN

Car? What car?

AUBREY

You know exactly what car.

ADRIAN

*(Thinking about it.)* Wait, you mean the MG?

AUBREY

See? You do know.

ADRIAN

*(Still baffled about how this is relevant.)* That was years ago. Decades, even. And besides you drove it as much as I did.

AUBREY

*(Righteously.)* Still, you made a major purchase without consulting me.

ADRIAN

And we had a big fight over it and I promised I would never do something like that again. And I haven't.

AUBREY

Our agreement was about major purchases.

ADRIAN

It was about major anything. Neither of us would make a major decision without the other.

AUBREY

It was about purchases. I haven't purchased anything.

ADRIAN

You're telling me—

AUBREY

It was just about *purchases*. Big ones.

ADRIAN

You're splitting a hair.

AUBREY

Am I?

ADRIAN

Yeah. Unless you can show me a signed a contract saying we would talk to each other only about major purchases and not other major stuff.

AUBREY

I can demonstrate to you what you've done.

ADRIAN

What I've done?

AUBREY

Exactly.

ADRIAN

*(Mystified.)* What exactly have I done?

AUBREY

Ray.

ADRIAN

Ray? What?

AUBREY

Your old buddy the college drop-out. Ray.

ADRIAN

My old friend?

AUBREY

Is it coming back to you?

ADRIAN

What's supposed to come back to me?

AUBREY

You don't remember?

ADRIAN

Remember what?

AUBREY

In the basement.

ADRIAN

Would you stop talking in riddles?

AUBREY

The only riddle is how dirt-bag Ray—and I'm sorry but that's how I think of him—got to live for three and a half months—almost four, actually—in that very same basement.

ADRIAN

*(Remembering.)* I remember asking you—

AUBREY

You asked me if I would mind if he stayed there for three or four *days*. You never said anything about *months*.

ADRIAN

*(Defensive.)* He had no place to go. Was I supposed to just kick him out onto the street?

AUBREY

You're perfectly willing to kick someone out onto the street now.

ADRIAN

But this is a stranger, at least to me.

AUBREY

It's a human being.

*ADRIAN is temporarily defeated. Considers sitting on the sofa. Decides on a chair.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

*(Pressing her advantage.)* The person downstairs is at least as much of a human being as Ray.

ADRIAN

You never liked Ray.

AUBREY

You're asking if I enjoyed him breezing into our house every six months? If I loved it when he got you drunk in the kitchen, or out in a bar some place? Was it just grand for me to hear you two trading your vulgar, sexist college stories? Did I think it was wonderful when he made himself at home without ever offering to contribute anything? Not help, not work, and never a dime?

ADRIAN

All right. I get it. But he was my oldest friend.

AUBREY

Another problem right there. What were you using for judgment?

ADRIAN

Judgment? About what?

AUBREY

About how you pick your friends.

ADRIAN

Oh my god.

AUBREY

Well?

ADRIAN

Alright, then. This is ridiculous.

AUBREY

Alright, then. It is ridiculous.

ADRIAN

We haven't seen Ray in years and I have no plans to see him again, ever.

AUBREY

I'll bet if he called you'd—

ADRIAN

I promise you, Ray will never set foot in this house again without your permission. Okay?

AUBREY

You better stick to it.

*AUBREY starts collecting the bottle and glasses.*

ADRIAN

Which reminds me.

*AUBREY heads toward the kitchen door.*

AUBREY

Yes, my darling?

ADRIAN

You say you don't know this person?

AUBREY

What person would this be, dear?

ADRIAN

*(Wryly.)* The one in the basement.

*AUBREY stops. During the following sequence, she continues to hold the glasses and bottle.*

AUBREY

Oh. That person.

*ADRIAN, sensing his new advantage, says nothing.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

What about them?

ADRIAN

Do you know him? Or her?

AUBREY

Not exactly.



ADRIAN

Have you even met them?

AUBREY

Not exactly.

ADRIAN

Not exactly? Speaking of bad judgment.

AUBREY

You're not going to rehash my antique enameled skillets.

ADRIAN

I wasn't, but now that you mention—

AUBREY

Because I got expert advice that those skillets would be appreciating—

ADRIAN

I don't care about your stupid skillets.

AUBREY

You see? You're still bitter.

ADRIAN

Aubrey, you are allowing a stranger to live in our house. Do I have to tell you how crazy that is? Aren't you scared?

AUBREY

I was at first.

ADRIAN

When was that?

AUBREY

When was what?

ADRIAN

At first. When you were scared. When this started. Was I here?

AUBREY

No dear, you were out, leaving me alone for hours, something you do all too often.

ADRIAN

Something I do—

AUBREY

Who knows what harm could come to me, while I'm alone and defenseless.

ADRIAN

So you discovered there was someone down there.

AUBREY

Yes.

ADRIAN

How?

AUBREY

Noises.

ADRIAN

So you heard noises.

AUBREY

Of someone moving around down there.

ADRIAN

You were alone and defenseless. Why didn't you call the cops?

AUBREY

I knew you wouldn't want me to.

ADRIAN

I wouldn't—

AUBREY

You're always complaining about them and how people are too quick to call them, and—

ADRIAN

And so you let whoever-this-is stay?

AUBREY

I started feeling sorry for them, Adrian. I mean, who does that? Moves into a strange house? They must be desperate.

ADRIAN

Aubrey, good lord.

*He holds up a hand to stop her from speaking.*

ADRIAN (CONTINUED)

Aubrey, I put up with your craziness—

AUBREY

Mine? What about—

ADRIAN

Aubrey. Please. (*Making himself speak slowly.*) The skillets were nothing. There was the horse, the gift catalog business, the emus, the vacation in Buffalo. But this may be the craziest.

AUBREY

The emus were very affectionate.

ADRIAN

This has gone on long enough.

*ADRIAN strides resolutely toward the basement door but before he gets there, the DOORBELL RINGS and he stops.*

AUBREY

That's unusual.

*ADRIAN says nothing.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Are you expecting someone?

ADRIAN

Sort of.

AUBREY

Sort of?

ADRIAN

Alex said she might come over.

AUBREY

Alex.

ADRIAN

Yeah, our daughter, Alex. You remember her?

AUBREY

When did she say she was coming?

ADRIAN

She said she *might* come.

*DOORBELL rings again.*

AUBREY  
When?

ADRIAN  
Maybe tonight. Maybe.

AUBREY  
Tonight. And when did she say that?

ADRIAN  
She texted me last night.

AUBREY  
And you didn't tell me?

ADRIAN  
I forgot.

AUBREY  
Why?

ADRIAN  
I don't know, I got busy with something and then I went to sleep.

AUBREY  
Not why did you forget. Why would she want to come?

ADRIAN  
I don't know.

AUBREY  
You're acting like you do.

ADRIAN  
Acting? I'm not acting, I really don't know.

*DOORBELL rings again.*

AUBREY  
I hope it's nothing serious.

ADRIAN  
I doubt it's serious. At least, not *serious* serious.

AUBREY  
She wouldn't want to come here if it wasn't serious. You should have told me.

ADRIAN  
I said I forgot.

AUBREY

When our daughter is in trouble, you shouldn't forget.

ADRIAN

Who said she's in trouble?

AUBREY

It's something, I know it is.

ADRIAN

She just said she wants to discuss something.

AUBREY

Discuss something? *(With dread.)* Oh god.

*DOORBELL rings again. And again. And again. ADRIAN goes to outside door and opens it. Their daughter, ALEX, is standing there. She enters as they take turns embracing and saying the next four lines.*

ALEX

Hi, Dad.

ADRIAN

Hey, Alex.

ALEX

Hi, Mom.

AUBREY

Hello, Alex.

*There is an awkward moment as they stand inside the door looking at each other, all of them worried. AUBREY suddenly notices the wine glasses and bottle still in her hands.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

*(Brightly.)* Dad and I were about to have some wine. Care to join us?

*ADRIAN gives AUBREY a look.*

ALEX

Um. Sure. What's the occasion?

AUBREY

No occasion. We don't need an occasion to have a little after-dinner wine in this house *(to ADRIAN)* do we, honey?

ADRIAN

Well—

ALEX

Wait. It's not your anniversary, is it?

ADRIAN

*(Starting to panic.)* I don't think—

AUBREY

Oh, no. That's not for four months.

ADRIAN

*(Relieved.)* Yeah, that's right, four months.

ALEX

*(Worried.)* And not a birthday? I usually don't miss—

AUBREY

No birthday either.

ALEX

It looks like I'm interrupting something.

*AUBREY and ADRIAN look at each other for a beat before they both start talking at once.*

ADRIAN

Oh, no, no, please join us and have  
some wine . . .

AUBREY

No, not at all, let's just sit, shall we?  
Relax . . .

*They all move to the sofa, where there is more awkwardness as they move behind the coffee table and ADRIAN and AUBREY make sure ALEX is seated in the middle.*

AUBREY

Well.

*AUBREY sets wine glasses and bottle on the table. She is about to pour when she notices that they have only two glasses.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Oh, my goodness, we need another glass. *(To ADRIAN.)* Hon?

ADRIAN

Oh, sure.

*ADRIAN rises and exits to kitchen.*

AUBREY

Well, my dear, how are you?

ALEX

I'm okay.

AUBREY

Just okay?

*ADRIAN pokes his head into the living room.*

ADRIAN

Honey, which glasses?

AUBREY

The ones that match these.

ADRIAN

I know.

AUBREY

You know I like for wine glasses to match.

ADRIAN

I know.

AUBREY

As you've so romantically put it, we've been married for a century and were together for a century before that, so I would think that in two hundred years you would have figured these things out.

ADRIAN

*(Getting angry.)* Right. So which friggin glasses are they?

AUBREY

*(Making a show of staying calm, while she holds up a glass for ADRIAN to see.)*

These friggin glasses, honey, the good ones.

ADRIAN

Crystal?

AUBREY

*(Starting to lose it.)* No, dear, not the crystal. These are the good glass.

ADRIAN

*(Definitely angry but not yelling.)* So the ones on the top shelf?

AUBREY

*(Definitely angry but not yelling, and making sure to announce each word, as if to a child.)* No, sweetie, the top shelf is for the crystal. These came from the middle shelf.

ADRIAN

They sure look like the friggin crystal.

AUBREY

*(Just angry.)* I know that, but they're not the friggin crystal. Just friggin glass.

ADRIAN

Right. Just friggin glass from the middle friggin shelf.

*ADRIAN ducks back into the kitchen.*

AUBREY

True love, huh?

ALEX

*(Forcing a smile.)* Yeah. Sure. You and Dad have always been a great couple.

AUBREY

No need to patronize, dear.

ALEX

Mom, I wasn't—

AUBREY

So, Dad tells me you have some kind of problem?

ALEX

He did?

AUBREY

Well, not in so many words.

ALEX

What did he say?

AUBREY

He said that you said you wanted to come over tonight.

ALEX

That's right.

AUBREY

Well?

ALEX

Well?

AUBREY

So, you have a problem.



ALEX

Mom, I never said anything about a problem.

*ADRIAN enters with wine glass, hands it to AUBREY and sits on the sofa.*

AUBREY

Adrian, didn't you tell me that Alex has a problem?

ADRIAN

No, I just said she might come over tonight.

AUBREY

To discuss something.

ADRIAN

Discuss something? Did I say that? If I did, I was just throwing it in.

AUBREY

Throwing it in?

ADRIAN

Yeah. I don't think Alex ever actually said that.

*ADRIAN puts his arm affectionately across ALEX's shoulders.*

AUBREY

Well, whether she said it or you said it or nobody said it, it's still true.

*AUBREY empties the bottle into one glass, filling it only a fraction full.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Crap. We need more wine.

*She looks at ADRIAN, who does not respond. Through all this, ALEX sits tensely, just wanting it to end.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

We were going to have wine, weren't we?

ADRIAN

*(With forced pleasantness.)* It was your idea, hon.

AUBREY

*(With forced pleasantness.)* But we all agreed, didn't we?

ADRIAN

I didn't agree.

AUBREY

But could you go along anyway? To please me?

ADRIAN

Fine, but, actually, I think we're out of that one.

AUBREY

Well, monsieur sommelier, what the hell have we got?

ADRIAN

How about a dessert wine? Something a little sweet, but not too? Or something stronger? Sauterne, maybe?

AUBREY

I don't care.

ADRIAN

Alex?

ALEX

Sauterne is really sweet.

ADRIAN

Yeah, I guess it is. Ideas?

ALEX

I don't know.

ADRIAN

*(Enjoying his role as wine expert.)* Come on. What kind of thing would you like?

ALEX

I don't really want—

ADRIAN

Oh, come on. Loosen up. Riesling?

ALEX

Sure.

ADRIAN

*(To AUBREY.)* Hon? Riesling okay with you?

AUBREY

Honestly, you know I don't—

ADRIAN

But then, Riesling can be a little too flinty for an occasion like this, don't you think so, Aubrey?

AUBREY

I don't know flinty from—

ADRIAN

I know what. I've got a very mellow dry sherry. How about that?

AUBREY

Fine. Sherry sounds fine.

*ADRIAN looks at ALEX, who shrugs.*

ADRIAN

Okay, then, sherry it is. But I hate to pour out this pinot.

AUBREY

I'll drink it.

ADRIAN

I just said we'll have sherry.

AUBREY

You and Alex drink sherry, and I'll drink the wine.

ADRIAN

*(To Alex.)* Okay?

ALEX

Really, Dad, why not.

ADRIAN

Why not indeed. Well, that's one problem solved. Which glasses would you prefer, dear?

AUBREY

What's wrong with these?

ADRIAN

Nothing, I suppose. They're a little large for sherry, but what the hell.

*ADRIAN exits to kitchen.*

ALEX

Mom, how come Dad's the wine expert but you choose the glasses?

AUBREY

I don't know. As long as your father and I have been together, there are some things I still don't understand.

ALEX

But—

AUBREY

Anyway, who cares about wine and glasses. Let's talk about something important, like you.

*AUBREY puts her arm around ALEX and draws her close.*

ALEX

Mom—

*ALEX tries to move away from AUBREY, who holds on to her.*

AUBREY

Come on, sweetie, level with me. I know you don't like it when I get physically affectionate with you, but I also can tell when there's something on your mind.

*ALEX breaks away, rises, and moves away from the sofa.*

ALEX

Mom, has it ever occurred to you that if I have a problem you should let me bring it up in my own time and my own way?

AUBREY

Of course not.

ALEX

Of course not?

AUBREY

No, you're my daughter. Why wouldn't I push you to tell me your problems on *my* time, in *my* way?

ALEX

Because it would be more polite?

AUBREY

Since when are we polite with each other?

ALEX

Maybe we should start.

AUBREY  
Don't be ridiculous. You're my daughter. So tell me.

ALEX  
Tell you what?

AUBREY  
Don't try to hide it from me.

ALEX  
There's nothing.

AUBREY  
B.S.

ALEX  
No. Really. Nothing.

AUBREY  
Uh-huh.

*ALEX takes a moment to think and AUBREY lets her.*

ALEX  
It's about Kim.

AUBREY  
Of course it is.

ALEX  
What the hell is that supposed to mean?

AUBREY  
You came here wanting to talk about something. If it wasn't about Kim you'd be talking to Kim.

ALEX  
That's not true.

AUBREY  
Of course it is.

ALEX  
What a thing to say.

AUBREY  
I never liked her.

ALEX

Yeah, I'm aware of that.

AUBREY

So it seems I was right.

ALEX

Mom, sometimes the way you jump to conclusions—

AUBREY

You mean I'm wrong?

*ALEX again takes a moment.*

ALEX

It's not her fault. Or at least not all her fault.

AUBREY

Now we're getting somewhere.

ALEX

It's just that we—

AUBREY

Get to the point, dear.

ALEX

I need a place to stay and I wondered if I could use the basement for a while.

*Now it's AUBREY's turn to take a moment.*

ALEX (CONT'D)

I'm sure it won't be for long.

AUBREY

*(To herself.)* Well, crap, I should have seen that coming.

ALEX

She didn't throw me out or anything. We just need a little time apart.

AUBREY

Honey, I think maybe . . .

ALEX

What? Don't tell me Aunt Allie is down there. Dad would never go along with that.

AUBREY

Maybe we could pay for an Airbnb for a while.

ALEX

Airbnb? What?

AUBREY

Look, your father will be back any second—what the hell is taking him so long anyhow?—and the basement is kind of a sore subject right now.

ALEX

The basement? Of all the things to quarrel about?

AUBREY

We're not quarreling, dear, it's just kind of a serious thing right now and—

ALEX

How in the world could the basement be a serious thing all of a sudden?

AUBREY

That's none of your business.

ALEX

How is it none of my business?

AUBREY

You don't live here any more, do you?

ALEX

But, Mom, I—

AUBREY

Please. Just humor me here, okay? When your father gets back I just need for you not to bring up the basement.

ALEX

Bring up the basement? Ha ha. That's a joke, right?

AUBREY

*(Urgently.)* No, it's not a joke. Just please—

*ADRIAN enters with a bottle and heads for the sofa.*

ADRIAN

Hey, sorry I took so long. I was sure there was a full bottle of sherry up here, but I couldn't find it, so I brought this partial. It's not as dry as—

*ADRIAN notices that there is now something between AUBREY and ALEX.*

ADRIAN (CONTINUED)

Okay. Spill.

*ALEX and AUBREY look at each other.*

ADRIAN (CONTINUED)

You think I can't tell that something's going on here? Alex?

ALEX

I . . . you . . . nothing.

ADRIAN

I, you, nothing? Fascinating. Aubrey, my love?

AUBREY

I agree with Alex.

ADRIAN

About what?

AUBREY

It's nothing.

ADRIAN

Why do I suddenly feel as if there's an epidemic of keeping secrets from me?

AUBREY

It's one of your problems, Adrian. You think you're entitled to know everything.

ADRIAN

We're talking about my daughter, not to mention my home.

ALEX

What about your home?

ADRIAN

Ah, so there *is* something about my daughter.

AUBREY

Yes, she just wanted our expert advice about, um.

*AUBREY looks at ALEX, pleadingly. ALEX gets the signal and decides to go along.*

ALEX

Right. I just needed your expert advice.

ADRIAN

My what?

ALEX

Your expert advice.



*ADRIAN takes that in.*

ADRIAN

*(Suspiciously.)* Suddenly I'm an expert. Really?

AUBREY

Oh, of course, darling.

ALEX

Dad, you know I've always respected your opinion.

ADRIAN

Now, I'm getting very worried.

ALEX

No, really, Dad *(groping, looking for help from AUBREY, who motions back as in charades)*, um, I have, uh, a little spare cash, uh, and I wanted your, uh, opinion on how I, uh, might invest it.

AUBREY

Right. Alex was just telling me how much she values your investing savvy.

ALEX

Exactly. So, using your savvy, where would you tell me to put a couple thousand dollars?

ADRIAN

Using my what, where would I what?

AUBREY

*(To ADRIAN.)* Come on, dear, you can't play dumb with us. You know what she means.

ADRIAN

I think I know that she means something entirely different from what she's saying.

AUBREY

She's just asking—

ALEX

*(Dropping the ruse.)* Stop, Mom. I can't keep this up.

AUBREY

Can't keep what up? You just need some information about investing.

ADRIAN

On which I am not exactly an authority, and neither are you, *(to AUBREY)* dear, and we all know it. So stop trying to bullshit me.

AUBREY

I am not bullshitting you.

ADRIAN

No? First about the basement, and now about Alex's mythical investing, and my own even more mythical investing?

AUBREY

Dear, your investing is not mythical.

ADRIAN

Right. I just let the broker do it.

AUBREY

With your advice.

ADRIAN

My advice is to buy high and sell low. Or is it . . .

AUBREY

I just hate to see you putting yourself down.

ADRIAN

My god, our arguments have hit a new low for weirdness. Or is it high?

AUBREY

Well, at least you're not putting me down.

ALEX

*(A command.)* Stop.

*AUBREY and ADRIAN look at ALEX, who takes a beat.*

ALEX (CONT'D)

What about the basement?

*Beat.*

AUBREY

Who said anything about the basement?

ALEX

Dad did. He said you were bullshitting him about it.

AUBREY

I have no idea what either one of you is talking about.

ADRIAN

Come on, Aubrey. Let's talk about the basement.

AUBREY

Why?

ALEX

Mom. Even I can see you're bullshitting. Of course, that's in the context that both of you bullshit so much that if at any given moment I just guessed that you were bullshitting I'd probably be right.

ADRIAN

That's very good, Alex. Very good bullshitting.

ALEX

That's not bullshit. I grew up listening to bullshit. You two taught me all about it.

ADRIAN

Ha ha.

ALEX

You think it's funny?

ADRIAN

What's funny is the mixing of metaphors.

ALEX

The what?

ADRIAN

The metaphor mixture. The idea that bullshit is something you listen to. I would have thought—

AUBREY

Okay, dear, that's enough.

ADRIAN

Enough what?

ALEX

You're illustrating it perfectly right now.

ADRIAN

Now suddenly bullshit is something you illustrate.

ALEX

*(Exasperated.)* Exactly what I mean. I grew up with your bickering and your bullshit to the point where I can't tell one from the other. Are you really upset, or are you just pretending to be upset as a way to tease me.

AUBREY

Alex, honey—

ALEX

You know what I'm talking about, Mom, and please don't pretend you don't. I've had enough pretending to last me a lifetime.

ADRIAN

Well, don't pretend you don't do it.

ALEX

Of course I do it. How could I not do it. You force-fed it to me and so now I'm barfing it back up even when I don't want to, or don't even know I'm doing it.

ADRIAN

But you're not pretending now.

ALEX

Damn right I'm not.

AUBREY

How can we know?

ALEX

*(Even more exasperated.)* Know what?

ADRIAN

That you're not pretending. If you're so good at it.

AUBREY

You might be pretending that you're not pretending.

ADRIAN

*(Supporting AUBREY.)* I think she is.

AUBREY

*(To ADRIAN.)* She is rather good at it. *(To ALEX.)* Maybe you should become an actor.

ALEX

You want to know how good I am at it?

ADRIAN

Sure, tell us.

ALEX

I am so good that it's driving Kim crazy. She says she can't tell when I'm real and when I'm not, even when I do everything but set up a website to tell her that I'm being real.

AUBREY

Because sometimes you're not?

ADRIAN

Give us a concrete example of when we're bullshitting

ALEX

Just now. The wine and the glasses.

ADRIAN

*(To AUBREY.)* Do you have any idea what she's talking about?

AUBREY

Not the faintest.

ALEX

The whole thing about one of you being an expert about wine and the other one an expert about glasses.

ADRIAN

That's not bullshit.

ALEX

If it's not, then—

AUBREY

Does it matter?

ALEX

It matters because if I can't trust you—and like I said I grew up learning not to trust you—I have trouble trusting anyone, including the person I love.

AUBREY

*Think* you love.

ALEX

What?

AUBREY

Think you love. There's a difference.

*ALEX gives up, heaves a sigh, and gathers herself.*

ALEX  
Alright. Okay. Forget it.

AUBREY  
Well, I'm glad that's over with.

ALEX  
The basement.

AUBREY  
What about it?

ADRIAN  
I'd like to know too.

ALEX  
I need a place to stay.

AUBREY  
You have friends, don't you?

ALEX  
I've called Randy and he couldn't and I'm just not comfortable calling anybody else.

AUBREY  
Except your parents.

ALEX  
Well, yeah.

AUBREY  
I'm hurt you didn't call us first.

ALEX  
Mom. As I think Dad once said, guilt is the highest form of bullshit.

ADRIAN  
I think it was lowest.

ALEX  
Whatever.

ADRIAN  
Why?

ALEX  
I just don't know anyone else who—

ADRIAN

Why do you need a place to stay?

AUBREY

It's a woman thing, Adrian.

ADRIAN

I'm guessing this woman thing has to do with Kim.

*Beat.*

AUBREY

Am I the only one who wants wine or sherry or whatever?

*AUBREY, whose glass is still filled, pours into the second glass and finds there is not enough for the third glass.*

AUBREY

Oh, crap.

ADRIAN

You know, I'm pretty sure I stashed at least one sherry bottle in the basement.

AUBREY

Adrian, please.

ADRIAN

Okay. You won't explain the basement situation to me, so I'll just listen while you explain it to Alex.

ALEX

Basement situation.

*ALEX and ADRIAN look at AUBREY, who sips her wine but says nothing.*

ADRIAN

Aubrey. Honey. Please explain to our daughter why she can't stay in the basement.

ALEX

What?

AUBREY

*(Seeing she can't evade any longer.)* Alex, dear.

ALEX

I'm smelling it.

AUBREY

No, dear, this is real. You know sometimes we have to look beyond our own petty, selfish interests and think of the greater good.

ALEX

I hear it. I mean, I smell it. Right, Dad?

AUBREY

I am totally serious and sincere.

ALEX

Are you? Give me a hint.

AUBREY

Trust me.

ALEX

Funny.

AUBREY

Alex, your father and I have always been here for you.

ALEX

Yeah. You should have run a cattle ranch.

AUBREY

*(Losing patience.)* You want to hear about the basement?

ALEX

I might as well hear about something.

AUBREY

*(Earnestly.)* Well. I saw that we had the chance to do something real to help our country and the world, but most of all, our community. Not something abstract or general, something real and specific.

*AUBREY makes a don't-you-see gesture to ALEX, who shrugs.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

I'll bet you can guess.

ALEX

Aunt Allie is down there, isn't she.

AUBREY

Aunt Allie?



ADRIAN

*(To AUBREY.)* You said she wasn't.

AUBREY

*(Definite.)* She's not.

ALEX

Who is?

AUBREY

*(Sanctimonious.)* A person who needs shelter.

ALEX

I need shelter.

AUBREY

Fortunately for you, we raised you to take care of yourself.

ALEX

So, if it's not Aunt Allie, then who?

AUBREY

As I said. A person in need.

ALEX

Dad?

ADRIAN

Actually, I first heard about this person myself, just a little while ago.

ALEX

So, who is it?

ADRIAN

Beats me.

ALEX

Mom?

AUBREY

As I have already said—

ALEX

But does this mystery person have a name?

AUBREY

Everybody has a name and I'm sure this person does too.

ALEX

Wait. You don't know the name?

AUBREY

If the person is in need, their name hardly seems critical.

ALEX

So, how did you find out about this need?

AUBREY

Why is that important?

ALEX

*(Cross-examining.)* Were you contacted by a social services agency?

AUBREY

No, but—

ALEX

A charity?

AUBREY

No.

ALEX

Did you contact them?

AUBREY

No. Hey, what is—

ALEX

So what did you do? Did you go cruising by one of the tent cities around town and just pick someone up?

AUBREY

What are you, a prosecuting attorney? Did you go to law school while we weren't looking?

ADRIAN

Alex, I think what happened is, someone just showed up. Right Aubrey?

AUBREY

Sort of.

ALEX

Sort of?

AUBREY

Well. Yes. Sort of.

ALEX

Is that what panhandlers are doing these days? Come to the door to beg for shelter? Do they promise to work for shelter? Wait, are you making them work, because that would be—

AUBREY

You're really misconstruing everything—

ALEX

So somebody just rang the door bell and—

*DOORBELL rings. Each of them looks at the other.*

AUBREY

I have no idea.

ADRIAN

Me neither.

ALEX

Don't look at me.

AUBREY

I suppose somebody should answer.

ADRIAN

Why?

AUBREY

Why?

ADRIAN

We don't always answer the phone, do we?

AUBREY

Now that you mention it, we don't.

*DOORBELL rings again.*

ADRIAN

We're not expecting anyone, are we?

AUBREY

No.

ADRIAN

And it's probably not an emergency.

AUBREY

If it were an emergency and we weren't here, it wouldn't matter.

ADRIAN

Exactly. And really, shouldn't the people we're with take precedence?

AUBREY

Yes. They should. I hate people who make the phone more important than the people in front of them.

ADRIAN

Yeah. You start to feel like if you really want their attention, you have to call.

AUBREY

Right. So why should the doorbell be different from the phone?

*DOORBELL rings. Then it rings again. And again.*

*ALEX goes to the door.*

ALEX

This damn family.

*ALEX opens the door to RAY, whom ALEX has never met, or at least doesn't remember. ALEX stands near the door as if to block RAY from entering.*

ALEX

Yes?

RAY

Hi. You must be Alex.

ALEX

Who are you and what do you want?

RAY

I'm a friend—

ALEX

*(Sarcastic.)* If you need a place to stay, it's already taken.

RAY

How—

ADRIAN

Hello, Ray.

*ALEX steps aside to allow this conversation. RAY stays outside the door. RAY's clothes are old, ragged, and very soiled. His face has some dirt on it, as if he's tried to wash it but not very well. He has a patchy beard.*

AUBREY  
Adrian. You promised.

ADRIAN  
I didn't know he was coming.

AUBREY  
Well, send him away.

ADRIAN  
While we're saving the world maybe we can at least talk to an old friend.

AUBREY  
Your old friend. Not mine.

ALEX  
Shall I let him in?

ADRIAN  
Sure. Come on in, Ray.

*RAY enters. ADRIAN pointedly does not stand up. AUBREY gets up and retreats to a far corner, her back to the others.*

RAY  
*(Shy and tentative, totally unsure of himself.)* Hi, Adrian. Hello, Aubrey. Hi, Alex. I'm Ray.

AUBREY  
*(To RAY but without facing him.)* What are you doing here, Ray?

RAY  
You look great, Aubrey.

AUBREY  
If you came to tell me that, you shouldn't have bothered.

RAY  
*(Clearly uncomfortable.)* Yeah. Hey. I know. I mean, I don't know. I really don't know.

ADRIAN  
How are you doing, Ray?

AUBREY

Adrian, damn it.

ADRIAN

He's here, Aubrey.

AUBREY

Well, let's keep that as brief as possible, okay?

*ADRIAN goes to RAY. During the following dialog, RAY tries to hug ADRIAN, who recoils from RAY's aroma. They settle for a handshake.*

ADRIAN

It's been a while, Ray.

RAY

It has.

*After they break from their handshake, for a brief moment ADRIAN examines his right hand.*

ADRIAN

You look good.

RAY

It's okay, Adie (*RAY addresses ADRIAN by a diminutive, rhyming with "lady"*). You don't have to bullshit. I mean, don't feel obligated.

ALEX

If you're an old friend, you should know it's what they do best.

AUBREY

Alex.

RAY

It's okay. Really. I know what I look like. I probably don't smell so good either.

ADRIAN

Oh, you're okay—

AUBREY

No, you're not okay. (*Sniffs.*) You're not okay all the way over here.

ADRIAN

Hey, we were just having some sherry—

AUBREY

(*Angry.*) Adrian.

RAY

That would be, uh. Really. Um. I should stay away from the sherry. Thanks.

ADRIAN

Some ice water?

AUBREY

Adrian, I mean it.

ADRIAN

For god's sake, Aubrey, the man can have some water.

ALEX

*(Annoyed.)* I'll get it.

*ALEX exits to kitchen.*

ADRIAN

*(To RAY.)* Want to sit?

RAY

Yeah. I, uh.

*ADRIAN looks around and directs RAY to the one unupholstered chair.*

ADRIAN

So, Ray, how have you been doing?

RAY

Okay I guess.

ADRIAN

Good to hear.

RAY

Actually, not so good.

ADRIAN

You still with Jordan?

RAY

Oh, no, we split up a while ago. Quite a while ago, actually. Like, eons ago.

ADRIAN

Sorry to hear that.

RAY

Yeah, well.

*ALEX re-enters with a tumbler of ice water, which she takes to RAY and immediately retreats.*

RAY

Thanks.

*RAY drinks most of the water, closes his eyes, and sighs.*

ADRIAN

And the job?

RAY

Oh, well. The job.

*AUBREY finally turns to face RAY.*

AUBREY

You don't have one, of course. No surprise there.

RAY

No. I guess not. Hey, Aubrey, I'm really sorry about. You know.

AUBREY

Yes, I do know. Believe me, I know. I remember it well.

RAY

So, yeah. I'm sorry.

AUBREY

I accept. Don't take that for more than it is.

RAY

No. I.

*RAY avoids talking by drinking his water. AUBREY, ADRIAN, and ALEX watch him drink. After he finishes he notices them all watching him.*

RAY (CONT'D)

Oh. Hey. I. You know, I was just remembering some old times and I wanted to see you two—oh, and it's nice to see you Alex. Has your dad told you about me? You're young, you would appreciate—wow, but you're not as young as you were when I last saw you. Really, I guess.

ALEX

Yeah, but they talk a lot about you.

RAY

Really?



ALEX

Whenever they bicker, you usually come up.

RAY

That doesn't sound good.

ALEX

Not to me either.

ADRIAN

So, Ray, what brings you around?

RAY

Well, like I said, I was just thinking about old times, when we were as young as Alex, and I wanted to talk, but I didn't have a phone, just your address, and so I. (*Suddenly trying to be cheerful, to ADRIAN.*) Hey, remember that time we went bar-hopping in old town? Well, I mean there were several times like that, I guess, but there was one where—

AUBREY

I remember the time you two went out from here all laughing and happy and came back plastered and you, Ray, destroyed my antique glass cabinet.

ADRIAN

Aubrey, really—

RAY

Hey, that was an accident, Aubrey.

AUBREY

Right. The kind of accident that only happens when you're falling-down drunk.

RAY

Oh, yeah, you're right about that. But, hey, Adie, we had a great time that night, didn't we? Remember those girls in the one place, and the guy with them—

ADRIAN

Yeah, I do, Ray, but I've kind of left that stuff behind.

RAY

Oh, yeah, me too, I mean I'm not trying to start up again, please don't think that, no, no way, those days are behind me too. (*Looks away and shakes his head and smiles.*) But they were something, weren't they?

ADRIAN

Yeah, Ray. They were something.

AUBREY

I'll agree to that. They were definitely something.

RAY

Yeah. Well.

AUBREY

So, Ray, you just came here to reminisce?

RAY

Yeah. No.

ADRIAN

You okay, Ray?

RAY

Yeah. Uh. I'm fine. I just. You know, I should go. I shouldn't have come.

*RAY starts to rise.*

ADRIAN

No, Ray. Sit. You want more water? How about a Coke?

AUBREY

Adrian.

RAY

Oh, a cold Coke would be fantastic. Please. But Aubrey. I don't want—

ALEX

I'll get it.

*ALEX rises, takes Ray's glass, and exits to kitchen.*

ADRIAN

So, Ray, you living in the same place?

RAY

*(Mystified.)* Same. Same as?

ADRIAN

The place where you were when—

RAY

Oh, that place, yeah, I know where you mean. No. I haven't. I mean, I haven't lived there for a long time. Years? Yeah, years, I guess.

*ALEX enters and takes an opened canned soft drink to RAY.*

ALEX

It's not really Coke, it's generic supermarket cola, but—

RAY

Oh, that's great. Can't complain. I mean, beggars can't. Not that I'm a beggar, no way. I mean.

*RAY takes can from ALEX and drinks as if it's heavenly elixir as ALEX, AUBREY, and ADRIAN watch.*

ADRIAN

So, where are you living now?

RAY

Where? Oh. Uh. Here and there. You know.

ADRIAN

Ray, are you really okay? Because you don't look—

RAY

Oh, sure. You know me. I'm always okay. *(Starting to break down.)* Life is a joke so why not laugh, you know? *(Forces a laugh, but the laugh turns to a sob and RAY breaks down.)*

ADRIAN

Ray?

RAY

Sorry. I didn't mean to do that. *(Collects himself.)* I don't want to impose. Oh, shit. Man, I'm down. I didn't want. Well, yeah, I did want. I needed. I've been staying in shelters, but they're depressing and. Well. And I remembered your basement and I thought maybe I could stay, and do some work around here, help out with things, get back on my feet—

AUBREY

*(Softening.)* Ray—

ADRIAN

Aubrey, it's okay, just—

AUBREY

Ray, you must be hungry. We just finished dinner a while ago and I could microwave some left-overs.

RAY

Aubrey, you're an angel. I know I'm a pain in the ass, and I'm sorry.

AUBREY

Don't worry about it, Ray. I'll bring you a plate.

ADRIAN

*(Suspiciously.)* Wait a second.

AUBREY

Me?

ADRIAN

Yes, my love.

AUBREY

What?

ADRIAN

I suppose I should just let this go, but I was wondering.

AUBREY

Yes?

ADRIAN

About your feelings about . . . *(gesturing discreetly toward RAY.)*

AUBREY

Adrian, I love you dearly, but sometimes you can be utterly cold and heartless.

ADRIAN

What?

AUBREY

Never mind.

ADRIAN

Fine.

*AUBREY exits to kitchen.*

RAY

Hey, Adie, I don't want to cause problems.

ALEX

Don't worry, Ray. Problems around her sprout like weeds.

ADRIAN

She's right, Ray. Don't worry about what you can't control. But about the basement.

RAY

I get it. She doesn't want me around. Can't blame her for that.

ADRIAN

No, it's not that, it's—

RAY

I mean, I don't like having me around, why should she?

ADRIAN

No, it's not like that.

ALEX

There's a queue, Ray.

RAY

A queue?

ALEX

Yeah. A line. Forms on the right.

*RAY looks at ALEX, figuring it out.*

RAY

I see. Well.

*RAY rises.*

RAY (CONTINUED)

I certainly don't want to interfere—

*AUBREY enters carrying a plate of food, with a fork and napkin.*

AUBREY

*(Bossy.)* Ray, why are you up? Where are you going? Sit down and eat this.

*RAY stares at the food and sits, takes the plate from AUBREY. He eats, ravenously.*

AUBREY (CONT'D)

You were going to just send him off, weren't you?

ADRIAN

Send him off? What are you talking about?

AUBREY

You know perfectly well, but never mind. I think we can work something out.

ADRIAN

I'm sure Ray—

AUBREY

You're homeless, aren't you, Ray?

*RAY looks up and stops eating, but only for a moment, as he scrapes up the last bits of food.*

ADRIAN

Honey, that's kind of a personal—

AUBREY

Dear, we can't ignore the obvious.

RAY

*(Swallows the last mouthful of food and drinks more cola.)* God that was good.  
Thank you.

AUBREY

When was the last time you ate?

RAY

Yesterday I ate a shelter meal. But it wasn't like this.

AUBREY

Thanks.

ADRIAN

Actually, I cooked it, so thanks from me.

AUBREY

Dear, I don't think Ray is interested in quibbles about who cooks.

ADRIAN

I'm sure he's not. It was just for the record.

ALEX

Sheesh.

AUBREY

Anyway, I think we should be able to work out an arrangement for Ray to stay in the basement.

ALEX

Mom?

AUBREY

We'll get to you in a minute, dear.

RAY

Look, if Alex is staying in the basement, I totally understand. I don't want. I mean, I can find—

AUBREY

Alex is not—

ALEX

If you can make an *arrangement* for Ray, why can't you—

AUBREY

You can sleep on the couch, dear.

ALEX

On the couch? Mom, I need some privacy.

AUBREY

You've slept on the couch before, Alex.

ALEX

That was on trips home from college.

AUBREY

I don't see that as a significant difference, do you, Adrian?

ADRIAN

I'm kind of confused about this whole situation.

AUBREY

There's nothing confusing about it. The person downstairs can share with Ray.

RAY

You mean there's someone else—

AUBREY

Ray, please. We're trying to work something out for you.

ADRIAN

Aubrey, slow down. I'm sure Ray appreciates your generosity, but—

AUBREY

*(Firmly, as to a child.)* Adrian, this is a different situation.

ADRIAN

It's certainly that—

AUBREY

I will work it out.

ADRIAN

Good. Then we'll finally find out who's down there.

AUBREY

I suppose we will.

ALEX

Why can't I sleep in one of the two extra bedrooms?

ADRIAN

Alex, you know—

ALEX

Yeah, I know they're your precious offices where you go and retreat and do your mysterious business, each of you, whatever the hell it is, but one of them used to be my room, so I don't see—

AUBREY

Alex, you forfeited your right—

ALEX

Forfeited?

ADRIAN

Alex, don't—

ALEX

Fine, I forfeited my room when I left for college.

ADRIAN

Alex, we needed—

ALEX

You should have heard me trying to explain that to my friends.

AUBREY

I could have—

ALEX

But let's not dwell on water under the bridge—

ADRIAN

Would require a house boat.

AUBREY

A house boat?



ADRIAN

To dwell on water under the bridge.

ALEX

*(A command.)* Okay. Whatever. *(Calming herself.)* In any case, right now, we seem to have a supply-demand imbalance here. You know?

AUBREY

Supply-demand? Well, excuse me.

ALEX

It's just an expression, Mom. We have too much demand and not enough supply.

AUBREY

We have exactly the right supply if your highness will just agree to be flexible and sleep on the couch.

ALEX

To sleep on that couch you have to be flexible, I'll give you that. But why am I the one who has to bend?

ADRIAN

Alex, we love you, but are you suggesting that we *(indicating himself and AUBREY)* should sleep on the couch?

ALEX

What I'm suggesting is, with the current housing crisis in this house, one of you could temporarily give up an office.

ADRIAN

I don't think so.

AUBREY

Nor do I.

RAY

I feel like I'm the cause of—

ADRIAN

Relax, Ray.

RAY

But I don't want to be in the middle of—

ADRIAN

*(A command.)* Quiet.

*Beat while they all look at ADRIAN.*

ADRIAN

Okay. So. First. Before we start making deals about the basement. We need to know who's down there now.

AUBREY

I swear I don't know.

RAY

*(Shocked.)* You don't know who's in your basement?

ALEX

My reaction exactly.

RAY

But how?

AUBREY

Someone appeared, Ray. Really, how this person arrived is not your business.

RAY

I know, you're right, but I've got lots of experience on the street and I would never break into someone's home.

AUBREY

They didn't have to break in, did they Adrian?

ADRIAN

Yeah, well, I admit it was a mistake.

AUBREY

Nice of you, after I've complained for years about it.

ADRIAN

And for years nothing happened but now that it has, instead of telling me—

AUBREY

So you're trying to turn it around on me, as usual.

ADRIAN

I'm not trying to turn it around on you. I admit I should have fixed that lock years ago, but you're the one who let someone stay down there, secretly. And what do you mean, as usual?

AUBREY

Like the time you bought that damn refrigerator.

ADRIAN

*(Mystified.)* What? You wanted the refrigerator.

AUBREY

I didn't want that one and I didn't want—

ALEX

*(A command.)* Stop.

*Beat. They all look at ALEX.*

ALEX (CONT'D)

Nobody cares about the refrigerator, do they? Does it matter?

AUBREY

It seems to matter—

ALEX

Mom.

ADRIAN

We're not making much progress here.

ALEX

Mom, are you sure it's not Aunt Allie down there?

AUBREY

Of course I'm sure, Allie wouldn't just move in without telling me.

ALEX

Really? She's crazy enough.

RAY

Allie? *(To Aubrey.)* Your sister?

AUBREY

Yes.

RAY

*(Grinning.)* Oh, she's definitely nuts. Adrian, remember that time she went out clubbing with us?

ADRIAN

*(Starting to laugh at the memory.)* Yeah, I do.

RAY

*(Laughing.)* That one time, she punched that guy in the stomach.

ADRIAN

*(Laughing.)* Yeah, she did.

RAY

*(Still laughing.)* I mean, the guy was begging for it.

ADRIAN

*(Still laughing.)* He was really gross.

RAY

*(Laughing harder.)* And the look on his face after she punched him?

ADRIAN

*(Laughing more.)* Just before he barfed on top of the bar?

AUBREY

*(Starting to laugh, in spite of herself.)* I remember that.

RAY

*(Laughing.)* Yeah, she punched him. She's a piece of work, that Allie.

ALEX

*(Wanting in on the fun.)* Didn't she once steal a car?

AUBREY

She did, sort of.

ADRIAN

Well, it was an accident.

AUBREY

It was one of those total coincidences where one key fit two cars.

ADRIAN

In the days before electronic locks.

AUBREY

*(Breaking out laughing.)* But when they stopped her she got so indignant.

ADRIAN

*(Laughing again.)* Outraged. When she phoned here I thought she wanted to kill me, like it was my fault.

ALEX

*(Laughing.)* Didn't she hit one of the cops?

ADRIAN

*(Laughing.)* Luckily the cops had a sense of humor.

AUBREY

Even when Allie does something totally nuts, there's something about her. You just have to laugh.

*Everyone takes a moment remembering crazy Allie.*

ALEX

So, couldn't she be crazy enough to move in without telling you?

AUBREY

No, I don't think—

ALEX

Didn't you once say she's sort of bipolar?

AUBREY

Yes, but—

ALEX

So if she was in a down cycle? And needed to get away from whoever those people are that she lives with? And knowing about the unlocked door?

ADRIAN

It makes sense, Aubrey.

AUBREY

*(Thinks for a moment.)* Yes, I suppose it does.

ALEX

So that makes it easier.

AUBREY

Makes what easier?

ALEX

You're not going to choose crazy Allie over me, are you?

AUBREY

Crazy Allie is my only sister.

ALEX

I'm your only daughter.

AUBREY

And Allie was there first.

ALEX

She has her own place.

AUBREY

So do you.

ALEX

But my partner—

AUBREY

And if you're having domestic problems you must admit that Allie could be having them too.

ALEX

It's not the same.

AUBREY

You are not in a position to judge, my dear.

RAY

If I could speak.

AUBREY

Of course, Ray.

RAY

I have to go with Alex on this. I mean, I like Allie—god she is so weird. Adie, remember when she told a restaurant manager she wasn't paying for her dinner because the seasoning wasn't right—after she'd already eaten most of it?

ADRIAN

I do remember that. And then she dared him to argue with her. The guy looked around at his other customers—

RAY

*(Laughing.)* With this look on his face, like, *seasoning? What the hell—*

ADRIAN

*(Laughing.)* I know. And he decides he'd rather have her just leave without paying—

RAY

*(Laughing.)* And then she says, well, they shouldn't pay either.

ADRIAN

*(Laughing.)* Meaning us, but the poor guy thought she meant everybody and he practically shoved us out the door.

AUBREY

Wait, I didn't know about this. When were you three out at a restaurant without me?

ADRIAN

The two of us were out and decided to call her.

AUBREY

So you had my sister out with you after you left me at home?

ADRIAN

Oh, no, it wasn't like that.

AUBREY

Like what?

ADRIAN

What you think.

AUBREY

And what do I think, exactly?

ADRIAN

Honey, it really had nothing to do with you or me. Ray and Allie, were, sort of . .

AUBREY

What?

RAY

Adie, I wish you wouldn't—

AUBREY

You mean Allie and Ray were . . .

ADRIAN

Ray, weren't you?

RAY

Yeah, I guess we were.

AUBREY

*(Outraged.)* But Allie's a lesbian.

RAY

Well, I guess maybe she's really bi.

AUBREY

*(Thinking.)* Now that you mention it. But then, you seduced her? Or worse?

RAY

Oh, no, I didn't have to seduce her or anything like that. *(Laughing.)* It was all Allie all the time. Not much effort on my part.

AUBREY

Still, you took advantage of my bipolar sister.

RAY

Took advantage? I was just along for the ride, Aubrey, believe me.

AUBREY

*(Turning on ADRIAN.)* And you, my dear husband, kept this from me, for how long?

RAY

This was years ago.

AUBREY

And you've never told me?

ADRIAN

Aubrey, honey.

AUBREY

You didn't think I was entitled to know?

ADRIAN

Not really. It was between Ray and Allie, both consenting adults, and they didn't want you to know.

AUBREY

Allie didn't want me to know?

ADRIAN

That's the fact. She said you were over-protective of her.

AUBREY

And you let her carry on with Ray. I'm just remembering why I made you promise that Ray would never set foot in the house—

RAY

What?

ADRIAN

Honey, slow down.

AUBREY

And then the two of you made me feel sorry for him—

ADRIAN

I didn't—



AUBREY

You did. Was this one of your plots against me?

ADRIAN

We never—

AUBREY

You did. You probably got together in a bar and planned this whole thing.

RAY

I still drink, unfortunately, but I haven't been in a bar in—

AUBREY

You're probably not even homeless. This is probably all an act.

RAY

Oh, I'm homeless, believe me.

ADRIAN

That's enough, Aubrey.

ALEX

*(Bursting into tears.)* What about me? I'm your daughter. I'm entitled to some special consideration and I need a place to stay and pull myself together.

AUBREY

Oh, honey.

ALEX

You just keep on with your bullshit and who knows how much of it's true—

RAY

Oh, it's all true, I think.

ALEX

And you go on and on about poor Allie, poor weird funny Allie, the bipolar bisexual basement-stealing slut.

AUBREY

Alex, you take that back.

ALEX

Which part? I need a place to stay.

ADRIAN

*(A Command.)* Whoa.

*Everyone looks at ADRIAN.*

ADRIAN

Whatever Allie might be—and she's many things—we've gone from, she's capable of sneaking into our basement and staying there, for three weeks—

RAY

Three weeks? My god.

ADRIAN

Ray, please. To, she's definitely the one down there. The truth is, we don't know.

*Beat.*

AUBREY

True. So where does that leave us?

ALEX

*(No longer crying.)* Why doesn't someone go down and look?

*ADRIAN strides toward the basement door.*

ADRIAN

Exactly.

AUBREY

*(A command.)* Wait.

ADRIAN

What for?

AUBREY

If it's Allie, and she's in a down period I don't think you should just barge in on her.

ADRIAN

Okay, so why don't you go?

AUBREY

If it's a stranger, a homeless stranger, I'm kind of afraid of going down there. I'm sorry, Ray, but I am.

RAY

I don't blame you. Some of us are really—

ADRIAN

Which is why you shouldn't have let this get started in the first place.

AUBREY

I just wanted to do some good for someone.

ADRIAN

*(Ignoring her.)* So, you don't want me to go down because it might be Allie and you're afraid my sudden appearance might, I don't know, scare her? Startle her? Despite the fact that she's staying in my house—

AUBREY

Our house.

ADRIAN

Sure, our house, your house, my house, but on the other hand you don't want to go down there because it might *not* be Allie, and the sudden appearance of a stranger might scare *you*. Have I got that right?

RAY

I'll go.

AUBREY

After the way you hurt her?

RAY

I didn't hurt her. We just had a fling.

AUBREY

That's what you call it.

RAY

That's what it was. Haven't you ever had one?

ADRIAN

*(A command.)* Stop. *(To Aubrey.)* It really doesn't matter, does it? Whatever mental problems Allie has, she is an adult. And I'm going down there.

*ADRIAN goes to basement door.*

AUBREY

Be careful, dear. Who knows who it is.

ADRIAN

Yeah. I'll be careful.

*ADRIAN exits through basement door and closes it behind him. EVERYONE looks at the door and listens as he goes clumping down the standard 12 steps of the flight. After a moment, it's quiet, and conversation resumes.*

ALEX

Okay, so let's game this out.

AUBREY

You kids and your games.

ALEX

Mom, it's just an expression.

AUBREY

So what's the expression for, in this case?

ALEX

I still need a place to stay.

AUBREY

You can find—

ALEX

Okay, I could find. If you and Dad didn't have this house or if you were living far away, or you and Dad weren't here at all—

AUBREY

Now you're wishing we were dead.

ALEX

Mom. I'm not wishing anything of the kind.

AUBREY

Well, I can tell you, don't count on an inheritance.

ALEX

*(A command.)* Damn it Mom.

*AUBREY looks at ALEX.*

ALEX (CONT'D)

Alright then. We've got two possibilities here. One, the person downstairs is Aunt Allie. Two, it's a homeless person.

RAY

It might also be an illegal immigrant, or an escaped convict, or maybe even more than one—

ALEX

Okay, Ray. It could be Elvis or, I don't know, that guy who jumped from an airplane—

AUBREY

D. B. Cooper.

RAY

D. B. Cooper.

ALEX

Right, or some combination. For all we know, they're both down there, maybe having a party with Greta Garbo—

RAY

*(To AUBREY.)* Garbo died, didn't she?

AUBREY

Yes, I believe she did.

RAY

How about Bobbie Gentry?

AUBREY

Bobbie Gentry? Wow, I haven't even thought about her in ages, but I haven't heard that she died.

RAY

Katherine Ross?

AUBREY

She dropped out, didn't she?

ALEX

*(A command.)* For god's sake.

*AUBREY and RAY look at ALEX.*

ALEX

I suppose there could be a bunch of drop-out celebrities, living or dead, down there having a party, but can we just stick to the main possibilities—

RAY

To game it out, right?

ALEX

Yes, to game it out. So.

AUBREY

So.

ALEX

Let's say it's Aunt Allie.

RAY

Just for the sake of argument.

ALEX

Believe me, Ray, around here nobody needs a *sake* to argue.

AUBREY

Okay. We'll say it's Allie. Just for the sake of argument.

ALEX

Will you ask her to leave?

RAY

I can't ask Aubrey to—

ALEX

Ray, I didn't mean—

AUBREY

She's my sister, Alex.

ALEX

Right. Will you ask her to leave?

AUBREY

*(Thinks for a moment.)* Maybe.

RAY

Wait, what about me?

ALEX

What about you, Ray?

RAY

If Allie's down there, maybe I could stay with her.

AUBREY

A very bad idea. Especially considering that she's in a trough.

RAY

We don't know she is.

AUBREY

Why else would she be down there without telling me?

RAY

How would I know?

ALEX

So, if Allie's down there, she might stay alone or *(to AUBREY)* you might allow Ray to stay with her, but I'm out, is that it?

AUBREY

I really don't think Ray—

ALEX

Alright, Ray or not, whatever, I'm out.

AUBREY

Dear, you really should be more generous.

ALEX

I said, I'm out. I'll accept that, even if I don't like it, so how am I not being generous? I understand that you care more for your screwy sister than you do for your daughter—but I am going to ask Dad.

*AUBREY does not speak.*

ALEX (CONT'D)

Okay. Now, let's say, it's a homeless person down there? Then what?

AUBREY

I never thought I would hear a child of mine talk about putting a homeless person back out on the street.

ALEX

I never thought I'd hear a mother of mine talk about putting *me* out on the street.

AUBREY

Then you'll have to be the one to do it because I won't.

ALEX

Sweet. Further discussion when Dad returns.

AUBREY

And you might be putting two people out, because if it's a homeless stranger I can see no reason why they couldn't share with Ray.

RAY

Well, I don't know—

ALEX

How come the idea of someone sharing with me never comes up?

AUBREY

Would you share with Allie?

ALEX

No.

AUBREY

With a homeless stranger?

ALEX

No.

AUBREY

Well, alright then.

ALEX

I wouldn't do it, but it would be nice to be asked.

AUBREY

You know, you might learn something from a homeless person.

RAY

I don't know about that.

ALEX

I might as well just hit the street now.

*We hear the sound of footsteps clumping up the basement steps and EVERYONE goes quiet and holds breath and watches the door. After the sound of 12 steps, the door opens and ALL release their breaths as ADRIAN enters through the basement door, carrying a stack of plates and flatware, and a couple of glasses, and a note. The others watch him as he walks across the stage toward the kitchen.*

RAY

Um, Adie?

*RAY holds up his used plate.*

ADRIAN

Of course.

*ADRIAN goes to RAY, who puts his plate on top of ADRIAN's stack. ADRIAN then walks back toward the kitchen door, and as he passes AUBREY he holds out the note for her to take.*

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Whoever it is, is currently out. You should read this.

*ADRIAN exits to kitchen. AUBREY reads note as ALEX and RAY watch her read. After a beat,*

ALEX

Well?

RAY

Well?

AUBREY

Not very helpful.



*ADRIAN enters from kitchen.*

ADRIAN

How did they get down there?

AUBREY

Through the door with the lock you haven't fixed.

ADRIAN

Not the people. The dishes.

AUBREY

*(A command.)* Wait. *(Holding up the note.)* This doesn't look like Allie's handwriting, does it?

ADRIAN

I know. It's printing. Doesn't she write in cursive?

AUBREY

Yeah, but people change.

ALEX

Cursive? What's cursive? A language?

AUBREY

*(Ignoring ALEX.)* So we still don't know.

ADRIAN

What we know is that you've been feeding them.

AUBREY

I couldn't let them starve.

*ADRIAN stares at her.*

AUBREY (CONTINUED)

*(Daring him to object.)* Well, I couldn't.

*ADRIAN continues to stare.*

AUBREY (CONTINUED)

*(Protesting.)* After a couple days I started leaving plates of food at the top of the stairs. The next day I'd find them in the same place without the food. And then a couple days ago the plates stopped reappearing. Don't look at me like that. I was scared to go down there.

ADRIAN

That might be the first sensible thing you've said in hours.

AUBREY

*(Caught.)* Well.

ADRIAN

The glasses.

AUBREY

What glasses?

ADRIAN

Unless I'm mistaken, and I'm pretty sure I'm not, the two glasses I just brought up were the friggin crystal.

AUBREY

I wanted them to have something nice.

ADRIAN

And they found a bottle of my reserve.

AUBREY

You wouldn't begrudge them a little pleasure, would you?

ADRIAN

Me? Begrudge? I'm going for my tools.

*ADRIAN starts for the basement door again.*

AUBREY

*(A command.)* Wait.

*ADRIAN stops.*

ADRIAN

Now what?

AUBREY

While you were downstairs we had a discussion.

ADRIAN

Great.

*ADRIAN starts for basement.*

AUBREY

We need your input.

*ADRIAN stops.*

ADRIAN  
My input?

AUBREY  
We gamed the situation out.

ADRIAN  
You what?

AUBREY  
You know, we tried different scenarios to see how it would go.

ALEX  
And in every scenario, I lost.

AUBREY  
But we couldn't really decide, so now we're looking to you.

*ADRIAN laughs.*

ALEX  
Dad, it's not funny.

ADRIAN  
Sure it is.

AUBREY  
We value your input and now we need it.

ADRIAN  
Because father knows best?

RAY  
Because they'll need someone to blame when things go south.

ADRIAN  
I have missed you, Ray. Folks, I think I'd rather fix the kitchen faucet. I'll accept whatever you decide.

*ADRIAN starts for the basement, but what AUBREY says next stops him.*

AUBREY  
If it's Allie down there, then we could kick her out in favor of Alex, but I don't favor that.

ALEX

Or if it's a homeless stranger, we could kick them out in favor of me, which sort of makes sense to me, or we could kick them out in favor of Ray, which I don't favor.

AUBREY

Or we could have Ray share the place with the stranger.

RAY

Which I don't favor.

ALEX

*(Sarcastically.)* Because Ray needs his privacy.

AUBREY

Alex, you should have more respect.

ALEX

Everybody gets respect around here except me.

AUBREY

Alex.

ALEX

Or we could just let the stranger stay there and to hell with both me and Ray.

RAY

I don't think letting a homeless stranger stay there is such a good idea.

ADRIAN

*(A command.)* Stop.

*Everyone looks at ADRIAN. ADRIAN looks back at them, one by one.*

ADRIAN

Oh, crap. I have nothing to say. Just. I don't care.

*ADRIAN heads again for the basement.*

AUBREY

*(Acidly.)* Or maybe, Adrian, dear, you'd like to share the room with Allie.

*ADRIAN stops.*

ADRIAN

What?

AUBREY

You heard me.

ADRIAN

I did, but what the hell are you talking about? Why would I—

AUBREY

You shared a room with her once.

ADRIAN

*(Baffled.)* I, what?

AUBREY

Don't pretend it hasn't been in the back of your mind.

ADRIAN

I don't have to pretend because it hasn't.

AUBREY

Are you going to stand there and deny—

ADRIAN

That I once slept with Allie?

AUBREY

Once. Ha.

ADRIAN

Okay, several times.

AUBREY

Several? Several dozen.

ALEX

I didn't know this.

RAY

Me neither.

ADRIAN

Aubrey, that was before you and I were even dating.

AUBREY

Oh, and that means it's not relevant any more?

ADRIAN

I took one look at you and knew I couldn't continue with her.

*AUBREY is speechless, pleasantly biffed by what ADRIAN just said.*

ALEX

You know, guys, all this ancient history, and all these proposed sharing agreements still leave me out in the cold.

AUBREY

*(Ignoring Alex.)* Adrian, you are sweet.

ADRIAN

Thanks. You're not exactly sour yourself.

*AUBREY moves to ADRIAN, who moves to her, and they embrace, as they remain during the following dialog.*

ALEX

Maybe you two should move in down there and let me take your bedroom.

RAY

You know, my little square of sidewalk under the overpass is starting to seem pretty nice right now.

*RAY starts to move to outside door.*

AUBREY

*(Still focused on ADRIAN.)* Oh, no, Ray, we couldn't let you go.

RAY

Come on, Aubrey, you don't like me and I'm just in the way.

AUBREY

*(Focused on ADRIAN.)* No, Ray. Hell, if you want Allie, you can have her, as far as I'm concerned.

RAY

Actually, I don't think I'm ready for that.

ADRIAN

*(Focused on Aubrey.)* Come on, Ray. You two might be just what you both need, right now. Just like me and Aubrey.

*ALEX goes to the coffee table, where the sherry is.*

ALEX

I think what I need is right here. Unless you have something stronger.

*DOORBELL rings and everyone freezes, including AUBREY and ADRIAN in each other's embrace.*

ADRIAN

Ignore it.

AUBREY

My sentiments exactly.

ALEX

Crap, maybe it's somebody else wanting the basement. You should start renting it out.

RAY

Hey, I'm going to leave, but I don't think you want me opening the door right now.

*DOORBELL rings again.*

AUBREY

*(To ADRIAN.)* Am I really sexier than Allie?

ADRIAN

Sure. Besides, she's still a ditz.

AUBREY

*(Starting to doubt.)* Still.

ADRIAN

Still.

AUBREY

You mean she was a ditz then?

ADRIAN

Of course.

AUBREY

So you would have broken up with her before meeting me?

ADRIAN

Probably.

*AUBREY breaks the embrace.*

AUBREY

So you took up with me on the rebound?

ADRIAN

*(To himself.)* I was so close.

*DOORBELL rings again. And then again. And again. All look at each other until ADRIAN goes to the door and opens it, to reveal KIM.*

ADRIAN (CONTINUED)

Well, you're just who we needed. Come on in.

*ADRIAN leaves the door open and KIM enters and shuts it.*

ALEX

*(Not pleased to see KIM.)* What are you doing here?

KIM

*(With suppressed anger.)* Figured this is where I'd find you.

ALEX

Why didn't you call?

KIM

Did.

ALEX

Ah.

KIM

Blocked me, huh? *(Sarcastically.)* Is it okay?

ALEX

*(Sarcastically.)* Of course it's okay. Why wouldn't it be okay?

KIM

I know your parents don't like me.

ALEX

Oh, I think—

AUBREY

*(Insincere.)* Kim, of course we like you.

KIM

Like hell.

ADRIAN

Kim. Want some sherry? I'd just have to get another glass—

AUBREY

*(While staring daggers at Kim.)* The glass, Adrian, not the crystal.

ADRIAN

Right. The middle shelf. The middle friggin shelf.



*ADRIAN exits to kitchen.*

KIM

*(To Alex.)* You know, when I thought about where you might go I ticked off a list of friends, but finally I knew you'd go running to Mommy and Daddy.

ALEX

*(Sarcastic.)* What a sweet thing to say.

KIM

What's wrong with it, Alex?

ALEX

What's wrong with it?

KIM

All I said was the truth.

ALEX

The truth.

KIM

Can you just respond to me? Are you capable of that? Or do you just want to echo back what I say? Because if that's all you want to do, I could just record myself and listen to it.

ALEX

You want a response?

KIM

What I just said.

ALEX

For starters you make everything you say about me sound like an insult. I mean, it could be, I don't know, an observation about what I'm having for breakfast, and from you it sounds like a put-down.

KIM

That's because you're so freaking insecure. You need my validation for everything you do, and frankly I'm tired of giving it.

ALEX

So I came here to see my parents, what's wrong with that?

KIM

Alex, honey, if you don't know—

AUBREY

I'd like to know too.

KIM

Aubrey, this is between Alex and me.

AUBREY

Sure, but as long as I happen to be here.

ALEX

Kim, do not start in on my mother.

KIM

Alright, darling, I won't. I'll just watch while you do it.

ALEX

What's that supposed to mean?

KIM

Don't tell me you came here for their wise counseling, because I won't believe it.

AUBREY

Wait just a minute.

*ADRIAN enters from kitchen with glass, which he sets on the coffee table as he continues to move toward the basement.*

ADRIAN

Sorry it took so long. I had to look for the last of the set and it was all dusty so I decided, the hell with it, I'd give Kim the friggin crystal, only there was none clean, for obvious reasons, so I started to wash the glass, only I couldn't, also for obvious reasons, so I had to wipe it out dry—I hope that's okay with queen Kim—and then I remembered I needed more sherry from the basement.

*ADRIAN continues toward basement door.*

KIM

Sherry, Adrian. Really?

*ADRIAN stops and looks at KIM.*

ADRIAN

It's a good dry one, I think you'll like it.

KIM

*(Sarcastic.)* You think I'll like it.

RAY

Be careful, Kim.

KIM

*(To Ray.)* Have we been introduced?

RAY

Ray. Friend of the family.

*KIM starts to move toward RAY with her hand extended, but she is stopped by the smell.*

RAY

It's okay. Everybody reacts that way.

KIM

*(To ALEX.)* You have a homeless person visiting?

ALEX

Sure, Kim. What of it?

*ALEX goes defiantly to RAY and puts her arm across his shoulders, while still recoiling from his aroma.*

RAY

Alex, you don't have to—

ALEX

*(With an effort.)* There's no have-to about it, Ray. You're my parents' guest and that makes you my friend.

KIM

Then maybe you'll be staying with him? *(Without waiting for an answer, To RAY.)* So, sir, how did you come to be homeless?

RAY

Well, it's a long—

ALEX

Kim, that's none of your business.

KIM

Did you ask him?

ALEX

No, I—

KIM

Well, if we don't ask, we won't know, and if we don't know, we won't be able to help, will we?

ALEX

This is exactly the kind of obnoxiousness that's driving me away from you.

KIM

*(Sarcasm turning to anger.)* I'm obnoxious? You should hear yourself whine and complain and demand and—

ADRIAN

Kim, you can't come into my house and insult my daughter.

KIM

*(To ADRIAN, dropping the sarcasm.)* I'm sorry, this isn't what I wanted. *(Back to ALEX.)* Alex, is there some place we can talk privately?

ALEX

If you want to say anything you can say it in front of my family and *(looks at RAY and recoils)* my family's friend.

KIM

As I said before, you've made it clear that you don't really value your parents' opinions, and that's putting it mildly, but if you really want them—

AUBREY

Alex, did you—

ALEX

*(To KIM.)* They can hear anything as far as I'm concerned. And if they feel like talking to me about what they've heard, of course they're welcome to.

KIM

Yeah, I guess that makes sense. You've told me how much they appreciate an audience when they fight.

ADRIAN

You know, I don't see why we should dirty a glass for you, Kim.

ALEX

Dad, please stay out of this.

ADRIAN

How can I do that?

KIM

*(To KIM.)* Alex, can we go down to the basement? Or would your parents insist on going down with us?

ALEX  
Well, actually,  
that's not such a  
good idea.

AUBREY  
I don't think you  
really want to do  
that.

ADRIAN  
The basement  
isn't really  
available right  
now.

RAY  
I've already tried  
that subject and it  
seems like it's in  
use.

*BEAT while KIM absorbs this information.*

KIM

So, you have a guest down there?

ALEX

Sort of.

KIM

Your crazy Aunt Arlene?

ALEX

Allie. But no, it's not her. Or maybe it is.

KIM

*(To ADRIAN.)* You've started a bed and breakfast?

ADRIAN

You know, it's really none of your business.

KIM

Adrian, you are absolutely right. It's none of my business.

AUBREY

*(Coldly.)* As far as I'm concerned, you two could go out front and talk on the sidewalk.

KIM

*(To ALEX, ignoring AUBREY.)* Well, whatever, it does explain why you're hanging out here with your beloved family instead of sulking alone down there.

ALEX

I did not come here to sulk.

KIM

Didn't you? Isn't that why you were demanding more *space*?

ALEX

What the hell are you—

KIM

You've been complaining that I didn't give you enough space to breathe, but what you really wanted was space to sulk.

ALEX

You're crazy.

KIM

I'm crazy? (*KIM's hard demeanor is starting to crack.*) You said I was always hovering and telling you what to do and how to do it and all I really wanted was. (*KIM stops herself.*)

ALEX

(*A command.*) What.

KIM

I don't know. (*She takes deep breaths as if she's about to start crying, which she does.*) I just thought. Well, just now I was hoping.

*KIM stands in place, starting to sway slightly and hunches over to cry.*

RAY

You can sit down here.

*RAY rises, goes to KIM, takes her arm, and gently leads her to the chair he had been sitting in.*

ALEX

Kim?

KIM

(*Through tears.*) I'm sorry I hurt you. I said things I shouldn't have. And I was hoping you'd be here. I had this stupid sentimental idea that we could go down in the basement and sort of, do what we used to do, you know?

*ALEX goes and kneels in front of KIM and holds her as she sobs through the next few lines.*

AUBREY

(*To ADRIAN.*) You see?

ADRIAN

See what?

AUBREY

I told you they were doing it down there.

ADRIAN

Yeah, okay. Apparently you were right. I mean, I don't care, but just knowing Alex I didn't think—

*At this revelation, ALEX shows as much consternation—behind the dialog—as any daughter hearing her parents talk about her sex life. KIM is just appalled.*

AUBREY

But didn't we do it in *your* parents house?

ADRIAN

*(Laughing.)* And in yours.

AUBREY

*(Laughing.)* And there was no basement in either place.

ADRIAN

Just the bedrooms.

AUBREY

And in those houses, the noise must have . . . *(she breaks off, laughing.)*

ADRIAN

I know. But, really, they probably didn't give a crap either.

KIM

*(Laughing through tears.)* There are really no secrets here are there?

ALEX

Are you kidding? If my parents didn't have secrets, they'd invent some just so they could out them.

KIM

*(Pulling herself together.)* Aubrey, Adrian, I'm sorry I said those things, even if—

ALEX

*(Gently but firmly.)* No, even-if's, Kim. Not right now, okay?

KIM

Okay. You're right. I'll just say I'm sorry.

AUBREY

Fine.

ADRIAN

Accepted.

KIM

So, I guess we can't do it in the basement, huh?

ALEX

Afraid not.

AUBREY

(*To ADRIAN.*) They're kind of sweet aren't they?

ADRIAN

I suppose. Even if Kim is kind of—

AUBREY

No even-if's. I have to agree with Alex, there.

ADRIAN

Okay. (*He smiles at AUBREY.*) Maybe the two of us should go into the master suite and leave the young people alone here in the living room.

AUBREY

What a lovely idea. They can do it on the sofa.

RAY

(*Clears his throat.*) I was just leaving, I guess.

ADRIAN

Oh, no, Ray. We'll figure out something.

AUBREY

Don't even think it, Ray. There must be a place.

ALEX

No, Ray, if my parents won't take you in, Kim and I could.

KIM

Wait, what did you say, Alex?

ALEX

I said that if my parents don't have a place for Ray, then you and I could let him stay with us for a while. We have a spare bedroom.

KIM

Alex, that's my office.

ALEX

I know, but you hardly ever use it, and it would just be for a short time until Ray can get on his feet, right, Ray?

RAY

Hey, I don't want to cause—



ALEX

It would be no trouble. Kim's always saying how we need to do more for the homeless. And here's our chance. We'd love to help, wouldn't we, Kim?

KIM

*(Grudgingly.)* Well, maybe for just a short time. Like a few days.

ALEX

So, then, there'd be homeless people staying in both our places. We'd be so unbelievably virtuous that all our friends would hate us.

KIM

You have a homeless person in the basement?

RAY

I really don't want—

ADRIAN

It's late. Alex, why don't you get the air mattress from the garage and pump it up in my office for you and Kim to do it on until your brains turn to water—but just for tonight. Ray, you can have the sofa, but first you can shower and I've got some clean clothes for you.

*Again, ALEX and KIM react silently to this old man discussing their sexual relations.*

RAY

Oh, god, Adie, that would be fantastic.

AUBREY

I think we could all use some sherry. Anyone disagree?

ADRIAN

Kim, think you can stomach a very dry sherry?

KIM

I'll force myself.

ADRIAN

Alright then. I'd better go down and get the sherry before our, um, guest returns. Which reminds me, I can get my tools at the same time, and—

*SOUND FROM THE BASEMENT OF DOOR OPENING AND SLAMMING freezes everyone. After a moment, there is SOUND OF TOILET FLUSHING.*

ADRIAN

Too late for the sherry, I guess.

AUBREY

You can fix the faucet tomorrow.

KIM

I don't understand. Why can't you—

RAY

See, Kim, we don't really know who's down there.

ADRIAN

Might be Allie. Might be a stranger.

ALEX

Might be some other relative.

AUBREY

I hadn't thought of that. Adrian, your mother?

*SOUND OF FEET TRAMPING SLOWLY UP THE BASEMENT STAIRS silences everyone. They all turn and stare at the basement door, 12 steps for a normal flight. The stage lights dim. The footsteps stop, the door opens, revealing a brightly back-lit silhouette of an unknown person.*

*BLACKOUT*

*END OF PLAY*

### Setting Detail

The living room in the house of Aubrey and Adrian. A sofa, with a coffee table in front of it. Various chairs, one of which must be unupholstered wood. Upstage are the following doors: the front door to the outside; a door to the kitchen; a hallway to the rest of the house; a door to the basement. The front door and the basement door must be located so that when they are open, all of the audience can see the person standing in the doorway. The kitchen and the basement door should be on opposite sides of the stage, so that a person walking from one to the other has a fair distance to go. Otherwise, the doors and everything else can be placed as the set designer and the director see fit.

### Costumes

Casual contemporary clothing.

### Props

Four wine glasses.  
One wine bottle, nearly empty.  
One sherry bottle, nearly empty.  
One glass tumbler.  
A can of generic, "plain wrap", cola.  
One dish of food, with a fork, to be eaten on stage.  
Several soiled plates with cutlery.

### Sound Effects

Doorbell or chimes. Must be loud.  
Sound of a person walking heavily up a whole standard flight of stairs.