**Second Son**

A Drama in Two Acts

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| **MAIN CHARACTERS (REQUIRED)** | |
| Robinson (Rob) Adams | 21-year-old pre-med student |
| Alyssa Jenkins | Rob’s fiancé |
| Grayson Adams | Rob’s 70-year-old father |
| Michelle Adams | Rob’s mother, she’s in her late 60s |
| Cheryl Smith | Rob’s “aunt”, she’s roughly 10 years younger than Grayson |

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| **ACT ONE, SCENE ONE** |
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| (ROB & ALYSSA ENTER THE ROOM. IT’S THE LIVING/DINING AREA OF A TONY VACATION HOME. ONE SECTION OF THE WALL IS LINED WITH BOOKSHELVES. ROB DROPS A COUPLE OF DUFFEL BAGS TO THE FLOOR UPON ENTRY - LUGGAGE TYPICAL OF COLLEGE DORM LIFE. CHERYL IS ASLEEP IN A CHAIR ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM. A COCKTAIL GLASS TEETERS PRECARIOUSLY IN HER HAND.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Mohh-ohhm?! Dahh-add?! We’re here! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I told you we should have gotten an earlier start. |
|  |
| ROB:  Considering the blown tire *and* the chronically-leaky radiator, I’d say we made pretty decent time. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But they were expecting us *hours* ago. |
|  |
| ROB:  We called. They knew we were running late. It’s not an issue. By this time tomorrow, we’ll be digesting a metric ton of dad’s famous barbeque and watching the fireworks go off over the lake. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I guess… |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m gonna get these bags upstairs. |
|  |
| (BEFORE HE CAN EXIT THE ROOM, ALYSSA TUGS ON HIS SLEEVE. SHE POINTS TO CHERYL SLEEPING IN THE CHAIR ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM.) |
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| ALYSSA:  (IN A LOWERED TONE) That’s not your *mom*, is it? That doesn’t look like the pictures I’ve seen of her. |
|  |
| ROB:  (DROPS THE BAGS AGAIN AND PEERS TO WHERE SHE’S POINTING. A BIG SMILE EMERGES ON HIS FACE.) No! That’s Auntie Cheryl! |
|  |
| (ROB WALKS TO CHERYL WITH ALYSSA TRAILING. WHEN HE’S RIGHT BY HER CHAIR, HE TAPS HER GENTLY ON THE SHOULDER AND SPEAKS IN A LOWERED, BUT JOLLY TONE.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Auntie! We’re here! |
|  |
| (IT TAKES CHERYL CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO REJOIN THE REALM OF THE WAKEFUL. WHEN SHE FINALLY DOES, SHE LOOKS UP TO ROB & ALYSSA, EXPERIENCES A SIGNFICANT SHOCK, DROPS HER COCKTAIL GLASS TO THE FLOOR, THEN FINALLY GETS TO HER FEET. WHEN SHE’S EVENTUALLY STANDING, SHE DOESN’T REMOVE HER GAZE FROM ALYSSA. SHE LOOKS AS THOUGH SHE’S SEEN A GHOST. UNSURE OF HOW TO PROCESS HER REACTION, ROB CONTINUES OBLIVIOUSLY. HE LEANS IN TO GIVE HER A HUG, WHICH IS BARELY RECIPROCATED, BUT SHE DOESN’T REMOVE HER GAZE FROM ALYSSA.) |
|  |
| ROB:  It’s so good to see you! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  It’s… it’s good to see you, too. You’ve brought… a ghost? |
|  |
| ROB:  (CONFUSED) Huh? Of course she’s not a ghost! What does that even mean? Didn’t mom-and-dad tell you? This is Alyssa. She’s here for the holiday weekend. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (STILL SPEAKING ABSENTLY WHILE SHE STARES AT ALYSSA) No. They didn’t tell me anything. I don’t think they realized who you’d be bringing home. |
|  |
| (AN UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENT PASSEES AS ROB PONDERS HOW TO HANDLE CHERYL’S ODD DEMEANOR. CHERYL IS LOOKING ALL AROUND ALYSSA – INSPECTING HER.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Well… I told them I was bringing my girlfriend. I don’t know what I else I should have told- |
|  |
| CHERYL:  You’re a… Jenkins, aren’t you? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That’s right! But… I’m sorry, do I… know you somehow? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  No, but our family’s been friendly with yours for years. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh, my apologies – I had no idea. I don’t remember ever meeting an Adams before Rob and I started dating. No parties. No family gatherings. Are you referring to *years* ago? Before I was born? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SHAKING HER HEAD SLOWLY AND CRACKING A SLIGHT SMILE) Oh, the details aren’t the critical, child. It’s not like we exchange Christmas gifts or anything. But your mom’s been a circuit judge over in Hennessy County for as long as I can remember. Your uncle was an all-state quarterback star until he shattered his knee. And your dad – he still runs that hardware store, right? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well, he sold it a few years back, but yeah! That’s right. I guess you know… all about us. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  A little… I taught some of your… relatives. Way back. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Really? Who? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (WAVING THE QUESTION OFF) It’s no matter. *Really*. Too many names, and faces… and *events* in the past. Things I wish I could forget. But we’re boring the life outta Rob here. |
|  |
| ROB:  My goodness, Auntie. I can’t believe you have her pegged like that! On nothing more than just a family resemblance. |
|  |
| (CHERYL MOVES BOLDLY CLOSER TO ALYSSA’S FACE, EXAMINING ALL HER FEATURES LIKE A MUSEUM PIECE.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Oh, it’s more than a resemblance, Rob. Some faces, well, you just don’t forget. (BACK TOWARD ALYSSA AGAIN) You had an older sister? Or maybe an aunt, right? I think her name was Amanda? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (INCREDULOUS, AND A LITTLE CONFUSED) That’s right. An aunt. But I never met her. She passed before I was born. Some kind of accident. I guess it was a car wreck. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Well let me tell you: You are her *doppelganger*. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  My grandparents always say the same thing. I’ve only seen her in a handful of pics. No one really talks about her much, though. And when they do, they cut the conversation short. I can tell that it always brings them down. So I don’t ask too many questions. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SEEMING TO SNAP OUT OF A SPELL AND CRINKLING HER NOSE AS SHE TURNS BACK TO ROB) No matter. But I thought you were supposed to be here earlier? |
|  |
| ROB:  We had a few delays. Some car trouble. I called mom earlier and let her know to expect us late. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Hmmm… And has she seen your new lady friend? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED, BUT CHEERY) Okay, first of all, “lady friend” makes it sound Alyssa is my side squeeze in the assisted living facility. But, no, mom and dad haven’t met her. So I guess you’re the first one in the family to be introduced to Alyssa! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Oh boy. |
|  |
| (ROB & ALYSSA EXCHANGE CONFUSED LOOKS, BUT CHERYL DOES NOTHING TO ELABORATE. SHE TURNS TO LEAVE THE ROOM.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I think it’s almost my bed time. |
|  |
| ROB:  (INCREDULOUS) But Auntie, it’s only eight o’clock! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (STILL SLOWLY MAKING HER WAY OUT OF THE ROOM) Which means I’ve already been drinking for twelve hours. And I need time to down a few more drinks before bed. Alone. |
|  |
| ROB:  (DISAPPOINTED) Oh… okay. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  There’ll be plenty of time for chit chat tomorrow, while your dad’s incinerating those ribs. It’s gonna be one *helluva* holiday, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  Okay, but… where *are* mom and dad? Are they upstairs? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (WAVING IN A SOMEWHERE-IN-THE-UNIVERSE MOTION) Last I remember, your dad was down in the boathouse working on that piece-of-shit engine that he refuses to sell. The stores in town are closing just now, which means your mom should be home as soon as the last clerk boots her ass out the door. If they’d give her a bunk, she’d *sleep* on Main Street. |
|  |
| (CHERYL EXITS. ROB & ALYSSA EXCHANGE AWKWARD GLANCES.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That was certainly… interesting. |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m… I’m sorry. I don’t even know what to say. She’s not normally like that. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SMILING, REASSURING) It’s okay. When you meet my family, there will undoubtedly be a few odd exchanges. |
|  |
| ROB:  I know. But Auntie Cheryl and I have always been so close. She practically raised me. Even more than my mom. Or my dad. But just now, she just seemed… off. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  She certainly doesn’t seem like any of the descriptions you’ve given me of your other family members. |
|  |
| ROB:  Well, she’s not *technically* my… “family”. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  How is an *aunt* not part of your family? |
|  |
| ROB:  She’s not really my aunt. That’s just how I grew up referring to her. She’s not my dad’s sister. And not my mom’s. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So is she *any* relation to you? |
|  |
| ROB:  Not really. When I was young, she was my nanny. She used to be a teacher who did housekeeping for my folks on the side. But once I was born, she quit that to be my fulltime caretaker. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  She gave up *teaching*? *Permanently*? Just so she could be your *nanny*? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHRUGGING) Yeah, pretty much. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And… as you grew older? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHRUGGING) Once I outgrew nannying, she really hasn’t done much of anything around here. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But she still keeps house? Or gardens? |
|  |
| ROB:  Most certainly not. I’ve barely seen her lift a finger since I was a very young. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So… she doesn’t cook? |
|  |
| ROB:  No. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Or clean? *Anything*? |
|  |
| ROB:  Nope. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So she hasn’t done any child rearing in a very long time. And she’s no blood relative of *anyone* in your family? |
|  |
| ROB:  That’s correct. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But if she’s still here, that must mean that your parents continue to pay her?? |
|  |
| ROB:  As far as I know, yes. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And that doesn’t strike you as odd in any way? |
|  |
| ROB:  I suppose it does… if I stop to think about it. But I’ve never really stopped to think about it much. Not now. Not ever. She’s just always been *here*. She is, for all practical purposes, a permanent part of the family. Her “job” is basically *being* my Aunt Cheryl. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  A job that your parents actually *pay* her for? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SQUEAMISHLY, AS HE PROCESSES THE ABSURDITY OF THE STATEMENT) Yeah… I guess so. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (DISTANTLY) Very interesting. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA PEELS AWAY AND STARTS PERUSING THE ROOM.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob… is there anything that you’d like to tell me?? |
|  |
| ROB:  Huh? What do you mean? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (MOTIONING TOWARD EVERYTHING IN GENERAL) You said that your parents were *medical researchers*? |
|  |
| ROB:  And… that’s true. They are. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  The “medical research” game must be much more lucrative than I thought. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SQUEAMISH) I suppose they’ve… done well for themselves. Besides, they’re not *just* researchers. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Do tell. |
|  |
| ROB:  My parents each own seven percent stakes in Allied Pharmaceuticals. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (STOPPING TO STARE AT ROB FOR A MOMENT) Allied Pharmaceuticals? We’re talking about *the* Allied Pharmaceuticals, makers of *Vigaro*? The cream that would put a raging boner on a two-week-old corpse? |
|  |
| ROB:  Umm… yeah. *That* Allied Pharmaceuticals. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And it only took two years of dating for you to come clean with this? |
|  |
| ROB:  Hey! I never *lied* about it! My parents *are* in medical research. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I suppose. Just like Mark Zuckerberg is in networking. And Jeff Bezos is in books. And Richard Branson is in aeronautics. And-- |
|  |
| ROB:  Look, I get it. I just don’t really like to talk – to *anyone* – about… (MOTIONING AROUND HIM) all this. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (DEADPAN) Your privilege must be a terrible burden to bear. |
|  |
| ROB:  *My* privilege? The last time I checked, we met *each other* at Cornell. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That’s exactly my point. We both have wealthy parents. It looks like your parents are… oh… massively, obscenely *wealthier* than mine. But it’s not like I’m out there hunting for my next baby daddy. So what’s with the cloak-and-dagger? |
|  |
| ROB:  It’s not about my family’s money. Or your family’s money. It’s just that… it makes me… uncomfortable. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SARCASTIC) Yeah, this kinda money’s gotta be hard to deal with. |
|  |
| ROB:  I know – first world problems. It’s not that their *money* makes me uncomfortable. It’s how they use that money. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And how’s that? |
|  |
| ROB:  They play God with it. They use it to control everyone. And everything. Even me. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That sounds rather… dour. You make them sound like malevolent puppet masters. |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah… maybe that’s *a* *bit* over-the-top. (MOTIONING AROUND HIM) But this has never really felt like *my* life. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Then whose life *does* it feel like? |
|  |
| ROB:  Like a character. Written by them in a screenplay. Fleshed out years ago. Edited, workshopped, and polished to perfection. All I have to do now is remember my lines and hit my cues. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Isn’t that how *all* rich people use their money? |
|  |
| ROB:  (EARNESTLY CONSIDERING THIS FOR A MOMENT) I suppose. I’m just tired of… of being *manipulated* by them. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Have they ever led you *astray*?? With their money? With their influence? |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t know. I guess they do what any other parent would do. Any parent who has no boundaries. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (INTRIGUED AND CONFUSED) What are you getting at? Are talking about something illegal? Or immoral? Presumably, to help you? |
|  |
| ROB:  No. No. Well… not *exactly*. But if dad think’s there’s *any* advantage to be gained with his bank account, he won’t hesitate to seize it. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Like…?* |
|  |
| ROB:  Like when I was on the chess team. And I just couldn’t beat our best player. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So he got you lessons? Maybe, a private chess coach? |
|  |
| ROB:  No. He found out that the best chess player always wanted to play hockey. But hockey’s expensive. You have to pay for skates. And pads. And other equipment. And ice time. So he made a point to sponsor that kid. Bought him *everything* he needed. Paid thousands of dollars in the process. When it was all said and done, that kid quit the chess team, and I was the left as the so-called “best” player. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I see… Did you ever *tell* your dad that you didn’t want him to do that? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHAKING HEAD) I never had a chance. By the time I knew anything about it, the other kid had already quit. Not that any of this made me any better, mind you. I was still the same second-tier chess player that I always was. But now, relative to the remaining players on our team, I was the “best”. (DEFLATED AND SARCASTIC) Hooray. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You never told me *any* of this before, Rob! |
|  |
| ROB:  I know. When we’re at school, I feel, at least a little bit, free of their influence. Their money. I feel like… my life is truly *mine*. And the less I think about their lives and their plans. The less I have to explain those plans, apologize for those plans – even to you - the happier I tend to be. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SMILING AT HIM TO LIGHTEN HIS MOOD) Look, I’m not *angry* with you. I’m really not. But if you’re gonna be *Mister Alyssa Jenkins*, we’re gonna need a greater level of openness here. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SMILING BACK BEGRUDGINGLY) Got it. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So did Cheryl come up for Independence Day like we did? Or does she actually live with your parents year-round? Permanently? |
|  |
| ROB:  It’s kinda half-and-half. In the winter, she has her own apartment in town. She still stays with my parents, but the short days get her down and sometimes she needs to hole up in her one-bedroom just to read a book and watch the snow fall. But when my parents come out here for the summer, she usually tags along. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So, Cheryl and your parents - they must all be pretty close? |
|  |
| ROB:  Hahaha – oh, *hell* no. Quite the opposite. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Huh?? |
|  |
| ROB:  Dad’s never had much in common with Cheryl. He can’t stand her drinking. Her language annoys him. Her merely-above-average intellect frustrates him. But he seems to tolerate her in an older-brother/younger-sister kinda way. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And your mom? |
|  |
| ROB:  They’re from two different worlds. Separate interests. Competing mannerisms. But mom always acts… like… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Like what? |
|  |
| ROB:  Well… like she *owes* Cheryl something. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What would she possibly owe her? |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m not saying that there’s a literal *debt* between them. It just seems that sometimes mom does stuff for Cheryl because she feels obligated, like… *she has to*. Does that make any sense? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Not really. |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah, it doesn’t make much sense to me either. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA MEANDERS AROUND THE ROOM AND PERUSES PICTURES THAT ARE PLACED ON MANY OF THE AVAILABLE SURFACES.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  There are pictures of you… *everywhere*. |
|  |
| ROB:  (CHUCKLING) Yeah… mom’s been like that ever since I can remember. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Maybe. But this is some next-level kinda offspring worship right here. National Museum of Rob kinda level. All hail the once and future king kinda level. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SMILING) *Stop.* She puts up new ones every time I come home. I barely notice them anymore. It’s like wallpaper to me now. I suppose it’s better than seeing more of that Venetian plaster or those faux-Roman sconces. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob with his tooth, waiting for a fairy. Rob blowing out candles, while he tries to block others from the cake. Rob in some kind of pie-eating contest. Or maybe it’s pudding. Or maybe it’s just mud – I can’t tell. It’s *everywhere*. Rob on his… first day of school? Rob learning to water ski. I’m surprised that we don’t have Rob’s first turd encased in plexiglass somewhere around here. |
|  |
| ROB:  You haven’t been upstairs yet. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh, now *this* is priceless. Rob at the plate. Looks like The Mighty Casey whiffed so bad that he almost fell over. |
|  |
| ROB:  Oh, no. That’s not me. I never played baseball. |
|  |
| (PICKING UP THE PICTURE FRAME TO GET A BETTER LOOK.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Nope. Nope. That’s *definitely* you. |
|  |
| ROB:  (ANNOYED, SING-SONGY VOICE) No-oh. I *never played* baseball. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SQUINTING AT THE PICTURE FRAME) Okay, smartass. *You* tell me who this is. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA EXTENDS THE PICTURE TO ROB. HE GRABS IT DEFIANTLY AND STARES AT IT FOR A FEW MOMENTS. HE GAZES AT IT LONGER THAN EXPECTED, AS HE TRIES TO FORMULATE A RESPONSE. HE THRUSTS IT BACK BEFORE REPLYING.) |
|  |
| ROB:  It’s gotta be someone else in the family. Maybe one of my cousins. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob. There’s not a *single* picture in this room that’s not centered on *you*. You think that your mom just randomly decided to plunk down something from your cousin over here? Besides, it’s an excellent photo. Very clear. Expertly cropped. Perfect exposure. |
|  |
| ROB:  (EXASPERATED AND GROWING MORE ANNOYED) What do you want me to say?? (POINTING TO HIS ANKLE) Remember my ankle? It got shattered when I was eight. Four surgeries. Over seven years. I haven’t played an organized sport since then. I never wore a helmet. Never laced up a skate. Never bothered to shoot a basketball. And I *never* played baseball! |
|  |
| (THEY BOTH ENGAGE IN A MOMENTARY STANDOFF. ALYSSA IS CERTAIN THAT THE PIC IS ROB. BUT SHE HAS NO BASIS ON WHICH TO REFUTE HIM. SHE FINALLY SNATCHES THE PICTURE BACK AND RETURNS IT TO WHERE IT CAME FROM.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Fine*. It’s not you. It’s Rob’s evil little, baseball-playing, curveball-missing, shapeshifting body double. |
|  |
| ROB:  (GRUMPY) *Thank you.* |
|  |
| (GRAYSON ENTERS FROM THE *OPPOSITE* SIDE OF THE ROOM FROM WHICH ROB AND ALYSSA ORIGINALLY ENTERED. [THIS IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE GRAYSON HAS NOT YET SEEN ROB’S CAR.]) |
|  |
| ROB:  Dad! |
|  |
| (ROB MOVES TO THE CENTER OF THE ROOM TO MEET HIS FATHER WITH A HUG. GRAYSON EXTENDS A HAND AND GIVES HIS SON A FIRM HANDSHAKE.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (COMPLETELY LOOKING PAST ROB TO ALYSSA AS THEY SHAKE HANDS, SPEAKING SOMEWHAT DISTANTLY) You said you were bringing a “friend”. But now I see what it was that *really* brought you home. |
|  |
| ROB:  Umm… nice to see you too, dad. And I told you I was bringing my *girl*friend. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SMILING WARMLY AS HE APPROACHES ALYSSA) You know, we’ve been asking him to come up over Fourth-of-July weekend for the last three years. But there’s always something more pressing down in the city. Some summer class he’s taking. Some course he’s *teaching*. Some internship that will be *oh so critical* to his career. It wasn’t until we heard about *you* that our boy suddenly wanted to come home and be familial. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (UNSURE HOW TO RESPOND) Well, thank you, sir. But we’ve actually been dating for a couple years now. And I can certainly confirm that his summers are always hectic. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (GRABBING ALYSSA’S HAND AND KISSING IT IN AN OVER-THE-TOP DISPLAY OF FORMALITY) That’s what I’ve heard. But you know, I wouldn’t have had any knowledge of that before last week. Holidays. Spring breaks. Letters from school. All these chances for communication come and go. And yet, it took all this time before we were ever clued in to your existence. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (FEIGNING SHOCK) Wait. Are you telling me that Rob actually sits down. With a pen and paper? And *writes letters*?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  He knows that I rarely read email or text messages. So when he needs his credit card paid off, he suddenly becomes quite loquacious. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Wonders never cease… |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SMILING WRYLY) Oh, you should see some of the desperate treatises he’s penned when there are urgent matters of cashflow - and love - to be addressed in the city. I’m starting to suspect that the impetus for all those letters now sits before me. |
|  |
| ROB:  (EMBARRASSED) Dad. Please, don’t. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (HOLDING UP A HAND TO REFUTE ROB’S WORDS) It’s okay, son. Just some gentle ribbing. What’s important is that we’re all here. And we finally get to meet the secret target of your affections. |
|  |
| ROB:  (NERVOUSLY) Not secret, dad. But, yeah… we’re all here. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON CONTINUES TO CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN HIMSELF AND ALYSSA, MOVING PAST AND IGNORING ROB. ALYSSA GROWS VISIBLY UNCOMFORTABLE AT HIS APPROACH.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SPEAKING TO ROB, BUT STILL STARING AT ALYSSA) I always feared this day would come. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Excuse me? |
|  |
| ROB:  *Dad?* What in the hell are you talking about? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (WITH GENUINE SADNESS) You had to find a Jenkins girl, didn’t you? Of all the beautiful forms upon which you could spend your seed, you couldn’t resist the siren call of this lovely child? So like her aunt. So alluring. So enticing. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SARCASTIC) Wow. That’s not creepy at all, dad. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (TURNING TOWARD ROB) Son, there are more important issues than whether you feel- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I’m *right here*. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA’S WORDS YANK GRAYSON’S ATTENTION BACK TOWARD HER.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’m sorry. What was that, dear? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Don’t play deaf. You heard me. And I won’t be talked about as though I’m not in the room. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AFFECTS A LONG PAUSE BEFORE ALLOWING A BROAD SMILE TO GROW OVER HIS FACE) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Of course, you are entirely correct. I apologize. Rob has always been a sucker for the feisty ones. And those Jenkins girls… well… they oooooze feisty. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You seem to have me at a disadvantage. And I don’t much appreciate it. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON PAUSES TO PROCESS THIS STATEMENT FOR A MOMENT.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  To what are you referring? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I’m *referring* to the fact that first Cheryl, and now you, come in here blathering on about something regarding my family. But I haven’t the faintest idea what you’re talking about. And it’s tremendously rude to keep your guest in the dark. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON STOPS FOR A LONG MOMENT TO CONSIDER HIS REPLY BEFORE CONTINUING.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You weren’t very close to Amanda, were you? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  If by “weren’t very close” you mean, “I never even had the chance to meet her”, then you’re correct. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I understand. You see, our family only had the pleasure of meeting yours when Amanda passed. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (GENUINELY CONFUSED) How would my aunt’s death have been the bridge to connect my family to yours?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  She perished on the road leading to our house. In fact, she met her demise in the lake, (POINTING OUT THE WINDOW) just a little ways down our lane. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (QUIET, SHOCKED) Oh. I’ve… never heard that before. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  And why would you? The passing years have a way of turning even the most gruesome details of tragedy into trivia. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I suppose… but… I don’t understand. Was she coming *here*? To your house? Did you *know* her? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SHAKING HEAD DISMISSIVELY) There are a hundred lakes in the countryside and a thousand roads circling those lakes. Who knows how she ended up down our lane? A wrong turn here. A missed sign there. The next thing you know, she’s driving a little too fast down a dark, winding path that borders a body of cold, deep water. In your aunt’s case, the combination was, unfortunately, fatal. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I had… no idea. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Completely understandable. There would be no reason for your parents, or anyone really, to share those kinds of details with you. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But what in the hell does any of that have do with me? Or Rob? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (FEIGNING GENUINE SHOCK) Well, nothing, of course. It just means a lot to people like me, and Cheryl, and Rob’s mom, because we had the misfortune to be present when your Aunt Amanda’s car was dragged from the lake. And in case you didn’t realize it, you are freakishly reminiscent of her. When I first walked in, I thought she’d been raised from the dead. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So I’ve been told. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (LAUNCHING A SMILE AND MOTIONING TOWARD THE COUCH) But come now, I’ve been terribly rude. Since I retired from my corporate duties, I’m afraid my manners have atrophied. I got so tired of kissing all the board members’ backsides that I may have allowed myself to grow course. Salty. Uncouth. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON MOTIONS FOR THE THREE OF THEM TO GET COMFORTABLE IN THE LIVING ROOM.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Thank you. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Would you like anything to drink? Tea? Coffee? Water? |
|  |
| ROB:  Would it kill you to keep a few beers in the fridge? It’s Fourth-of-July weekend, for cripe’s sake. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (FROWNING AT ROB) Rob thinks he’s quite the grown-up now. He can smoke. He can drink. He can be *a man*. |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m *twenty-one*, dad! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I’m quite alright, Mr. Adams. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Did you catch that, son? Your beloved is mature enough to make it through an adult conversation without dulling her mind and deadening her senses. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I don’t know if I’d really go that-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SMILING, BUT DISTANT) So how did you two meet? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (CAUGHT A BIT OFF GUARD BY THE ABRUPT CHANGE IN SUBJECT) Well… I had a *huge* paper due, and I was *hopelessly* behind. It was only about an hour before the library would close and I was frantically searching for *this one critical book* that I needed to complete my notes. And right as I was reaching for this book, there’s Rob! Standing right next to me. And grabbing the exact same book, at almost the exact same time. He just stood there with this goofy grin on his face. And I couldn’t decide if it was offensive… or adorable. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I always felt that the philosophy section of Cornell’s library was woefully understocked. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Exactly.* So I’m reaching for the book and there’s Rob reaching for the same thing, and the next thing you know-- Wait a minute… What did you say? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I said that for all the money I ship to that institution you’d think they could offer a more comprehensive selection of philosophy texts. You could probably do a better job down here at the county library, and I don’t have to send *them* six figures. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (A BROAD SMILE ARISES ON HER FACE AS SHE LOOKS AT ROB) I thought you said that you hadn’t talked to your parents about me before this weekend? |
|  |
| (ROB LOOKS CONFUSED. HE FURROWS HIS BROW AND SHAKES HIS HEAD.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well, you must’ve been talking to *someone* about me. How else would your dad know that we specifically met over a *philosophy* text? |
|  |
| ROB:  (GENUINELY LOST) I… I don’t-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SMILING FAINTLY) Oh, don’t obsess on that. It’s part of the core curriculum. Rob practically lived in that library. Most of the undergraduates do. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But… of all the subjects you could have picked… *Philosophy?* How could you-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (REFUSING TO RELINQUISH HIS CARDBOARD SMILE) Lucky guess. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Ooooh…kay |
|  |
| (GRAYSON SMILES AND SHRUGS) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (ANNOYED, BUT MOVING ON) Anyway… I thought he was cute. But we really didn’t say much of anything. And I thought that was the last I’d see of him. (GRINNING) But as it turns out, your son here is quite the stalker! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  The Adams men need to use every trick in the book. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh, he did that alright. He started staking out the library, just to learn when I typically came in. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  That’s my creepy boy! |
|  |
| ROB:  (GRINNING) I saw that she always came in with those crappy snack cakes from the seven-eleven. You know, those Hostess chemical thingies. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (NODDING AND SMILING WIDER) Never underestimate the power of effective surveillance! So you baked her something. Something *homemade*. One of those delicious Boston cream pies! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That’s *exactly* what he did! I came back to my table and there was a big ol’ homemade pie plunked down right on top of my laptop. It was still warm! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Your granddad always told me: When your nerve fails, let the baked goods do the talking! Women *love* a man who can cook! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I didn’t even know where he found an oven to bake that thing… but I have to admit - it worked. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *Whatever* works! It’s the results that count. That’s my boy! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So I guess he used to bake a lot as a kid? Maybe with Mrs. Adams? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Hmmm? Oh… no. When he was young, I couldn’t get him into the kitchen with a bulldozer. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Did someone else in the family use to make Boston cream pies? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Not at all. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (PAUSING, INCREDULOUS) Oh, *c’mon now*. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (LOOKING PART ALARMED, PART AMUSED) Am I missing something? What’s the matter? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Boston cream pie??* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (NODDING) I’m proud of him! I’m sure it was quite delicious. A good pie is so much classier than a muffin or a cupcake. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Doesn’t that seem like a terribly *specific* identification? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Boston cream, pecan, apple, sweet potato – there are so many good choices. They’re all delightful with a scoop of ice cream. Or a tall glass of milk. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (GROWING EXASPERATED) Yeah, yeah. I get that. But that’s not my point. You chose *Boston cream pie* – you called it out - which is the exact type that your son baked for me. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Indeed. A wise choice. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (TO ROB) This *isn’t* just coincidence. You *have* been talking to your dad about us! |
|  |
| (ROB SAYS NOTHING BUT JUST STARES AT HER IN WIDE-EYED CONFUSION WHILE HE SHAKES HIS HEAD) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  This is ridiculous. There must be *hundreds* of potential pies to-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We’re in New England. There are a *lot* of Boston cream pies up here. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Being in the northeast doesn’t limit anyone to eating Boston cream pies! This is a little too odd to simply be a-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (HIS CARDBOARD SMILE HAS RETURNED) Lucky guess. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Really? *Really??* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SHRUGS, THEN, AFTER A LONG PAUSE) How else to explain it? |
|  |
| (ALYSSA DOES NOT REPLY BUT STARES INCREDULOUSLY. GRAYSON OFFERS NO RESPONSE. ROB SHRUGS. WHEN SHE RETURNS HER GAZE TO GRAYSON, HE RAISES HIS HANDS SLIGHTLY IN SURRENDER.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Fine.* It’s all just one crazy coincidence. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Precisely. |
|  |
| (THEIR ATTENTION IS DIVERTED BY THE SOUND OF A CAR APPROACHING IN THE DRIVEWAY. WHEN IT COMES TO A STOP, THEY HEAR THE CAR DOOR OPENING-AND-SHUTTING. MICHELLE RELEASES A PANICKED SHRIEK, WHICH BRINGS GRAYSON, ROB, AND ALYSSA TO THEIR FEET. MICHELLE COMES RUNNING IN THE HOUSE. AS SOON AS SHE ENTERS, SHE MINDLESSLY TOSSES HER SHOPPING BAGS TO THE FLOOR. SHE’S HYSTERICAL.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  What on earth is the matter?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (POINTING TOWARD THE DRIVEWAY FROM WHICH SHE CAME) What in the hell is *that* doing here?! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (CONFUSED AND MOVING TOWARD HER) *What??* What are you talking about? What’s wrong?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Did you buy that.. that… *thing* for him?? What’s that *thing* doing in my driveway?! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW AS HE ATTEMPTS TO CONSOLE HER) Dear! I don’t have the slightest idea what-- Oooooh… Oh, I see now. |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t get it. What’s going on?? What’s she so freaked out about? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (WHILE EMBRACING MICHELLE BUT LOOKING STERNLY AT ROB) The car. |
|  |
| ROB:  *What?* What *about* the car?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I thought you were taking the train? |
|  |
| ROB:  Well, yeah. That was before I bought the car. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  And when were you going to bother telling us about this? |
|  |
| ROB:  Aww, *c’mon*. It’s not like I’m hiding the thing! It’s parked right in the middle of your driveway! I wasn’t just going to *tell you* about it. I was going to *brag* about it! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (TO GRAYSON) Did *you* buy that *thing* for him? Did *you* bring that thing to our house?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Of course not. Why would you think that? I would *never* do such a thing! |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t get it. What’s the big deal?! *It’s just a car!* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We’ve talked about this – *dozens* of times. The deal was simple. We pay for *everything* until you get out of college. Tuition. Books. Room-and-board. And yes, even *transportation*. |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah, yeah. I know. I get it. But I’m only one semester from graduating. The busses and the subways are such a royal pain in the ass. And I just figured-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  And where’d you get the money for that thing? |
|  |
| ROB:  Money?? *It’s a piece of shit!* It’s been sitting in my buddy’s dad’s best-friend’s backyard for the last three years. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  It’s a *classic* roadster! |
|  |
| ROB:  Maybe it *was* a classic roadster at some point in time. Now it’s just a restoration project. And a long one at that. I’ll be tinkering with that thing for the next ten years. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I thought I’d never have to see that thing again! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Young man, since when do you have the money to work on “restoration projects”?? |
|  |
| ROB:  *What money??* You’re acting like I traded in a medical degree for that car. My friend sold it to me for a grand. I spent another five hundred at the junkyard foraging the parts to get it minimally operational. It needs a new transmission, a radiator, brakes, and who-knows-what-else. But at least it’s road-worthy. For the time being. Sort-of. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  And you have that kind of money just lying around? |
|  |
| ROB:  (INDIGNANT) No, dad! I’m trying to tell you: *It didn’t really cost that much money!* But for the little money that it did cost, yes, I had the money. I’ve been tutoring. I *earned* it. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Great. Now you’re Smith Barney. |
|  |
| ROB:  (GENUINELY CONFUSED) Huh?? What does that even mean? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Nevermind. It’s not important. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Get it out of here! I want it out of here *right now*! |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t understand! Why are you flying into a tizzy? What is the emergency?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (COMFORTING, TO MICHELLE, IGNORING ROB) Look, we’ll get it moved. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I don’t just want it *moved*. I WANT IT OUT OF HERE! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I know… I know. It’s okay. I hear you. We’ll get it off the property. Right away. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What did we do to deserve this? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Nothing. Nothing at all. Why don’t you go to the kitchen? Start getting some of the side dishes ready for tomorrow. I’ll be in there in just a few minutes to help you get everything prepared. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I mean it, Grayson. I want that thing gone! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I know. I know. Rob and I are gonna take care of it *right now*. Just let us deal with it, and I’ll be in the kitchen in a few minutes to help you get everything prepped for the cookout. (FORCEFULLY MAKING EYE CONTACT WITH HER) *Okay???* |
|  |
| (MICHELLE TAKES A FEW MOMENTS TO LOOK AT ROB AND ALYSSA WHILE CALMING HERSELF DOWN.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *Off* the property?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes, dear. Nowhere in sight. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (AFTER LONG PAUSE, SHE SLOWLY NODS HER HEAD AND DRIES HER EYES) Okay. |
|  |
| (MICHELLE WALKS OVER TO ALYSSA AND GIVES HER AN AWKWARD HUG. ALYSSA HAS NO IDEA HOW TO REACT.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  It’s so nice to finally meet you, my dear. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Uhhh… likewise? |
|  |
| (MICHELLE WALKS TO ROB AND GIVES HIM A HUG EVERY BIT AS AWKWARD AS THE ONE SHE GAVE ALYSSA.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Welcome home, dear. I’ve missed you. |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah… Umm… Thanks, mom. I’ve missed you too. |
|  |
| (MICHELLE TURNS AND EXITS TO THE KITCHEN. AFTER SHE LEAVES, ROB, ALYSSA, AND GRAYSON ALL EXCHANGE LOOKS OF WHAT-THE-FUCK BEFORE RESUMING THE CONVERSATION.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Okay, do you want to try explaining to me what the *fuck* just happened here?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (FROWNING) You watch your tongue, young man. |
|  |
| ROB:  No. *No.* Don’t even go there with me. Mom just had a major mental breakdown. And it all happened because… because I bought *a car*?? That doesn’t even make any sense. You would think that I’d brought home a nuclear reactor. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We’re your parent, Rob. We *worry* about you. About your health. About your *safety*. |
|  |
| ROB:  Okay, yeah, I get that. And as soon as I take up base jumping, or one-armed tiger wrangling, or competitive freebasing, you both have my explicit permission to blow *all* of the proverbial gaskets. But we’re talking here about *owning a car*. Doesn’t her reaction sound the slightest bit overboard to you? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Look. She just wants the best for you. |
|  |
| ROB:  Does she realize that I frequently use *electrical outlets*? Hell, I’ve been centimeters from a high-voltage death on several occasions today alone! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I think she’s just a bit exhausted. She’ll be much better tomorrow. |
|  |
| ROB:  Unless someone else comes cruising down the driveway. Then she’ll fly into another epileptic fit! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Rob, stop. |
|  |
| ROB:  I’ve never brought anyone home to meet you guys, and Day One turns into some kind of reality-show freak show! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *ROB!!* |
|  |
| ROB:  (RESPONDING QUIETLY, SUDDENLY FEELING SCOLDED) What? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Stop. It. |
|  |
| ROB:  (AFTER A SHORT PAUSE) Yes, sir. |
|  |
| (BEFORE CONTINUING, GRAYSON SEEMS TO BECOME NEWLY AWARE OF ALYSSA’S PRESENCE. HE SMILES AT HER BEFORE CONTINUING.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’m afraid that we’ve made poor hosts tonight. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (UNCONVINCINGLY) That’s alright. Everybody has family. And every family has drama. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (CHUCKLING) I’d like to argue that point, but there’s only so much that even *I* can control. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It’s already been a trip to remember. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Let’s hope that tomorrow allows us to redeem ourselves – even if just a little bit. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (MORE TO ROB THAN TO GRAYSON) A new day will wash the weird away. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (HER WORDS CAUSE HIM TO PAUSE AND SMILE TO BRIEFLY) They have the oddest phrases in the city. But you know what? I couldn’t have said it better myself. Rob and I are going to take care of the car… situation. Why don’t you go ahead and get comfortable in the guest room, and that new day will be on us before you know it. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (LOOKING AROUND, A BIT CONFUSED) I’m not sure that I had a chance to even *see* the guest room. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Goodness gracious, I’m sorry. We’ve been atrocious hosts. (POINTING) It’s off the living room, right through that door. It has its own bathroom. The bed has fresh linens and heavier blankets in the armoire, if you prefer them. It gets a little chilly up here at night, even in July. So you may want to close the windows before you go to bed. We’ll have breakfast ready for you in the morning. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (FORCING A SMILE) Thank you very much. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (WITH AN ANTISEPTIC SMILE) You’re welcome, dear. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON STANDS IN SILENCE AND LITERALLY WAITS FOR ALYSSA TO EXIT. WHEN SHE REALIZES THAT GRAYSON HAS NO INTENTION OF CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION, SHE GIVES ROB A HUG AND A KISS ON THE CHEEK. THEN SHE GRABS HER DUFFELBAG AND HEADS TO THE GUEST ROOM. GRAYSON WAITS BEFORE SHE HAS COMPLETELY EXITED BEFORE RESUMING THE CONVERSATION WITH ROB.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Good. Now let’s take care of that car. |
|  |
| ROB:  And just how are we supposed to “take care” of it?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You heard your mom. She wants it off the property. |
|  |
| ROB:  So that’s it? She just *decrees it to be so*, and next thing you know where transporting vehicles across the countryside? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Have you ever felt like standing in that woman’s way? |
|  |
| ROB:  Well… no. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  And that makes two of us. So we might as well get to work. |
|  |
| ROB:  To work doing *what*? The last time I checked, they haven’t built any parking garages out here in the land of croquet, summer homes, and boat slips. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We’ll take it down the street. It doesn’t need to be out of the state. We just need to get it off the property. |
|  |
| ROB:  And do what with it? Just leave it in a ditch? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Don’t be silly. You remember the Buckners, right? |
|  |
| ROB:  Sure. With the pool. And the derp-y kid. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Well, they’re up here this summer and they’re only about a half mile down the road. I’m sure they won’t mind if we park your new project behind their barn. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON BEGINS MOVING TOWARD THE DOOR, BUT ROB LAGS BEHIND. HE HALTS IN THE DOORWAR AND ACKNOWLEDGES ROB’S HESITANCE.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *What??* |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t know… I just… I still don’t know *why* we’re doing this or how a car became a histrionic emergency. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (MOTIONING FOR ROB TO FOLLOW) C’mon. We’ll talk. |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **ACT ONE, SCENE TWO** |
|  |
| (THE ADAMS’ FRONT PORCH. IT’S DARK. ALYSSA SITS ON THE FRONT STEP WITH A BLANKET DRAPED OVER HER SHOULDERS, SMOKING A JOINT AND BROWSING THROUGH A GRANDIOSE, LEATHERBOUND BOOK IN THE DIM LIGHT FROM THE PORCH LIGHT. CHERYL SLEEPS SILENTLY AND UNNOTICED IN A CHAIR OFF TO THE SIDE. ROB PEEKS HIS HEAD OUT THE FRONT DOOR.) |
|  |
| ROB:  (WHISPERING) Alyssa? Is that you? Are you out here? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Yeah – it’s me, silly. C’mon out. |
|  |
| (ROB EXITS THE HOUSE AND SITS NEXT TO HER ON THE FRONT STEPS.) |
|  |
| ROB:  It’s getting chilly out here. What are you doing up so late? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I couldn’t sleep. Your parents’ “guest room” is a menagerie of stuffed, stretched, preserved, and probably zombified animal spirits. |
|  |
| ROB:  Oh, yeah. Dad always had some kind of romantic vision of safaris, and living off the land, and (EXAGGERATING FOR EFFECT) “The Hunt”. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I don’t care so much that he hunts. But why does he have to mount the head of every critter he’s ever slain over the last twenty years *in the guest room*? |
|  |
| ROB:  Hehe – probably cuz mom won’t let him hang them in the living room. Or the dining room. Or the- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well, it’s creepy. Every time I roll around, the empty eyes of Bambi’s disembodied head are peering down on me. Observing me. Accusing me. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHRUGGING) Sorry. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SIGHING) It’s alright. |
|  |
| ROB:  Those aren’t actually his trophies, you know. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What do you mean? |
|  |
| ROB:  The stuffed animals. The heads.. all of it. It’s all fake. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  They’re not real animals?? You coulda fooled me. They sure look real. |
|  |
| ROB:  Oh, they’re real animals. But he didn’t hunt them. He didn’t kill them. He’s never even owned a rifle. I’m fairly certain that he’s never shot a gun. Or drawn a bow. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Then why in the hell are they mounted all over the guest room? |
|  |
| ROB:  Cuz he wants to *believe* that he’s a warrior. A provider. A *slayer of beasts*. He sees himself as some intrepid explorer, venturing fearlessly into the Great Unknown. You know, all that Heart-of-Darkness shit. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But if *he* didn’t kill them, then where do all those gawdawful carcasses come from? |
|  |
| ROB:  From *other* hunters. He buys them. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Isn’t that a bit like buying someone else’s bowling trophies? Or hanging someone else’s diploma on your wall? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHRUGGING) I don’t know that dad really cares either way. In fact, I’m not even sure if he understands the difference. The way he sees it, if he can afford to buy your bowling trophies, then that’s every bit as good as winning them himself. Hell, he probably thinks that it’s *better* to just buy the bowling trophies outright. Cuz then he wouldn’t have to… you know… *bowl*. In his mind, that's exactly what the money is for. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  How very… interesting. |
|  |
| (THEY BOTH LAPSE INTO SILENCE FOR A MOMENT WHILE ALYSSA PERUSES THE BOOK IN FRONT OF HER.) |
|  |
| ROB:  What ya readin? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It came from one of those big book shelves in the living room. Looks like a perfectly *ancient* copy of Robinson Crusoe. |
|  |
| ROB:  (WITH SUBDUED FASCINATION) Holy cow. Dad got this at auction when I was only five or six. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (RISING) Oh, crap! I had no idea it was so valuable. I’ll put it back. |
|  |
| ROB:  (REACHING TO STOP HER) No, really, it’s fine. Dad has all kinds of antique books. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SLOWLY RETURNING TO HER SEAT ON THE STEP) Are you sure? I don’t want to tarnish anything valuable around here. |
|  |
| ROB:  My parents have already started the tarnishing process… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You know what I mean. This is an antique. I don’t want to smudge it. Or rip a page. Or crack the spine. |
|  |
| ROB:  Dad always told me that if you can’t bring yourself to actually pull these books off the shelf from time-to-time and, you know… *read* them, then there’s no point in owning them in the first place. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SMILING) Well… okay then… This is your namesake, isn’t it? |
|  |
| ROB:  That’s right. Dad’s always had some kind of fascination with Robinson Crusoe. He must have read that story to me a dozen times before I was ten. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  From *this* exact book? |
|  |
| ROB:  No, no. He gave me several different copies of my own. The first one was a picture book, adapted from the novel. Eventually he gave me more mature versions. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What time did you and your dad get back here? |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t know. It was at least an hour after we left. I thought you had gone to sleep and I didn’t want to wake you. So I just went up to my own room. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I tried. |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah, I couldn’t sleep either. A lotta non sequiturs bouncing through my head… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So what did your dad have to say? |
|  |
| ROB:  Huh?? Oh… yeah. Not much, really. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh, c’mon. |
|  |
| ROB:  Seriously! It only took us a few minutes to drive down to the Buckners’ place. Once we were there, he spent nearly a half hour shootin the shit with Mr. Buckner. And once we had the car safely parked away, he and I just walked back. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *And?* |
|  |
| ROB:  That’s *it*. He didn’t say a damn thing during the whole walk back. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And you didn’t *ask him* anything?? |
|  |
| ROB:  I wanted to! But it was just… weird. He was walkin so fast ahead of me that I could barely keep up. Every once in a while, he’d pull up, look back at me like he was going to say something, then turn around and start hoofin his way back up the lane. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So he explained… nothing, before you went to bed? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHAKING HEAD) Nope. By the time I’d gotten back to the house, he’d already gone in the house and turned off the lights. |
|  |
| (THE TWO SIT FOR A MOMENT IN SILENCE, SHARING THE JOINT.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What the hell’s going on, Rob? |
|  |
| ROB:  I wish I knew! They’re not normally like this. I swear! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I’ll have to take your word for it. |
|  |
| ROB:  Oh, don’t get me wrong. They’re about a hundred different flavors of odd. But not *like this*. I’ve had friends over for the weekend, and they’re always so nice. To everyone. This whole thing just makes me wanna… Hey. Do you wanna just… go? We can walk down to the car right now. Get the hell out of here. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SMILING) Thanks, babe. But if we get back in that car right now, your mom might call a tri-state all-points-bulletin on us. |
|  |
| ROB:  I *know*. What is her deal with the car, anyway?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You tell me. |
|  |
| ROB:  I told them I wouldn’t buy a car til after graduation, but that whole scene was *way* over the top. After one more semester I’ll be graduating early. *With honors*. And I didn’t ask them for a cent to buy the car. You’d think I just robbed a bank. I just don’t get it. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It wasn’t the car. It was the *type* of car. |
|  |
| ROB:  What do you mean? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  She wouldn’t take her eyes off it. She stared at it through the window til your dad finally calmed her down. |
|  |
| ROB:  Well, obviously, she was pretty pissed off. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *No*. Don’t you get it? She wasn’t pissed *at you*. She was horrified *by that specific car*. |
|  |
| ROB:  That’s…. ridiculous. Why would anyone care about a *particular kind* of car? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I suppose that depends on the last time they saw that particular kind of car. |
|  |
| (ROB & ALYSSA LET OUT A SCREECH AND JUMP TO THEIR FEET) |
|  |
| ROB:  Holy crap, Aunt Cheryl! You scared the crap out of us! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I sometimes have that effect on people. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I thought you went to bed? Hours ago? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Your room isn’t the only one with zombie critters mounted on the walls. |
|  |
| ROB:  So when is the last time that mom saw my car? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  As of tomorrow, it will be twenty-five years ago. Exactly. |
|  |
| ROB:  Huh? What does that mean? I’m not following. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  That’s the day they pulled it out of the lake. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *What??* |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Yep. Right down the lane. You could see the emergency lights from the back porch. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Wait. You’re talking about my *aunt*, right? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Of course. |
|  |
| ROB:  So Alyssa’s aunt… Amy-- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Amanda. |
|  |
| ROB:  Right, Amanda. Sorry. You’re saying that her Aunt Amanda was driving that car? *My* car?! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Well, it wasn’t the exact same *machine*. But the same car? Yeah. Same make. Same model. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Whoa…* |
|  |
| ROB:  So you’re telling me that Alyssa’s aunt, a quarter century ago, *just happened* to be driving an old roadster like the one I just bought? |
|  |
| (CHERYL PAUSES TO LOOK STERNLY AT ROB BEFORE REPLYING.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  No, you dimwit. I’m telling you that Alyssa’s aunt was driving a nineteen-sixty-eight forest-green Volkswagen Karmann Ghia with tan leather interior, when she took Hawkins Bend just a little too fast and went soaring into the deep end of Bagby’s Cove. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  She had… the same car? A Volkswagen *Karmann Ghia*?? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Yep. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Nineteen-sixty-eight? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  That’s right. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  In *all the same colors*? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  You Cornell kids catch on fast. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (TURNING TO ROB) Why would you do this? |
|  |
| ROB:  Do *what??* |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You *had* to know that my aunt died in a car just like that one when you bought it. |
|  |
| ROB:  I didn’t know *that you had an aunt* until just a few hours ago! And until a few hours ago, you didn’t even know how she died. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But this can’t all be… *a coincidence*? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (QUIETLY, AFTER A ALONG PAUSE) There’s no such thing as a coincidence. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What is that supposed to mean? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SHRUGGING) I don’t know. Mr. Adams says it all the time. Always spewing bullshit. I can’t possibly keep up with all the arrogant crap that comes outta his mouth. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  This is like some kind of sick joke. You can’t honestly tell me that this has all happened *randomly*? |
|  |
| ROB:  Babe, from the time we met, what have I had on the walls of my dorm room? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  A disturbing array of Bettie Page pinups? |
|  |
| ROB:  *Aside* from those?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Pictures of restored Karmann Ghias. |
|  |
| ROB:  *Exactly!* I’ve loved those cars since I was a little kid. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So do you think this is all fed somehow by your dad? |
|  |
| ROB:  Huh?? You’ve lost me. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  He had some sixth sense about us. Almost like he’d been *watching* us. The car had to have something to do with this. |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t know how. You saw the look on his face. He was shocked! And angry. He may not have reacted as hysterically as my mother, but he had no idea about the car either. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I… don’t know. It just doesn’t make any sense. |
|  |
| ROB:  Look. You went *with me* last week when I went to check out the car. Just you and me. Dad was nowhere around. He had no idea. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Maybe… but this is beyond weird. |
|  |
| ROB:  No kidding! This has me freaked out, too! Cheryl, did mom or dad know the full make and model of the car that was pulled out of the lake? |
|  |
| (ROB AND ALYSSA TURN TO FACE CHERYL, BUT SHE HAS LEFT THE PORCH.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Cheryl? *Aunt Cheryl??* |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Where’d she go? |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t know. I suppose she went back to bed. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Or maybe she’s drifting down to the next house that she’ll be haunting. |
|  |
| ROB:  At this point, anything’s possible. |
|  |
| (ROB AND ALYSSA BOTH RETURN TO THEIR SEATED POSITIONS ON THE FRONT STEPS. ALYSSA STARTS MINDLESSLY THUMBING THROUGH THE BOOK AGAIN. THEY SIT IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT BEFORE ROB CONTINUES.) |
|  |
| ROB:  You know, we can just get out of here. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (LOOKING UP FROM THE BOOK, AMUSED AND SURPRISED) There you go again. What are you talking about? |
|  |
| ROB:  We just head down the road, grab the car, and hightail it back to the city. Back to school. Anywhere but *here*. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But we came up here for the Fourth. They’re expecting us for the cookout tomorrow. We can’t just sneak out in the middle of the night. |
|  |
| ROB:  You mean, like Aunt Cheryl? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (CHUCKLING UNCONVINCINGLY) *Exactly*. Let’s not be like Aunt Cheryl. We can do this. It’s just one day of grilling and awkward small talk. |
|  |
| ROB:  I know, but this has all gotten weird. Much weirder than I ever imagined. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA SMILES AND PLACES A HAND ON HIS CHEEK.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I won’t lie to you. This *is* weird. But all we have to do is make it through Independence Day, then we’re back to the city. |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah, back to the city. Back to studies. Back to lectures. Back to the same old crap? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What’s gotten into you?? |
|  |
| ROB:  My parents’ shit, that’s what. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We’ll get through it, Rob. *Together.* |
|  |
| ROB:  I know. But why wait? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What do you mean? |
|  |
| ROB:  Let’s *elope*. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh, Rob… |
|  |
| ROB:  No, I’m serious! We ship that beauty to Europe and we spend a year travelling the countryside. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We have no *income*, and neither of our parents will want to bankroll that little adventure. |
|  |
| ROB:  You already have some leads on research internships in Italy and Austria. I’m sure I could get accepted into one of those study-abroad programs for a few semesters. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Rob.* |
|  |
| ROB:  Yes? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We’ve been patient for this long. There’s no reason to run now. |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m not running. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Yes, you are. You’re running from *them*.(MOTIONING TOWARD THE HOUSE) |
|  |
| ROB:  (QUIETLY) I suppose you’re right. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Look at it from the bright side. |
|  |
| ROB:  How’s that? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  The whole time we were planning to come up here, my most nerve-wracking fear was wondering how your parents would take it when you tell them we’re engaged. |
|  |
| ROB:  And now? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Now that’s the *last* worry on my mind. It all seems so silly in relation to your witchy, nanny, sorta-housekeeper-who-doesn’t-actually-clean, not-quite aunt; your hysterical mother; your creepy, all-seeing, commandeering father; and your ghost car that may-or-may-not contain the resurrected spirit of my long-dead aunt. |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t know if that makes it sound better – or horrifically worse. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Luckily, we don’t have to decide. We’ll just wade through a day of barbecue, fireworks, and your family’s hysterical nonsense. Then we can check off the met-the-parents requirement and head back to the dorms. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA RISES WITH THE BOOK UNDER HER ARM.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I think I’m finally tired enough to sleep under the angry glare of Rocky, Bullwinkle, Donald, Daffy, and all their vengeful woodland cronies. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA REACHES DOWN AND EXTENDS A HAND TO ROB. AS HE REACHES UP FOR HER HAND, HE ACCIDENTALLY KNOCKS THE BOOK FROM HER ARM. AS IT FALLS, A PILE OF PAPERS COMES LOOSE FROM INSIDE THE BACK COVER. THE PAPERS SCATTER ACROSS THE PORCH.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh, dear. Help me pick these up. |
|  |
| ROB:  What are all these? |
|  |
| ALYSSA: |
| Hell if I know. I guess they were stuffed somewhere in the back of the book. |
|  |
| (ROB AND ALYSSA SPEND A FEW MOMENTS GATHERING THE PAPERS FROM THE PORCH FLOOR.) |
|  |
| ROB:  These are all… pictures. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SMILING) What a shocker! More pictures of *you*! |
|  |
| ROB:  (SQUINTING TO LOOK AT THE PAPERS) No… No. I don’t think so. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Of course they’re you. Here. Look at this one. |
|  |
| (ROB EXAMINES THE PICTURE IN THE DIM LIGHT.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Nope. *Definitely* not me. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Really?* Are we doing *this* again? |
|  |
| ROB:  Okay, smartass. Who is *this*?? |
|  |
| (ROB HANDS A PICTURE TO AMANDA. SHE SPENDS AN EXTENDED PERIOD STARING AT IT IN DISBELIEF.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It’s… |
|  |
| ROB:  Yes?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It’s someone who look’s incredibly like… |
|  |
| ROB:  Say it. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Like *me*. |
|  |
| ROB:  (MOCKING) *Really?* Are we doing *this* again? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But… But *it’s not me*! |
|  |
| ROB:  I should hope not. I don’t think I could be engaged to anyone who previously sported mall bangs. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But it looks *just like me*! |
|  |
| ROB:  Now you know how I feel about the Little League picture in the living room. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But what is this? Some kind of retro cut-and-paste computer graphics? |
|  |
| ROB:  Dad is many things. A computer graphics specialist, he’s not. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So you think these pictures are *real*? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHRUGGING) Your guess is as good as mine. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But if these pictures are real, then who are these people? And why do they look just like us? |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m not sure. But I do know one thing. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What’s that? |
|  |
| ROB:  We’re definitely staying for the cookout. |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **ACT TWO, SCENE ONE** |
|  |
| (GRAYSON, MICHELLE, CHERYL, ROB, AND ALYSSA ALL SIT AROUND THE DINING ROOM TABLE. THE FULL INDEPEDENCE DAY MEAL IS ARRANGED ON THE TABLE. THE USUAL HUBBUB OF A FAMILY MEAL IS TAKING PLACE, BUT MICHELLE IS OBVIOUSLY FIXATED ON ALYSSA. CHERYL IS VISIBLY DRUNK.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Can you please pass the ribs? |
|  |
| ROB:  You’re in for a treat. Dad’s been perfecting the recipe for that sauce since before I was born. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I can’t wait. |
|  |
| (CHERYL HOLDS UP A BLACK, DESSICATED RIB.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Shouldn’t sauce be… you know… *saucy*?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (GRACIOUSLY ABSORBING THE DIG) Any time you’d like to try your hand at the grill, Cheryl, you are more than welcome. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (UNDER HER BREATH) Translation: If you don’t like eating charcoal, cook’em your damn self. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (ANNOYED) Cheryl, if you don’t have anything positive to say-- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Really. It’s quite alright. They look great to me. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (SMILING) You’ve always been so sweet. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SLOWLY) I’ve… *always been*-- |
|  |
| (ROB ELBOWS HER BEFORE SHE CAN CONTINUE.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Owww! |
|  |
| ROB:  (NERVOUSLY) Please excuse Alyssa. She doesn’t realize how much I’ve already told you both about her. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Yeah, *how much*. As in… *nothing*. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  So how have your studies been going, son? |
|  |
| ROB:  Huh? Oh… yeah. My studies. They’ve actually been going great. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  You’re still on pace to graduate early? |
|  |
| ROB:  (NODDING) Well you see all my grades. Sometimes before I do. But yes, absolutely. One more semester, and I’m done. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You mean: one more semester, *and then you’re on to graduate studies*? |
|  |
| ROB:  Well, yeah, that’s… what I meant. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Will someone pass me some goddamn corn before I gnaw my arm off? |
|  |
| (EVERYONE PAUSES TO LOOK AT CHERYL, SURPRISED BY HER OUTBURST.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (WHILE HANDING THE CORN TO CHERYL) I didn’t realize you were so passionate about native American produce. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I’m passionate about eating, drinking, and getting past this goddamn day. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (TO MICHELLE) Maybe I should have stuck around longer during breakfast this morning. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *What??* We had coffee and toast. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  No doubt, with beans supplied by Juan *Jameson*. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  It was *just* coffee. You know I wouldn’t touch that stuff. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’m not talking about *you*, dear. Cheryl here is a walking distillery. She selects her pants based on the number of flasks she can fit in the pockets. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (KEEPING HER FOCUS ON HER FOOD AS SHE REPLIES) As the Boy Scouts always say: *Be prepared*. Can you please pass the briquets? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON PASSES THE PLATE OF RIBS) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You were never in the *Boy* Scouts, Cheryl. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  And you’ve never held a hunting rifle. But your “trophies” are still plastered all over the bedroom walls. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (DELIBERATELY CHANGING THE SUBJECT) You know, son, I’ve been thinking about your graduate studies. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SURPRISED) Really?? What about them? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Well, I fear you’ve become a bit too sheltered. Cornell is such a cloistered community. It seems like you’ve lived half your life in New York City. |
|  |
| ROB:  (CHUCKLING) You may be the first person I’ve ever heard refer to New York as *cloistered*. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You know what I mean. Not *the city*, but *the academic community*. |
|  |
| ROB:  I’ve been telling you since I started college that I want to travel. I want to live somewhere outside the northeast. I’d like to see more of America. Every single time I bring it up, you immediately shut it down. But *now* you want to talk about this? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I just want to broaden your horizons. You should consider someplace further abroad. University of Chicago. Maybe the West Coast? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (BLURTING OUT, NEARLY YELLING) You should get the hell away from here! |
|  |
| (EVERYONE PAUSES AGAIN, THIS TIME TO LOOK AT MICHELLE, SHOCKED BY HER OUTBURST.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  That wasn’t *quite* what I was trying to communicate, but-- |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I mean it! You should get the hell out of here. As far away as you can go! Transfer. Learn a foreign language. Experience new cultures. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SLOWLY) I’m starting to feel that this isn’t really about college… |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  The longer you’re here, the more likely you are to repeat the past. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *What* past is she talking about? |
|  |
| ROB:  (IGNORING ALYSSA) You know, I’ve been thinking about some new plans as well. |
|  |
| GRAYSON & MICHELLE:  *Ohh??* |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah. You see, I’ve… |
|  |
| (ROB PAUSES, LOOKS TO ALYSSA, SMILES, AND GRABS HER HAND.) |
|  |
| ROB:  I mean *we’ve* been making a lot of plans. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (SUDDENLY ANGRY AND SUSPICIOUS) What *kind* of plans?? |
|  |
| ROB:  Well… this isn’t really how I wanted to tell you. I had this all mapped out. A whole scenario built up in my head. But these last twenty-four hours have been so… well, weird, and I’m not sure if I’m ever really gonna get the chance I was looking for. And I know that you guys *just met* Alyssa and all… but… |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (DEADPAN) I see that the Toastmaster membership has really been working for you. |
|  |
| ROB:  Huh?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Oh, for the love of God, son. *Spit it out.* |
|  |
| ROB:  (DISORIENTED BY GRAYSON’S INTERRUPTION) Oh… yeah. Well… we’re engaged! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Oh dear God. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *Excuse* me?! |
|  |
| ROB:  (SMILING AND SPEAKING MORE TO ALYSSA THAN TO ANYONE ELSE) That’s right. We’re in love. And, well, I just can’t see the point in waiting until we’re both done with school to-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (STERN, ANGRY) Young man, we’ve *talked* about this before! |
|  |
| ROB:  About Alyssa? You just met her. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  No! About *the plan*. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What plan is that? |
|  |
| ROB:  (BITTERLY) The choreographed, step-by-step guide to my whole goddamn life. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Goodness gracious. Stop being so melodramatic. |
|  |
| ROB:  Did I misspeak?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You most certainly did. *The plan* – since you seem to have forgotten everything we’ve discussed over the last ten years – is a logical series of steps designed to get you through graduate school and into your career. Once that plan is complete – and you’re *well on your way to just that* – you’re free to do as you please. Live where you like. Work where you choose. Marry some nice girl who you love – and who loves you back. |
|  |
| ROB:  Dad, I’ve already *met* that girl! She’s right here! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Great! Then I’m sure the two of you will make a lovely couple. In four or five years. Once you’ve completed your graduate work. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (SHAKING HER HEAD) No. |
|  |
| ROB:  (ANGRILY) That timing is not yours to dictate! We won’t *make* a lovely couple. We *are* a lovely couple. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (STILL SHAKING HER HEAD) NO! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Son, you’re going to meet many delightful young women in your life. There’s no reason to condemn yourself to a-- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *EXCUSE ME?!* |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (YELLING) *No!!!!* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (RESTRAINING HIS VOICE) Dear! *We’ve talked about this.* |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  No. *No. NO!*  Not *her*! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (FLABBERGASTED) Ma’am… with all due respect. You barely know me. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Oh, I *know* you! You’ve haunted me every time I dare to close my eyes. You’re here every summer, floating out of that lake. I know you like a dog-eared book. I keep reading it over, and over, and over again. And no matter how much I dream of a new climax, the ending is *always* the same! |
|  |
| (CHERYL JUMPS TO HER FEET.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  It’s time for cake! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But I don’t know what any of that has to do with *us*? With me? With Rob? You’ve told me now about my aunt’s death and, I get it – that’s horrible. But that’s *the past*. I’m not my Aunt Amanda. I’ve never been here before today. I’ve never met you, or Mr. Adams, or Cheryl in my life. Ever. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  No,no,no,no,no,no,no,no. Anyone but *her*! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Yep! It’s *definitely* time for cake! |
|  |
| (CHERYL MOVES BEHIND MICHELLE AND STARTS TRYING TO NUDGE HER FROM HER SEAT.) |
|  |
| ROB:  So… you’re not mad that I’m engaged? You’re only mad that I’m engaged *to Alyssa*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (RISING FROM SEAT) You know, cake is starting to sound mighty good right about now. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  She needs to leave this place. She should never have come back. We’ve put all that behind us. And she has no right to dredge it up now. |
|  |
| ROB:  *Mother?!* How can you be so rude?? You’re not making any sense! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I don’t care! She has to go! |
|  |
| GRAYSON & CHERYL:  *MICHELLE!* |
|  |
| (THE JOINT EXCLAMATION SEEMS TO SNAP MICHELLE FROM A TRANCE. SHE LOOKS TO BOTH OF THEM, SLIGHTLY CONFUSED.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Yes?? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AND CHERYL ARE PRACTICALLY DRAGGING MICHELLE UP OUT OF HER SEAT.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Let’s go prepare the cake. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (ABSENTLY) But we’re still eating lunch. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (WHILE PULLING MICHELLE UPWARD) *Let’s go cut the cake!* |
|  |
| (MICHELLE LOOKS FIRST TO GRAYSON, THEN TO CHERYL, THEN BACK TO GRAYSON AGAIN. GRAYSON AND CHERYL ARE REPEATEDLY MOTIONING FOR HER TO JOIN THEM IN THE KITCHEN. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS SHE RISES AND THE THREE OF THEM HEAD TO THE KITCHEN. ALYSSA WAITS UNTIL ALL THREE ARE OUT OF THE ROOM BEFORE TALKING TO ROB.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well, congratulations. |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m too confused to even *begin* processing that statement right now. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  After last night, I didn’t think that things could possibly get weirder around here. |
|  |
| ROB:  Neither did I. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And sadly, I was very mistaken. |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t really know what to say. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well why don’t you start with the pictures? |
|  |
| ROB:  What do you want me to say about the pictures?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Let’s start with when you’re going to say something - *anything* - about them to your parents? |
|  |
| ROB:  I know. I know. I’m waiting for the right moment. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Like… *Christmas*? |
|  |
| ROB:  No! It’s just… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Yes? |
|  |
| ROB:  It’s just that, after mom’s whole “episode” yesterday, she seemed so much calmer this morning. That was, until now. I didn’t want to disturb her. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well, she’s not calm anymore. And she didn’t seem too concerned about disturbing *me*. |
|  |
| ROB:  I know. You’re absolutely right. That was totally unwarranted. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It’s good to know that you have *some* woman’s feelings in mind right now. |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m sorry. You have to understand: I really haven’t seen my parents like this. It all has me rather… off balance. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well I’m sorry about your delicate balance – but as I see things, it’s not even three PM yet. We’re supposed to sit here for the rest of the day listening to Cheryl’s drunken rants, your dad’s controlling demands, and your mom’s overflowing – and completely unfounded - hatred of me. Am I missing anything? |
|  |
| ROB:  No… I think that about covers it. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Maybe we should bring the Karmann Ghia back up to the house and complete the symphonic shit storm that’s already been launched? |
|  |
| ROB:  You know that’s not an option right now. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh, I’m sorry. Would that make things *weird*?! |
|  |
| ROB:  (MATTER-OF-FACTLY) Yes. Besides, you can’t drive a stick. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (LOW, WITH MEASURED ANGER) The last I checked, you were very happy with the way that I drove a stick. |
|  |
| ROB:  Oh my… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And if you’d ever like to see me drive a stick again, you might want to jump on top of this situation before I have to. |
|  |
| (ROB AND ALYSSA EXCHANGES LOOKS ALONG THE LINES OF “ARE YOU SERIOUS?” ANSWERED BY “I’M DAMN SERIOUS.” BEFORE ROB CAN REPLY, GRAYSON, MICHELLE, AND CHERYL COME BACK INTO THE DINING ROOM WITH PLATES FULL OF CAKE. MICHELLE IS STILL FLUSTERED, BUT SEEMS TO HAVE FORCEFULLY CALMED HERSELF DOWN – SOMEWHAT.) |
|  |
| ROB:  (NODDING) Understood. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SMILING) I hope that German chocolate is to your liking, Alyssa? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That’s fine, thank you. |
|  |
| ROB:  Did you buy this? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’ll have you know that your mother *made it*, from scratch, this morning. |
|  |
| ROB:  (CONFUSED) Wonders never cease. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What is that supposed to mean? |
|  |
| ROB:  Nothing. It’s just that I don’t ever remember having German chocolate cake in the house when I was growing up. And I definitely don’t remember you ever baking one. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It looks delicious, Rob. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *See*? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  German chocolate cake is actually my favorite. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *Exactly*. |
|  |
| ROB:  Wow. What a… coincidence. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SHRUGGING, WITH HIS CARDBOARD SMILE) Lucky guess. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Awwww, shit. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  For cripe’s sake, will you *please* watch your tongue, Cheryl? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What’s wrong?? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  We forgot the milk. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  How silly of me! German chocolate cake is only half the dessert without a nice glass of milk! |
|  |
| ROB:  Indeed. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (RISING FROM HER CHAIR) Milk for everyone? |
|  |
| ROB:  Yes, please! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  None for me, thank you. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (PAUSING, SURPRISED BY ALYSSA’S RESISTANCE) Are you sure? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Dear, she’s *lactose intolerant*. |
|  |
| (MICHELLE NODS ANDS EXITS FOR THE KITCHEN. ALYSSA HAS A LOOK OF SIMULTANEOUS ASTONISHMENT AND ANNOYANCE. ONCE MICHELLE HAS LEFT, GRAYSON, ROB, AND CHERYL ALL MUNCH QUIETLY ON SMALL BITES OF THEIR CAKE AS THEY WAIT FOR THEIR MILK, WITHOUT PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO ALYSSA. ALYSSA STARES AT EVERYONE FOR A LONG MOMENT BEFORE SPEAKING.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Do you care to explain that? |
|  |
| (IT TAKES ANOTHER LONG MOMENT BEFORE GRAYSON REALIZES THAT ALYSSA IS SPEAKING TO HIM.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Who – me? I’m sorry? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  How in the hell would you know that? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (ACTING GENUINELY OBLIVIOUS) Know *what*, my dear? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That I’m lactose intolerant. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (AFTER A LONG PAUSE) You know, most people don’t realize that, unless your ancestors come from a few specific regions in Europe, you’re quite likely to be lactose intolerant. |
|  |
| (MICHELLE COMES BACK INTO THE DINING ROOM WITH NO MILK.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  It’s the strangest thing, but the milk seems to have gone bad. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Well, thank God for whisky. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I know. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You see? It all works out the same, regardless. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Don’t give me that line. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (THROUGH A FORCED SMILE) *What* line? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (ANNOYED) You don’t just *assume* that people are lactose intolerant. It’s a very specific diagnosis. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes… one that applies to a surprising subset of the population. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (WITH RISING ANGER) You said it with *absolute confidence*. |
|  |
| (GRAYSON LOOKS PENSIVELY AT MICHELLE, THEN CHERYL, BEFORE SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (WITH CARDBOARD SMILE) Lucky guess. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (WITH UNRESTRAINED ANGER) Now look here. I’ve had just about enough of your bullshit *lucky guesses*-- |
|  |
| (IN A FIT OF DESPERATE, FRANTIC ACTIVITY, ROB SHUFFLES THROUGH HIS POCKETS AND VOMITS A LARGE COLLECTION OF PAPERS ONTO THE DINING ROOM TABLE.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Mom! Dad! What are these?? |
|  |
| (EVERYONE IS CAUGHT OFF GUARD. GRAYSON AND MICHELLE PERUSE THE PAPERS ON THE TABLE SLOWLY.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  They’re… pictures, son. |
|  |
| ROB:  (EXASPERATED) Yes, *I can see that*. But they’re pictures of… *what*? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AND MICHELLE SURVEY THE PICTURES. THEY SPEND AS MUCH TIME LOOKING AT EACH OTHER AS THEY DO LOOKING AT THE PICTURES.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  They’re… pictures of you, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  Bullshit. Try again. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *I beg your pardon.* |
|  |
| ROB:  You heard me. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Where did you find these pictures? |
|  |
| ROB:  Where I found them has no bearing on the answer. *Who’s in these pictures??* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I think your eyesight’s better than mine. But surely you recognize this handsome fellow? |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah. It looks *exactly* like me. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (SMILING) Well there you go! |
|  |
| ROB:  Awww, c’mon, mom! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *What?* What’s wrong?? |
|  |
| ROB:  And who’s with “me” in these pics? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Obviously, that’s your beloved – Alyssa! |
|  |
| ROB:  *Look again*. Does anything strike you as odd in these pictures? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Maybe you could just come out with it, rather than playing twenty questions? |
|  |
| ROB:  (WITH GROWING ANNOYANCE) I was hoping we could have some kind of adult conversation about this. But since you won’t acknowledge anything but the obvious, I guess I’ll spell it out for you. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Please do. |
|  |
| ROB:  In this pic, I have *a mustache*! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Everyone makes a few unfortunate style choices in their formative years. |
|  |
| ROB:  *DAD!* I’ve *never* had a mustache! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Come now! We can hardly account for all the fads you followed in high school! |
|  |
| ROB:  Okay. Fine. Forget the mustache for a moment. Do you see my jacket in that picture?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Yes, but I don’t really know what that has to do with-- |
|  |
| ROB:  It’s a *Starter jacket*! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Umm… so? |
|  |
| ROB:  So no one’s actually worn a Starter jacket in more than twenty years! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Rob, Rob, Rob. We *all* look back with regret at the fashions and the hair styles of our youth. |
|  |
| (ROB TURNS TO ALYSSA WITH A LOOK OF UTTER FRUSTRATION.) |
|  |
| ROB:  *AARRRGGGHHH! NO!!!* That’s not what I’m talking about! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  What *are* you talking about? |
|  |
| ROB:  I… I mean, maybe… *Goddamnit!* Okay, fine. (POINTING TO ONE OF THE PICTURES) What about *her*? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What *about* her? |
|  |
| ROB:  That’s Alyssa! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes… and? |
|  |
| ROB:  And how would you have pictures of a mustachioed, Starter-jacket-wearing me, side-by-side with Alyssa, when you never even met her before this weekend?? |
|  |
| (THERE IS A LONG PAUSE WHILE GRAYSON AND MICHELLE CONSIDER HOW TO FIELD THIS QUESTION.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Have you been *spying* on us? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (AFTER A LONG, DELIBERATE PAUSE) Yes. Yes, we have. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Wait. *What?* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’m sorry, son. It was important for us to know that you haven’t been in any danger at school. Haven’t been hanging out with the wrong crowd. |
|  |
| ROB:  Because you thought there was a big risk of me finding the “wrong crowd”… *at Cornell*? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  You can never be too safe. Drugs aren’t limited to the ghetto. And shysters are everywhere, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  Oh gawd, that’s the most *racist* term. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *What?* It’s true! |
|  |
| ROB:  Nevermind. That doesn’t matter now. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  So what *does* matter? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  This is a big load of crap. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Whatever do you mean? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Even if I believed that you were spying on us, that wouldn’t account for pictures of us in venues we’ve never visited, with clothing and styles that we’ve never worn, in the midst of activities that we’ve never done. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What do you want us to say? The evidence is right in front of you. The pictures don’t lie. |
|  |
| (ROB AND ALYSSA LOCKS EYES AND NOD, COGNIZANT OF A PREVIOUS AGREEMENT.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Mom, dad: I want you to be honest with me. |
|  |
| GRAYSON & MICHELLE:  Of course. |
|  |
| ROB:  (AFTER A LONG PAUSE) Do I have an identical twin? |
|  |
| (CHERYL ALLOWS HER FOREHEAD TO CRASH LOUDLY ONTO THE TABLE. GRAYSON AND MICHELLE EYE EACH OTHER CAUTIOUSLY.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  It’s time that you know the truth, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  Finally! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You… *do* have a brother. |
|  |
| (ROB SIGHS FOR A MOMENT. THEN LOOKS AROUND WITH RENEWED SKEPTICISM.) |
|  |
| ROB:  You mean, I have a *twin* brother? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  No. Of course not. He was much older. |
|  |
| ROB:  *Was* or *is*? Is he still alive? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  He’s… he’s… no longer with us. |
|  |
| ROB:  No longer with us? As in, he’s *dead*? |
|  |
| (THESE WORDS IMMEDIATELY MOVE MICHELLE TO TEARS.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes, dammit. He’s *dead*. Does that make it sound better to you?? |
|  |
| ROB:  (QUIETLY, TO HIMSELF) Yeah, honestly, it kinda does. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (SOBBING) Well now you know. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Does he? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What are you talking about? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  This deceased “brother” – he was *identical* to Rob? How does that work? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  They bear a striking resemblance. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *No!* We’re not talking about a “striking resemblance”. They’re damn near carbon copies! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (DISTRAUGHT) What do you want me to say? Same gene pool. Family resemblance. What else would you expect?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And that extends *to me*? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What are you getting at? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob’s supposed, twenty-year-older, deceased brother also happens to be with *my* twin? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  It’s not your twin. It’s your aunt. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  My Aunt *Amanda*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Precisely. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (INCREDULOUS) So my dead doppelganger aunt was dating Rob’s dead doppelganger brother? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Basically… yes. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (ANNOYED) *Basically??* |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (AFTER A LONG PAUSE) They were… engaged. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Wait. *Wait*. Hold up. I’ve never heard anything about this. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Have your parents ever told you much of *anything* about your late aunt? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Well… no. They really didn’t. But I’d think they would have-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I think your family was as distraught over the loss of Amanda as we were over Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  *I’m* Rob. And I’m not “lost”. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  We’re talking about your brother. |
|  |
| ROB:  You gave me the same name *as my dead brother*?! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Not exactly. Your brother was Robert. You’re Robinson. |
|  |
| ROB:  (ABSENTLY, AS HE MAKES THE REALIZATION) Oh… that’s *sick*. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Oh, c’mon. |
|  |
| ROB:  You named me after my deceased brother! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I *just told you that*-- |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah, yeah. *I get it*. Robert. Robinson. They’re *soooo* different. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Well, they *are* different. |
|  |
| ROB:  They’d be different if you called me *Robinson*. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  What difference does that make? |
|  |
| ROB:  You call me *Rob*! What did you call *him*?? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AND MICHELLE BOTH AVOID ROB’S GAZE, HESITANT TO REPLY.) |
|  |
| ROB:  *What* did you call him?! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What’s important is that you’re our son and we *love* you more than-- |
|  |
| ROB:  Nevermind. I’m not even sure why I asked. You called him *Rob*! You call me *Rob*! I’m like some kind of sad avatar for my dead brother. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  You’re no *avatar*! You’re our boy! |
|  |
| ROB:  (BITTERLY) Words are cheap. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  There’s no reason to get so upset over this. |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t really want you telling me what I-- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (QUIETLY) How did he die? |
|  |
| (HER QUESTION SEIZES EVERYONE’S ATTENTION.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Why, in a car wreck, of course. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  With… my… |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  With your aunt, yes. They both perished in this very lake. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Together. On the fourth of July. In a nineteen-sixty-eight forest-green Volkswagen Karmann Ghia with tan leather interior?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes… That’s precisely the case. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA TAKES TURNS LOOKING EACH OF THE ATTENDANTS IN THE FACE, TRYING TO SHAKE OUT SOME FURTHER REVELATION. NONE IS FORTHCOMING.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (LOOKING UPWARD, TOWARD NO ONE IN PARTICULAR) *Does everyone here think I’m a goddamn idiot??* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  All we can offer is the truth. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *The truth?!* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  But of course. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Your *truth* smells an awful lot like bullshit! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Maybe you should sit down, dear. You’re getting worked up. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Don’t patronize me! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I’m only trying to help. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  If you won’t give me any answers, maybe you can start by supplying some questions?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’m… afraid I don’t understand. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I’m supposed to believe that your “truth” goes something like this: Rob has a deceased, nearly-identical, older brother that you’ve never bothered to tell him about until today. And this is strangely similar to the fact that I have a deceased, nearly-identical, aunt that no one in my family has told me much about. And oh, by the way, Rob’s brother and my aunt were engaged. They both spent their last weekend at this very same house, celebrating Independence Day on this very same lake, and when they left, they perished when their nineteen-sixty-eight forest green Karmann Ghia with tan leather interior crashed into the lake. Which happens to be the exact same car that Rob and I drove up here in yesterday? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Well… it’s not the *exact same machine*, but-- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Same year! Same make! Same model! *Ammiright??* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes… that sounds about right. |
|  |
| (ANOTHER PAUSE ENSUES AS ALYSSA WAITS FOR SOMEONE TO ELABORATE. NO ONE DOES.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So even if I *do* have all the “answers” right now – and believe me, I highly doubt that! – I apparently have no idea what the *questions* should be. Because none of this is really making much sense. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I suppose it must seem terribly confusing… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Yes!* |
|  |
| (ALYSSA AGAIN VISIBLY IMPLORES SOMEONE – ANYONE – TO ELABORATE. BUT NO ONE DOES.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *AND?!* |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  And *what*? You have the details correct! We *agree* with you! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  C’mon, Rob. We’re getting the hell outta here! |
|  |
| ROB:  (STUNNED) But... where are we going?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We haven’t even done fireworks. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We’re going to *my* parents! |
|  |
| ROB:  Are they home?? I’ve never even met them! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  No time like the present to get the introductions out of the way! We can be at their cottage in less than an hour. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  That’s *not* a good idea!! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And why not?! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Well… there’s… pie later. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Ma’am, I love your son. And I don’t want to show you any disrespect, so I’m gonna say this the nicest way I know how. You can take your pie, and your fairy tales, and all the creepy stalker-ish details of my life, and shove them right up your-- |
|  |
| (ROB JUMPS UP TO INTERJECT, HOLDING ALYSSA BACK, EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS NOT THREATENING ANY PHYSICAL ACTION.) |
|  |
| ROB:  (TRYING TO CALM AYSSA) Babe! Please! Sit down. We’ll figure this out. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob! *Don’t you see?!* There’s nothing to “figure out” as long as your parents insist on telling us these ridiculous stories. |
|  |
| ROB:  Well, there’s… a lot to parse here. For all of us. I haven’t quite processed it myself. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *ROB!!I Open your eyes!* I don’t know *what* we are missing in this puzzle. But I know your parents aren’t being straight with us. And I’m not waiting until the next time that I just so happen to be visiting *my* parents to get this unraveled. Now, are you with me? Or am I finding *my own* *way* out of here?? |
|  |
| ROB:  (QUIETLY, AFTER LONG PAUSE) I’m with you. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Good. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA RISES AND ROB RELUCTANTLY JOINS HER. THEY’RE ABOUT TO TURN FOR THE DOORWAY WHEN GRAYSON SPRINGS TO HIS FEET AND PUTS HIS HAND ON ROB’S SHOULDER.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Son. |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (BEGRUDGINGLY) And… Alyssa. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (ANNOYED) *Yes??* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We may not have been *entirely* straight with you. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (ANGRILY SARCASTIC) *Ya think??* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I know. And I’m *truly* sorry. But you have to understand. (MOTIONING TO MICHELLE) We weren’t expecting to dredge up any of these issues this weekend. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What *issues*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *Any* of them. Rob’s brother. Your aunt. The horrible experience of seeing that car pulled out of the lake. I think it’s safe to say that we had, well, *buried* those images. We’ve spent the better part of twenty years pushing them deeper and deeper below the surface. And now, with one, crazy, holiday weekend, everything explodes into the present. |
|  |
| (ROB SINKS BACK TO HIS SEAT. ALYSSA SLOWLY FOLLOWS SUIT.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Go on… |
|  |
| (A FEW ANXIOUS MOMENTS PASS AS GRAYSON, MICHELLE, AND EVEN CHERYL ALL EXCHANGE LOOKS OF CONSTERNATION. MICHELLE, IN PARTICULAR, LOOKS AFRAID OF WHAT GRAYSON’S GOING TO SAY.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (FUMBLING) We- Well, I mean, your mother and I. Not Cheryl. Well, you see, we… We… Umm… |
|  |
| ROB:  Jesus Christ, dad. Just spit it out! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We… used to be… involved in human trafficking. |
|  |
| (CHERYL AUDIBLY BANGS HER HEAD ON THE TABLE AGAIN. MICHELLE IS SPEECHLESS, BUT COMPLETELY AGHAST. GRAYSON REMAINS CALM.) |
|  |
| ROB:  *WHAT?!* You mean, like, slaves? Sex workers? Indentured servants?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SOLEMNLY) No, no, no. Nothing like that. And believe me, it’s nothing we’re proud of. We’d do *so many* things differently if we had the chance to do it all over again. But at the time we were just trying to help families that couldn’t make it through the labyrinth of U.S. adoption laws. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (INCREDULOUS, SHAKING HER HEAD) What does any of that have to do with *us*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (LOOKING TO ALYSSA) You. Your aunt. Rob. His older brother. You were all a part of our process. Latvian babies brought into the country for loving, American families. |
|  |
| ROB:  You’re saying that I’m… I’m *Latvian*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes, but we’ve always loved you as our own. |
|  |
| (MICHELLE IS FROZEN, WITH AN ODD LOOK OF HORROR ON HER FACE. CHERYL MAKES NO ATTEMPT TO HIDE HER INTERMITTENT, BUT RISING, LAUGHTER.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And you’re trying to tell me, that *I’m* another one of your Latvian imports? Like Rob? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (NODDING SOLEMNLY) I’m sorry. This is really something you should only hear from your adoptive parents. But yes, that’s exactly what I’m saying. |
|  |
| (CHERYL BEGINS LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY. GRAYSON IGNORES HER.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You brought Rob’s identical older brother into the country? Aaaannnddd… twenty-some-odd years later, you brought Rob into the country? And you kept both of them? And you brought my Aunt Amanda into the country where she was adopted by my grandparents? Aaaannnddd… twenty-some-odd years later, you brought me into the country? And I was adopted by my parents?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SWALLOWING HARD) Yeah… that’s about right. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (RISING ABRUPTLY) C’mon, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  What are you talking about? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We’re getting the hell outta here. Or at least, *I’m* getting the hell outta here. |
|  |
| ROB:  But… *he just told us,* that… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Is that Cornell education doing *nothing* for you here? The magnitude of the lies seems to double every five minutes or so. |
|  |
| ROB:  I just learned that I have a brother. And he’s *dead*. And my parents were some kind of… *baby brokers*. I’m confused. It’s a lot to process. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You’re right. Horse manure does take a while to decompose. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I don’t know what else you want me to tell you? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (WITH SUDDEN RAGE) *How about starting with the TRUTH?!?!* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  That’s exactly what I’m trying to-- |
|  |
| CHERYL:  *STOP IT!!!!* |
|  |
| (CHERYL’S OUTBURST SEIZES EVERYONE’S ATTENTION. SHE SPRINGS TO HER FEET AND BEGINS POUNDING THE TABLE.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Stop it! STOP IT! *STOP IT!!!* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Cheryl. You’re drunk. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  And you’re an asshole. Regardless, you should shut your mouth. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I won’t put up with this from you. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  How long are you going to do this, Gary? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’m trying to level with them, Cheryl. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (INCENSED) You see?! That’s what I’m talking about!! They’re not buying it! Your idea of “leveling with them” is just making everything worse. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I can’t help it if they doubt my truth. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  How can you say that they doubt the truth when you haven’t bothered to *tell them* the truth? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I’ve had just about enough of your-- |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (POUNDING THE TABLE FOR EFFECT) I’m going to say this one time – and one time only. So you and Michelle had better listen up good. These kids are going to learn the truth. Today. If they don’t learn it from you, they’ll learn it from me. It’s your choice. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  How could you *betray* us like that?! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I think we all need to calm down. It’s gotten a bit heated. We’re all struggling to find our moorings. Maybe if we just relax, have some dessert, and-- |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Goddammit, Gary, don’t give me your deflections. And don’t give me any of your PhD psychobabble bullshit. I’ve spent two decades trying to swallow this horse pill and it’s clear that none of your stories are working. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (DESPERATE, PLEADING) Cheryl, *please*! Don’t let your liquor get the best of you! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (WHILE TOSSING A DRINK ACROSS THE ROOM) Don’t paint me as your degenerate! This game is over! |
|  |
| ROB:  Mom? Dad? What is she talking about?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (AFTER A LONG PAUSE) She’s drunk, Rob. She’s sad… and depressed. |
|  |
| ROB:  Depressed about *what*?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Awwww, hell, who can ever tell? The weather? The evening news? The wilted lettuce on her sandwich? It changes every day! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I won’t be marginalized in that way! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  And why not?! You’ve marginalized *yourself* for twenty years! You lounge around here, draining your flask, watching your soap operas, snoozing on the couch, and contributing *nothing* to this household! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Nothing?! I contribute *NOTHING*?!?! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (INDIGNANT) You heard what I said. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (POINTING TO ROB) I gave you *HIM*!! I carried him for nine months! I saved you from a life of childless joy!! I took your wicked deal-with-the-devil for… for… what?! |
|  |
| ROB:  (DISTANT, TO NO ONE IN PARTICULAR) I… I don’t understand… |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (COLDLY) We’ve always held up our end of the deal. |
|  |
| ROB:  What… what is she talking about, dad? |
|  |
| (CHERYL WALKS BETWEEN MICHELLE AND GRAYSON, SPEAKING TO EACH OF THEM IN TURN. MICHELLE AND GRAYSON TAKE TURNS TRYING TO AVOID CHERYL’S GAZE.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (VINDICTIVE) You can paint any label on me that you wish. Lord knows, I’ve painted too many on myself already. I’m telling both of you, *one more time*, that you can tell him, right here, right now, *or I will do the telling for you*. I’m not carrying this one more day. It’s all coming out. *Today!* |
|  |
| (SEVERAL AWKWARD MOMENTS PASS WHILE GRAYSON AND MICHELLE LOOK AT ROB AND ALYSSA. ROB AND ALYSSA ARE CLEARLY PROMPTING THEM TO CONTINUE.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Okay… but, this is a little hard to fathom-- |
|  |
| CHERYL:  *Out with it already!!!* |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  We get it, Cheryl!!! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Son, we’ve… well, I mean… |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  There’s just no easy way to say this. |
|  |
| ROB:  Then, dammit – just spit it-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *YOU’RE A CLONE!* |
|  |
| (THESE WORDS SEND THE ENTIRE ROOM INTO A MOMENTARY LAPSE OF SILENCE.) |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m… I’m sorry. You mean: I’m *alone*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (ANNOYED) No, goddammit. You heard me. You’re a clone. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (RISING AGAIN) C’mon, Rob. I’m tired of these stories. Let’s get the-hell outta here. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (RISING TO INTERCEPT ALYSSA) My dear… please… listen. He’s telling *the truth*. It took a while. And it’s hard to swallow. But he’s finally telling the truth. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (INCREDULOUS) Oh, gimme a break! Identical twins! Covert surveillance! Child trafficking! *Cloning*!!! What’s next? A breach in the space-time continuum? Maybe Rob is a time traveler doubling back on his own timeline?? |
|  |
| (CHERYL PLACES A HAND ON ALYSSA’S SHOULDER AND LOOKS HER EARNESTLY IN THE EYE.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I know. I really do *get it*. You’ve been exposed to so many lies and half-truths today. But you need to understand. Right here. Right now. For once, Grayson is telling you the truth. |
|  |
| ROB:  (PLEADINGLY, TO CHERYL) Awwww, c’mon, Cheryl! This is *ridiculous*! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SADLY, LOOKING DOWNWARD) You’re right. It *is* ridiculous. And we brought this all upon you. |
|  |
| ROB:  (CONFUSED, FORLORN) Mom? Dad? What-in-the-hell is she talking about?? |
|  |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (QUIETLY, EMBARRASSED) It’s exactly what it sounds like. |
|  |
| ROB:  (ANGRY, SARCASTIC) Well that’s funny! Cuz to me, it sounds like complete bullshit! So is that it? Are you telling me that this is *complete bullshit*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON & MICHELLE:  (QUIETLY) No. |
|  |
| ROB:  So what *are* you telling me?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  That you’re… you’re a… |
|  |
| ROB:  (ENRAGED) *A what?!?!* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  A clone. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SLOWLY, AFTER A LONG PAUSE) A clone?? Of *what*?? Of *who*?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (SADLY) Of Robert Adams. |
|  |
| ROB:  But I’m *Robinson* Adams! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  I know, son-- |
|  |
| ROB:  Don’t call me that! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  But, you *are* our son! |
|  |
| ROB:  Your *son*? Or your *clone*? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (INCREDULOUS) Well… *both*! |
|  |
| ROB:  How can I be *both*?! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  You’re our son, who is a clone of… our son. |
|  |
| ROB:  That makes no goddamn sense. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Are you familiar with the aspen tree? |
|  |
| ROB:  (CONFUSED, ANNOYED) What? No. I mean, a little. But what does that have to do with anything?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Aspen trees can grow vegetatively. |
|  |
| ROB:  What *in the hell* does that have to do with this? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *Vegetatively* is a euphemism that simply means they can extend their roots – *their DNA* – until they branch out into an entirely new tree. |
|  |
| ROB:  I… have no idea what you’re getting at right now. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  They extend out. They create entirely new trees, reaching far above the forest floor. But because they all branch from the same root – *the same DNA* – they are, biologically speaking, the same organism. |
|  |
| ROB:  (CONFUSED, UNSURE HOW TO PROCESS THIS INFORMATION) Okaaaay… and why would I give a *shit* about any of that? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Don’t you see, Rob?? |
|  |
| ROB:  No! I most definitely do not see! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  You are not really Robert’s clone. You *are* Robert. Robert was our son. You have the exact same DNA as Robert. So, biologically speaking, you *are* Robert. |
|  |
| ROB:  Oh, god. That’s horrific. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  No! Don’t you see?? You’re Robert. And Robert *is* you! It’s not you-versus-Robert. Robinson *is* Robert. Robert *is* Robinson. You are a single, beautiful organism. |
|  |
| ROB:  I think I’m going to be sick. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *Don’t you get it?* We never viewed you as *Robert’s clone*. We always saw you – and Robert – as one, beautiful soul. |
|  |
| ROB:  (ALMOST STAGGERING IN HIS CONFUSION AND ANGER) And you think that somehow, this is supposed to make me feel… better?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Yes! Because you’re *our son*! Our beautiful son! Our *only* son! |
|  |
| ROB:  (LOW, WITH SIMMERING RAGE) You mean, I’m your *second* son. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  No! It’s not like that! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SHAKING HEAD) None of this makes a lick of sense. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  What do you mean? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Cloning is *illegal*. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (CONDESCENDING) You can’t possibly be so naïve. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SALTY) Humor me. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  How long has cloning been around? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Umm… I mean… I’m not totally sure. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Dolly, the sheep, was cloned in nineteen-ninety-six. |
|  |
| ROB:  And what does that have to do with us? With *me*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Once they figured out how to clone a sheep – an animal that is ninety-nine percent similar in DNA to a human – how much longer did you think it would be before we could clone a human? |
|  |
| ROB:  Well… I don’t know. I’ve never really given it any thought because… it’s *illegal*! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (CONDESCENDING) Yes, son. It’s illegal. Just like smoking pot. And cheating on your taxes. And jaywalking. |
|  |
| ROB:  You *cheat* on your taxes? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Can we *please* not go there right now? |
|  |
| ROB:  Well, sure, I suppose. I just figured that-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Look. The point is very simple. You know that cloning *happens*, right? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SLOWLY) Well… yeah. I guess I do. I know that farmers clone their champion steers. I know that conservationists clone their endangered species. But I’m not… a steer. I’m not simply a… species. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (ANNOYED) C’mon, son! We’re *all* species! |
|  |
| ROB:  Yeah, yeah. Scientifically, I get that. But I’m not livestock. Or a science project. I’m not here to be treated like a zoological experiment. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (MOVING FORWARD TO GRAB ROB’S HANDS AS SHE SPEAKS) Rob! There’s nothing about you that’s an experiment! We have cherished you since the day you were brought into this world! |
|  |
| ROB:  (ANGRILY, UNDER HIS BREATH) In a test tube. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What?! No!! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SHAKING HIS HEAD) Give him the truth, dear. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (DEFENSIVE) It *is* the truth! There were no test tubes! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Maybe not. But you couldn’t bring him to term… |
|  |
| (ROB LOOKS TO BOTH GRAYSON AND MICHELLE, TRYING TO GARNER SOME RESPONSE, BEFORE TURNING HIS ATTENTION TO CHERYL.) |
|  |
| ROB:  *You’re* my mother?! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  No! |
|  |
| ROB:  I’m so confused. What happened to my brother? And how am I… here? |
|  |
| (CHERYL, MICHELLE, AND GRAYSON ALL EXCHANGE GLANCES BEFORE GRAYSON PICKS UP THE NARRATIVE.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (PAINED) It’s not easy to relive. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Oh, screw that! It’s easy to remember *that night*! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (UNDER HIS BREATH) You’re so subtle. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  He’s had more than twenty years of subtlety. Don’t you think it’s time for some facts? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AND MICHELLE BOTH WAVE DISMISSIVELY.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (TO ROB AND ALYSSA) Robert and Amanda dated their whole time at Cornell. We knew Rob had “a girl”, but he wasn’t gonna let us meet her until the Fourth-of-July-weekend. That’s when he introduced us to her. And that’s when he told us that they were engaged. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And they came up here in a nineteen-sixty-eight forest green Volkswagen Karmann Ghia with tan leather interior. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  That’s right. And Rob’s mom here, well, she didn’t take to it too well. She suspected that Amanda was pregnant (she wasn’t). She thought that Amanda was trapping Rob (she wasn’t). And, well… they all got in a big argument. And when it was all said-and-done, Robert let the whisky get the better of him, and he told off his daddy here. And then he-and-Amanda jumped into their classic roadster and decided to go cruising through the countryside in the middle of the night. |
|  |
| ROB:  (DISTANTLY) But they didn’t come back home, did they? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Not in any traditional sense, no. We woke up the next morning to sirens and emergency calls. We thought you’d both gone back to school. We thought we’d patch it up at the next family gathering. But when we woke up, they were dragging your asses out of the lake. |
|  |
| ROB:  But it wasn’t *us*! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (DISMISSIVELY) Don’t get bogged down in the details. |
|  |
| ROB:  Those aren’t simply “details”. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SIGHING) *The point is*, the next time we saw either of you, you were being dragged out of the lake. |
|  |
| ROB:  So how in the hell does any of that lead to cloning?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We were distraught. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I can’t even begin to describe the emptiness we felt. For years. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We thought about selling our shares. Quitting the business. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  We thought about moving away. Somewhere. Anywhere. Any place – just to escape. Everything reminded us of you. This house is drenched in you. The lakes. The roads. They all hold little memories of you. Even the town feels like a living, breathing memorial – to you. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We even thought about ending it all. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  More than anything in the world, we just wanted our Robert back. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  But your mother was forty-eight. None of the fertility treatments worked. Nothing stuck. It was hopeless. And to be honest, even if she *could* get pregnant again, it wasn’t really what we wanted. |
|  |
| ROB:  But why not? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SIGHING) Because we didn’t want to have *another* child. What we *really* wanted was to have our Robert back. And the only way to make that happen was through cloning. |
|  |
| ROB:  I don’t understand. Where did you get my… err, Robert’s, DNA? And how do you find someone who has the knowledge to covertly clone a human being? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  The DNA problem is an easy one to solve. Once you’ve lived for years in one place, your surroundings are virtually blanketed in your genetic material. Razors. Hair brushes. Clothing. Even the furniture. It’s everywhere. And as for the expertise, well… your mother and I are founding partners in a company that employs some of the best medical scientists in the world. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHOCKED) You used Allied Pharmaceutical employees?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (FROWNING) Not… as such. It’s not like they did it on company time. But we knew a few talented young doctors. Ripe for a challenge. And we approached them… privately. Discretely. |
|  |
| ROB:  But even if you cloned me, you said that mom couldn’t bring me to term? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (QUIETLY) No. It was too risky. We needed a surrogate. |
|  |
| ROB:  (RISING AND LOOKING IN TURN AT GRAYSON, MICHELLE, AND CHERYL) Wait. So you’re saying that was… Cheryl?? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON, MICHELLE, AND CHERYL ALL NOD SILENTLY.) |
|  |
| ROB:  (TURNING TO CHERYL) So Cheryl? She *is* my mom! |
|  |
| (CHERYL BEGINS WEEPING QUIETLY.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (INDIGNANT) *I* am your mother! |
|  |
| ROB:  But… you just told me that… Cheryl-- |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  If “mother” is the woman whose birth canal you traversed, then yes, Cheryl is your mother. But a mother is more than just the woman who carried you to term. |
|  |
| ROB:  (INCREDULOUS) How so?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  *Genetics*, son. Genetics! Cheryl gave of herself to provide you – and us – with the ultimate gift. A gift for which we will forever be grateful. But the baby she nurtured inside her was one hundred percent us. One hundred percent you. |
|  |
| ROB:  So I was implanted in her? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  That’s correct. One of her eggs was extracted, emptied of all its native genes, and impregnated with all of the genetic information that is you. Then it was restored to her womb and nine months later… we had our son back. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SEETHING) You mean, that you had *Robert* back?? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (OBLIVIOUS) Yes, that’s what I said. |
|  |
| (ROB PUTS HIS HEAD DOWN INTO HIS HANDS. ALYSSA IS STUNNED. GRAYSON AND MICHELLE SIT PATIENTLY WAITING FOR SOME KIND OF REACTION.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  This… this is some really *sick shit* right here. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (OFFENDED) Any mother would have done the same. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (RISES FROM HER SEAT WITH GROWING ANGER) No! I don’t think that’s correct at all. In fact, as far as I know, no other woman in the history of mankind has *ever* done the same! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (DISMISSIVE) That’s merely because none before us had the knowledge. Or the means. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Having the knowledge and the means doesn’t make it *right*. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (INDIGNANT) How dare you preach to me about right-or-wrong?! When you put your baby in a casket every notion of *right* goes flying out the window. There is only one thing that’s *right* in this world, and that is having our Rob. Right here. Right now. With us. As long as we have our son back, I don’t give a damn about anyone else’s high-and-mighty notion of *right*! |
|  |
| ROB:  And were you everplanning to actually *tell me* about this?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (AWKWARDLY) We… talked about it. We’ve wanted to tell you. We were waiting for the right time. |
|  |
| ROB:  And that would be… when I’m thirty? When I have my own kids? Or grandkids? When I’m on my deathbed? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We weren’t trying to *hide it* from you. It’s just that, “Hey son, you’re a clone of your dead brother” doesn’t easily work itself into everyday conversation. |
|  |
| ROB:  And yet, it doesn’t seem as though you tried. At all. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  That’s fair. And you have to believe me: For that, I’m terribly sorry. We should have told you soooo much sooner. I totally understand. |
|  |
| ROB:  (JUMPING TO HIS FEET WITH INDIGNATION) Umm… no, dad! I don’t think you do understand! Please tell me all about the time when grandpa revealed that you’re a perfect genetic copy of a deceased older son that she adored!! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (ASHAMED) I… have no such story. |
|  |
| ROB:  (TO MICHELLE) Who do you see when you look at me?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (CONFUSED) Well, my son, of course. |
|  |
| ROB:  No, mom! Who *exactly* do you see? Do you see *Robert*? Or do you see *Robinson*?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (QUIETLY, AFTER A LONG PAUSE) I see… Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  Jesus Christ, mom! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  What else is she supposed to say? |
|  |
| ROB:  What else? How about that she doesn’t see me as the reanimated avatar of her dead son? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Oh, now that’s’ just-- |
|  |
| ROB:  How about that she understands that I’m my own, unique individual with my own goals? My own dreams? My own *agency*? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Don’t be ridiculous. *Of course* we understand that! |
|  |
| ROB:  *Really??* |
|  |
| (ROB WALKS ACROSS AND SNATCHES A BABY PICTURE OFF THE WALL. THEN HE RETURNS TO HIS PARENTS AND HOLD THE PICTURE UP IN FRONT OF THEM.) |
|  |
| ROB:  *Who* is this?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  *Obviously*, it’s you! |
|  |
| ROB:  *Are you sure??* Take a really close look. Are you certain this is *Robinson*? Or is it *Robert*? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AND MICHELLE BOTH LEAN FORWARD TO INSPECT THE PICTURE, SQUINTING.) |
|  |
| ROB:  So who is it?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I’m… I’m not sure. |
|  |
| ROB:  Exactly! And I suspect that, until today, the distinction didn’t really matter that much to you! |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Rob, we understand that you are not *literally* Robert. But you do share each other’s exact DNA. You have to forgive us if it gets a little confusing at times. |
|  |
| ROB:  *Nooooo*, dad! You see, it’s not confusing to me *at all*. I don’t ever look in the mirror and confuse myself for a guy who died more than twenty years ago. And if you can’t distinguish between *Robert* and *Robinson* – if you think that we’re both part of the same goddamn tree stand, then no, I don’t think that I *do* have to forgive you for it. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (FROWNING) Oh, come now! There’s no reason to be so harsh. |
|  |
| ROB:  Of course you say that. Because the sooner I calm down, the sooner you can go back to seeing me as *Robert*. I have his DNA. I’ve been immersed in his identical environment. All the same influences. All the same opportunities. When it comes right down to it, you didn’t just copy Robert. You *repeated* Robert’s entire history. Everything I’ve done. Everything I’ve been. It’s all Robert. I’m living *his life*, aren’t I? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We’ve never tried to steer you into anything you weren’t already interested in. |
|  |
| ROB:  Maybe not, but you didn’t really have to. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  What do you mean? |
|  |
| ROB:  What’s the saying? *Genetics loads the gun, but environment pulls the trigger?* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Something like that, yes. |
|  |
| ROB:  Well I already had Robert’s *exact* genetics. And whether on purpose, or through mere happenstance, I’ve had nearly the same environment he enjoyed. So in many respects, I assume that we’re probably *the exact same person*. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I think that’s exaggerating a bit. |
|  |
| ROB:  Is it?? Robert went to Cornell, right? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Well, yes. |
|  |
| ROB:  And did you *choose* that university for him? Did you *make him* attend Cornell? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  No. He chose it himself. From a very young age. |
|  |
| ROB:  What a “coincidence”! I remember coming home from Mrs. Lawson’s sixth-grade career fair and telling you that I’d decided to go to Cornell. |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  I suppose… that’s true. |
|  |
| ROB:  Did *Robert* read comics? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  We discouraged it, but… yes. |
|  |
| ROB:  (PLACING HIS HAND OVER HIS EYES, LIKE HE’S MOCKINGLY TRYING TO READ SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL) And what comic was he utterly obsessed with? Which single volume did he read *hundreds* of times? Was there one? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AND MICHELLE NOD.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Wait! I’m getting something. It’s becoming clearer. Could it have been… *The Watchmen*??? |
|  |
| GRAYSON & MICHELLE:  Yes. |
|  |
| ROB:  Wow! My psychic powers are *on point* today! |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  Your life isn’t a carbon copy of his! |
|  |
| ROB:  Okay, humor me. In what way have we so clearly diverged? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  He… well… he was an athlete! Played all kinds of sports! That’s something you never had much interest in! |
|  |
| ROB:  Mom! I shattered my ankle! It took years of surgery before I could run more than ten yards without circling back to where I started. Do you remember that?? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (DEJECTED) Oh… yeah. |
|  |
| ROB:  So after pursuing the same interests, studying the same subjects, and basically living the same life, I went off to the same college. From there I enrolled in the same major. I admired – and eventually bought - the exact same make, model, and color of car. I hung out at the same places on campus. And inevitably, I was attracted to damn near the same woman. Am I leaving out anything significant? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  No. I think that about covers it. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Wait. Goddammit, wait a minute. What does all of this mean for *me*? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SLIGHTLY CONFUSED) I don’t know. What *does* it mean for you? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  The “coincidences” don’t end with you, Rob. When we got here, it was almost like your parents already knew me. |
|  |
| ROB:  (DISMISSIVELY) I highly doubt that my parents cloned their son *and* his deceased fiancé. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  My “aunt” Amanda was apparently identical to me. She was the same age as Robert. |
|  |
| ROB:  (CHUCKLING NERVOUSLY) Just how many births do you think Cheryl could handle? I mean, we can’t be some kind of creepy sci-fi twins. (TURNING TO GRAYSON AND MICHELLE) *Right??* |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (LOW AND DELIBERATE) Mister-and-misses Adams. Is Rob *the only* clone?? |
|  |
| (GRAYSON AND MICHELLE EYE EACH OTHER NERVOUSLY.) |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  My dear, you should really be discussing such things with *your* parents. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SWIFTLY RISING ANGER) That’s what we’re doing now?? After you dump this nightmare revelation on Rob, you’re going to shoo me off to my parents for any more information? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  But… it’s not *our place to*-- |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *This was your doing!* Your plan. Your technology. A few *basic answers* is all I ask!! |
|  |
| (ALYSSA RISES AS THOUGH SHE’S GOING TO EXIT. GRAYSON MIRRORS HER RISE AND PLACES A HAND ON HER SHOULDER.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (QUIETLY) Alyssa. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  *Yes?!* |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  When we – Misses Adams and I – decided to go forward with this, we talked to your parents about it. We had kept in touch with them since the funeral. Had even gotten somewhat close. We told them what we were considering. We gave them the names of our contacts. Told them how the process would probably go. And… |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  And *what*? Did they clone Amanda? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  That’s all we know. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You mean: That’s all you’ll tell me? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  (SHAKING HEAD SLOWLY) No. Once we gave them this information, we all decided that it would be in everyone’s best interest if we broke off all contact. Your parents were very conflicted about how, or whether, to proceed. They were unsure of the ethics. The legality. The feasibility of the procedure. All of it. So we gave them all the information we had, then we all agreed to go our separate ways. We never knew if they decided to go through with cloning Amanda. And we didn’t really *want* to know. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (LOWER) But regardless of what choice they made, Amanda was never really my “aunt”, was she? |
|  |
| MICHELLE:  (SADLY) No, I’m sorry. She wasn’t. She was born of your parents. She was your older sister. |
|  |
| (THIS TAKES SEVERAL MOMENTS TO SINK INTO ALYSSA, AS EVERYONE ELSE SEEMS TO BE AWAITING HER REACTION.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  C’mon, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  Where are we going?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  For a walk. For a drive. For a swim. Does it really matter? |
|  |
| ROB:  No… I suppose it doesn’t. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  All that matters to me right now is that we get the hell out of this house. |
|  |
| (ROB RISES TO JOIN HER. ROB AND ALYSSA TURN TOWARD THE DOOR.) |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Don’t be *too* long. It’s getting dark soon. And we’ve got an incredible stash of fireworks to shoot off over the lake! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (PAUSES AT THE DOOR BEFORE EXITING AND TURNS TO FACE GRAYSON) Mister Adams? |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Umm… yes? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Fuck your fireworks. |
|  |
| GRAYSON:  Ooooh-kay. |
|  |
| (ROB AND ALYSSA EXIT.) |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **ACT TWO, SCENE TWO** |
|  |
| (FRONT PORCH. CHERYL SITS ON THE FRONT STEPS, DRINKING. ALYSSA ENTERS. ALYSSA IS VISIBLY INEBRIATED.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (SURPRISED) Oh… Cheryl. I’m sorry. I didn’t know you’d be out here. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (PATTING THE STEP NEXT TO HER) Not at all. Grab a piece of step and relieve your worries. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (BELOW HER BREATH) Good luck with that. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA SITS DOWN. CHERYL IMMEDIATELY OFFERS HER FLASK TO ALYSSA. ALYSSA GRABS IT, SNIFFS IT CAUTIOUSLY, AND RECOILS AT THE SMELL. NEVERTHELESS, SHE TAKES A SWIG. AFTER TAKING A MOMENT TO DOWN THE LIQUOR, SHE PROCEEDS TO TAKE SEVERAL MORE, LONG SWIGS. IMPRESSED, CHERYL NODS IN APPROVAL.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Where have you two been off to? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We walked around the lake. Even stopped in at some of Rob’s childhood friends. The Sutherbys… or the Sunderlies… or the Sanities… |
|  |
| CHERYL:  The *Satterlys*. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA RAISES A FINGER IN THE AIR TO INDICATE THAT CHERYL HAS NAILED IT.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That’s it! The Sanderbys! |
|  |
| (CHERYL SHRUGS AND TAKES ANOTHER SWIG, BEFORE PASSING IT BACK TO ALYSSA.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (FAUX WHISPERING) Did you know that they make their own *moonshine* over there?? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Do you *really* think this fact would have escaped me?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (AFTER ACTUALLY PAUSING FOR A MOMENT TO CONSIDER THIS QUESTION) Good point. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Exactly. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (FAUX WHISPERING AGAIN) Well, let me tell you – it is *strong*! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  All the best moonshine is. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Where are mister-and-misses Adams? |
|  |
| (CHERYL LOOKS AROUND AS THOUGH THEY WERE ON THE PORCH, THEN SHE SHRUGS.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Haven’t seen them in hours. Once you two left, there was yelling. And crying. And more yelling. At some point I lost track. But it’s been quiet for a while now. Haven’t seen them since it started getting dark. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Did they ever do their fireworks? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Naw. Grayson got all pissy and locked himself in his workshop. He may still be there for all I know. Michelle probably took a few sleeping pills and slithered off to bed. |
|  |
| (THEY BOTH TAKE TURNS HITTING THE FLASK.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  What are you and Rob up to now? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob’s down the street getting the car. (ALYSSA HESITATES, ONLY CONTINUING APOLOGETICALLY) When he gets back… we’re… we’re gonna leave. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Don’t be bashful. Hell, I figured you’d already be gone by now anyway. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We talked, and walked, and talked some more. I just needed to clear my head before we figured out what to do next. And then we stumbled across the *Santa-Knees*, and all that moonshine started flowing… |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Yeah. They have a tendency to suck you in like that. They’re either your best friends or your worst enemies. I haven’t figured out which. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I’m sorry, but we just can’t… well, I feel like we just have to get out of here. It’s nothing personal. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Child! *Stop* apologizing! I totally understand. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You do? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Of course I do. You’ve had one helluva day. A *traumatic* day. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  We just feel like… our whole reality has been yanked from under us. I don’t know that I want to talk to my parents just yet. Or whether we just want to go back to the city. But either way, we gotta get the hell out of here. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I’m shocked that you stayed as long as you did. |
|  |
| (THEY BOTH LAPSE INTO SILENCE FOR A BRIEF MOMENT.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Why did you do it? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (GENUINELY CAUGHT OFF GUARD) Huh?? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  The cloning. The surrogacy. Why’d you do it? I mean, I don’t want to put words in your mouth, but you seem pained by all this. Like it bothers you on some deep level. So if that’s the case, why’d you do it? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Oh, it bothers me all right. |
|  |
| (CHERYL TURNS AND LOOKS DIRECTLY INTO ALYSSA’S EYES WITH AN EARNESTNESS THAT BELIES HER INEBRIATION.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  You’d be bothered, too, if you were going to hell. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Oh… *c’mon*! What’s all that about? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Child, I’m deathly serious. I subverted God’s wishes. I helped to foster life that the Lord had already chosen to call home. And for that, I have absolutely no doubt, that I’ll be spending eternity far south of the pearly gates. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Now, Cheryl! I’m not trying to downplay your religious beliefs. But you can’t *honestly* believe that you’re going to hell! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (WITH STEELY RESOLVE) There is nothing in this life of which I’m more certain. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  (BEFUDDLED) Well… well, I certainly… don’t share your conviction. But even if we assume that you're right – then, why did you do it? Why would you do something so antithetical to your core beliefs? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (DISTANT) I’ve often asked myself that same question. And at first, I made a lot of excuses to myself about it. I’m ashamed to say that part of it was good ol’ fashioned greed. Grayson offered to give me a monthly stipend – a handsome one at that – for the rest of my life. I’d never have to work again. And at that time, well, money was tight, and it was tempting. Hell, it was *beyond* tempting. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  That’s understandable. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  It’s shameful, is what it is. But the raw truth is something simpler than that. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  How so? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I was Robert’s nanny. And he was a sparkling little boy. I dare say that I loved him every bit as much as Gary and Michelle. And he’d grown into such a *fine* young man. (Well, I guess I don’t have to tell *you* that.) So when he passed away – so tragically – well, I could hardly bear it myself. And even worse than my despair, I hated to see Rob’s parents in all that pain. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You agreed to go to hell just to make *them* happy? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Sounds pretty silly when you phrase it like that. But it wasn’t just about someone being “happy” – like it was a rollercoaster ride or a fancy dessert. It was about restoring some sense of normalcy. Some semblance of *the life before*. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  What does that mean? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  It may be hard to see it now, but Grayson and Michelle were an absolutely adorable couple. The kind of sickly-sweet, ridiculously-happy couple that would almost make you resent them – if you didn’t love them so much. And Robert - *oh Lord* – he was the sun rising and setting over this household every day. It was damn near storybook. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Until he died… |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Mmmhmm. This whole house fell into a frightful miasma. When Rob died on that warm summer night, a big part of Grayson and Michelle – and me - went with him. She could scarcely manage to drag herself out of bed – *for months at a time*. He didn’t mourn the same as her, but he became a shell of a man, mindlessly trudging from one day to the next. They stopped talking. They stopped eating out. They stopped socializing. They stopped *living*. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  So when Grayson decided to try cloning-- |
|  |
| CHERYL:  At first I *knew* he must be joking. Then I thought he’d lost his goddamn mind. Then I settled on the realization that he’d become as evil as any demon to ever stalk this earth. He was dead serious. And he wasn’t going to rest until he’d done everything he could to put his plan in action. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Okay. But that doesn’t mean that *you* had to go along with it! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  No. I didn’t. But… I was weak. I mourned *for* them. I didn’t just mourn for Rob. I mourned for what the Adams family was. When it came right down to it, I *missed* them. All of them. I missed everything that it meant to be around them. They were the closest thing I’d ever had to *true* family. And I realized that I had the ability – the *God-given ability ­*– to give them something that they could never do on their own. I could be the catalyst *that brought Rob back*! |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But now you regret it? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Oh, hell yes! I mean.. no! I mean… well, Rob’s here. And I guess, if I had it all to do over again, I’d make the same choice. But the more I think about it, the more I read my scriptures, the more I believe that this is *not* what the good Lord intended for us. Dead stays dead. That’s one of life’s most basic facts. When you start tinkering with that, you’re violating the sanctity of God’s plan. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But it’s not like you brought Robert back *from the dead*, like some latter-day Frankenstein’s monster. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Didn’t we? |
|  |
| (THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND ALYSSA SWALLOWS HARD, WITHOUT REPLYING DIRECTLY.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  But even with all that, you’d do it *again*?? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (LONG PAUSE) Yeah. I guess I would. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA GIVES CHERYL A HUG.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  You’re a *good* person, Cheryl. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SMILING) Thank you, child. And maybe one day, I’ll bring myself to believe that. |
|  |
| (THE SOUND OF A CAR PULLING UP IN THE DRIVEWAY. HEADLIGHTS SWEEP ACROSS THE PORCH, GRABBING ALYSSA’S AND CHERYL’S ATTENTION. THE ENGINE STOPS. A CAR DOOR OPENS-AND-SHUTS. ROB ENTERS THE PORCH. ROB IS ALSO VISIBLY INEBRIATED.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Babe! Are you ready? I don’t wanna get back to the city too-- (QUIETLY) Oh. Hey, Cheryl. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SMILING) This one here’s a keeper, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  (DISMISSIVE) You mean that *Amanda’s* a keeper? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (BRUSHING OFF HIS DIG) No, *Robinson*. I mean that *Alyssa* is a keeper. |
|  |
| ROB:  (AWKWARD) That’s… uhh. That’s nice. Thanks. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob! Don’t be so rude. |
|  |
| ROB:  Have you forgotten all the events of the past day? |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  No. But there’s no need to be spiteful on our way out the door. |
|  |
| (ROB SITS DOWN ON THE STEP NEXT TO ALYSSA. HE DOESN’T LOOK DIRECTLY AT CHERYL, BUT SHE PASSES OVER THE FLASK. HE NEARLY DROPS THE FLASK SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE STUDYING IT IN HIS HANDS AND HE TAKES A BIG SWIG FROM IT.) |
|  |
| ROB:  (GRIMMACING) Good Lord! This is worse than Satterly’s rot-gut. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (CHUCKLING) That *is* Satterly’s rot-gut. But it’s not the plebian shit they hand out to their Independence Day guests. |
|  |
| ROB:  (SARCASTIC) Yeah, this is the *premium* stuff, here. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SHRUGGING) Then don’t drink it if you don’t want it. |
|  |
| (ROB MAKES A WEAK ATTEMPT TO VISUALLY INSPECT THE FLASK, THEN DOWNS ANOTHER FULL GULP BEFORE HANDING IT BACK TO CHERYL.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SOFTLY) I’m sorry, Rob. |
|  |
| ROB:  (CONFUSED) For *what*? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  For *all* of this. I only wanted – we *all* only wanted - what is best for you. |
|  |
| ROB:  You mean, what is best for *Robert*? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  I *deserve* that. But no, *Robinson*. You’re not *Robert*. You’re *Robinson*. You know that. Alyssa knows that. I know that. Hell, even your *parents* know that, although they may tend to forget it from time-to-time. |
|  |
| ROB:  (EXHAUSTED) You know, Cheryl, I appreciate that. And it all sounds great. But I’ve just spent more than two decades subconsciously living another man’s life. Someone who’s *almost* me. Someone who looked, by all outward appearances, to *be* me. But who ultimately, wasn’t me. Or maybe I should be saying that I’m not him? I’m not sure. And to make matters even worse, for all we know, Alyssa may have just been through the same experience. (LOOKING APOLOGETICALLY TOWARD ALYSSA) I’m sorry, babe. |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  It’s okay. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  So… *who cares*? |
|  |
| (ROB AND ALYSSA ARE BRIEFLY STUNNED BY CHERYL’S QUESTION.) |
|  |
| ROB:  *Excuse me?* |
|  |
| CHERYL:  You heard me. Who. Gives. A. Shit?? |
|  |
| ROB:  (INCREDULOUS) Well… *I* give a shit! And I’m pretty sure that Alyssa does as well! |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (WAVING DISMISSIVELY) Yeah, yeah. I get all that. You care about what’s happened in your life up to now. We all do. |
|  |
| ROB:  Well… *duh*. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  But that history is… well, *history*. |
|  |
| ROB:  That’s lovely, Cheryl. But now it’s *my* history. It’s *Alyssa’s* history. We can’t erase it. We can’t ignore it. But we can’t actually own it, either. Because my history *is* Robert’s history. And for all we know, Alyssa’s history *is* Amanda’s history. We will never fully possess *our own history*. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  No. But you can build on it. You can pave over it. |
|  |
| ROB:  That’s all good and fine, but I can’t just put all this behind me so easily. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  So don’t. Wear it as a badge of fiery inspiration for the rest of your days. But you’re already on the cusp of a new history. *Your* history. |
|  |
| ROB:  What do you mean? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  *Robert* and *Amanda* died in their twenty-first year, on the evening of Independence Day. So whatever their history entailed. No matter what legacy they’ve bestowed upon you. This is as far as it goes. This is where *their* story ends and the story of *Robinson* and *Alyssa* begins. It has to begin here. Because there’s no more of their story to continue. From this day forward, every thought you have, every decision you make, every opportunity you seize is, by definition, *your* history, and yours alone. |
|  |
| (ROB TAKES ANOTHER SWIG AND PONDERS THIS FOR A MOMENT.) |
|  |
| ROB:  You know, as much as I hate to admit it, you’re right. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (GRINNING) I usually am. |
|  |
| ROB:  I *like* it. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  *Both of you*: Build your future. Pave your path. Lay a foundation that Robert and Amanda were never capable of. |
|  |
| (ROB FINISHES THE FLASK AND STANDS UP. ROB SPENDS SEVERAL MOMENTS STEADYING HIMSELF AFTER HE MAKES IT TO HIS FEET. CHERYL AND ALYSSA TAKE IT AS THEIR CUE TO DO THE SAME.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Thank you, Cheryl. I think we’ll do just that. |
|  |
| (ROB GIVES CHERYL A LONG HUG.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SMILING) That’s my *Robinson*. |
|  |
| ROB:  (LOOKING TO ALYSSA) You have your bag? |
|  |
| (ALYSSA LIFTS HER DUFFEL BAG TO SHOW IT TO ROB.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Good. Let’s get the fuck outta Dodge. |
|  |
| (ROB SPINS TO MAKE HIS WAY TOWARD THE DRIVEWAY AND STUMBLES.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  Rob! Are you okay to drive?? |
|  |
| ROB:  Ab-so-tive-ly. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Why don’t you two bunk down and leave first thing in the morning? |
|  |
| ROB:  (SHAKING HIS HEAD) No can do. It’s gonna be a long time before I consider spending another night under this roof. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  This is still your home. It will always be your home. |
|  |
| ROB:  Maybe. But right now, it feels like *Robert’s* home. *Robert’s* family. *Robert’s* life. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Sadly, I understand this. |
|  |
| (ALYSSA GIVES CHERYL A LONG HUG. ROB DROPS HIS KEYS AND SPENDS AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF TIME TRYING TO PICK THEM BACK UP.) |
|  |
| ALYSSA:  I hope we see you again soon. When things aren’t quite so… *weird*. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (SMILING AND LOOKING DIRECLTY INTO ALYSSA’S EYES) No, child. I want you to *stay* weird. Do you understand me? |
|  |
| (ALYSSA NODS. ROB PICKS UP THE DUFFEL BAG AND DROPS THE KEYS ON THE GROUND. HE THEN SPENDS SEVERAL MOMENTS WORKING TO PICK THEM BACK UP.) |
|  |
| ROB:  Cheryl? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  Yes? |
|  |
| ROB:  They’ve closed US-19. Some kind of massive construction project. We had to take some horrific detour on our way up here. |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (REMEMBERING THE ROAD WORK AS HE SAYS THIS) Oh yeah… you’re right. |
|  |
| ROB:  What’s the fastest way to get back to I-95? |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (THINKING) Go to the stop sign up here and take a left. But obviously, you don’t want to follow the signs to 19. Just keep straight for a few miles until the road turns into Hawkins Bend. That will take you clear around Bagby’s Cove, through Oak Valley, and before you get to Main Street, you’ll see the sign for Copper Road. That will take you all the way out to the highway. |
|  |
| (ROB NODS AS CHERYL GIVES HER DIRECTIONS. HE TURNS TO HEAD FOR THE CAR, STOPS, THEN TURNS AROUND AND GIVES HER A BIG HUG.) |
|  |
| CHERYL:  (WHILE STILL EMBRACING ROB) Make *your* future, Robinson. Live *your* life. Chase *your* dreams. |
|  |
| (ROB NODS SILENTLY, THEN GRABS THEIR BAGS. ROB AND ALYSSA MAKE THEIR WAY OFFSTAGE TOWARD THE CAR IN THE DRIVEWAY. CHERYL SLUMPS DOWN ONTO THE STEP WITH A CONTENTED LOOK ON HER FACE. ROB’S KARMANN GHIA IS HEARD PEELING OUT OF THE DRIVEWAY. THE SCENE GOES DARK.) |
|  |