CHARACTERS

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.)
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)
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.
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.
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 boyfriends 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?
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?
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?
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.)
Alex!

How’s the steak coming along?

Alex, what wouldn’t I understand?

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

Help me understand.

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

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

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

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.)

I don’t know what to do Lauren.

Let us help you.

Oh, what can you do?!

Keith is a cop, if you talk to him, he could help you. He could protect you. He could—
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 what 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 get’s 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.
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.
(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.)
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