

WHAT ABOUT MIMI?

A Romantic Comedy in Two Acts

by

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(WHAT ABOUT MIMI?)

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Cast of Characters

Alex Brownell.....22, a senior at Brown University
Kip Dyer.....22, Alex's friend, an African American
Melanie Chase.....21, Alex's fiancée
Max Halley.....45, a detective from Atlanta
Madison Halley.....21, Max's daughter
Jack Brownell.....47, Alex's dad
Lisa Brownell.....45, Alex's mom
Mimi.....7 months (a prop)

Time: Late summer 2006.

Place: Newport, RI.

Setting: The play is staged on an area set. Most of the action takes place around a lifeguard tower, which must be painted white and high enough to move beneath. Close to the tower, slightly upstage, there is a bench overlooking the beach on the "boardwalk." Other areas, which are lighted when in use, include the porch of a Victorian B&B and the patio of a typical American home. Mood is more important than realism in the sets.

Playwright's Notes: African American, Hispanic, or Asian actors can be cast in the roles of Max and Madison Halley with no changes to the script. The extent to which nudity is used in Act II is at the discretion of the producing theatre. The scene with optional nudity will work if the actor wears a bikini top or bra while playing the scene. The part of Mimi does not require the use of a real baby, only a prop.

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ACT I, SCENE I

SCENE: Lights come up on ALEX BROWNELL, 22 and his best friend, KIP DYER, also 22, seated in a lifeguard tower overlooking Easton's Beach in Newport, RI. They are both fine physical specimens, lean, with well-defined muscles. Alex is tanned from a summer on the beach. Both are about to enter their senior year at Brown University. Each is holding a clipboard and pencil and making notes as they scan the beach and surf. They are, in fact, playing Beach Baby Bingo, a game they devised to help pass the long hours while on lifeguard duty. They share a set of binoculars to survey the beach babes for gaming purposes. They are both wearing sunglasses and ball caps. Alex has his cap on backwards; Kip is wearing his forward.

KIP (checking his clipboard)

Two o'clock. Red hair, white bikini, no tattoos—that are visible.

ALEX

Damn! Redheads are tough to find; they normally avoid the sun. But she *could* have a tattoo. Gimme the glasses.

KIP (hands him the glasses)

Come on! If she had a tattoo, with what she's wearing, it would be visible.

ALEX (looking)

Okay, I'll give you this one. (After a moment of looking.) There—there. Eleven o'clock. Brunette, two piece, tanning, yellow suit, top untied, no tan lines.

KIP

I got her already!

ALEX

No way! She had her top *on* then. I got her with it off.

KIP

You can't use the same babe for two squares!

ALEX

Where's that written?

KIP

Where are *any* of the rules of Beach Baby Bingo written?

ALEX

In my head. And since it's my game—I can make the rules--

KIP

As you go along.

ALEX

Just like with love.

KIP

What do you know about love?

ALEX

Only when I'm in it.

KIP (takes the glasses & scans)

Three o'clock. Fortyish, black bikini, a few stretch marks, but basically *very* hot—blond. Check her out.

ALEX (taking the glasses)

That's my *mother!*

KIP

What? (Takes the glasses and looks.) Sorry, Man. Never saw her—showing so much flesh before.

ALEX

I'll consider that a good thing.

KIP

Yeah, I see your point, but I'm still going to check off that square.

ALEX

All is fair in love and war.

KIP

And Beach Baby Bingo. (A beat.) Know who said that—about love and war?

ALEX

Kipling, Hemingway, Genghis Khan—I don't know. Some rogue or warrior.

KIP

Jane Grey Swisshelm. Referring to her rogue of a husband. (A beat.) What's up with the love bit anyway? You seem to have *luv* on your mind.

ALEX

If I told you, you wouldn't believe me.

KIP

Probably not.

ALEX (thinks, then)

I got engaged last night.

KIP

You what?

ALEX

Got engaged.

KIP

I don't believe you.

ALEX

What'd I just say?

KIP

You're pulling my joint, Man. You did *not* get engaged. No way!

ALEX

Wanted you to be the first—actually the second to know. She was the first.

KIP

Knock that shit off. You did not get engaged last night!

ALEX

Okay, fine. Whatever you say.

KIP

Four-thirty. Twins, yellow bikinis, the cups runneth over. Bingo!

ALEX

Damn! I was so close.

KIP

So who's the lucky girl?

ALEX

Who do you think?

KIP

I dunno.

ALEX

Melanie!

KIP

Melanie? Melanie Chase! Bro, you telling me you're going to marry the same girl you've been dating since the seventh grade?

ALEX

I just did tell you. But you seem to be having a hard time comprehending it.

KIP (stands and blows his whistle)

Hey, no Frisbee throwing on the beach! (A beat.) Yeah, you. You can't throw that thing on the beach. What? (A beat or two.) Causes ripples in the airwaves—those ripples attract sharks. Yeah, I'm serious. (He sits.) Morons. People will believe *anything* about sharks.

ALEX

But not about engagements.

KIP

Look, I believe it. I'm just having a hard time comprehending it.

ALEX

I thought so. (A beat.) What's so hard to comprehend? I've been dating her since the seventh grade.

KIP

I just said that.

ALEX

Which is a fact of which I am well aware.

KIP

And it is exactly why you *shouldn't* marry her.

ALEX

I know her, man. I'm—used to her.

KIP

Used to her? *Used* to her! How romantic is that?

ALEX

Marriage isn't all romance, Bro. You need to have—a mutual respect, a compatible world view, a sense of history.

KIP

Well, you got the *history* all right. Do you really love this girl, Alex?

ALEX

Of course I love her. That's goes without saying.

KIP

You'd better not tell *her* it goes without saying.

ALEX

I love her! Damn--

KIP

I love you too, man. You're my best friend, but I got no intention whatsoever of spending my life with you.

ALEX

I'm relieved to hear it.

KIP

What I mean is—I might have some *other* best friend before this is all over.

ALEX

All this what?

KIP

All this—life and love, as we know it.

ALEX (after a moment)

Who did you think I was going to marry?

KIP

I had no idea. (A beat.) I guess I figured you hadn't met your match yet.

ALEX

Well, I have. I met her in grammar school.

KIP

That's cool, Man. Whatever you say.

(They scan the beach. Alex stands, blows his whistle and motions for some swimmers to move closer to shore.)

ALEX

People just don't realize what can happen when they get in too deep.

KIP

You got no business telling people anything about getting in too deep.

(They sit in silence for a moment.)

ALEX

What's wrong, Man?

KIP

Nothing. Nothing's wrong?

ALEX

Fine. Be that way.

(As they sit in silence, MELANIE CHASE, 21, ENTERS. She is a strikingly beautiful blond and a senior at Smith. She's wearing a skimpy bikini, carrying two cups of lemonade, and flashing her engagement ring at every opportunity. She moves in line with the tower and holds up the lemonade.)

MELANIE

Thought you gentlemen could use some lemonade.

KIP

An angel sent straight from Heaven to quench the thirst of God's pitiful excuse for mortal man.

MELANIE

Oh, Kip, stop that.

KIP

Can't help it—comes from hanging out with all you literary types. Not kidding about the angel part though.

ALEX (taking the lemonade)

Hi, Honey. Thanks.

KIP

I hear congratulations are in order.

MELANIE

Yes, they are.

KIP

Let me see the rock.

(She holds up the ring.)

KIP

Hoo-lee . . . sh--moke! Now that is a rock and a half. Congratulations.

MELANIE

Thank you, Sir. You will be receiving an invitation of course, and feel free to bring along one of your many lady friends.

ALEX

Kip has a lot of friends—not too many of them are ladies.

MELANIE

Alex! (Then to Kip.) Don't pay any attention to him. I find your friends—very stimulating.

ALEX

So does he.

MELANIE

Interesting, I mean. Alex!

KIP

That's all right. He's just . . . never mind. (A beat.) When are the nuptials to take place?

MELANIE

Next summer after we graduate.

KIP

And then?

ALEX

We'll live happily every after.

KIP

A fairly tale romance.

MELANIE

Isn't it just the most romantic thing in the world?

KIP

Don't believe in fairy tales myself. But that's just me. I'm sure you two will be—beat the odds.

MELANIE

What odds?

KIP

The odds and ends.

MELANIE

Gotta run. Tons more people to show my rock to. Bye, Honey. Love you.

(They watch her scamper off down the boardwalk.)

KIP

Fine booty there, Bro. *Fine* booty.

ALEX

Kip, that's my future wife—not some "fine booty."

KIP

Sorry, Man. Meant it as the supreme compliment.

ALEX

Okay—I think.

KIP (after a moment)

You ever been with another woman?

ALEX

What?

KIP

You losing you're hearing along with your mind or what?

ALEX

I heard you, I just don't know that . . . it's any of your business.

KIP

I didn't say it was my business. I'm just curious, that's all.

ALEX

I've never . . . actually "been" with Melanie.

KIP

You kidding me?

ALEX

I'm not kidding you.

KIP

You've never . . .

ALEX

Nope.

KIP

Bro, you have fallen some in my estimation!

ALEX

It's not a crime.

KIP

Well, it may not be a crime, but it *is* a sorry ass pity, I'll tell you that. Fine booty like that going to waste.

ALEX

It—she's not going to waste. (A beat.) She's saving herself.

KIP

Saving herself? Women aren't like a bar of soap, Bro. You can't use them up.

ALEX

It's important to her. I'm just respecting her wishes.

KIP

That doesn't make any sense. You're here—she's here. You have been going together since the beginning of time. What's she saving herself for?

ALEX

Our wedding night.

KIP

Oh please! I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that. (A beat.) Your *wedding* night? Your life ain't a romance novel, Bro. Man, you two live in never-never land. You never got any booty; now wonder you're on edge all the time.

ALEX

Since when have I been on edge all the time?

KIP

Since the seventh grade.

ALEX

I'm *not* on edge, and I never said I never got any booty.

KIP

Oh . . . Oh, I got you, Bro. She's saving herself for you, but you're not saving yourself for her. That's cool.

ALEX

It's not like that.

KIP

Like what?

ALEX

Like whatever you're thinking.

KIP (standing, blows whistle)

Hey, lady, how 'bout you tell your kids to stop playing let's drown each other. (A few beat.) Okay, fine, not your kids. Just let them go ahead then. Hey, you kids knock it off out there or you're outta here! (Sits, then to Alex.) So, what am I thinking?

ALEX

You're thinking I'm sneaking around behind Melanie's back getting some booty on the side.

KIP

No, that's what I'm *hoping*. But I'm *thinking* you're too damn straight for anything so carnal as that. And guys that straight—often end up in straight jackets.

ALEX

The fact is—

KIP

Don't leave me hanging here—what is the fact?

ALEX

The fact is—my parents are coming. We'll have to continue this conversation at a later time.

(JACK and LISA BROWNELL, mid-forties, ENTER. Both are attractive and well kept. Lisa is wearing a short beach robe over her bikini, and Jack has on a boxer type swimsuit. They are wealthy, liberal

academics and basically very decent folks.
They stop on either side of the tower.)

JACK

Hello, Kip. How 'bout those Red Sox?

KIP

They're hopeless—as usual. What else is new?

LISA

Hello, Alex.

ALEX

Hi, Mom.

LISA

Hi, Mom? Is that all?

ALEX

Hi, Dad.

JACK

We just ran into Melanie on the beach.

KIP

We just saw her too—brought us some of that fine Del's lemonade. Fine—*beauty* that girl. Fine beauty.

JACK

Yes, she is quite striking, isn't she? The girl next door, literally in this case.

LISA

And I understand she's recently engaged. (A beat.) Do you know anything about that, Alex?

ALEX

Oh, yeah, I was going to tell you about that. Mel and I got engaged to be married last night.

LISA

He was going to tell us, Jack. Isn't that sweet. Our son was going to tell us he got engaged last night. Must have slipped his mind.

ALEX

I just did tell you.

LISA

Yes, you did—*after* I saw the rock on Melanie's hand. She was as surprised as we were that we didn't know, wasn't she, Jack?

JACK

Well, I don't know that she was *as* surprised as we were, but I have to agree that she was somewhat taken aback by the lack of communication about the engagement on your part, Son.

KIP

Alex is very deep and quiet—very quiet. Right, Bro?

ALEX

Yes, deep. Very deep and yet—at the same time quite shallow at times.

JACK

What the hell does that mean, Son?

KIP

That under ordinary circumstances—which these are far from—he can make meaningless statements like that without fear of having to provide any explanation about their meaning. It's an undergraduate thing.

LISA

It's the quiet I find disconcerting, not the deep. Alex, you could have told us this tidbit of news this morning.

ALEX

I was on my way out the door.

LISA

Maybe you just didn't *want* to tell us.

JACK

Why wouldn't he want to tell us?

LISA

I haven't the slightest notion. Ask him.

JACK

Alex, why wouldn't you want to tell us about your engagement to Melanie?

ALEX

I didn't not want to tell you! I was just . . . I didn't have time to get into a protracted conversation about it. I would tell you, and then Mom would have had to tell me about how you two got engaged. What the night was like; what you had for dinner, the wine; how you got down on your knees, what she was wearing, what the weather was like, and the phase of the moon. The whole episodic tale when I'm trying to get out the door so I won't be late for work. I'm sorry. I should have told you last night when I got home. But you were in bed.

KIP

He didn't want to—disturb you. Right, Alex?

ALEX

That's right.

JACK

We weren't sleeping.

ALEX

That's why I didn't want to disturb you. Anyway . . .

KIP

Congratulations are in order. (Slaps Alex a high five.) My Man! This is some great news for the Brownell family. My best bro marrying the girl next door and fulfilling a life long dream.

LISA

Yes, well, of course congratulations are in order. That's the important thing. You're father and I are ecstatically happy for both of you—you and Mel. You know how we love her. Not that we have anything against you, Kip.

KIP

I know what you're saying.

ALEX

And I know you love Mel like a daughter.

KIP (to Alex)

Which isn't to imply that *you* love her like a sister. That would be very uncool.

ALEX

I don't love her like a sister.

LISA

I want you to invite her over, say tomorrow evening, her parents too, for a little engagement dinner.

JACK

They're on sabbatical, Dear.

LISA

They already left?

ALEX

For Greece. They'll be back for the wedding.

LISA

Just Mel then. And you come too, Kip.

JACK

Bring one of your lady friends, Kip. You have the most *interesting* lady friends.

LISA

Just concentrate on the "lady" part if you wouldn't mine.

KIP

I regret to decline such a gracious invitation, but I do have a previous engagement with a—lady friend in Jamestown. But I'll take a rain check. Wouldn't want to miss my best bro's engagement party. (To Alex.) But we do have a matter of booty on the side to discuss.

LISA

Booty on the side?

ALEX

Kip! Okay, okay. Tomorrow we'll discuss it.

KIP

And you'll tell me everything?

ALEX

Yeah, I swear. Just—drop it!

KIP

Okay, I'll see you folks another time.

(Lisa and Jack start off.)

LISA (to Jack as they exit)

What is—"booty on the side", Jack? Are they talking about what I think they're talking about?

JACK

It's probably just some undergraduate thing. Nothing to concern yourself about.

(Alex starts to climb down from the tower.)

KIP

Where you going?

ALEX (starting off)

End of my shift, Bro. I have a date with the girl next door.

KIP

Hey, Bro.

ALEX

What?

KIP

Next time you get some, get some for me.

ALEX

I'll pretend I didn't hear that. See you tomorrow.

KIP

Hey, and—don't believe anything Mel tells you about me either.

ALEX (puzzled)

What?

KIP

Nothing, Man. Everything's cool. Have the time of your life—while you still got one to live.

(Kip stands, blows his whistle and motions for some bathers to come in. ALEX shrugs and EXITS. LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE .)

ACT I SCENE II

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP MAX HALLEY, 42, and his daughter MADISON, 22, on the porch of a Victorian B&B. Max is dressed somewhat carelessly in khakis and a knit polo shirt. Madison is a very attractive petite brunette; She is worldlier than Melanie, but there is still a fresh innocence about her that is very appealing. She's wearing shorts and a halter-top and is barefoot. There is a pitcher of lemonade on a wicker table in front of them, and both are sipping from a tall glass.

MADISON

Yes, this is a lovely little city, but I still don't have any idea of what we're doing here. And don't tell me I needed a break—after *all* I've been through.

MAX

Maybe I'm the one who needed a break.

MADISON

Then why didn't you just go fishing in the Georgia somewhere? Why come all the way to New England and drag me along?

MAX

Fishing is great here, I'm told—tuna, giant blue fin and yellow fin, striped bass, blues, fluke. I might have a boat chartered for all you know.

MADISON

Yes, you just might for all I know. (A beat.) Actually, I don't have the slightest notion of what you're up to.

MAX

You will.

I hope this is . . . not about Mimi.	MADISON
More lemonade?	MAX (rises)
Dad, tell me this isn't about Mimi.	MADISON
No, it's not about Mimi.	MAX
Thank God for that.	MADISON
It's about you, and . . .	MAX
And? (A few beats.) Dad?	MADISON
I found him.	MAX
Oh God. (A beat.) Here?	MADISON (stunned)
Yes.	MAX
You had no right!	MADISON
I had a responsibility. So do you. So does he.	MAX
I can't believe you did this.	MADISON
His name isn't Brown; it's Brownell. That's why it took so long to find him.	MAX

I told him my name was Healy. MADISON (sighs and smiles slightly)

Healy? MAX

That's not so far from Halley. MADISON

So, he couldn't have found you if he had gone looking. MAX

Not unless his dad is a cop too. MADISON

College professor—his mother too; literary types, both teach at Brown University. (A beat.) Why the wrong name? MAX

That's the way spring break is supposed to me. No names, just— MADISON

A good ole time. MAX

Yeah, just a good time. MADISON

Anything else you didn't tell me? MAX

Don't interrogate me, Dad. I'm not a suspect. MADISON

Is there? MAX

Well, he didn't . . . exactly leave me hanging. MADISON (sighs)

No? MAX

MADISON

No.

MAX

You'd better tell me about it.

MADISON (after a moment)

We were supposed to meet the last day—to exchange addresses and phone numbers, email contact—just so we could keep in touch—if either of us wanted to.

MAX

You felt something for this guy. You didn't tell me that either.

MADISON

I didn't say that. I just said we were going to—keep in touch. *Maybe*. If either or both of us wanted to. I don't know if he wanted to or not.

MAX

So what happened?

MADISON

I—left *him* hanging. I didn't show.

MAX (thinks, then)

Got a reason?

MADISON

Not a very good one. (A beat.) I just freaked out. All of a sudden I was ashamed of—how I had put myself out there, about how far things had gone in so little time, and—somehow, I knew I was pregnant.

MAX

You couldn't have know that.

MADISON

But I did. I could feel it; something inside me had changed, and I could actually feel it—this—I don't know how to describe it. It was very primal, and I knew.

MAX

Seems to me you'd have wanted to see him under those circumstances.

MADISON

Logically, yes, but I was a wreck after all that had happened. And it dawned on me that—I didn't even know this guy and that I was going to have his child.

MADISON (continuing)

Suddenly--I just wanted to be home, to shut myself up in my room, so I left. Never looked back.

MAX

Or forward.

MADISON

Nope, not forward either.

MAX

You should have told me.

MADISON

And you should have told me about—*this*. I can't believe you dragged me all the way up here under the guise of a—fishing trip.

MAX

Would you have come?

MADISON

I—don't know. Probably not.

MAX

There you are. That's why I didn't tell you. (A beat.) Let's call it even, Okay?

MADISON

It's not exactly even, but I'll let you off the hook this time.

MAX (after a moment)

So?

MADISON

So what?

MAX

So what now?

MADISON

What do you think?

MAX

I just found him.

MADISON

You think I should see him?

MAX

I'm going fishing. You can do whatever you want.

MADISON

We know how *that* turns out.

MAX

I can't tell you what to do, Madison. You have to figure it out for yourself. What do you want?

MADISON

I don't know what I want. (A beat.) I wish Mom were still here.

MAX

So do I, Honey; then we'd both be off the hook.

MADISON

You're all I've got, Dad. You've got to help me figure this out.

MAX

Tell me what to do?

MADISON (thinks, then)

Talk to him. Don't tell him you're my dad. Don't say anything about Mimi. Just get an impression of him; you *know* people. You'll know right off the kind of—person he is—if he would want to know about Mimi. Tell him you're a P.I. Tell him anything. Let me know what you think of him—maybe I won't even want to tell him.

MAX

I'll talk to him.

MADISON

Then I'll decide whether to see him or not.

MAX

Sounds like a good plan.

MADISON

You really did come fishing this time, didn't you?

MAX
Always looking to land the big one.

MADISON
Or the one that got away?

(Offstage a BABY STARTS TO CRY.)

MADISON
Somebody just woke up. (She rises and starts for the door.) When will you see him?

MAX
Tomorrow. On the beach.

MADISON
On the beach! That's sounds a little grim.

MAX
He's a lifeguard.

(The CRYING GROWS LOUDER.)

MADISON (as she exits)
Oh. (A beat.) So am I.

MAX (to himself)
So am I, Baby, so am I.

(MADISON EXITS as the LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT I, SCENE III

SCENE: LIGHTS COME ON the next morning on the beach. KIP and ALEX are picking up and raking the area around their tower. Kip keeps looking at Alex, expecting him to say something, but Alex is all business.

KIP

Now don't give me the deep and quiet act. I know you better than anybody. No offense intended, but you're not that deep and not particularly quiet either.

ALEX

It's not an act, Man. I was just—thinking.

KIP

About what?

ALEX

Last night.

KIP

Something happen I shouldn't know about?

ALEX

Can I trust you, Man?

KIP

You know better than that.

ALEX

Yeah, that's why I can't tell you—about—what happened.

KIP
Okay, Bro, I'm all business. Tell me all about it—what happened?

ALEX
Everything—*almost*.

KIP
You and Melanie?

ALEX
Yeah!

KIP
All right! My Man! Now, congratulations *really* are in order.

ALEX
Your jubilation is premature.

KIP
I hope that's all that was!

ALEX
I didn't go through with it.

KIP
What? What!

ALEX
I could have, easily; she wanted me to—she just got carried away.

KIP
Carried away is cool.

ALEX
No, I stopped. Just short of actually—"sinking the bit." I stopped.

KIP
"Sinking the bit." I like that. It very literary. (A beat.) Why didn't you.?

ALEX (thinks, then)
I didn't want to ruin her dream. So . . . I couldn't go on. It would have spoiled or soiled everything she's been living for—me, our wedding night, her, her—gift to of herself to me.

KIP

Bro, you are talking some scary shit now, a sure indication that you *are* deep, but not too bright. (A beat.) What'd she do?

ALEX

She cried.

KIP

That's what I'm about to do.

ALEX

Then she thanked me.

KIP

She *thanked* you?

ALEX

For being strong. For respecting her feelings.

KIP

Holy, holy, hoo—lee!

ALEX

Was I stupid?

KIP (thinks, then)

No, Man, you weren't stupid. You did the right thing.

ALEX

But not what you would have done?

KIP

Bro, I *never* do the right thing! I am weak—very, very, very, very—

ALEX

I got the idea.

KIP

Weak!

ALEX

No way, Bro. You're like a rock; you are my Gibraltar, and seeing what you've accomplished is what makes me strong.

Don't start that shit, Bro.

KIP

I mean it.

ALEX

I know you do. That's why I don't want to hear it. Makes me all gushy inside.

KIP

Don't be that way.

ALEX

Maybe I'm not quite as good as you think I am.

KIP

Then you know something I don't

ALEX

Maybe I do.

KIP (elusively)

You want to talk about it?

ALEX

Hell no! If I did, which I don't, I'd be talking about it.

KIP

Go ahead then.

ALEX

I just said I *didn't* want to talk about it!

KIP

I know what you said. (A beat.) Go ahead, Bro. I'm listening.

ALEX

Man, you sounding like Dr. Frazier Crane now.

KIP

Fill me in.

ALEX

KIP (after a moment)

This is hard, Bro.

ALEX

If it wasn't hard, it would be worth doing!

KIP

Man, you been reading Vince Lombardi or some shit?

ALEX

No. I don't know where that came from. My dad probably said it.

KIP

Hell, every teacher I ever had said it. Anyway . . . Melanie never told you anything, right?

ALEX

About what?

KIP

About—anything.

ALEX

Kip, Mel has told me thousands of things, maybe hundreds of thousands of all kinds of things. What the hell are *you* talking about?

KIP

I mean, she never told you anything about—us.

ALEX

You and me, *us*, or you and Melanie, *us*?

KIP

Actually, it was more me, than it was us—the me and Melanie, *us*. In fact, it was much more me than it was us.

ALEX

The you and Melanie *us*?

KIP

That's right.

ALEX

Please continue. You have my undivided attention now, *Bro*.

KIP

Now don't get all pissy. It's not like that—not like that at all.

ALEX

What is it like, *Bro*?

KIP

Stop it with the Bro. You're making me nervous.

ALEX

We always call each other bro, Bro.

KIP

Not if it's insincere. If there's no sincerity, there's no brotherhood—Bro.

ALEX

Just tell me what it is that you don't want to tell me, *Kip*.

KIP

That "Kip" didn't sound all that sincere either.

ALEX

Just tell me!

KIP

Easy, Bro. All in good time. This is not easy for me.

ALEX

You said that!

KIP

And I might just say it two, three more times. Maybe four or five.

ALEX

You're stalling!

KIP

Damn straight I'm stalling. This is a sensitive subject I'm dealing with here. I have to—phrase it properly to keep you from getting the wrong impression. (A beat.) Okay. Remember a year ago last April when you went down to Ft. Lauderdale for spring break?

ALEX

Yeah, I remember. That's what I was thinking about.

KIP

Why's that?

ALEX

Doesn't matter. Keep going.

KIP

So, if I remember correctly, you went down to—sow your wild oats, I think, is how you put it.

ALEX

That's how *Melanie* put it. She insisted that I go down to—get it out of my system.

KIP

Ah—*it*—to get what out of your system?

ALEX

What has this got to do with anything?

KIP

You'll see. To get what out of your system? What "*what*" was she talking about?

ALEX

A man's compelling desire to experience—other women.

KIP

Exactly. Even sweet innocent Melanie was and is aware that there is one thing a steady girlfriend or wife cannot give her husband or sweetheart.

ALEX

And what would that be?

KIP

Strange booty! (A beat.) Are we on the same wavelength here, Bro?

ALEX

More or less.

KIP

So, Melanie, knowing that you two will ultimately marry, wants you to get some "strange" *ahead* of time—before you're married to her rather than after when it would be just that much more troublesome. Are we still on the same wavelength?

ALEX

She expressed it a little more eloquently than that. I don't recall the word "strange" being used in her conversation.

KIP

Regardless of the mode of expression, we both arrived at the same place.

ALEX

Which is where?

KIP

With you playing Beach Baby Bingo in the sun and surf of Ft. Lauderdale. Right?

ALEX

That's slightly overstated, but I see your point.

KIP

Do you now?

ALEX

Evidently not.

KIP

My point is this: while you're in the Southern environs, sowing your wild oats with babes from all over this beautiful country of ours, Melanie is left here in Newport, lonely as hell, and worried sick to death about what she has done. Are you with me?

ALEX

You were supposed to take care of her for me.

KIP

And therein lies the crux of my dilemma.

ALEX

The "crux of your dilemma" was simply that I asked you to do me the favor of looking after Mel while I was—away.

KIP

And it is as a personal favor to my best bro that I approached that arduous task.

ALEX

I don't think we're on the same wavelength now, Bro.

KIP

Allow me to elaborate.

ALEX

Elaborate all you want, *Bro*.

KIP

There you go again. (A beat.) So—there you were in the land of milk and booty.

ALEX

Milk and honey.

KIP

Same thing in this case. And here was I, land-locked in the still frigid north, charged with the awesome responsibility of seeing my best bro's main squeeze through this perilous period of primal procreation. Are you with me?

ALEX

No, but go on.

KIP

So, in spite of my inexperience in this arena, without hesitation, equivocation, or moral evasion, humbly, I leaped into the breach. Which is to say, in simple terms, I put a few of my best moves on your best girl.

ALEX

You put moves on my Melanie?

KIP

As a personal favor to you.

ALEX

You tried to seduce my girl!

KIP

"Seduce" is a very strong word.

ALEX

Now *that* is some sorry shit.

KIP

Let's look at this logically.

ALEX

Where's the logic? You seduced my girl!

KIP

Tried! Big difference. She didn't go for it.

ALEX

Of course she didn't. She loves me.

KIP

Of course she does. We know that *now*! But you have to look at this from a—a relationship standpoint. At some point, Melanie is very likely to come to her senses about what she allowed you to do, and will want to make up for it. All I was trying to do is to protect you from having Melanie give herself to some perfect stranger to make up for your misadventure in the Sunshine State.

ALEX

My misadventure! It was *her* idea!

KIP

Doesn't matter. *You* did it! You should have known better. That's what she'll think. So rather than have her suffer at the hands of some rank amateur, I planned to put her in the capable hands of your best bro.

ALEX

As a personal favor to me?

KIP

And at no charge.

ALEX

You're all heart, Bro.

KIP

I do what I can to make the world a better place.

ALEX

But she said, "no"

Quite emphatically.

KIP

What if she had said, "yes?"

ALEX

Well, I suppose I'd have had to oblige her.

KIP

And what would that do to us—our friendship? And Mel and me?

ALEX

I didn't think that far ahead. (A beat.) She said, "no," so don't you start speculating about what if.

KIP

Bro, you've got to think about consequences.

ALEX

Nothing came of it, so they're no consequences. Just that I felt real bad for a long time because I was afraid Melanie would tell you—and not be able to explain it right.

KIP

She never said a word about it.

ALEX

She kept her promise then; she's a good sport.

KIP

She's a whole lot more than that.

ALEX

I know.

KIP

Feel better now?

ALEX

Yes, I do.

KIP

ALEX

Good, because we've got to get to work.

(They both climb onto the tower.)

ALEX

How 'bout a little game?

KIP

Sure, *after* you tell me what you were going to tell me before you ran off yesterday.

ALEX

What was I going to tell you?

KIP

About some "strange" you got.

ALEX

Oh, yeah. Okay, Man, I'll tell you—after the game.

KIP (climbing off the tower)

Sure, Bro. Whatever you say. I'll get some cards and the glasses.

ALEX

I'll be right here.

(BLACKOUT TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT I, SCENE IV

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON later that morning on a patio where JACK and LISA are having their morning coffee. Lisa has her head buried in the morning paper; Jack is moving about, watering potted plants, picking up leaves, and keeping Lisa's coffee cup filled.

Alex . . . engaged . . .

JACK (thinking aloud)

What, Dear?

LISA

Nothing. I was just thinking aloud.

JACK

You said something about Alex—his engagement.

LISA (putting the paper aside)

Yes, that's what I was thinking about.

JACK

What *do* you think about it—really?

LISA

Do you *really* want to know?

JACK

Actually, I don't. I want you to say your thrilled and just leave it at that.

LISA (turns back to her paper)

(Jack continues tidying up, etc.)

JACK

Thrilled? No . . . I really think Alex ought to—experience—more of the world before he settles down.

LISA

What does that mean exactly—“experience more of the world”?

JACK

Simply that—there’s a lot out there to experience.

LISA

A lot of what?

JACK

Things.

LISA

Women?

JACK

Did I say, “women”?

LISA

You wouldn’t dare, not directly. But, do you deny that’s what you’re talking about?

JACK

Coffee?

LISA

Jack--

JACK

Let’s not get into that.

LISA

I’m not getting into anything that you didn’t “get into” when you took up with—you know very well with whom you took up.

JACK

That was a long time ago.

LISA
Still, it's a hard thing to forget.

JACK
And apparently to forgive.

LISA
And rightly so.

JACK
I guess my point about Alex is--

LISA
I know what your point about Alex is, and you needn't bother to make it. Alex isn't like you.

JACK
Alex is more like me than you know.

LISA
How would you know what Alex is like? Outside of the wonderful world of sports, you two haven't communicated in years.

JACK
Men don't have to fill the air with constant chatter to communicate.

LISA
Chatter is it?

JACK
I've spent the entire day sailing with Alex without either of us saying anything that didn't have to do with tending the boat, and yet we were communicating just by doing what we both loved. (A beat.) Maybe you should consider the possibility that there's something to be said for--not saying anything at all.

LISA
I've had my chances too you know?

JACK
Lisa—just drop it.

LISA
Frank Williams. Byant Wingate. Paul Mason—several others.

JACK

Why are you doing this?

LISA

Because I *don't* want you to talk to Alex.

JACK

You just accused me of never communicating with him!

LISA

And I don't want you to start now! Melanie is a wonderful girl; they love each other, and she'll be perfect for him.

JACK

I know that! I agree with everything you said; it's just that--

LISA

Alex is not like you!

JACK

Neither one of us is different from every other man on the planet. We're all basically the same in that regard; it's biology. Some men are just—I don't know—stronger.

LISA

Well, I've already taken care of—*that*. And I've raised him to be different; Alex *respects* women.

JACK

Honey, I respect women.

LISA

That's not all you do to them either.

JACK

Once! One affair in 25 years of marriage!

LISA

Once was enough.

JACK

Which is exactly why I want Alex to—experience other women before he marries anybody. I don't want him to--

LISA

Destroy a sacred trust?

JACK

Hurt someone he holds dear. I don't want him to hurt the woman he loves because he married her—before he was ready.

LISA

That's a very civil way to put it.

JACK

Lisa, how long has it been?

LISA

Just over ten years.

JACK

And haven't I proven myself—proven my love to you since then time and time again?

LISA (softening a little)

I suppose you have.

JACK

Then why can't you let it go?

(She turns away.)

LISA

I don't know—because I'm a woman.

JACK

What can I do?

LISA (turning back to him)

Nothing. I have to do it myself. And ordinarily I can, I do. Alex's engagement just brought up old—issues. His romantic notion of how you proposed to me—well that was a joke. Do you remember how it went? (Jack turns away.) "I'm pregnant," I said. Then you said—what? What did you say, Jack?

JACK

I don't remember.

LISA

You don't remember because you didn't say anything at all. The second line was mine too—"We have to get married," I said.

JACK

I remember that!

LISA

Of course you do.

JACK (taking her hand)

Honey, I wanted to do it the other way—like Alex said, but--

LISA (softening more)

I know, just like Mick said, "You can't always get what you want." (A beat.) It wasn't your fault—entirely.

JACK (taking her hand and kissing it)

Honey, if I could have anybody, any woman in the world right now, I wouldn't have anybody else but you.

LISA (touching his cheek)

Thank you, Jack.

MELANIE (off)

Knock knock. Anybody home?

JACK

On the patio, Mel. Come on out.

(MELANIE ENTERS, wearing shorts and a halter-top; her hair is tied back in a ponytail. She looks radiant. Lisa rises and embraces her. Jack can't help but give her the "once over.")

LISA

Jack, aren't you going to say, "hello"?

JACK

Hello, Mel.

You can do better that. MELANIE (crosses to hug him)

Good morning, Melanie. JACK

Hi—Dad! MELANIE

(Jack forces a slight, sad smile.)

I just couldn't wait to say it. (A beat.) Alex here? MELANIE

No, they called him in to fill in for somebody— LISA

that didn' want to spend a day at the beach. JACK

Oh! We were going sailing. MELANIE

Alex said you're folks already left. JACK

Yeah, a week early, to get a better rate on the flight. MELANIE

So you're all alone. LISA

No, I have you right next door. Anyway, I'm off to Smith next week. I want to be out before the exchange couple from Athens gets here. MELANIE

You know our door is always open if you need a place to stay—especially now. LISA

I know, thanks. MELANIE

So what have you two got planned for the future? JACK

Just to live blissfully happy ever after.

MELANIE

That's your plan?

JACK

Jack!

LISA

We don't have all the details worked out?

MELANIE

I hope it works out.

JACK

I don't know of anything that could possibly go, do you Jack?

LISA

Oh, what do I know about these things? Happiness is where the heart is.

JACK

That's "home", Jack.

LISA

Same thing.

JACK

Well, I have to run—*lots* to do.

MELANIE

We'll see you this evening then.

LISA

You will?

MELANIE

Don't tell me Alex didn't tell you?

LISA

He has a lot on his mind.

MELANIE

LISA

That's no excuse. In any case, we're giving you two a little engagement dinner this evening.

MELANIE

How wonderful.

LISA

Just the four of us, very informal. Say, about seven, no--make it seven-thirty.

MELANIE (exiting)

That will be great. I'll see you then.

LISA (after Melanie exits)

Now that is a peach of a girl.

JACK

I couldn't agree with you more. (A beat.) May I warm your coffee?

LISA (taking his hand)

No. But you can warm my bed. Come with me.

JACK

I'll try.

LISA

Jack . . . for god's sake!

(They head for the bedroom as the
LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY.)

ACT I, SCENE V

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP that afternoon on KIP and ALEX sitting in the tower, looking out.

ALEX (looking through the glasses)

One o'clock. Tall brunette, bikini with American flag motif. Only one star, but in the right place.

KIP

Gimme those glasses! Okay, you got her. (Looks.) Oh, oh, what have we here—tall sister, red bikini, and a cell phone glued to her ear. Bingo!

ALEX

Damn! You're on a roll.

KIP (putting his "card" aside)

Now, I'm going to insist that we continue our conversation about "strange" that we started yesterday.

ALEX

Oh, that.

KIP

Yeah, my man, *that!*

ALEX

It's not a long story.

KIP

Then you can embellish it all you want. We got plenty of time.

ALEX

Where shall I begin—?

KIP

At the juicy part.

ALEX

Okay. The juicy part is—I actually have been with a girl—woman—no, girl.

KIP (worried)

How old was this girl?

ALEX

Old enough.

KIP

All right. *Now*, we can talk man to man.

ALEX

Don't count on it. Just give me—credit for doing what I went down there to do—to sow my wild oats.

KIP

How many babes you sow'em with?

ALEX

Just the one.

KIP

One! Bro, you were at a buffet; you're supposed to sample a little bit of everything.

ALEX

That depends on what's being served.

KIP

You telling me you—"met" someone?

ALEX

No! I just sort of settled in for a couple of days with this—one girl. We—hit it off.

KIP

Hit it off! Bro, you supposed to git it off, not hit it off. You're talking *romance*. Man, I knew you shouldn't have gone down there without me. (A beat.) When you got home, you were different, you know?

ALEX

I know.

KIP

I don't mean because you got laid. I mean—you were different. There was something on your mind.

ALEX

Georgia.

KIP

What?

ALEX

That's where she was from. I'm okay now though.

KIP

If you say so. (A beat.) What's her name?

ALEX

I don't even know.

KIP

That's cool. Not supposed to know.

ALEX

She gave me a name, but there is nobody at the University of Georgia or in Atlanta, where she said she lived, with the name she gave me.

KIP

Little Georgia peach, was she? (A beat.) Wait a minute; hold the phone and stop the presses! You tried to contact her—*after* you got back?

ALEX

It didn't end well. I just wanted to—see if she was okay.

KIP

If it ended, it ended well—William Shakespeare, I'm paraphrasing.

ALEX

I was supposed to meet her—I had something I wanted to tell her.

KIP

Bro, you should *never* contact a woman who you only used as a source of booty. Haven't I taught you *anything*?

ALEX

She wasn't—*that*! She was a genuinely decent girl that was about as lost down there as I was. I think that's why we hit it off.

KIP

Hit it off! There you go again talking crazy. And what of Miss Melanie up here in Yankeeville? You forget about her? "Why Miss Melanie, I slept with your Yankee beau! I hope you don't mind." Bro, seriously, you need more help that I can give you; you need professional help.

ALEX

Look, it's over. I don't even know who or where she is. It's just that--it wasn't like I thought it would be.

KIP

Man, it isn't *like* anything; it just is. Men always fall in love with the their first girl—just like the commercial says. Doesn't matter if she's the biggest slut on the block. We're just so grateful for what she gave to us that we'd die for her. Thankfully, those feelings don't last or every man would have been dead a hell of a long time ago. Are you with me?

ALEX

This girl was no slut!

KIP

You going to cast off Melanie for her?

ALEX

I just got engaged to Mel!

KIP

Okay.

ALEX

Okay!

KIP

Okay. Man, you are some kind of sensitive.

So drop it!

ALEX

I'll be back.

KIP (climbing down)

Where you going?

ALEX

The head, Man. You gonna miss me?

KIP

(Kip goes upstage and disappears into a door marked "Office." Alex sits for a moment, then stands, blows his whistle and motions for some swimmers to move in closer to shore.)

Come in! You're too far out.

ALEX

(As Alex sits down, MAX ENTERS. He has on a light beige summer suit. He's carrying the coat over his arm; his collar is open and his tie loosened. He stops to wipe the sweat from his brow as KIP ENTERS and passes him. LIGHTS FADE ON ALEX and COME UP ON MAX and KIP.)

Excuse me.

MAX

Yes sir?

KIP

I'm looking for Alex Brownell.

MAX

(Kip glances out at Alex and then back to Max.)

KIP
Alex is—ah—unavailable at the moment. Maybe I can help you?

MAX (nods toward Alex)
That him?

KIP
You a cop?

MAX
You're good.

KIP
Not as good as you. (A beat.) You're not a Newport cop though.

MAX
Nope.

KIP
Somewhere down South?

MAX
Atlanta.

KIP
I thought Sherman razed Atlanta.

MAX
Long time ago. We raised it back up out of the ashes. The *new* South we call it.

KIP
So I'm told. (A beat.) Alex in some kind of trouble?

MAX
Not that I know of. (A beat.) Nice kid is he?

KIP
You going to propose?

MAX
Not marriage.

KIP
Yeah, he's a nice guy—the finest kind.

Known him long? MAX

Long enough. KIP

Maybe you could get him for me. MAX

He's on duty. KIP

This is important. MAX

To whom? KIP

"To whom." (A beat.) You must go to Brown too. MAX

Yeah, I do. KIP

I think this would be important to your friend. MAX

Okay, I'll get him. KIP (nods)

(Max sits down on a bench and waits as Kip goes to fetch Alex. LIGHTS FADE ON MAX and INTENSIFY ON ALEX and KIP.)

Hey, Bro. KIP

Yeah. ALEX

Some dude up there wants to see you. KIP

Who? ALEX

Up there. On the bench. KIP

What's he want? ALEX (looking)

Wouldn't say—but he's a cop. KIP

A cop? ALEX

You go through an orange light or something and not tell me about it? KIP

What'd he say to you? ALEX

He made some discreet inquiries about your character. KIP

What'd you tell him? ALEX

Not the truth. KIP

Tell him to come on down. ALEX

I got the distinct impression that he wants to talk to you—about a private matter. KIP

I've never even been to Atlanta! ALEX (impulsively)

How'd you know he's from Atlanta? KIP

Oh, Jesus. Cover for me for a minute. ALEX (climbing down)

KIP (climbing up)
Atlanta? Jesus, isn't that where this girl's from?

(LIGHTS FADE ON KIP and COME UP ON
MAX and ALEX as Alex approaches the
bench.)

ALEX
Sir, my friend said you wanted to see me?

MAX
You Alex Brown?

ALEX
Ah—Brownell.

MAX (checks note pad)
Right—Brownell. Alex Brownell then?

ALEX
Yes, Sir. That's me.

MAX (stands, extends his hand)
Max Halley.

ALEX (shakes his hand)
"Halley," you said?

MAX
That's right. Call me, "Max." (A beat.) Sit down.

ALEX
I've been sitting all day.

MAX
Save the occasional rescue?

ALEX
Been a quiet day—up to now.

MAX
No rescues?

ALEX
No, Sir. (A beat, then spontaneously.) I've never been to Atlanta.

MAX
Is that so?

ALEX
You a police officer?

MAX
Private Investigator.

ALEX
Oh, a PI—like Magnum?

MAX
Not exactly.

ALEX
Spencer?

MAX
Can't cook.

ALEX
Jim Rockford?

MAX
I'm pretty much like Max Halley—not anybody else.

ALEX
Okay, I'm with you on that.

MAX
Never been to Atlanta, you say?

ALEX (nervously)
No sir. Never. I swear it.

MAX
You don't have to swear, Son. I'll take your word for it.

ALEX (spontaneously)
For are we not all honorable men—Shakespeare.

MAX
Yeah, well—don't get carried away with the program.

ALEX
Sorry. Undergraduate enthusiasm.

MAX
Undergraduate?

ALEX
I'm entering my senior year at Brown this fall.

MAX
Brown not Brownell?

ALEX
I don't think there is a Brownell University.

MAX
There's not an Alex Brown either.

ALEX
Not that I know of.

MAX
Anyway . . . Ivy League. Not bad.

ALEX
My parents are on the faculty.

MAX
That won't get you in a school like Brown without the grades.

ALEX
I do all right.

MAX
Modest too. (Alex shrugs.) Got any plans for the future?

ALEX
What's this all about, Mr. Halley?

Max, please.

MAX

Sure. Max. What's this all about?

ALEX

(Max takes a photograph from his jacket pocket and hands it to Alex.)

Ever see this young woman before?

MAX

(Alex swallows hard and just stares at the photo without speaking.)

Alex?

MAX

Yes, Sir. I have seen her. I—I know her—*knew* her. We—we've been out of touch. Is she okay?

ALEX (shaken)

I think so.

MAX

She hired you to find me?

ALEX

Something like that. Does that surprise you?

MAX

Yeah. I mean, no. It doesn't. I met her on spring break in Ft. Lauderdale—year before last. We—had a romance of sorts, I guess it was. We were both looking for something.

ALEX

Did you find it?

MAX

I don't honestly know.

ALEX (thinks, then)

So, it was just a spring fling?

MAX

ALEX

I didn't think so at the time, but—I guess that's what it was. (A beat.) It ended rather badly.

MAX

How's that?

ALEX

Why all the questions?

MAX

My job.

ALEX

Sure. (A beat.) I promised to meet her before we left—I didn't show up.

MAX

Any particular reason?

ALEX

Yeah, I got busted for anti-littering.

MAX

I'm not familiar with that particular statute.

ALEX

On my way to meet her, I picked up a couple of beer cans to put in the trash. One of the cans was half full. Got busted by the local cops for violation of the open container law. Got booked, printed and read my rights, the full catastrophe—all for picking up litter.

MAX

So you didn't make the meeting.

ALEX

I spent the night in jail. My dad had to fly down and bail me out the next day.

MAX

Ever try to contact her after that?

ALEX

Yeah, as soon as I got home. But there are no Madison Healys listed in Atlanta or at the University of Georgia.

Why did you want to contact her? MAX

Personal reasons. ALEX

I can respect that. MAX

I guess—I just didn't want to lose contact with her. ALEX

You haven't. MAX (thinks, then)

No, I guess not. ALEX

She's—right here. MAX

In Newport? ALEX

A B&B on The Point. MAX

Oh boy! ALEX

You okay? MAX

Yeah, I'm—thrilled. ALEX

You don't look thrilled. MAX

And surprised. Stunned actually. I . . . ALEX

MAX

You want to see her?

ALEX

Yes! No! Yes, of course, I want to see her. (A beat.) Does she want to see me?

MAX

What do you think?

ALEX

I don't honestly know. This is just—all so unexpected.

MAX (handing him a card)

She's staying at the Hutchinson House. Shall I tell her you'll be by later this afternoon?

ALEX

Yeah, a little after five. I'll come over right from work.

MAX

Fine. I'll tell her. (Extends his hand.) It's been a pleasure, Alex.

ALEX (shell shocked)

Believe me, the pleasure was *all* yours.

(Max exits as the LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT I, SCENE VI

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on MAX and MADISON later the same afternoon on the porch of the B&B. Madison's hair is pinned up and she's wearing just enough make-up to accentuate her natural beauty. She is dressed in a pastel sundress and is bare foot. The pitcher of lemonade sits on the wicker table in front of them.)

It's 5:30.

MADISON (checks her watch)

He'll be here.

MAX

He told you 5:00.

MADISON

No, he told me after work.

MAX

Most people get off at 5:00.

MADISON

Honey, relax. He'll be here.

MAX

How do you know?

MADISON

Because I know people—just like you said. Now relax. Have some more lemonade.

MAX

(He fills her glass.)

MADISON

I *never* should have agreed to this.

MAX

He's a good kid; he'd want to know.

MADISON (near tears)

Okay, so he'll know. (A beat.) Then what?

MAX

I don't know.

MADISON

I don't either! (A beat.) I don't even have a clue of what I want.

MAX

That makes you pretty much like the rest of us, Honey. (Looks up the sidewalk.) Here he comes.

MADISON

Oh God! (She wipes away a tear and straightens her dress.) Do I look okay?

MAX

You look beautiful.

(ALEX ENTERS, carrying a bouquet of fresh cut flowers. Madison looks up and forces a smile.)

ALEX

Madison.

MADISON

Hello, Alex.

MAX

I'll leave you two alone.

ALEX AND MADISON

That's all right. You—

(They both smile and MAX EXITS.)

I won't be far.

MAX (exiting)

Please, sit.

MADISON

Sure.

ALEX (sitting opposite her)

Lemonade?

MADISON

No, thanks. (A beat.) Okay, sure. Make mine a double.

ALEX

How have you been?

MADISON (smiles as she pours)

Me? Fine. You?

ALEX

Fine.

MADISON

We've both been fine.

ALEX

That's a fine thing. (A beat.) Pretty flowers.

MADISON

Oh, jeeze. They're for you.

ALEX

Thank you, they're lovely.

MADISON

ALEX (just talking)
Newport has all kinds of flowering plants and trees. Sailing ships used to load tons of earth from countries all over the globe for ballast. When they got back home, they off loaded what they thought was just dirt, and it had all kinds of exotic trees and plants seeds mixed in with it. Of course, not everything

ALEX (continuing)
survived, but lots did—thrived here, in fact. That’s why we have such a wide diversity of plants on the island.

MADISON
That’s fascinating. All that—new life from tons of dirt.

ALEX
So, how have you been?

MADISON
I think we already established the fact that we’ve both been fine.

ALEX
Right. Fine. We did—establish the fact that we’ve both been fine. Fine. (A few beats.) I’m sorry; I’m just—so surprised—stunned really—to see you. I’d pretty much given up hope of—ever seeing you again.

MADISON
But you did have some?

ALEX
Hope? (She nods.) Yeah, but after I—missed our—farewell meeting—

MADISON
Max told me what happened—busted for picking up litter.

ALEX
I hope you didn’t think—that what happened between us down there—didn’t mean something to me.

MADISON
I didn’t think that.

ALEX
Anyway, it’s a little late for an apology, but I’m sorry. Really.

MADISON
You don’t have to be sorry. I wasn’t there either.

ALEX
What?

I didn't make the meeting either.

MADISON

Oh . . . why not?

ALEX

I—don't know for sure. I just sort of freaked out—and some—personal reasons.

MADISON

Fine. (A few beats.) I did try to contact you when I got home.

ALEX

Healy isn't my real name.

MADISON

Mine's Brownell, not Brown.

ALEX

I know. (A beat.) Mine's Halley.

MADISON

"Halley?" Like Max.

ALEX

Max is my father.

MADISON

Oh, jeeze, what did I tell him?

ALEX

Nothing he didn't already know. And, don't worry. If he didn't think you were okay, you wouldn't be here.

MADISON

Damn! He plays rough.

ALEX

Here with me!

MADISON (laughs)

ALEX

Oh, good. For a minute there I thought maybe you meant—here on the planet.

MADISON

You made me laugh; I think that's why I was first attracted to you.

ALEX

You made me feel comfortable by laughing at all the right places.

MADISON

And you told me you'd never been high or drunk.

ALEX

That's still the case. I have very little trouble making a complete ass out of myself when I'm stone sober.

(A CAR PASSES ON THE STREET, AND
SOFT DANCE MUSIC CAN BE HEARD
FROM THE RADIO.)

MADISON

Pretty.

ALEX

Yeah. (A beat.) Do you remember what you told me—the night we met?

MADISON

I told you lots of things.

ALEX

That your dream was to dance under the stars with someone who would love you unconditionally—for exactly who you are.

MADISON

I told you that?

ALEX

How else could I have known it?

MADISON

Just a romantic notion—has nothing to do with reality. (A beat.) You have any dreams?

ALEX

Me? No, all my plans—have to do with—making a living, I guess. So, how was school last year?

MADISON

I took the year off. You?

ALEX

I'm still on track—graduate next May.

MADISON

And then what—graduate school?

ALEX

No, the Navy. Going to Officer Candidate School. Do my three years, and then—I don't really know.

MADISON

Why the Navy?

ALEX

I think I have an obligation to serve—whether it's mandatory or not.

MADISON

You big on fulfilling obligations?

ALEX

So far. Besides, I don't know what I want to be when I grow up. (A beat.) You still planning on med school?

MADISON

Not—immediately. But that is still my ultimate goal. I've had to make—a minor course adjustment, to put it in nautical terms.

ALEX

Minor adjustments aren't so bad.

MADISON

Well, this one was a *major* minor adjustment.

ALEX

Oh . . . you want to tell me about it.

MADISON (thinks, then)

There's someone I want you to meet.

ALEX

Hope it's not a big brother.

No. MADISON (laughs)

ALEX
Good. Had me worried there for a minute.

MADISON
I'll be right back. Have some more lemonade.

(MADISON EXITS. Alex pours himself some lemonade, takes a sip and checks his watch. MADISON ENTERS CARRYING their daughter, MIMI. Alex looks up at them but cannot speak.)

Alex, this is Mimi. Say, "Hello." MADISON (sits next to Alex)

Hello, Mimi. ALEX (faintly)

MIMI is our daughter. MADISON

(Alex drops his lemonade. BLACKOUT to END THE SCENE AND ACT I.)

What About Mimi?

by

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ACT II, SCENE I

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON JACK and LISA on the patio. Lisa is setting the table, etc. while Jack is sweeping up leaves. ALEX and MADISON enter. Alex is carrying Mimi and pretty much dragging Madison along. They're on the opposite side of the stage from Jack and Lisa, who are yet not aware of their presence.

MADISON

Alex, I don't think this is a good idea—to spring it on them like this. *You* haven't even given it a chance to sink in yet.

ALEX

No they'll be fine—thrilled. They've been chomping at the bit for my sister to give them a grandchild. They'll be thrilled.

MADISON

Isn't she married and everything?

ALEX

Doesn't matter. They have to know. I know and I'm thrilled

MADISON

You're not trilled. You're wacky! You're not even thinking straight. You're just reacting. We should wait for a better time.

ALEX

There is never a good time for this kind of news. We just have to tell them!
(Looks at Mimi.) How can she sleep through all this?

MADISON

A ride in the car always puts her right out. She won't wake up until she's hungry.
You sure this will be okay?

ALEX

Okay? They'll be *thrilled*. My parents are very reasonable, low key, people.
They'll—adjust. Now, come on, please.

MADISON

Wait.

ALEX

What?

MADISON

Do I—look okay?

ALEX (looks at her & catches his breath)

Madison, you're—beautiful.

MADISON

Really?

ALEX

Absolutely.

MADISON (squeezing his hand)

Okay then, let's go.

(They ENTER THE PATIO.)

ALEX

Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad.

LISA (turning)

Alex, you're . . . early. Who is this?

JACK (to Madison)

Well, hello.

LISA

Alex, we were expecting--

ALEX

I know who you were expecting. There's been a slight change of plans.

JACK

Is that a baby?

ALEX

This is Madison Healy--

MADISON

Halley.

ALEX

Right, Halley. Sorry. Madison Halley—from Atlanta.

JACK (extends his hand)

The young lady from Atlanta. Hello, Madison.

LISA (peeking at Mimi)

And who is this little angel?

ALEX

That little angel—is Mimi.

LISA (to Madison)

Mimi. Is that a family name?

MADISON

Sort of. Mimi's named after who her parents were thinking of the night she was conceived.

LISA

Oh . . . well. (A beat.) Alex is named after my brother—God rest his soul. Tragic loss.

ALEX

Mimi is—my daughter.

Your daughter? LISA

Our daughter. MADISON

And *your* granddaughter—aren't you thrilled? ALEX

Jack, did Alex just tell us that this is his daughter, and that we're this child's grandparents? LISA (stunned)

I don't think they're thrilled. MADISON (to Alex)

She does have his eyes. JACK (looking)

Jack! LISA

Yes, I believe that's what he said, if I heard him correctly. JACK

You heard me correctly. ALEX

This just can't be happening—not tonight of all nights. Dinner is all set for-- LISA (falling back into a chair)

Of course, you're right. This has to be . . . JACK (looking around the patio)

(He moves behind Alex and Madison and points to his eye. Then he crosses his fingers to make a "T" and then makes a "V" with is fingers.)

Eye? Eye— LISA (not getting it)

You what? Mom? ALEX (to Lisa)

LISA (watching Jack)
Eye, T—V. Eye TV. What the hell is that, Jack?

(Alex and Madison turn to Jack who feints
innocence.)

JACK (to Lisa)
Not eye—double oh seven. Bond. James Bond.

ALEX
What *is* going on?

LISA (to Jack)
Oh, OOOH! I get it—(whispers to Jack) *Spy* TV. Thank God, I thought I was
going to have a heart attack.

JACK (nodding)
Has to be. Let's play along.

(Alex and Madison still don't know what's
going on.)

ALEX
Mom, would you like to hold Mimi?

LISA (playing to the "camera")
Of course. I love children. (To Madison as she takes Mimi.) These people are
good. She does look like Alex. We stopped at two—Alex has an older sister—
because of the world "bloom" as we call it. We thought the responsible thing to
do was just to replace ourselves. People just need to become more aware of
over-population and the problems directly associated with it.

JACK
Don't preach, Lisa. It will just end up on the cutting room floor.

ALEX
Cutting room floor?

LISA (dramatically)
Oh, Alex, how could you do this to me? (Then to Jack.) How was that?

MADISON
You parents are behaving very strangely.

JACK (dramatically)
Goddammit, Son! How could you do this to us?

ALEX
What the hell are you doing? This isn't TV; this is my life! Stop it!

JACK
Right. And next you're going to tell me that Melanie isn't going to come through that door in about 10 seconds.

ALEX
God, I hope not.

MADISON (to Alex)
Who's Melanie?

ALEX
There's something I didn't get a chance to explain.

MELANIE (off)
Knock knock!

LISA (handing Mimi to Madison)
Come on in, Mel. We're out back.

(MELANIE ENTERS and is surprised to see Madison.)

MELANIE
Ah, hello.

LISA (to Melanie)
We know everything—we're playing along.

MELANIE (confused)
What?

MADISON
I'm Madison Halley. This is Mimi—we're from Atlanta.

MELANIE
I'm Melanie Chase—I live next door.

The girl next door. JACK

And—I'm engaged to Alex. MELANIE

Oh—Alex didn't tell me he was—engaged. MADISON

Oh, he doesn't tell anyone. LISA

I wasn't—then. ALEX (to Madison)

When? MELANIE

When Mimi was conceived of course! JACK (laughing uproariously)

Alex, what is going on? MELANIE

It's—hard to explain. ALEX

Try. Start with *her*. MELANIE

Madison. ALEX

I don't care! Just explain to me what she's doing at *my* engagement party! MELANIE

That's what's hard to explain. ALEX

And then tell me about this baby! MELANIE

Oh, this is good. JACK (still laughing)

ALEX

Dad—please. Just . . . give me a second. (A few beats.) Mel, remember when I went to—where the girls are for spring break?

MELANIE

Ft. Lauderdale? (He nods.) Oh my God!. Please don't tell me this baby—

LISA

Mimi.

MELANIE

--is yours.

JACK

Has his eyes.

MELANIE (breaking)

Alex?

ALEX

Yes, Mimi is mine.

(Melanie starts crying.)

JACK

Oh, this is *so* good.

ALEX

Goddammit, Dad. Stop it!

MELANIE (screaming at Lisa)

This is all *your* fault!

(Melanie turns and runs out crying hysterically.)

ALEX

Mel, wait!

MADISON

You should have told me you were engaged. I *never* would have come!

ALEX

I'm sorry. That was next on my to do list.

(Madison turns and storms out with Mimi.)

ALEX

Madison, wait!

JACK

Cut. Cut! That's a wrap.

ALEX

Dad, cut the crap! There are no hidden cameras here. This isn't reality TV; it's authentic reality, and people are being hurt and I'm hurting them and I don't know what the hell to do about it. (He starts out.) Mel—Madison—Mimi--

JACK (looking around)

What? No cameras, no TV?

LISA (stunned)

Evidently not.

JACK

Well, then, is it just me, or was that a little awkward? (A beat.) No, this can't be happening. It's too unreal to be real—it's *got* to be television.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY as Lisa buries her face in her hands and Jack continues to look for a hidden camera.)

ACT II, SCENE II

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON ALEX, sitting by himself on the lifeguard tower. It is dark; the set is only dimly illuminated. After a few moments, MELANIE ENTERS. She's wearing shorts, sandals and a loose sweatshirt. There are a few lights upstage and SOFT DANCE MUSIC IS JUST AUDIBLE PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND.

Hi.

MELANIE

Mel. Hi.

ALEX

I figured I'd find you here. May I come up?

MELANIE

Sure.

ALEX (gives her a hand)

So, what are you doing up here all by yourself?

MELANIE

I'm not by myself.

ALEX

Not *now*.

MELANIE

Sorry. (A beat.) I actually do some of my best thinking up here.

ALEX

I've got a penny.

MELANIE (reaches in her pocket)

ALEX

It will cost you a whole lot more than that.

MELANIE

Already has.

ALEX

I know. I'm so sorry, Mel. You deserved—something much better.

MELANIE

No, actually I didn't. I got pretty much what I deserved. But, I've been thinking about it and decided: this—really doesn't have to change anything.

ALEX

Mel—it has already changed—*everything*.

MELANIE

Only if you let it.

ALEX

Mel, I have a daughter, a child that I brought into the world.

MELANIE

Not all by yourself.

ALEX

Of course not all by myself.

MELANIE

Then you should let—that girl--

ALEX

Madison.

MELANIE

Yes, Madison. Let *Madison* take care of her baby. Couldn't you do that—and just send money and gifts and cards. That's all that lots of fathers do.

ALEX

Sure, I could do that.

MELANIE

But you won't. You wouldn't dare. You know why?

ALEX

I think so.

MELANIE

Because you *always* do the right thing!

ALEX

Not always, obviously.

MELANIE

But you try.

ALEX

So do you.

MELANIE

But you don't know what's right in this case—you can't. Because going with—Madison and your daughter is the right thing to do. And you know what else—staying with the girl that has loved you for as long as either one of us can remember is *also* the right thing to do. They're *both* right—but you can't do both of them.

ALEX

That's what I've been thinking about.

MELANIE

There's nothing to think about. You'll be doing the right thing either way. *You* can't lose.

ALEX

I guess this is a case where two rights make a wrong. Somebody is going to be hurt.

MELANIE (thinks, then)

And it shouldn't be me. (A beat.) It's not fair, you know. I've been the good girl all my life, always done the "right" thing. Was an excellent student; developed a social conscience; protected my virginity—and for what? What did it get me?

ALEX

Love. Respect. Admiration.

MELANIE

Nonsense! Those are nothing but romantic notions. (A beat.) I thought I had it all figured out even down to the point of prearranging your dalliances with other women to take place before we were married instead of after, when they would be a much greater threat to our love. How could I have been so stupid as to let her—talk me into—

ALEX

What are you talking about? Spring break?

MELANIE

Yes!

ALEX

Her? Who talked you into—what?

MELANIE

Your mother! She talked me into sending you down there to—to inoculate you against having an affair later.

ALEX

That's why you said it was her fault.

MELANIE

It was her idea! I never would have—dammit, Alex, you were just supposed to get—laid, not involved.

ALEX

I didn't have any desire for anyone else. If I had wanted somebody else, I wouldn't have stayed with you all these years.

MELANIE

I knew that, Honey, but your mother was so convincing because of—what happened to her.

ALEX

Okay, I'm clueless. What *did* happen to her?

MELANIE

Don't you know anything? You dad had an affair with Mrs. Monroe. That's why they packed up and moved.

ALEX

That was years ago. (A beat.) My dad had an affair with Mrs. Monroe?

MELANIE

Yes. And to keep the same thing from happening to us, you're mother talked me into this crazy idea to send you to Ft. Lauderdale to—

ALEX

Sow my wild oats.

MELANIE

Yes. But you, you not only sowed them; you cultivated and harvested them.

ALEX

My dad had an affair with Mrs. Monroe. She was a fox!

MELANIE

Alex, your mother was devastated; she still hasn't gotten completely over it.

ALEX

So, she didn't want the same thing to happen to you?

MELANIE

Us! Of course not.

ALEX

She told you all this? (Melanie nods.) She never told me.

MELANIE

Your mother and I are very close.

ALEX

So, off I go to Ft. Lauderdale with the knowledge, if not the blessing, of my girlfriend and mother, to get "inoculated" from the desire to experience other women.

MELANIE

You put that very well.

ALEX

And what if I had gotten down there, among all that "strange" and decided I liked it? What then?

MELANIE

If that was the case, I don't suppose you would have asked me to marry you.

ALEX

I don't know what to say.

MELANIE

I don't want you to *say* anything, but I do want you to do something. You're not entirely at fault for—this situation. And I don't love you any less for it.

ALEX

Mel, this is all still very confusing.

MELANIE

I know. And I'm going to take care of that.

(She leans over and kisses him, tenderly at first and then much more passionately. He can't help but respond. They kiss again and then Mel pushes away from him and lifts her sweatshirt over her head.)

ALEX

Mel!

MELANIE

I want you, Alex. Right here, right now, under the stars, in front of God and everybody. I want you inside me.

(She crawls on his lap and tries to kiss him again.)

ALEX

What has gotten into you?

MELANIE

Nothing! Ever! That's what I want you to do for me.

ALEX

Mel, for God's sake. What are you doing?

MELANIE

You know what I'm doing. Take me. Now!

ALEX

No, no! Not like this.

(He lifts her off and jumps off the tower.)

MELANIE (shaken)

You don't want me?

ALEX

Not like this.

MELANIE

You took *her*--probably on a moonlit night on the beach in Fort Lauderdale. Why not me?

ALEX

Stop this!

MELANIE

What's wrong with me!

ALEX

Mel, nothing, nothing is wrong with you. You're—perfect.

MELANIE

That's it, isn't it? *That's* what wrong with me—there's nothing wrong with me. I'm perfect! I've always been perfect, and I'm sick of it. What did it get me? The man I love has a child with a perfect—no with an *imperfect* stranger and is leaving me.

ALEX

I didn't leave you, Mel.

MELANIE

Yet! And here I am on this goddamn ivory tower all by myself with you refusing to touch me?

ALEX

Mel, this is an impossible situation. We have to work it out logically. It won't help to behave irrationally.

MELANIE

No, the playing field isn't level; she has your child. It isn't fair. I have to give myself to you to even the score. I can be as good or as bad as she can be, Alex.

MELANIE (continuing)

I've read all the books; I know what to do. And I can give you a child too. Just give me a chance.

ALEX (backing away)

You don't have to do this. I won't let you.

MELANIE

Where are you going?

ALEX

I don't know.

MELANIE (desperately)

Alex, just—touch me! Please.

ALEX

Mel, I just can't now.

MELANIE

You touched her!

ALEX

It would just make things more complicated than they already are.

MELANIE

Don't leave.

ALEX (starts out)

I have to—for now.

MELANIE (suddenly angry)

Alex! Don't you leave me like this! Don't you *dare* leave me like this?

(He starts up the boardwalk just as KIP ENTERS.)

MELANIE

Alex!

(LIGHTS DIM ON MELANIE AND COME UP ON KIP AND ALEX on the boardwalk. Melanie falls back on the tower and covers herself with her sweatshirt.)

KIP

Bro, what the hell is going on?

ALEX

Bad Day at Black Rock, Bro. *Very* bad day.

KIP

Man, I swing by your place to say hello, and find your mother running all over the house raving, "it's not her fault," over and over, and your dad is crawling all over the place looking for hidden cameras. Had me doing it. Damn!

ALEX

I'll tell you about it tomorrow. Take care of Mel for me.

KIP

Oh yeah. We know what happened last time I did that!

ALEX (exiting)

Just—be nice to her; she's in a state. I've got to see somebody.

KIP

What's this about you having a kid?

ALEX

Mel will tell you everything.

(ALEX EXITS and Kip makes his way over to Mel, still sitting on the tower, crying.)

KIP

Mel?

MELANIE

What?

KIP

You okay?

MELANIE

Just—peachy!

KIP

Peachy's cool. Like in Georgia.

MELANIE (breaking)

Oh, Kip, I just found out that Alex has a *daughter* by a woman he hardly knows—some little Georgia peach. And I—I don't know what I am to him.

KIP

Alex—has a Georgia peach?

MELANIE

Two!

KIP

That's some sorry shit.

MELANIE (softly)

Isn't it though? (A beat.) Come up here and sit by me, would you?

KIP (climbing up)

Sure.

(Kip sits down next to her; she snuggles up next to him and rests her head on his shoulder. Reluctantly, he puts his arm around her. She is still holding the sweatshirt loosely over her breasts.)

MELANIE

This is nice.

KIP (nervously)

Yeah.

MELANIE

Makes me wish—

KIP

Upon a star?

MELANIE

No.

KIP

Oh.

MELANIE

Remember that night—when Alex was in Ft. Lauderdale, and you—tried to seduce me?

KIP (nervously)

Is it hot out here, or is it just me?

MELANIE

It's *me*, Kip. I'm hot, very hot. And I was just wishing that—I'd given myself to you—that night—when I had the chance.

KIP

Oh . . .

(She turns and kisses him a little recklessly.)

KIP

Whoa, Mel!

MELANIE

Come on, Kip. Make love to me.

KIP

What?

MELANIE

Take me!

KIP

Here?

MELANIE

And now.

(She pulls the sweatshirt away, baring her breasts. Kip stares at her and puts out a hand but doesn't dare touch her.)

KIP

Oh my God! I have seen the splendor of God's natural creations in the Rocky Mountains, the Grand Canyon; sunsets in Key West: I have seen the Mona Lisa and David, inspired works of God's hand working through man; I have seen the

KIP (continuing)

Golden Gate Bridge and Hoover Dam, triumphs of man's ingenuity, but I have never seen *anything* like this!

MELANIE

And they're yours for the taking.

KIP

Oh, oh. (A beat.) What about—Alex?

MELANIE

He had his chance! What about *me*? (A beat.) I know you want me.

(She closes her eyes and lifts her breasts for him. Kip swallows hard, turns and jumps off the tower. She opens her eyes and jumps down after him.)

MELANIE

Take me!

KIP (backing around the tower)

Mel, you're too good for this.

MELANIE (pursuing him)

No, Kip—Kippie—I'm not. I'm a bad girl. I can be *very* bad. Help me be a *bad* girl.

KIP (climbing under the tower)

Oh. Mel, I respect you; I—I—like—you.

MELANIE (following him)

I like you too, Kippie.

KIP

Kippie?

MELANIE

I couldn't let Alex know. This, too, will be our little secret.

KIP (going around the tower)

No, Mel, you're just mad. That's all, and I don't want any get back booty.

MELANIE (following him)

It's get *even* booty, Kip. I have to get even with *her*.

KIP

No, I don't want you to hate me in the morning.

MELANIE (catching him)

Would you rather I hate you tonight? Or love you?

KIP (turning away)

Yes. No. I don't know, but I *can't* do this.

MELANIE (seductively)

Look at me, Kip.

KIP (turns away, holds the tower)

This is a far, far better thing I do, than I have ever done before. Charles Dickens, Tale of Two-- (Melanie wraps her arms around him and pushes her breasts against his back.)

MELANIE

Two what, Kippie?

KIP

Cities!

MELANIE

Don't you want me?

KIP (pulling away)

More than you know, but not like this. Mel, you're engaged to my best friend in the whole world.

MELANIE (furious)

No, no I'm not! Not anymore! (Takes off the ring and throws it toward the ocean.) There! There's the engagement in the goddamn ocean. Not take me!

KIP (falls to knees searching for the ring)

Oh, oh.

MELANIE

Dammit! I've had it with *both* of you. Wait until I get back to school. I'll find a *real* man.

KIP (looks up)

Mel—you go to *Smith*.

MELANIE

I don't care. I'll find *somebody*.

KIP (to himself)

Don't look. Just keep digging. If you don't look again, you'll be okay. Man can only take so much.

(LIGHT COME DOWN as Melanie storms off and Kip continues digging in the sand for the ring.)

ACT II, SCENE III

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on MAX on the porch of the B&B an hour or so later. There is bottle of Jack Daniel's on the table, and Max is sipping whiskey as he looks across the lawn, thinking. ALEX ENTERS and steps onto porch.

MAX

Nice night—cool up here in New England.

ALEX

Nice for you maybe. I've had better myself.

MAX

Sit down, Son.

(Alex sits opposite him.)

MAX

Drink? It's not lemonade.

ALEX

Why the hell not?

(Max pours him a healthy shot. Alex gulps it down without hesitation and slaps the glass down on the table.)

ALEX

Hit me!

Like I said, it's not lemonade.

MAX (pouring)

(Alex throws down another shot.)

Hit me again.

ALEX

One more, then I'm going to let these hit you before I hit you again.

MAX

(Max pours and Alex immediately throws down the third shot.)

ALEX

That how they do it down south?

MAX (holds up the bottle)

Son, this is Tennessee sipping whiskey. We tend to sip down south.

ALEX (shakes his head)

Wish you'd told me that three shots ago. (A beat.) Madison here?

MAX

Inside—you know—feeding the baby.

ALEX

Right. Feeding the baby. She tell you what happened?

MAX

Yeah, in a fashion; she wasn't totally coherent.

ALEX

My parents weren't thrilled with the news like I thought they'd be—far from it.

MAX

She said that. (A beat.) Sounded like things could have gone better.

ALEX

They'd have gone better if the Devil and Daniel Webster were there. (Grabs the arms of this chair.) Whoa! I think I'm taking that hit now.

MAX

Sometimes helps you see things straight—long as you don't *overdue* it.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, I see what you mean. Is—is Madison your only child?

MAX

She is that.

ALEX

She told me—in Ft. Lauderdale—that you praised her pretty much by yourself.

MAX

Raised her by myself.

ALEX

Raised her--right.

MAX

I tried.

ALEX

Where's her mother.

MAX

A better world than this one.

ALEX

I'm sorry.

MAX

So are we.

ALEX

I think you did a hell of a job of raising Madison—all on your own like that.

MAX

Yeah, a hell of a job.

ALEX

A hell of a job!

MAX

You're not much of a drinker, are you?

ALEX

I'm one *hell* of a drinker! (A beat.) I gotta talk to Madison—*Halley*. I got something important to tell her.

MAX

She knows you're engaged.

ALEX

But I don't! I'm not sure anymore. We just had this terrible scene—on the beach. Everybody died—radiation poisoning.

MAX

That was the movie, Son. Nobody died tonight.

ALEX

Inside, I mean. Something *inside* me died, I think. My best friend is probably screwing my fiancée or ex-fiancée as we speak. And that's okay. I deserve each other.

MAX

They.

ALEX

They?

MAX

Deserve each other.

ALEX

I don't know about that, but I know I don't deserve either of them—or Madison either. They're all good people. Mel is perfect. Kip, a little less so, but a genuinely good guy.

MAX

Who is screwing your fiancée as we speak.

ALEX

What are friends for?

MAX (chuckles to himself)

Beats hell outta me.

(MADISON ENTERS.)

MADISON

Dad, who are you—oh—Alex.

ALEX (stands unsteadily)

Madison! It's Alex Brownell—Mimi's dad.

MADISON (to Max)

He's drunk? (Max shrugs. Then to Alex.) You told me you didn't drink.

ALEX

Just started.

MADISON

Dad!

MAX (to Madison)

I didn't know he couldn't hold his liquor.

ALEX (grabs the bottle)

Oh, I can *hold* it! I just can't—drink it.

MADISON (to Max)

I have a good mind to get your gun and shoot you both.

MAX

The kid is having a bad day.

ALEX

At Black Rock. A *very* bad day, and getting shot—might just improve it.

MADISON

Alex, you're drunk.

ALEX

No, I'm okay, just a little tipsy. And—we need to talk.

MAX

I'll think I'll go in now.

MADISON

Take the bottle with you!

Good night. MAX (taking the bottle)

Not for me! MADISON

Good night, Son. MAX (as he EXITS)

Good night, moon. Good night room. Good night stars and chairs; good night bears and furry hares and all the rest . . . ALEX

Good god! MADISON

(She sits across from him.)

That point is debatable. (A beat.) Madison, we have to talk. ALEX

We should have talked—before. MADISON

Before what? ALEX

Before we—got involved. MADISON

Involved? Is that what we got? ALEX

That and Mimi. MADISON

That’s what I want to talk about. ALEX

You’re in no shape to talk, so why don’t you just let me talk, and you listen. MADISON

Good plan. You talk; I’ll listen to you talk. ALEX

That's the plan. MADISON

What do you want to talk about? ALEX

Us. MADISON

Me and you, us? ALEX

What other us is there? MADISON

Oh, there are all kinds of other us-*ez* out there. You have *no* idea. ALEX

I want to talk about the you and me, us. Our—situation. MADISON

Is that what it is—a situation? ALEX

A rather complicated one. MADISON

Is it? ALEX

Yes. You're just supposed to be listening—not questioning everything I say. MADISON

Comes from being an adult child of an academic—we question everything. It's a terrible burden. We need a support group of some kind. ALEX

Just try to listen, okay? MADISON

Okay, I'm all tears—*ears*. ALEX

Look—
MADISON

And listen?
ALEX

This isn't a good time.
MADISON

This might be as good as it gets, Madison.
ALEX

Dammit, Alex!
MADISON

Don't shout—you'll wake Mimi.
ALEX

You don't care about Mimi.
MADISON

Do so!
ALEX

Don't either!
MADISON

Do so!
ALEX

Don't—oh my God, you've reduced to a six-year-old. I'd call my mother, but I *am* the mother in this case.
MADISON

I'm sorry, Madison. I'll be quiet; I know this is impotent to you—us.
ALEX

Important!
MADISON

Okay.
ALEX

MADISON

Just let me explain something—my dad brought me up here against my will.

ALEX

That's kidnapping—federal offense if you cross state lines.

MADISON

What I meant, is that he didn't tell me why we came here. He didn't tell me he'd located you until we were here. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't have come. Do you understand what I'm telling you?

ALEX

No, but I'm listening.

MADISON

The thing is . . .

ALEX

This creature from outer space that can take the form of a human being—and melt its heart or something. It was a movie; I can't remember the details.

MADISON

That's not the thing I'm talking about. (A beat.) The *point* is: before we got here, I didn't know if I'd ever see you again, and I'd resigned myself to the fact that I might very well be just one more single mom out there in a world of single moms. Then Dad tells me you're sitting down on the beach not five minutes away; it was quite a shock

ALEX

I was thrilled.

MADISON

You were *not* thrilled. You were—I don't know what you were. But, I really had no idea of what to do, what I even wanted to do. I decided it wouldn't be fair not to tell you about Mimi, but not because I wanted anything from you—

ALEX (grabs his wallet)

No, no, I want to help. I'll do my part. Here's—eleven, twelve, plus five, seventeen dollars. And—and (taking change from his pocket) thirty-seven, not thirty-six cents. I always keep a lucky penny.

MADISON

That's probably a good thing.

Here, take it all—for Mimi.

Anyway, I wanted you to know.

And now I know.

Yes, now you know.

May I see her?

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

I won't wake her, and—Madison, I swear to you—neither of you will ever see me—this way again. Please.

Come on.

Madison—

What?

Was—was I the first man you ever—you know—were with?

No. But you were the last.

Oh no! You don't mean—

ALEX

MADISON

ALEX (thinks, then)

MADISON

ALEX

MADISON

ALEX

MADISON

(She helps him get up and they start for the door.)

ALEX

MADISON

ALEX

MADISON

ALEX

MADISON

No, I don't mean that. I mean I haven't been with anyone else since.

ALEX

You weren't my first either.

MADISON (smiles)

Yes, I was.

(They stop just before going in.)

MADISON

Now let me ask you something.

ALEX

Anything.

MADISON

Why didn't you tell me you were engaged?

ALEX (thinks, then)

Because—because as soon as I saw you, I didn't know if I was or not.

MADISON

You shouldn't say things like that if you don't mean them.

ALEX

As soon as I saw you, I didn't know if I was or not.

MADISON

Well . . . I don't love you, you know.

ALEX

I can think of a couple of reasons why you shouldn't.

MADISON

Don't add to my list.

ALEX

Good idea—but, just because you *don't*, doesn't mean you *couldn't*. I have some—very admirable qualities.

MADISON

Says who?

Melanie!

ALEX

I doubt it.

MADISON

ALEX

Kip—my best friend—you don't know him—will speak favorably on my behalf. Right now, he's—never mind what he's doing right now.

MADISON (taking his hand)

Let's go see Mimi.

ALEX

Good idea. I won't say a word. I want to hold her.

MADISON

No!

ALEX

Please.

MADISON

God, you make me crazy!

ALEX

Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

MADISON

Good for you, but probably bad for me. Come on.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE AS THEY EXIT.)

ACT II, SCENE IV

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON LISA and JACK at 2:00 A.M. on the patio. Lisa is pacing nervously and sipping from a glass of wine. Jack is sitting at the table and just about to doze off.

LISA (frantic)

Where could he be? He's not at the beach; he's not with Kip. Mel came home hours ago—*she* was in a state! Where is he? Jack!

JACK (waking)

What? Jack what?

LISA

Are you listening to me?

JACK (checks his watch)

Honey, I'm trying, but it's almost two. Let's go to bed.

LISA

We have to be here for him.

JACK

We'll be here—we'll just be in bed.

LISA

Oh, Jack, for God's sake. He'll need to talk to someone; he must be terribly confused.

JACK

He's not the only one, I can tell you that. Explain it to me one more time why Mel said this all your fault.

LISA

It's not—*all* my fault! (A beat.) I simply *suggested* to Mel that she could consider the *possibility* of sending Alex off on spring break to—to—

JACK

Get laid?

LISA

That's a rather mundane way to put it, but frankly, yes.

JACK

And this was supposed to—*inoculate* him against desiring other women after he was married to Mel, which you both assumed was going to be the case at some point in the not too distant future?

LISA

That was what I had originally hypothesized.

JACK

And Mel bought into this—inoculation theory?

LISA

It took a bit of coaxing. I had to—tell her about—my experience.

JACK

Your experience?

LISA

Yes.

JACK

You know, Honey, I love you to pieces, but sometimes—you just get too involved in other peoples' lives.

LISA

I did it for them, Jack—to protect their relationship. And now—I feel an obligation to help—make it right. Alex—has to see his way clear to do the—sensible thing.

JACK

How 'bout the right thing?

Do you know what that is?

LISA

(We HEAR A CAR PULL UP OUTSIDE AND A DOOR SLAM SHUT.)

Thanks, Max.

ALEX (off)

Take a couple of aspirin and get some rest. You'll live.

MAX (off)

(CAR TAKES OFF and ALEX enters the patio.)

Hello, Alex.

LISA

Mom, Dad. What are you doing up?

ALEX

Just enjoying the morning air—the *early* morning air.

JACK

Don't pay any attention to him. We waited up—in case you wanted to talk—about it.

LISA

It?

ALEX

The—situation.

LISA

Right—the situation. (A beat.) Actually, I don't. I have a little headache going here, and it really hurts even to think, much less speak.

ALEX

Then you needn't speak. Just listen.

LISA

Do I have to?

ALEX

LISA

It will hurt me very much if you don't.

ALEX

Okay. I'll listen. I don't want to hurt anyone else tonight.

JACK

Who's Max?

ALEX

Madison's father. He's a cop from Atlanta. Do we have any juice?

LISA

There's some ice water on the table. Have you been drinking?

ALEX (pours a glass of water)

One thing at a time, Mom. Now, go ahead. Tell me about—the situation.

LISA

Well, I have an opinion, of course, but what you do is entirely up to you.

ALEX

Right. Like going down to Ft. Lauderdale was my idea in the first place.

JACK

May I interject a bit of fatherly wisdom at this point?

LISA (to Alex)

That was for your own good. Tell him, Jack.

JACK

That was for your own good, Son, and for the good of the institution of the American family, which recently, has fallen upon some very hard times.

LISA

I simply thought—

ALEX

I know what you thought, Mom. Mel told me all about it.

LISA

Then don't blame her; it really was my fault. I can see that now, and I'm terribly sorry. I would never do anything consciously to jeopardize your relationship with Mel, you know that.

ALEX

I'm not looking to blame anybody, Mom. I'm just trying to figure out what the hell to do now that I've been inoculated, initiated, and inebriated.

LISA

Isn't it obvious what you should do?

JACK

Honey . . .

ALEX

Not to me.

LISA

You love Mel, don't you?

ALEX

Mom, I can't remember a time when I didn't love Mel.

JACK

How could he not love her? They've been programmed to love each other since grammar school.

LISA

Then nothing has to change. Of course we'll provide whatever support is necessary to this woman—

ALEX

Madison!

LISA

--and her child.

ALEX

Our child! Mimi. *I* am Mimi's father; *you* are her grandmother; she is part of *us*—all of us. I held her; I listened to her breath; I felt her tiny heart beating as she slept in my arms.

LISA

She was a mistake, Alex. You can't let a mistake ruin your life.

JACK

Change, *not* ruin, Honey. It's just going to change his life.

LISA

Jack—please.

ALEX

Mimi didn't change my life, Mom. *I* changed my life. Now, I just have to somehow figure out—how much.

LISA

You didn't even know this woman's name for god's sake! You love Mel; don't forget that—love is the most important thing.

ALEX

Mom, you're not helping.

LISA

Tell him, Jack.

JACK

Honey, let me talk to Alex—

LISA

You?

JACK

Just the two of us.

LISA

Man to man?

JACK

Father to son.

LISA

All right. I'll just be—

ALEX

Go to bed, Mom.

JACK

Don't worry about Alex; he'll do the right thing.

LISA

I don't want him to do the *right* thing; I want him to do the sensible thing. Mel is like a daughter to me. They were made for each other.

JACK

Who made them that way?

ALEX

Goodnight, Mom.

LISA (kissing Alex)

Goodnight, Son.

(LISA EXITS. Jack sits down at the table opposite Alex.)

ALEX

So . . . Dad?

JACK

I don't remember the last time we had a—heart to heart, Son.

ALEX

Never.

JACK

That explains it.

ALEX

Did you have an affair with Mrs. Monroe, Dad?

JACK

Some time ago.

ALEX

Why?

JACK

Get right to the point, don't you?

ALEX

I'm in kind of a hurry here to tell you the truth.

JACK

Your mom and I—*had* to get married. Did you know that?

ALEX

I didn't—*know* it, but I sort of suspected. I guess I wanted to believe that Andrea was just premature. Math has never been my strong suit, but I can count to nine.

JACK

Your mom was "in trouble" as we said in the old days.

ALEX

The good old days?

JACK

They had their moments. Anyway . . . don't misunderstand—I *wanted* to marry your mother; I had every intention of marrying her, but not then, not at that time. I was due to go in the service, and I wanted to marry her when I got out. During my time in the Army, I wanted to—

ALEX

Sow your wild oats?

JACK

Yeah, but because Lisa got pregnant I didn't get to do that—and I blamed her and resented her for it. Not at first, but later on—after we'd been married a few years and I saw—everything that was out there.

ALEX

Women you mean?

JACK

Yes, and surprisingly enough, a number of them found me attractive. That was the catalyst for my becoming aware of my unconscious resentment for the—circumstances of my marriage. Then during some hard times for us, I just let this thing with Francis—Mrs. Monroe—happen.

ALEX

And that's why Mom and Mel sent me off to Ft. Lauderdale?

JACK

Don't ask me to explain that.

ALEX

Okay. (Thinks, then.) So you married Mom out of a sense of obligation—because she was pregnant?

JACK

It was more than that; I loved her and would have married her anyway—eventually or would have tried too. I could have lost her when I was in the service. That's the chance you take.

ALEX

Works both ways then. She could have found someone else?

JACK

That's right.

ALEX

Did you love Mrs. Monroe?

JACK

For one brief—unshining—moment in time I thought I did.

ALEX

Why didn't you stay with her?

JACK

Oh, I could say the usual things—because of you and Andrea, our friends, our history, but what it came down to was this: I couldn't imagine waking up in the morning without having your mother by my side. I realized that's what I wanted more than anything else in the world, so I ended the affair.

ALEX

How did Mom find out?

JACK

I told her—when it was all over. I told her because—I don't know why. I just did. (A few beats.) Do you want to wake up every morning with Mel next to you?

ALEX

I thought I did—until I woke up a couple of mornings next to Madison. Now, I don't know . . . there's Mel. Madison. Mimi. Mom. Everybody wants something different. And you—you married out of a sense of obligation and it was wrong then, but now it's right. I don't know what to do. Is it so wrong for me to think of what I want?

JACK

You know what my mother used to say to me every day—when I was old enough to understand?

ALEX

What?

JACK

She said, “Jackie, what have you done today to make the world a better place—for somebody other than yourself?”

ALEX

What’d you tell her?

JACK

I’m sorry to report that more often than not I’d have to tell her, “not much.”

ALEX

How about now?

JACK

I think I’m doing a little better.

ALEX

I think you are too. (A beat.) You never told me this before.

JACK

I didn’t want to burden you with it. It’s not just a story about your grandmother; it’s a way to live your life that requires sacrifice, and I knew you’d take it seriously.

ALEX

Now I wonder why that is . . .

JACK

That’s all the wisdom I have to offer tonight. Get some sleep; you don’t look so good

(Jack rises, crosses to Alex and touches his shoulder.)

ALEX

I’d don’t feel so good either. Thanks, Dad.

(JACK EXTS.)

ALEX (to himself)

What have you done today . . .

(BLACKOUT TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE V

SCENE: LIGHTS COME ON MADISON at 8:00 A.M. She's sitting on the porch of the B&B and is breast-feeding Mimi and softly humming a lullaby. MELANIE ENTERS, sees what Madison is doing, is embarrassed and turns to go, but Madison sees her.

MADISON

Are you—looking—oh, for someone?

MELANIE

I'm sorry, I didn't want—to disturb you.

MADISON (closing her blouse)

It's okay. She just nodded off.

MELANIE

I'm Melanie Chase. We—met last night.

MADISON

I remember.

MELANIE

Hard thing to forget.

MADISON

No matter how hard you try. Please, sit down.

MELANIE (sitting)

I thought—we should have a little chat—about our common interests.

MADISON

Yes, a little chat. That would be lovely.

MELANIE

Your—daughter is beautiful.

MADISON

Madison. Thank you. She really favors—I'm sorry. (A beat.) Would you like to hold her?

MELANIE

I don't think so. Thanks.

MADISON

They don't bite—no actually, they *do*.

MELANIE

I can't stay, really, I just came by to . . . I don't know. I had this huge fight with Alex last night, and—I guess I needed to find out more about . . . what happened between you and Alex down there and . . . I don't know what I'm doing. Last night I—I nearly made a real fool of myself—for love? Ha! If Alex and Kip weren't such basically decent guys, well . . .

MADISON

I can see why you love him.

MELANIE

Can you, really?

MADISON

He not a bad sort.

MELANIE

No, not a bad sort at all. Then you must know I'll fight to keep him.

MADISON

I didn't come here for a fight. I didn't even come of my own volition; my dad dragged me up under the guise of a fishing trip and to escape the heat in Atlanta. When we got here, he told me about Alex. I had no way of knowing he was engaged. (Madison inconspicuously covers her left hand.) Actually, I knew very little about him, not even his real name until Dad told me.

(MAX ENTERS.)

MAX

Excuse me. I didn't know you had a guest.

MADISON

Dad, this is Miss Chase, Alex's fiancée.

MAX

My pleasure, Miss Chase.

MELANIE

Thank you. Are you enjoying your stay in Newport, Mr. Halley?

MAX

"Enjoying" is maybe stretching things a bit, but some things are getting tended to that needed some attention.

MADISON (holding up Mimi)

Dad, will you take Mimi in for me?

MAX

Yes, I will. There does seem to be a distinct chill in air out here.

(MAX EXITS with Mimi.)

MADISON

How long have you and Alex been together?

MELANIE

I can't remember a time when we weren't. We grew up together.

MADISON

That's lovely.

MELANIE

Yes, I thought that too—until last night. (A beat.) Tell me something, will you?

MADISON

Maybe.

MELANIE

Once you got here, what made you decide to see him?

MADISON (thinks, the)

Based on what I knew about him—from our time together in Ft. Lauderdale, and my dad's impression, I thought he would want to know about Mimi; thought he had the *right* to know. It was never my intention to make—any kind of claim on him.

MELANIE

But when you met, down there, there must have been a pretty strong attraction.

MADISON

Yes, there was a mutual attraction; and then there was this whole atmosphere down there that encouraged—

MELANIE

Irrational behavior?

MADISON

Don't put words in my mouth, Miss Chase.

MELANIE

Clearly, that's what it was. And now, there's this—what—certainly not a love child.

MADISON

A *loved* child.

MELANIE (seething)

Well, what about me?

MADISON

Miss Chase, I didn't come her to take Alex from you.

MELANIE

And Jack Kennedy didn't go to Dallas to get shot!

MADISON

I'm leaving tonight.

MELANIE

What? You're leaving?

MADISON

For Atlanta—tonight.

Does Alex know?
MELANIE

Not yet.
MADISON

I can't say that I'm not relieved to hear it.
MELANIE

I do intend to say good-bye to Alex.
MADISON

Of course. I'd—expect that. He's often on the beach at night; you could probably catch him there on your way out of town.
MELANIE

You're very helpful.
MADISON

So—I'll go and let you do—whatever young mothers do with their mornings these days.
MELANIE

I'll figure something out.
MADISON

I think—under different circumstances, we might have—been friends
MELANIE (rising)

Maybe—if we didn't kill each other.
MADISON (rises)

I guess I'm just a romantic at heart.
MELANIE

I guess that's something we don't have in common.
MADISON

Well, good-bye, Miss Halley.
MELANIE (extends her hand)

Good-bye, Miss Chase.
MADISON

(Melanie turns and scampers off with
Madison watching her as THE LIGHT
COME DOWN TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE VI

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON KIP AND ALEX ON THE TOWER later the same day. Alex is sitting back with his arms folded across his chest, brooding. Kip is sitting forward and is very animated. He's playing a game of Beach Baby Bingo by himself and assuming the role of Alex. As he switches roles between himself and Alex he reverses the position of his baseball cap from fore to aft.

KIP

So, Bro, you want to finish this game or what?

(Kip reverses his ball cap and mimics Alex's position and says nothing.)

KIP

That's cool. I'll finish for you. I know you got a little something on your mind. Here we go. (Looks through the glasses.) Oh, oh—what have we got here—four o'clock. Petite brunette, lavender bikini, *nice* hips, smallish breasts, but not bad. (Puts down the glasses and looks at "cards.") Hell, Bro, she's on your card—Bingo! Bro, you are *kicking* my ass today. One more game; gimme a chance to get even.

KIP (as Alex)

No, man, you're too easy. Makes me feel bad to beat up on you so.

KIP

I can take it. Come on, Bro! What else we got to do?

KIP (as Alex)

Nah, I'd rather just sit here and brood. Looks cool.

KIP

Bro, to paraphrase Brother Frost, you may be in far, but you most definitely are not out deep. Let's play!

KIP (as Alex)

Maybe I don't like this game anymore. Maybe I find it sexist and demeaning to the fairer sex.

KIP

Oh, Bro, you are getting deep now; you're starting to scare Kippie.

KIP (as Alex)

Kippie?

KIP

Don't ask where that name came from? I can't tell. I am sworn to secrecy.

KIP (as Alex)

Man, I don't care where it came from. I don't care if that's what Mel called you last night on the beach when she tried her best to seduce you. I'm just going to sit here and be quiet and deep and ultra-cool.

KIP (now he begins to talk to Alex)

Come on, Bro! You are boring me to death up here. (Nothing.) All right, don't talk; just hold up your hand to answer a few questions. Okay?

(Alex just gives him a look of indifference.)

KIP

How many hours we been up here?

(Alex holds up four fingers.)

KIP

And how many words have you spoken to me in that four hours?

(Alex holds up four fingers.)

KIP

Four! "Don't screw with me." Four words in four hours. You are so fortunate that I am not your shrink, because you most definitely would not be getting your money's worth. Are you with me? (Alex looks away.) Man, you are starting to get on my nerves now. (Kip stands and blows his whistle.) Hey, knock off the roughhousing. (A beat.) You keep it up I'm gonna let the sharks out of their pens! (Sits. To Alex.) Is it hot out here, or is it just me?

ALEX

It's hot, Man. *Very* hot.

KIP

He lives. He speaks! My best bro has returned from the depths of relationship hell. Welcome home.

ALEX

Kip, I don't what the hell to do—have no idea. First I think one thing, and then the total opposite. I'm totally screwed up.

KIP

You really got a kid?

ALEX

Yeah, a daughter. Name's Mimi.

KIP

Mimi! Who's she named after?

ALEX

Both of us. Get it? Me—Me!

KIP

Yeah, I got it. I know all about such things from my liberal education. (A beat.) You're absolutely certain that—Mimi is—yours?

ALEX

There is no doubt in my mind that Mimi is my daughter.

KIP

They got tests, you know?

ALEX

Kip, she's my daughter. Has my eyes.

KIP

Hopefully, she doesn't have that pea brain of yours. (A beat.) So, how you feel about—her mother? Madison is it?

ALEX

Yeah, Madison Halley.

KIP

Whoa, like the comet! How do you feel about Madison? She cool or what?

ALEX

Obviously I was attracted to her—when we met. And if it weren't for Mel, I think something could happen—I mean if she felt anything for me.

KIP

She must have. Down there. Or else you two never would have hooked up in the first place.

ALEX

I guess so.

KIP

So what's the problem? You got a mutual attraction; you've got a kid. That's the way you gotta go.

ALEX

Wait! It's not that simple. What about Mel?

KIP

Hey, Bro, as soon as you brought that child into this world, Mel was out of the equation.

ALEX

Like hell!

KIP

Oh, no. I'm serious now. You have a responsibility.

ALEX

Look, Kip, I know—how you feel about—not having a father around, but this is

ALEX (continuing)

different. I would—provide some means of support. It wouldn't be like—I just ran off and never came back.

KIP

Bro, I'm not talking about me; I'm talking about you.

ALEX

You want me to change all plans because—because of—an accident?

KIP

No such thing as accidents. I don't believe in 'em. Everything happens for a reason.

ALEX

Here we go.

KIP

You think our meeting was an accident?

ALEX

Yeah, I do.

KIP

Man, my mother worked like a slave to keep me in private schools—St. Michael's, St. Georges and finally Brown University—just so I'd meet "fine" people like you. And what do you folks do? Come on, tell me.

ALEX

They kept me in public school—Sheffield School, Thompson and Rogers—the whole time so I'll meet people like you.

KIP

So we never should have met at all. And if you hadn't stolen my bicycle, we wouldn't have.

ALEX

I didn't steal your bike!

KIP

Well then whose bike was that you were riding down Bellevue Avenue in broad daylight when the cops stopped you?

ALEX

It was your bike, but I took it my accident because we had identical bicycles.

KIP

Bro, that was *no* accident! We were supposed to meet; it was a—divine providence.

ALEX

What then was the purpose of this divine providence? We supposed to change the world or some damn thing?

KIP

Maybe. Our world.

ALEX

So, according to this theory: there's some divine purpose in my meeting Madison.

KIP

Damn straight. There she came for no apparent reason, streaking out of the stars like—like Halley's comet, showering you with the star dust. Wasn't an accident. She's your destiny.

ALEX

And Mimi?

KIP

I think anytime a child is brought into the world, there is a divine purpose.

ALEX

I don't know whether to believe you or not. Maybe you're still—trying to deal with the fact that your dad ran off.

KIP

My dad died, Man.

ALEX

After he left; you told me all about it.

KIP

That's *not* what this is about.

ALEX

Okay, let's say that's *not* what this is about, and Madison would even consider having me—I'm *still* engaged to Melanie.

KIP

Oooh, I don't know about that.

ALEX

What do you mean?

KIP (takes rings from his pocket)

Just that last night, *after*, Miss Melanie tried to seduce Kippie right here on the very tower of power on which we are currently perched, she threw *this* into the shining sea. But Kippie recovered it for his best Bro.

ALEX

That's *all* you did?

KIP

Oh no, Bro. I did *much* more. I fought a valiant battle for my moral integrity, and it pains me to say: I won!

ALEX

Do I want to hear the details of this episode?

KIP

Probably not.

ALEX

Then you'd better tell me.

KIP

When you left last night, Melanie was in quite a state—*quite* a state! Are you with me?

ALEX

Yeah, I'm with you, but you were with her—that's the part I want to hear about.

KIP

So, I no sooner sit down beside her to provide some emotional support in her time of need than she is all of sudden crawling all over me like a cat on a hot tin roof, if you know what I mean.

ALEX

I've read my Williams. I know. She did the same thing with me.

KIP

Then you know what agony it is to confront such ecstasy, and have to turn it away.

ALEX

I am with you there, Kippie!

KIP

I mean—

ALEX

I *know* what you mean.

KIP

It was a clear case of get back booty, and I was having none of it, although I must confess that I was sorely tempted, *sorely* tempted. But I did not succumb to her wily ways.

ALEX

Hold on! Mel offered you sex, and you turned her down?

KIP

Repeatedly and regretfully.

ALEX

Now, *that* is really hard to believe.

KIP

Bro, why don't you just stab me through the heart instead of question my integrity. I would not violate my best friend's girl—except as a personal favor to keep somebody else from doing it, like I told you before.

ALEX

You didn't even touch her?

KIP

Didn't lay a hand on her.

KIP

Did she lay a hand on you?

KIP
Did you say, "hand," or did you say, "gland?"

ALEX
I said, "hand."

KIP
That's cool. She didn't lay a hand on me.

ALEX
I don't think I'll pursue this line of questioning any further.

KIP
Wise decision.

ALEX
What happened next?

KIP
After she didn't lay a hand me, she freaked out—totally. Threw your engagement ring into the Atlantic Ocean and ran off--raving about finding a man to make love to her on campus.

ALEX
She goes to Smith.

KIP
That what *I* said.

ALEX
Thanks, Bro, for everything you could have done, and didn't.

KIP
I wish I could say it was a pleasure.

ALEX
Let me have the ring.

KIP (gives him the ring)
What are you going to do with it?

ALEX
Give it back.

KIP

Oh, Man! Haven't you been listening to me?

ALEX

Kip, everybody wants me to do something different—my mom, my dad, you, Mel. Well—what about me?

KIP (after a moment)

What about Mimi? (A few beats.) That's all I'm saying.

ALEX (thinks, then)

Do me a favor, will you?

KIP

What are friends for?

ALEX

Bring Mel here tonight.

KIP

What time?

ALEX

Ten o'clock.

KIP

I can do that. (A beat.) What about--

ALEX

Madison?

KIP

Yeah.

ALEX

Bring her too. She's staying at the Hutchinson House on The Point.

KIP

Okay. Ten tonight. (A beat.) Now, how 'bout a game.

ALEX

You know, I don't think I want to play this game anymore.

Have it your way.

KIP

Too late for that.

ALEX

(BLACK OUT TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE VII

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON ALEX sitting alone on the tower. There is a full moon and the set is bathed in a golden glow. The SOFT STRAINS OF A DISTANT MELODY ARE JUST AUDIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND. After a moment KIP enters with MADISON on one arm and MELANIE on the other. Madison is carrying MIMI.

KIP

Hey, Man, look what I picked up on the beach.

(Alex turns, sees them and attempts to smile.)

ALEX

Oh . . . hi.

MELANIE

Kip said you wanted to see me.

ALEX (climbing off the tower)

Yeah, I did—*do*.

MADISON

And I just stopped to say good-bye.

ALEX

Good-bye?

MADISON
We're catching the 11:59 Amtrak out of West Kingston Station. Dad's waiting in a cab.

ALEX
You're leaving—just like that?

MADISON
Just like that.

KIP
Gone with the wind, Man.

ALEX
What about Mimi?

MADISON
She's coming too, of course.

ALEX (to Madison)
That's not what I meant.

MELANIE
Things will be just like they were before.

ALEX
They can't be like they were before, Mel.

KIP (puts his arm around Madison)
Sure they can, Man, if that's what you want. Just put—all *this* behind you.

MELANIE
We're all going to pretend it never ever happened.

ALEX
Oh, good, let's play pretend—like we're four-year-olds.

MELANIE
We decided that's the best thing to do—just now.

ALEX
"We" decided? (To Madison.) You're just going—to leave?

Takin' that midnight train to Georgia. KIP (referring to Madison)

Madison . . . ALEX

Alex, Kip told me you have something that belongs to me. (She holds out her left hand.) I'd like for you to put it back where it belongs. MELANIE (taking his arm in hers)

(Alex looks at her and then to Madison.)

Alex. MELANIE

I have to go home, Alex. Say good-bye to Mimi. MADISON

No, wait. ALEX

Alex, my ring! MADISON

Bye, Mimi. ALEX (kisses Mimi)

(Madison turns and starts walking very slowly up the boardwalk. Alex watches her go and reaches into his pocket for the ring. He takes Melanie's hand, looks again at Madison and Mimi, and then drops Melanie's hand.)

Mel . . . I'm sorry. ALEX

(Melanie looks at him for a moment, lets out a heavy breath, tightens her mouth, and then turns and walks away in the opposite direction from Madison.)

You're doing the right thing, Bro. KIP

For who? ALEX

The one who counts the most. KIP

Do me a favor— ALEX

Sure, Bro. I'll take care of Mel. But this is the *last* time. (Goes after Melanie.)
Mel, wait up! KIP

(Kip catches her and THEY EXIT. Alex goes after Madison.)

Madison . . . ALEX

(She stops and turns to him. MUSIC begins to build slowly.)

Don't go . . . please. Stay for a moment and—dance with me, here, under the stars. ALEX

Why should I? MADISON

You probably shouldn't, but—why not take a chance? ALEX

What about Mimi? MADISON

Mimi too. ALEX

(MUSIC continues to build.)

It will be a little awkward.

MADISON

We'll have to learn some new steps.

ALEX

I don't suppose it will hurt to try.

MADISON (thinks, then)

(They meet center stage and Alex wraps them both in his arms and they begin to dance under the stars as the MUSIC BUILDS AND THEY ARE ILLUMINATED BY A GOLDEN SPOTLIGHT. As they dance the MUSIC BEGINS TO FADE ALONG WITH THE LIGHTS. Just before the lights go dark, Alex lifts up Madison's chin and they kiss. BLACKOUT.)

END OF PLAY

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