

# Under Her Roof

A play in two acts

by John Scavone

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**Characters** (in order of appearance)

Regina, late 30's

Dave, her husband, late 30's

Will, her brother, late 20's

Nicki, late 20's

**Setting:** The living/dining room of Regina's and Dave's house, in a contemporary open floor plan. The kitchen is partially visible—perhaps stove and refrigerator—behind a breakfast bar or island, such that a character in the kitchen can be part of the action taking place in the main area. The home is largely a reflection of Regina, tastefully though not richly furnished, clean and neat to the point of being not quite comfortably lived in; the one piece more his than hers is a bar or bar cart. Opposite the kitchen are a curtained window and a vestibule entrance, with the house's front door off stage. On a level above are two bedrooms, the master and the guest room, with a hallway running between them and continuing to an offstage bathroom; each bedroom has a closet or at least a closet door. Access between levels is via a short flight of stairs up center on the lower level.

**Time:** The present.

## Under Her Roof

### Act I

*At rise, sound of the front door closing. After a moment Regina enters. She wears a waitress uniform, has some mail and a bag of take-out, is reading a message on her phone. She leaves the mail on the coffee table, the bag and phone on the dining table, gets a bottle of beer. She sits and rereads the message, sends a reply. The front door closes again, louder.*

DAVE

*(off)*

Regina, I'm home.

REGINA

Make sure the door's locked. Last night you forgot.

DAVE

*(entering)*

Don't start on me. You know what the fuck time it is?

REGINA

Sometime the fuck around nine thirty.

DAVE

*(flipping through the mail)*

I spent this entire rotten day dealing with other people's dumb problems, got none of my own work done, missed lunch trying to get it done, and the sales meeting ran an hour and a half over. Topping it all off, a truck accident caused a ten mile back-up on the highway.

REGINA

That's nice.

DAVE

*(going to get a beer)*

You remembered to bring something home, good, I'm starved.

REGINA  
I picked up some food, if you're hungry.

DAVE  
*(returning)*  
What's with you?

REGINA  
Nothing.

DAVE  
How come you're drinking beer?

REGINA  
I'm over twenty-one.

DAVE  
But I thought— never mind.

REGINA  
What were you going to say?

DAVE  
Skip it. I'm dead on my feet, I don't want to start anything.

REGINA  
Good idea.

DAVE  
Let's see what we've got here. Sandwiches from the deli?

REGINA  
And chips. It was the easiest stop for me.

DAVE  
We can make our own sandwiches. Why didn't you lift some decent food from the restaurant?

REGINA  
Biggs was skulking around, I didn't want him staring at my cleavage while he reminded me I'm only allowed one meal per shift.

DAVE  
Bull, the more the employees eat, the better management likes it. It's tax deductible. Most of the food gets thrown out at the end of the night, anyhow.

REGINA

How would you know?

DAVE

I know.

*He removes his tie, stuffs it in a pocket.*

REGINA

I wish you wouldn't do that, hang the damn thing up.

DAVE

It's just a tie, I'll hang it up after I eat.

REGINA

It'll already be wrinkled. Then you'll complain when you can't wear exactly that tie with that suit, as if it really matters.

DAVE

I need to look like I manage a fucking office.

REGINA

Then hang up your fucking tie, and the suit when you take it off.

DAVE

You're in a mood tonight. Which one of these is mine?

REGINA

They're both tuna, and I'm not in a mood.

DAVE

Tuna. I'd have preferred something with meat on it, I happen to like meat. And you are too in a mood.

REGINA

Okay, I am. I have something on my mind, and I'm tired besides. You're not the only one who works for our living.

DAVE

Sorry, guess I'm in a mood of my own. Tuna's fine with me.

REGINA

Please put it on a plate, so I'm not cleaning crumbs off my floor before going to bed.

DAVE  
I'll be careful.

REGINA  
Dave—

DAVE  
Alright, a plate. One more thing to rinse and put in the dishwasher.

*He gets two plates, returns and starts eating.*

You gonna eat yours?

REGINA  
Not right now.

DAVE  
Hon, I hope you're not feeling depressed all over again. Six months, I thought you were finally letting it go.

REGINA  
I won't completely let it go. The best I'll do is learn to live with it.

DAVE  
Sure, that's all I'm saying. I thought you were getting there, we both were. I thought maybe we'd start trying again soon. That's why I was a little surprised to see you drinking beer.

REGINA  
I can have a fucking beer if I want it!

DAVE  
Calm down, have a damn six pack for all I care.

*Pause.*

REGINA  
It's something else, not the miscarriage.

DAVE  
Alright, that's good. Not good that something's bothering you, good that it's not— you know what I mean. Want to tell me about it?

REGINA

Just as I got home, I had a text from my brother.

DAVE

Will?

REGINA

Yes, my only brother. From a number I don't have stored, he must have gotten a new phone.

DAVE

Probably has several.

*He finishes the half of his sandwich, guzzles the rest of his beer, belches.*

That hits the spot. Should I have another? I don't need one tonight. I'm so fucking tired, I oughtta sleep like— a log.

REGINA

You can say baby. You shouldn't eat so fast, you'll give yourself heartburn.

DAVE

Another beer it is.

*(getting one)*

So what did your brother have to say?

REGINA

He's coming here.

DAVE

Here? When? What the hell for?

REGINA

I don't know.

DAVE

What do you mean you don't know? What did he say?

REGINA

*(opens the message, reads)*

"On my way north with a friend, want to stay over tonight. Will." That's it.

DAVE

Tonight? You mean like now?

REGINA

Soon, I assume, since tonight is already half gone.

DAVE

Ours is, but he doesn't care about that.

REGINA

Please don't start ragging on him.

DAVE

Face it, he's a self-centered prick who thinks people should do what he wants when he wants. Forget about anything they might have planned.

REGINA

Like what?

DAVE

Like sleeping, so we can both get up and go to work tomorrow. No, you're probably taking the day off to wait on him hand and foot.

REGINA

Go to bed yourself, nobody's making you stay up.

DAVE

No sweat, I've gotten used to being alone in bed, whether you're there or not. *(pause)* I'm sorry, Reg, really. I shouldn't have said that.

REGINA

Exactly when we're the most honest.

DAVE

I didn't mean it. I'm just tired, I had a bad day.

REGINA

So I've heard.

DAVE

I take it you told him it's okay, come on over anytime.

REGINA

He's my baby brother.

DAVE

Yeah, I get it. I'll wait up with you.



REGINA

You don't have to.

DAVE

I want to. I don't want him thinking whatever he would think. Just hope he makes it soon, that's all.

REGINA

Thank you.

DAVE

Don't mention it. But you owe me one.

REGINA

I'll pay up this weekend, I'm sure he'll be gone by then. Okay? We good?

DAVE

Good. *(pause)* Why tonight all of a sudden?

REGINA

That's what I'm wondering.

DAVE

What's it been, over three years since we've seen him. When the company held the regional meeting in the city, you came with me so you could visit him.

REGINA

That was a fun trip.

DAVE

For you, I was working. God, that nightclub he dragged us to, when he knew I had to get up for a breakfast breakout session.

REGINA

You didn't have to drink so much.

DAVE

We both hit it pretty hard that night, we were in the last of our party days. At closing time Will went with you to get the car and left me to foot the bill.

REGINA

You insisted on it, show-off.

DAVE

My point was that I don't remember the last time he came up here. Why tonight?

REGINA

I guess we'll find out when he—

*Doorbell.*

I guess we'll find out in a minute.

*They cross into the living room,  
Regina exits to the front door.*

WILL

*(off)*

Reggie! Hi, Mama.

REGINA

*(off)*

Sweetheart, it's so good to see you. Let me hang up your coats. You look fine, about time you put on a little more weight.

WILL

*(off)*

You know, living the good life. This is Nicki.

REGINA

*(off)*

Happy to meet you. Come in, Dave's still up.

*Regina and Will enter, their  
arms around each other, Nicki  
behind.*

WILL

Dave, good to see you, Pops.

DAVE

How the heck are you, Willie?

WILL

Great, couldn't be better. Only it's Will, if you don't mind. And this is—

DAVE

Nicki, I heard. This guy was like fifteen when I first met

him. His friends all called him Willie.

WILL

Dave worked like hell to be my friend back then. He had to if he wanted to keep banging my sister.

NICKI

Will, what a thing to say.

DAVE

No problem, I'm used to it. And everything worked out, I got Reggie, and he got a hell of a brother-in-law.

WILL

Wow, the place has really changed. Didn't there used to be a wall there?

DAVE

Surprised you remember. Did this about eight months ago, all Reggie's idea. Some strange manifestation of the nesting instinct, I think, we'd just found out we were— anyway, it cost us a fortune, but ended up being worth it. I like it.

NICKI

Thank you both for letting us stay tonight. I hope we won't be any trouble.

WILL

No trouble, they love having me.

REGINA

We do, but I hope not only for tonight. Can't you at least stay through the weekend?

WILL

Afraid not, we need to make Montreal by tomorrow afternoon at the latest.

REGINA

Montreal?

DAVE

Let's not stand around. C'mon, sit down, sit. Can I get anyone a drink?

REGINA

Not now, it's late.

DAVE

They drove all the way up from the city, they need to relax. I've already blown my night. You can call in sick for me tomorrow.

REGINA

I'll fix them some food instead, they're probably hungry.

DAVE

Why don't we let our guests decide? Drinks or eats? Or both?

WILL

I definitely need a drink, scotch rocks.

NICKI

I'd love a g and t if you have it.

DAVE

Got it all right here. Let me just grab some ice.

*Dave goes to the kitchen to fill the ice bucket.*

WILL

We're pretty hungry, too, Mama, didn't get a chance to stop anywhere on our way. We don't need anything special, whatever you have lying around is fine.

NICKI

Why do you call her Mama? Why does he call you Mama?

REGINA

I wish he'd get over it. People think it's weird, and it is.

WILL

At your command, my lady, Regina. She must be obeyed. Regina means queen, she's queen of her realm.

DAVE

*(returning)*

And all she surveys, including me.

REGINA

Be about your work, slave, and don't butt in.

DAVE

Yes, madame.

WILL

To answer your question, my sister raised me. I was a little kid when our mother died, Reggie took over the household. Our old man wasn't good for much besides opening a bottle.

REGINA

He had his share of problems.

NICKI

That's so sad, your mother dying, a kid shouldn't have to go through that. You're lucky to have a sister who could take charge.

DAVE

We're both lucky. I couldn't get through a day without her.

WILL

I wouldn't be alive without her.

REGINA

Knock it off, both of you. They're exaggerating, I'm just another all-American heroine.

DAVE

And modest, besides. Now then, gin and tonic for our lovely guest, scotch on the rocks for my wife's first and only child. I'm gonna have one of those myself.

REGINA

You were drinking beer.

DAVE

Now I'm drinking scotch.

REGINA

One, Dave, please.

DAVE

One.

*Pause.*

NICKI

So you don't have children of your own?

REGINA

No, we—

DAVE

Not yet, but we're trying. Soon, we hope.

WILL

I was sorry to hear about the miscarriage, Mama. I didn't say anything at the time because— because I just didn't know the right thing.

REGINA

I know, sweetheart. I don't think there's anything you could have said to make it any better.

DAVE

It was a tough time for the two of us. People who haven't gone through it can't understand. We only had ourselves to fall back on.

REGINA

What about that food? I can whip up something quick.

NICKI

Don't go to any trouble.

REGINA

No trouble, I can—

DAVE

Reggie brought home a couple of nice tuna salad sandwiches, I ate half of one. You two can split the rest.

NICKI

I'll only want half, and Will can have the other.

WILL

Tuna's okay, I guess, if that's all there is.

DAVE

Our deli only uses Ahi flown in fresh daily from Hawaii.

WILL

Even if they did, they still made it into tuna salad.

DAVE

Maybe I should go out on the patio and grill you a steak. Would that suit you?

WILL

As a matter of fact, yes.

NICKI

He's kidding, I know him well enough by now. You're kidding, aren't you?

WILL

If you say so.

NICKI

He's kidding. Why don't you let me get the sandwiches? I can find my way around.

REGINA

No, you sit, I won't be a minute.

*Regina crosses to the kitchen for plates and napkins, brings them to the table, sets out the sandwiches and chips.*

WILL

The kitchen is Reggie's, you don't fart around in it.

NICKI

I was trying to help.

DAVE

Worst thing you can do in this house, believe me.

WILL

And Dave oughtta know.

DAVE

So should Willie. Sorry, Will.

REGINA

Come to the table, please.

WILL

*(finishes his drink)*

How about another? I'm ahead of you.

DAVE

*(finishes his)*

Right with you, buddy.

REGINA

David, do you really think you should?

DAVE

Uh-oh, she called me David. I'm in trouble now.

WILL

He's right.

DAVE

I already decided I'm calling in sick tomorrow, so there's no harm.

REGINA

That's not what you'll be saying tomorrow morning. You don't bounce back like you used to.

WILL

Ouch.

DAVE

But now I can drink twice as much before I reach hangover level.

REGINA

And get twice as stupid.

WILL

Give up, Pops, while you still have some dignity.

DAVE

Fuck you both.

*He downs his second drink and makes another.*

NICKI

Will, be nice. They're opening their house to us.

WILL

Dave and I always give each other shit, he expects it.

REGINA

I pretend it means they love each other.

DAVE

I wouldn't go that far.

WILL

Yuck, creepy.



REGINA

So tell me about Montreal.

WILL

A little vacation, that's all.

NICKI

We've both been working very hard, a thousand loose ends to tie up before we left.

WILL

The office tends to fall apart whenever I'm gone.

REGINA

Why Canada at this time of year?

DAVE

Yeah, why not someplace warm, where you can play a little golf?

WILL

I don't play golf. I thought I might take up hockey.

NICKI

He's kidding. This sandwich is good.

DAVE

Fresh Ahi. Where's your luggage? Planning to buy a new wardrobe while you're up there?

WILL

I can afford one if I want it. We left our bags in the hall. Should I get them?

DAVE

No, we'll have the butler do it.

REGINA

Enough, Dave. You really should go to bed.

DAVE

Nonsense, I'm wide awake. I'll get their things.

WILL

Better let me help. Don't want to strain yourself.

*Will and Dave exit.*

REGINA

Little boys, the pair of them, I swear.

*The men return, each with a  
suitcase, Will with a briefcase,  
as well.*

DAVE

Where do we want them, dear? You and Nicki are planning to share a bed, I presume.

REGINA

Dave—

WILL

No, she's a wayward nun I picked up hitchhiking. The convent is offering a generous reward for her return.

NICKI

Will— he's kidding.

REGINA

Put them in the guest room, where else?

DAVE

Is back in the car an option? This way, William.

WILL

Turd.

*Dave leads Will upstairs to the  
guest room.*

REGINA

So I gather you and my brother work together? How long?

NICKI

Almost a year now. Chilcott Financial assigned me as his executive assistant, which of course is office-speak for secretary.

REGINA

I'm sure you're very valuable to Will.

NICKI

I am, and he knows it, too.

DAVE  
Same old room, nothing's changed.

NICKI  
He made me marketing director for Eagle.

DAVE  
Dresser and closet, you two can fight over them.

*Will puts the briefcase on the closet shelf.*

REGINA  
Eagle, what's that?

NICKI  
You don't know?

DAVE  
What's in there, gold?

WILL  
Just some work I'm bringing with me.

DAVE  
You have to hide it in the closet?

WILL  
It's out of the way.

DAVE  
Okay. Just don't forget it when you leave.

WILL  
Not a chance. Let's head back downstairs.

DAVE  
Not gonna unpack?

WILL  
Later, I'd rather look at the ladies than you.

DAVE  
Have another scotch, I'll look a lot prettier.

*Will and Dave come downstairs.  
Dave fixes two more drinks.*

REGINA

Nicki was just telling me about your new company.

WILL

She was, was she?

NICKI

I assumed your sister already knew about it.

REGINA

This is the first I've heard. Why keep it a secret?

WILL

No secret, I wanted to try doing something on my own, that's all, branch out a little bit.

*He hands Regina a business card.*

REGINA

Eagle Portfolio Management. Soar to new heights. Clever.

NICKI

I came up with that slogan.

DAVE

Obviously the brains of the new operation. Here you go, chief. Ready for another, Nicki?

REGINA

I think it should be closing time soon.

DAVE

I think not.

NICKI

I really would like another, if it's okay.

DAVE

There, you see? The customer is always right.

REGINA

Sweetheart, when did you start this new business?

WILL

What's it been, Nick? About six months ago, I guess.

DAVE

Around the same time we had the— don't mind me, just thinking aloud.

REGINA

I thought you liked your job at Chilcott, that you were doing well there.

WILL

I was their top trader, if I do say so myself.

DAVE

And naturally you do.

NICKI

He really was, everyone there thought of him as some kind of genius.

DAVE

Especially Willie.

WILL

They offered me a fat promotion to stay on, I'd have had a key to the executive washroom and a ton more money.

REGINA

But you quit anyway?

WILL

Handed over my id badge and walked out. You should have seen the look on the old man's face, he couldn't believe it, never saw it coming.

REGINA

That's so risky, a new business is always risky. You'd have been much safer keeping your job for a little while, at least until you're sure you have everything up and working.

WILL

It's working great. As well as I was doing before, I'm doing a hundred times better now.

NICKI

And risk is exciting. Will's not afraid, neither am I.

DAVE

*(handing Nicki her drink)*

The plunge is the point, right? Making up your mind on the

spot and jumping in.

REGINA

Will's always just jumped into things, he never thinks about what might go wrong. When he was a kid he used to scare the hell out of me. The more dangerous something was, the more he'd just have to try it.

NICKI

Like what?

REGINA

Stupid boy things, like diving into the river from a train trestle. He could have killed himself.

WILL

But I'm still here. Nothing touches me.

REGINA

Someday something is going to. I just wish you'd learn to look before you leap, consider the consequences.

WILL

Yes, ma'am, I'll remember.

DAVE

Words he's said a thousand times. I, on the other hand, learned very quickly to let Reggie take the reins, and it can only serve you well.

REGINA

Is there something wrong with caring for your loved ones? You make it sound like I'm some sort of evil dictator.

NICKI

I'm sure he didn't mean it that way.

DAVE

He didn't. Did he?

REGINA

You're getting drunk.

DAVE

What's a little buzz among friends? Anyone else ready?

WILL

Slow down, old fart, the evening's young. We are, too, but