

SIGNING OFF

JORDAN BOWERS

CHARACTERS

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| ALEX | Gender open, race open, late twenties to early thirties, married to Sam. |
| SAM | Gender open, race open, late twenties to early thirties, married to Alex. |
| LAUREN | Female, race open, late twenties to early thirties, married to Keith, best friend to Alex. |
| KEITH | Male, race open, late twenties to early thirties, married to Lauren. |

LOCATION

Inside Lauren and Keith's home, including the living room and kitchen.

TIME

Present Day.

SCENE 1

AT RISE

No lights. A digital clock is projected on the back wall. MARCH 5th, 7:00 AM.

KEITH

Lauren! Lauren get in here now!

(A crash. Pause. LAUREN starts screaming and crying.

The digital clock rewinds to MARCH 1st, 4:50 PM. Lights on. The living room has a couch, loveseat, coffee table, clock on the wall and television set. The T.V. faces away from the audience. The kitchen has a fridge, counters and an island.)

(LAUREN is chopping vegetables on the kitchen island. ALEX leans on the counter facing LAUREN. The clock moves forward with the play.)

JORDAN BOWERS

LAUREN

You seem different.

ALEX

How so?

LAUREN

I don't know, your face looks different. You using a new foundation or something?

ALEX

Oh, no I don't think so. Might be the lighting.

LAUREN

Probably.

(A beat. The sound of LAUREN chopping vegetables. ALEX looks away touching his/her cheek.)

LAUREN

You going out with Sam tonight?

ALEX

No.

LAUREN

Really? I thought you might be. It looks like you did your hair.

ALEX

No, I'm just . . . trying something new.

LAUREN

Like the new makeup?

(Chop)

ALEX

I'm not wearing any.

LAUREN

Right, of course not.

(Three chops)

STAFF SECTION

LAUREN

How you like your potatoes?

ALEX

What?

LAUREN

Potatoes, how you want 'em?

ALEX

Whatever's easy.

(LAUREN continues cutting vegetables. She puts them in a large pot on the stove. Each chop louder than the last. ALEX fidgets with his/her hair, adjusting it to cover part of his/her face, careful not to touch his/her makeup.)

LAUREN

Do you want pepper on your steak? *(no response, chop)* Alex, pepper or no? *(chop)* Alex!

ALEX (JUMPS)

What?!

LAUREN

Pepper on your steak or no?

ALEX

Oh . . . uh no, if that's fine with you.

LAUREN

Hon, I don't care, I like it either way. It's whatever you want.

ALEX

Okay . . . no pepper, I guess.

(LAUREN sets down her knife.)

LAUREN

Alex, make a decision. No "I guess" or "if it's fine with you". A yes or no.

JORDAN BOWERS

ALEX (PANICKED)

No! No pepper!

LAUREN

Okay. Thank you.

(LAUREN continues cooking. ALEX leaves the kitchen and sits on the couch. He/she checks the clock as he/she passes it and looks towards the front door. As he/she sits down, he/she look out the living room window. He/she turns on the television.)

WOMAN ON T.V.

A woman was found dead behind Walmart on Main Street this morning. The police have identified her as Meranda Billings. The police are about to give a statement to the public.

POLICE ON T.V.

If anyone has information on Meranda Billings, please call the number that is flashing on the—

(ALEX changes the channel. Commercials for beauty products plays. LAUREN leaves the kitchen and joins ALEX on the couch.)

LAUREN

Crazy what happened to that girl.

ALEX

Yeah, crazy people out there. Who would do something like that?

LAUREN

I don't know. *(PAUSE)* Hey, do you remember when you would come over every Friday and we would binge watch shows from the ID channel on Netflix?

ALEX

Yeah, it was a lot of fun, spending all hours of the night while Keith was working nights.

LAUREN

Might've not been the smartest thing to do though.

STAFF SECTION

ALEX

It was your idea!

LAUREN

I know that!

(ALEX and LAUREN laugh. LAUREN looks towards the television set.)

LAUREN

Who do you think killed that Billings girl?

ALEX

Who knows? It could be anyone.

LAUREN

Well, on those shows they always checked out the husband and boy-friends first.

ALEX

True.

LAUREN

Didn't they usually end up being the one that killed them though?

ALEX

Not always.

LAUREN

But usually.

(ALEX fixes his/her hair. LAUREN watches ALEX. She puts her hand on his/her leg.)

LAUREN

You know, we could do that again tonight.

ALEX

Do what?

JORDAN BOWERS

LAUREN

Well, you're staying for dinner, why not spend the night? We could stay up and binge watch something on Netflix like before.

ALEX

I don't know, I mean . . . Sam will be expecting me to be at home.

LAUREN

Well then, I'll call him/her and let them know where you're at and that you're spending the night.

ALEX

I don't think that's a good idea.

LAUREN

Why not?

ALEX

I . . . I just don't think it is.

LAUREN

It's really not a problem, I don't mind talking to Sam about you spending—

ALEX

I said no!

LAUREN (SHOCKED)

Okay . . . okay. I won't call him/her.

(Awkward silence. T.V. continues to run.)

WOMAN ON T.V.

It's comfortable and has a sleek style for anyone to use. Use it at work, at home. In the kitchen, anywhere you—

(LAUREN turns off the television.)

LAUREN

How are things between you and Sam?

STAFF SECTION

ALEX

Good. We're good.

LAUREN

Are you sure?

ALEX

Yeah, why? What's up?

LAUREN

I never really see you guys anymore, neither does Keith. But really, I don't see you anymore. We used to hang out all the time, have sleepovers and snack nights. You were here almost every weekend. Now it takes pulling your teeth out to get you to come over here for dinner, and you only live a few houses up.

ALEX

I know. I'm sorry, I've just been busy with—

LAUREN

With what? What have you been busy with?

ALEX

Things.

LAUREN

What things?

ALEX

Just . . . things, okay?

LAUREN

Well, are you doing any "things" tonight?

ALEX (PAUSE)

No.

LAUREN

Does Sam have anything planned for you guys tonight?

JORDAN BOWERS

ALEX

No, he/she doesn't.

LAUREN

Then stay.

ALEX

I can't.

LAUREN (PAUSE)

Alex, why don't you talk to me anymore?

ALEX

What?

LAUREN

Why don't you talk to me anymore? You used to tell me everything. We would spend hours on the phone.

ALEX

Well, married life is different. I'm not single and can just—

LAUREN

Oh don't give me that! When you and Sam first got married you were still spending the night and talking on the phone all the time and we would go out to coffee and dinner.

(ALEX sits in silence. They adjust their hair.)

LAUREN

Alex . . . what's going on?

ALEX

Nothing.

LAUREN

Then why are you wearing makeup to cover up that bruise under your eye.

ALEX

You wouldn't understand!

(ALEX leaps off the couch and heads to the kitchen. LAUREN follows.)

STAFF SECTION

LAUREN

Alex!

ALEX

How's the steak coming along?

LAUREN

Alex, what wouldn't I understand?

ALEX

Oh, we haven't started the steak yet. Well, the potatoes are almost done.

LAUREN

Help me understand.

ALEX

Come on, I'll help you with the steak.

(ALEX picks up the knife and starts cutting the steak.)

LAUREN

I don't give a shit about the fucking steak!

ALEX

Well I want to do the fucking steak!

(LAUREN grabs the knife from ALEX and sets it on the island. ALEX begins to cry. LAUREN holds ALEX.)

ALEX

I don't know what to do Lauren.

LAUREN

Let us help you.

ALEX

Oh, what can you do?!

LAUREN

Keith is a cop, if you talk to him, he could help you. He could protect you. He could—

JORDAN BOWERS

ALEX

I know he's a fucking cop! So does Sam! I've thought of coming to you, but Sam would know who I went to. I don't want him/her coming after you next, and I don't want to make things worse.

LAUREN

Alex, listen to me. Spend the night, or at least long enough till Keith gets home. If you stay, you can talk to him and we can figure something out. Please?

ALEX

I can't, when Sam gets back, I have to—

LAUREN

Say you're staying the night. It's not that big of a deal.

ALEX

He/she will know I'm lying. I haven't stayed the night in months.

LAUREN

Say you're helping and staying for dinner. That's not a lie.

ALEX

It won't matter.

LAUREN

Come on, let me help you.

(ALEX walks into the living room and paces. LAUREN follows him/her.)

LAUREN

Alex, I can talk to Keith. See if him and his partner can watch your house. You can stay here and we will guard the house. We can send you somewhere that Sam doesn't know about.

(Doorbell rings. ALEX and LAUREN freeze. LAUREN calmly walks to the front door. Enter SAM, uninvited.)

Hey Lauren. I just came to get Alex.

STAFF SECTION

LAUREN

Oh, we were about to call you. Alex is staying over.

SAM

He/she is?

LAUREN

Yes. We're having dinner and hanging out.

SAM

Ah. You used to hang out a lot. Guess you're catching up then?

ALEX

Yeah, we were—

SAM

Alex needs to come home.

LAUREN

Dinner is already cooking. It's almost done, and Alex has been helping me. We're having steak.

SAM

Alex doesn't like steak.

LAUREN

He/she chose to have steak.

SAM

That's new to me.

LAUREN

Alex, we still need to cut the steak. Let's go finish dinner before Keith comes back.

SAM

Actually, I have a surprise dinner waiting at home. Alex, let's go.

JORDAN BOWERS

(ALEX looks to LAUREN. He/she gives her a sad smile and walks to SAM. SAM holds the door open for ALEX. ALEX tries to turn around to look at LAUREN, SAM blocks ALEX'S view and uses their body to force ALEX out. They exit. LAUREN sits on the couch, defeated. KEITH enters.)

KEITH

Hey babe, where's Alex? I thought they were coming over for dinner.

LAUREN

Just missed them.

KEITH

Where are they at?

LAUREN

Sam came over and took him/her home.

KEITH

What'd Alex say? Did the talk go well?

LAUREN

Nope. He/she didn't say Sam was doing anything, but if you heard what he/she did say you would know something is going on. When Sam came over, he/she practically forced Alex out. He/she didn't have a chance.

(KEITH sits with LAUREN. He holds her.)

LAUREN

I hope he/she will be okay.

KEITH

I'm sure he/she'll be fine.
(The clock chimes, 5:00 PM.)

STAFF SECTION

SCENE 2

The date and time change. MARCH 5th, 7:00 AM, lights on. LAUREN is cooking breakfast. KEITH watches the morning news.

WOMAN ON T.V.

This morning a body was found in the river that runs on the edge of town. The deceased has been identified as—

KEITH

Lauren! Lauren get in here now!

(LAUREN drops everything she is holding and runs to KEITH, watching the T.V. She screams. KEITH wraps his arms around her while keeping his eyes glued to the T.V.)

POLICE ON T.V.

We are making this case a top priority, due to the fact that this is the second victim we found. Whether or not the cases are related is unknown, but the police department is doing everything in its power to protect the people in this town.

Black out.

End of play