

**FREE SHOT**

A Drama in Two Acts

by

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(FREE SHOT)

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### Cast of Characters

(4 women, 3 men)

Lauren Alexander.....18, an athlete and scholar  
David Duncan.....18, Editor of high school paper  
Kathryn Alexander.....43, Lauren's mother, an academic  
Harriett Weinstein.....50, a psychiatrist  
Aaron Kingsley.....40, a coach & athletic director  
Cormac McCabe.....42, a detective with LAPD  
Lisette Kingsley.....25, Aaron's pregnant wife

Time: Spring 2007.

Place: Los Angeles, CA

Setting: The play is staged on an area set. The play opens on a backyard basketball court and then moves to an adjacent kitchen for the remainder of scene one. Other areas, which are lighted when in use, include a hospital room, the "office" of a psychiatrist, an airline terminal, a computer workstation, and an interrogation room in the LAPD. Only the suggestion of these locations is needed for a scene to work; mood is more important than realism in the sets.

Playwright's Notes: African American, Hispanic, or Asian actors can be cast in any of the roles in this play without changes to the script. Since Lauren is one of the best basketball players in the country, she should be cast with an actor who has reasonable skills on the basketball court, as should the part of Aaron Kingsley, a former NBA All-Star.

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### ACT I, SCENE I

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on LAUREN ALEXANDER, 18, a prep All-American basketball player. She is tall, lean and exceptionally bright. Although athletic, she is quite feminine and not nearly so sure of herself off the basketball court as she is on it. She is shooting baskets on a "half" court outside the back door of her house where a small stoop leads into a typical middle class kitchen. DAVID DUNCAN, 18, editor of Rydell High School News, is rebounding and passing the ball back to Lauren while he interviews her for a story. He's a nice looking kid, a little on the bookish side, as tall as Lauren and athletic, but not a varsity athlete. They play the scene with Lauren shooting and David passing her the ball as he takes mental notes.

DAVID

So who'd you hear from today?

LAUREN

Duke and Oklahoma. UT El Paso, LSU and . . . Bates I think it was . . . somewhere in Maine.

DAVID

Lewiston, Maine. That's where the second Ali, then known as Cassius Clay, and Sonny Liston fight was held. Liston went down early on a *very* controversial punch.

LAUREN

Boy, you are just a fountain of knowledge.

DAVID

Mostly useless trivia, but sometimes it comes in handy. (A beat.) So, OU and Duke today. UCONN and Texas yesterday. I would have to conclude that the word is out on "Alexander the Great."

LAUREN

Don't call me that!

DAVID

That's what the LA Times is calling you.

LAUREN

*You* started it.

DAVID

I only report what I see, and you—Lauren Alexander—are indeed great. Sensational, in fact, but "Alexander the Sensational" just didn't have the right ring to it. Never would have caught on.

LAUREN

You know, I have all this natural athletic talent, but you word smiths have all the real power. You can make or break us jocks with the stroke of a pen.

DAVID

Keyboard, please. Pens are as obsolete as the two-handed set shot.

LAUREN

Maybe I'll revive it from the dead.

(She attempts a two-handed set shot that clanks against the rim or backboard.)

DAVID

Maybe not.

LAUREN

So where do you think I should go to school?

DAVID

I'm interviewing you. Let me ask the questions.

I just have this one. LAUREN

Go ahead. DAVID

This is . . . off the record—is that right? LAUREN

Yeah, that’s right. DAVID

So I’m asking as a friend. LAUREN

Okay, off the record. DAVID

Where do you think I should play next year? LAUREN

I think . . . you should stay right here and go to UCLA. DAVID (thinks, then)

Stay here . . . with my mother! Are you kidding? LAUREN

It’s just a thought . . . DAVID

That turns my blood to ice. LAUREN

She’s on the faculty— you’d get free tuition. DAVID

Tuition is not an issue. I’ll get a full scholarship wherever I go. LAUREN

Yeah, if you play basketball. DAVID

LAUREN

I *want* to play; I love playing basketball!

DAVID

I thought you wanted to write.

LAUREN

I do want to write.

DAVID

But you never take the time to write because you're always playing basketball.

LAUREN

I'm not *always* playing basketball!

DAVID

Okay, you only play when you could be writing.

LAUREN

Let's get back on the record?

DAVID

Fine. (A beat.) How does it feel to be the most highly recruited shooting guard in the country?

LAUREN

You know, David, you spend all your time chasing down stories for the school paper and now the *Times*. Pecking away at the word processor. You never go anywhere without your laptop in your backpack. You even took it to Yosemite.

DAVID

I was doing a story about the trip.

LAUREN

That's exactly what I mean. You couldn't just—enjoy the trip. You had to document it.

DAVID

And if there had been a basketball goal attached to El Capitan you would have been over there throwing pine cones in it.

LAUREN

I don't think you would have noticed what I was doing with all the attention you were giving Jerry Ann Robinson.

DAVID

She's the president of Hiking Club, and believe it or not, *she* knew where we were going.

LAUREN

Oh, she's knows her way around all right. You can bet on that.

DAVID

I don't know how you'd know with Ed Brady hovering over you like a hawk.

LAUREN

Ed Brady is a gentleman, a nearly extinct breed, more like the California Condor than a hawk.

DAVID

I think we're getting off the record again.

LAUREN

Oh . . . yeah, I guess we are.

(She shoots and turns to the house.)

LAUREN

I'm thirsty. Want a drink?

DAVID

I'm good. You go ahead.

LAUREN

It's okay if you come in.

DAVID

What about . . . your mom?

LAUREN

She's in class.

DAVID

That's not the point.

LAUREN

Give me the ball. We'll put it in the hands of Fate. If I make this free shot, you come in. Deal?

Okay, deal.

DAVID

And if I miss it, you come in anyway . . . to finish the interview.

LAUREN

What kinda deal is that?

DAVID

(Lauren lines up a free shot and takes a deep breath. As she prepares to shoot, A TAPE PLAYS OF FANS SCREAMING AND CHANTING "AIR BALL, AIR BALL." The TAPE STOPS AFTER THE SHOT.)

Nice shot.

DAVID (if she makes it)

Glad nothing was riding on that.

DAVID (if she misses)

You like Gatorade?

LAUREN

I'd prefer something weaker.

DAVID

Water weak enough for you?

LAUREN

As long as it's not the imported stuff. My system can't handle anything that pure.

DAVID

(David follows Lauren into the kitchen. She runs tap water and gets ice and Gatorade from the fridge. David sets up a portable tape recorder on the table.)

It's straight from the tap.

LAUREN (serving him)

Thank you, Mr. Nicholson.

DAVID (drinking)

LAUREN

Mr. Nicholson?

DAVID

Jack Nicholson in Chinatown—he prevents the bad guys from getting control of LA’s water supply. If not for him . . .

LAUREN

It was a *movie*, David.

DAVID

About the water wars! Nicholson was the PI, Jake Gittes. Very, *very* cool, even for the thirties—especially for the thirties. And John Huston was this disgusting, lecherous old bastard, who . . . really . . . didn’t treat his daughter very well at all.

LAUREN

So what happened?

DAVID

What happened was . . . Jack Nicholson nearly got his nose cut off and, the fact of the matter is, he didn’t prevent John Houston from getting control of the water anyway. The daughter, Faye Dunaway, gets shot in Chinatown and daddy gets off because he has money and power.

LAUREN

Major bummer.

DAVID

Yeah, I guess it was now that I think about it.

(They sit in silence for a moment, looking at each other a little nervously.)

DAVID (switching on the recorder)

So, how do you account for your athletic prowess, Miss Alexander?

LAUREN

Genes.

DAVID (surprised)

From your mother?

LAUREN

My dad played varsity ball at UCONN in the early eighties—before Jim Calhoun was there. They were respectable, but not the powerhouse they are now; my dad started at point guard.

DAVID

Do you ever . . . like have any contact with him?

LAUREN

He was killed in a car wreck before I was born.

DAVID

I didn't know that.

LAUREN

I didn't . . . know you well enough to tell you that.

DAVID

But now you do?

LAUREN (nods)

Evidently.

DAVID

What was his name?

LAUREN

Jason Alexander.

DAVID

He played basketball at UCONN?

LAUREN

In the mid-eighties.

DAVID

So your mom's from Connecticut?

LAUREN

She's a military brat; she's from all over. She was in graduate school at Connecticut Wesleyan when . . . all this happened.

DAVID

That had to be hard.

LAUREN

I guess that's why she left. "Go West young ma'am." Who said that?

DAVID

Horace Greeley, but you didn't get it quite right.

LAUREN

Neither did Horace.

DAVID

Okay. (A beat.) So you've got genes for games from you dad and genes for brains from your mom. Not a bad combination.

LAUREN

I've also got a pair of jeans from the Gap, and to tell you the truth, they're probably the best fit. (Takes a drink.) Here's to electrolytes.

DAVID (holds up his glass)

And tap water. Two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen.

LAUREN

And you hope that's all that's in there.

DAVID (drinks)

Cheers. (Checks his notes.) Says here you hold a Black Belt in Karate. That true?

LAUREN

You want a demonstration?

DAVID

No thanks. Just trying to verify a rumor.

LAUREN

Yes, I hold a Black Belt. I also have a thin red leather belt that I wear with a blue chambray dress and red pumps.

DAVID

Don't think I've seen it.

LAUREN

Maybe you will if you get lucky. It's quite an attractive ensemble.

DAVID

Is that a fact?

LAUREN

It's not a rumor; you see, I prefer to deal with facts rather than rumors.

DAVID

A journalist has to wade through rumors sometimes to get to the facts.

LAUREN

This is not one of those times.

DAVID

Isn't it?

LAUREN

I don't know what you mean?

DAVID

Just that . . . there's this rumor that . . . Carl Putnam didn't break his arm in the state semi-finals football game.

LAUREN

Is that a fact?

DAVID

It's a fact that there's a rumor going around to that effect.

LAUREN

Well, *he* said he broke in the game.

DAVID

But I overheard the football coaches talking over coffee . . . they think differently.

LAUREN

You are such a busy body.

DAVID

I prefer to think of myself as an investigative reporter.

LAUREN

And just what did you hear, Mr. Investigative Reporter?

DAVID

That the orthopedic surgeon who set the bone said two things: One, Carl could not have finished the game with that break, and two, the break was clean . . . like it came from a single blow. And the coaches said, of course, that the break cost Rydell the state championship. They were right on that count.

LAUREN

That's very interesting, but I don't see what any of it has to do with me.

DAVID

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't it a fact that you went to the victory party with one Carl Putnam, starting quarterback for our very own Rydell Spartans?

LAUREN

You already know I did.

DAVID (after a moment)

So why'd you break his arm?

(Lauren turns off the tape recorder.)

LAUREN

Off the record?

DAVID

Whatever you say.

LAUREN

He's a jerk.

DAVID

Lauren, I sorry to admit it, but a lot of us adolescent males are jerks. It's a phase we go through, and with a little bit of luck, we grow out of it without having our arms broken. (A beat.) What happened?

LAUREN

He got . . . fresh.

DAVID

Fresh?

LAUREN (think, then)

More that fresh. He got . . . very insistent—even—rough, I guess. And I did what I had to do to defend myself.

DAVID

I'm . . . very sorry that happened to you.

LAUREN

I'm okay.

DAVID (starting to laugh)

Jesus, Carl is 6'4", 215, and you broke his arm!

LAUREN (begins to laugh)

He never knew what hit him; you should have seen his face. Turned white as a sheet and just stared at his arm.

DAVID

And he couldn't tell anybody a *girl* had broken his arm! Lauren, you're incredible.

LAUREN

I tend to think of myself as competent. He got exactly what he deserved.

DAVID

At least you didn't break this throwing arm.

LAUREN

I thought about it. But I broke the left one first, and I didn't think he ever could have explained *two* broken arms.

DAVID

If he ever bothers you again, which I don't suppose he will, you let me know.

LAUREN

So you can . . . ?

DAVID

Break his neck.

LAUREN

David, Carl is twice your size, and when it comes to neck breaking—size matters.

Then I'll break something else. DAVID

Like what? LAUREN

Oh . . . maybe the world record for the hundred-meter dash. DAVID

I love it that you make me laugh. LAUREN (laughing)

All the jocks laugh at me. DAVID

Not this one. LAUREN

And I appreciate that. DAVID

You know, David, I'm more than just a basketball player. LAUREN (thinks, then)

I know that; you're one hell of a volleyball player too. DAVID

What I meant, was that I'm more than just a jock. LAUREN

I have all that. You're a class president and a straight A student. An accomplished pianist. Anything else? DAVID (checks his notes)

Just that under all this athleticism and intellect beats the heart of a pretty ordinary adolescent girl—with the same . . . needs and fears as anybody else. LAUREN

Needs like—for approval? DAVID

Yeah and like—for affection. LAUREN

DAVID  
Right, affection. I guess I didn't think . . .

LAUREN  
Didn't think what?

DAVID  
I guess—I didn't think at all.

(Lauren crosses to David, sits down on his lap and puts her arms around his neck. He looks up at her a little nervously.)

LAUREN  
I guess what I'm trying to tell you, David, is that . . . I wouldn't break your arm.

DAVID  
Oh . . .

(As Lauren bends down to kiss him, a door opens opposite them and KATHRYN (KATE) ALEXANDER, 43, enters. She is a professor of literature at UCLA. Her attire is conservative and totally professional. A Coach bag is hanging from her shoulder. She is upset about finding David alone in the house with Lauren.)

KATE  
Lauren! What—is going on?

LAUREN (jumping up)  
Mom! I thought you were in class.

KATE  
Obviously. (A beat.) Who's this?

DAVID  
Hello, Ms.--

KATE  
Dr.!

Dr. Alexander. I'm David Duncan. DAVID

I thought we had an agreement. KATE

Not that I know of. DAVID

She means with me, David. LAUREN

I think I'll be heading out. DAVID

You don't have to go. LAUREN

Yes, he does. KATE

No. He can stay now because you're home. Don't go, David. LAUREN

David, please . . . go. KATE

I'm kind of caught in the middle here . . . DAVID

All right, you can stay. Lauren's right. Since I'm here, she's allowed to have a male visitor in the house. KATE

No, go. She has to have her way, or I'll pay for it later. LAUREN

Lauren! What an awful thing to say. KATE

How 'bout I just mosey along . . . with my recorder and notes. I'll catch up with you in class Lauren. DAVID

(David gathers his things and EXITS through the back door. There is a long moment of uncomfortable silence.)

Well?  
KATE

I'm sorry, Mom.  
LAUREN

Lauren, we have an agreement.  
KATE

It's a stupid agreement, and I hate it.  
LAUREN

Nevertheless, you agreed to it.  
KATE

I only agreed to the agreement—because I was coerced to do so with season tickets to the Lakers.  
LAUREN

Which I had to pull a few strings to come by.  
KATE

Well, I don't need them now. UCLA assured me I'd have a courtside seat if I sign a letter of intent with them.  
LAUREN

But you'll never have the opportunity to attend a game. They didn't tell you that. (A beat.) So you're considering UCLA now?  
KATE

No, just the tickets, and don't change the subject. (A beat.) I want to be free to entertain my friends in the house whether you're here or not.  
LAUREN

The rule is for—your protection. And I don't have any trouble following it.  
KATE

Because you never go out with . . .  
LAUREN

Who? KATE

Anybody!. You don't have a life outside of your mind. LAUREN

I have you. KATE

I cannot be your life indefinitely, Mother. LAUREN

Now who's changing the subject? KATE

I'm not changing anything. LAUREN

The point of the rule is that it provides some measure of protection for both of us in what is a very dangerous city. KATE

Mom, I have a Black Belt in karate; you carry a handgun in your handbag. I'm astounded that either of us can get a man to come within miles of the place. LAUREN

What were you doing sitting on his lap? KATE

Lap dancing. LAUREN

Lauren, for god's sake. Stop it. KATE

Maybe I was expressing some genuine affection. LAUREN

"Genuine affection." How quaint. KATE

You know, Mom, you don't like it when I date jocks; you don't like it when I take up with nice guys either. What does that leave me? LAUREN

KATE

In a safe environment until I'm sure you can take care of yourself.

LAUREN

Mom, you have *no* idea of how capable I am of doing that.

KATE

Does David?

LAUREN

Oh, don't worry, he's more interested in a *story* about me than he is about *me*. The LA Times has even agreed to publish the piece.

KATE

So . . . you're letting David do the story instead of them . . . so you can—what? Get to know him better?

LAUREN

You are just unbelievable.

KATE

Well, it certainly looked like you were making some fine progress in getting to know him with your—lap dancing.

LAUREN

You just won't get off that, will you?

KATE

*I*—wasn't on it.

LAUREN

Oh, here we go: Miss Cleverocity. I just hate it.

KATE

Hate what?

LAUREN

For you to riddle your ridicule with witty wisecracks. If you want to humiliate me, just do it plain and simple.

KATE

I don't mean to humiliate you, Lauren; it's just that I get angry when you can't

KATE (continuing)

stick to what is fundamentally a very simple agreement about having guests in the house when I'm not here.

LAUREN

Not guests. Men, Mother! Male-he-persons of the masculine gender. That's what you object to, and I seriously think this is an issue you should discuss with Dr. Weinstein.

KATE

And I will. *If*—you'll stick to our agreement. By the way, I've scheduled you for another appointment.

LAUREN

Mother, I don't need to see a shrink.

KATE

I need for you to.

LAUREN

Well, I intend to bring the agreement up with Weinstein.

KATE

You needn't bother. I discussed it with her before it was implemented. She was in complete agreement.

LAUREN

Yeah, well, we'll see about that.

KATE

Yes, I suppose we will.

LAUREN

And in the meantime, I guess I just have to do my lap dancing somewhere else.

KATE

Why do you have to hurt me so?

LAUREN

I . . . don't know. Do you?

(Lauren turns and storms out. Kate goes to the door and wants to call out to her, but doesn't. LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE .)

ACT I SCENE II

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON HARRIET WEINSTEIN, 50, a prominent LA psychiatrist. She is dressed professionally and sits taking notes in a simple chair DOWNSTAGE CENTER. LAUREN and KATE are on either side of Weinstein sitting or lying back on portable chaise lounges (that can easily be moved on and off stage). In this scene two separate counseling sessions are being shown simultaneously; a LIGHT REMAINS FIXED on WEINSTEIN throughout the scene, but SHIFTS BETWEEN Lauren and Kate as the focus of the scene moves from one to the other.

Look, Weinstein--

LAUREN

*Dr. Weinstein!*

WEINSTEIN

Whatever. I don't have any idea of why I'm here; *she's* the crazy one! Not me.

LAUREN

Lauren, I'd rather we didn't use the term "crazy" in this office.

WEINSTEIN

We?

LAUREN

Either of us.

WEINSTEIN

Fine, but what do you call it?

LAUREN

WEINSTEIN

Without getting into any professional jargon, let's just say—"emotionally troubled."

LAUREN

Fine. That's what she is then—emotionally troubled. And how!

(LIGHTS COME UP ON KATE.)

WEINSTEIN

Lauren doesn't seem to have any idea of why you have her in therapy, Kate.

KATE

The child is obviously—emotionally troubled, Dr. Weinstein.

WEINSTEIN

How so?

KATE

Well, she flies off the handle at the slightest provocation.

WEINSTEIN

Provocation?

KATE

Did I say—"provocation?"

WEINSTEIN

Yes, I believe you did. I wrote it down right here in my notes—provocation.

KATE

Slightest—"thing." Change "provocation" to "thing" in your notes.

LAUREN

I think mother—unconsciously—tries to provoke me.

WEINSTEIN

Why?

LAUREN

I don't have the slightest idea. If she does it unconsciously, she doesn't even know why she does it. Your job is to find out why and tell her. Isn't it?

WEINSTEIN

It's really more a journey of—self-discovery. My job is just to act as a guide. (Now to both of them.) Tell me about the latest—provocation or . . . maybe “incident” is a better choice of words.

LAUREN

Well, I invite my new friend, David, in for a drink—of water or Gatorade—he's doing this piece for the Times.

KATE

I get home early from class, and there is Lauren—entertaining a guest in our kitchen in direct violation of—

LAUREN

We have this utterly stupid agreement—

KATE

Not to have guests in the house when the other one of us is not home.

WEINSTEIN

Male—guests?

KATE AND LAUREN

Of course, *male* guests!

LAUREN

*She* wasn't supposed to be there.

KATE

*He* wasn't supposed to be there.

WEINSTEIN (to Lauren)

Was David?

LAUREN

Don't take sides, Weinstein.

WEINSTEIN

Dr.—never mind.

KATE

Lauren thinks that just because I so seldom entertain, the rule is unfair.

LAUREN

Mother never go out *or* stays in with anybody of either sex. So the stupid rule is easy for her to follow. But I'm a perfectly normal adolescent female—

WEINSTEIN

Do you often entertain gentlemen in your home?

KATE

Not frequently.

LAUREN

She hasn't been out with a man in years.

WEINSTEIN

Do you—prefer the companionship of women?

KATE

Not necessarily. If I found a suitable companion of either sex that I could see eye to thigh with—

WEINSTEIN

Eye to thigh?

KATE

Eye! Eye to eye. I suppose you'll have to classify that as a Freudian slip?

WEINSTEIN

How would you classify it?

KATE

In any case, the rule is for Lauren's own good—to keep . . . something from happening.

LAUREN

I'm a normal adolescent with normal adolescent needs. Mother thinks I'm made of steel or something, like she is.

WEINSTEIN

Perhaps your mother is just—afraid that something might happen.

LAUREN

She's right. Something might. Something might because I might *want* it to!

WEINSTEIN

Then you're attracted to this—David?

LAUREN

Oh, Weinstein, I'm crazy—sorry—mad—ah—I really do like him a lot.

WEINSTEIN

"Crazy" is okay to use in this context.

LAUREN

Oh, so it's okay for *me* to be crazy, but not my mother?

WEINSTEIN

That's not quite what I meant.

KATE

All I'm trying to do is protect her.

WEINSTEIN

Did you ever consider the possibility that "the rule" is there because your mother wants to protect you?

LAUREN

I know that, but Weinstein, listen—I've taken karate lessons since I was seven-years-old, and I'm—very capable of taking care of myself physically. And she—she packs heat, you know?

WEINSTEIN

Packs heat?

LAUREN

Weinstein, please, this is LA. Don't you watch television?

WEINSTEIN

Actually, I don't.

LAUREN

How can you deal with the real world if you don't watch television?

WEINSTEIN

People on television—pack heat?

LAUREN

They carry guns, Weinstein. My mother carries a handgun.

WEINSTEIN

My god! Where?

Everywhere! LAUREN

Where—on her person? WEINSTEIN

In her handbag. It's a Beretta. LAUREN

The bag? WEINSTEIN

No, the gun. The bag is a Coach. LAUREN

That's a nice bag. WEINSTEIN

It's a nice little Beretta too. LAUREN

Is it true, Kate, that you—pack heat? WEINSTEIN

Pack heat? I have a hot flash now and then, but— KATE

That you carry a handgun? WEINSTEIN

Yes, as a matter of fact, I do. In my Coach bag. KATE

Why don't you tell me about that. WEINSTEIN

It's a small caliber, semi-automatic, clip-loaded, recoil action Beretta with— KATE

That's not what I meant. WEINSTEIN

Oh.

KATE

Are you—afraid?

WEINSTEIN

Not anymore.

KATE

But there was a time when you were?

WEINSTEIN

Mother has an underlying sense of dread or doom or insecurity that taints everything she does.

LAUREN

There was a time when I was—somewhat frightened of—the world, but I’ve put all that behind me now.

KATE

It’s like how a pet can sense a person’s fear and somehow come to fear the same things. Mother is scared to death of thunderstorms, and we had this Golden Retriever, Lady, when I was a little kid. That dog would protect me with its life, but at the first sign of thunderstorm, it would crawl under the bed and whimper—just like my mom. I became aware of her fears too, but I was able to overcome them. Lady never did.

LAUREN

Lauren is fearless; that is one reason I’m so concerned for her welfare. She just doesn’t know—what’s out there.

KATE

What is out there, Kate?

WEINSTEIN

I—don’t know.

KATE

It’s like she preparing me for the worst; like because she had to raise me by herself and everything, because she lost Dad. I don’t know, but—so far, *she’s* the worst thing that has happened to me.

LAUREN

WEINSTEIN

And the best.

LAUREN

Whatever. (A beat.) Best or not, Weinstein—I have to get away.

WEINSTEIN (to Kate)

Are you afraid of losing Lauren? Of having her leave home?

KATE

She won't leave . . .

(Kate and Lauren look at each other, but don't really see each other because they are not there together. Kate's look is hopeful and frightened; Lauren's is sad. Lauren shakes her head and finally looks away as THE LIGHT COME DOWN SLOWLY.)

ACT I, SCENE III

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON LAUREN shooting baskets as before. She's dressed in shorts and a T-shirt and has her hair tied back in a ponytail. After sinking a final shot, she turns and enters the kitchen, gets the Gatorade from the frig, drinks from the bottle and begins sorting through a stack of recruiting letters on the table. After a few moment, KATE ENTERS.

LAUREN

Mom, do you have to read all my mail?

KATE

I don't read *all* your mail. I only glance at the pieces addressed to the parent or guardian of—

LAUREN

It's still my mail. They're recruiting me, not you.

KATE

Don't kid yourself, Lauren; the smart ones recruit the parents too.

LAUREN

Not in this case. If I thought there was the slightest possibility of you being there too, I wouldn't even consider the school.

KATE

You don't mean that.

LAUREN

Right, I don't mean it.

KATE

In any case, they just can't seem to leave you alone.

LAUREN

I'm the best shooting guard in the country, Mom. A hot commodity.

KATE

You have me to thank for that.

LAUREN

You never even played basketball.

KATE

But I have an excellent eye; you've seen me on the firing range.

LAUREN

I told Weinstein that you packed heat.

KATE

I know. She was—quite impressed.

LAUREN

Impressed?

KATE

Not necessarily favorably.

LAUREN

You know, Weinstein's son is in my homeroom at school—he's not exactly your everyday kind of guy, if you know what I mean.

KATE

He's a little—different?

LAUREN

More than a little.

KATE

I'm not surprised.

LAUREN

So why do you think Weinstein can help me—us?

Be nice to him. KATE

Why? LAUREN

Because you should be nice to everyone—until they give you a reason not to be. KATE

Then what? LAUREN

That's up to you. KATE

Turn the other cheek? LAUREN

Depends on what happened to the first one. (A beat.) Have you narrowed down your possibilities for school in the least. KATE

Yes, I narrowed it down to a number of possibilities in the East and a couple in the Big Twelve. Maybe Tennessee. And, of course, there's always Point Barrow Community College. LAUREN

Barrow? Alaska? KATE

If distance makes the heart grow fonder, I figure the further away I am from you, the better off we'll both be. LAUREN

It's "absence", not "distance" that makes the heart grow fonder. KATE

Whatever. LAUREN

Nothing—close to home? KATE

LAUREN

No.

KATE

You don't *have* to play basketball at all, you know. I put money away for your education.

LAUREN

Mom, I want to play ball; it's in my blood. It's what I do best. We've been all through that.

KATE

Big Twelve, you said—which schools?

LAUREN

Oklahoma and Texas.

KATE

And in the East?

LAUREN

UCONN and a small liberal arts college with an up and coming program—Connecticut Wesleyan.

KATE

Connecticut Wesleyan, for god's sake, why?

LAUREN

You went there?

KATE

I was a graduate assistant there for one semester. Not even. I . . . left early.

LAUREN

Why?

KATE

Because—my thesis chairman was a tyrant with a very small mind and a very large ego.

LAUREN

Well, it has an excellent academic record, and, like Oklahoma and LSU a very strong creative writing program.

KATE

But *not* a powerful basketball program.

LAUREN

No, but at a school like that, I'd get to play immediately. At Oklahoma or LSU, it might be a couple of years before I start.

KATE

Well, I don't pretend to know anything about basketball, but if you're really interested in a small liberal arts college, there are plenty of them with fine writing programs on the West Coast. USC has an excellent program as well.

LAUREN

You're missing the point, Mom.

KATE

No, I see your point. I just don't think you need to make it with such vehemence.

LAUREN

I'm sorry. It's just that . . .

KATE

What?

LAUREN

When you try to keep me close . . . it just makes me want to go.

KATE

How can I take care of you if you're clear across the country?

LAUREN

I can take care of myself.

KATE

You're not—seriously considering Connecticut Wesleyan?

LAUREN

If I went so far away, who would there be to look after you?

KATE

I can take care of myself.

LAUREN

You could take care of someone else too—someone besides me—if you'd give yourself a chance.

KATE

You needn't concern yourself with that. I'm perfectly satisfied with my situation.

LAUREN

That's what's wrong with you, Mom. You have a—situation, instead of a life. It would be so much better for both of us if you'd start participating in life instead of managing a situation.

KATE

I think I've managed pretty well.

LAUREN

Under the circumstances.

KATE

What circumstances?

LAUREN

That's what I want to know.

KATE

Don't be poking your nose where it doesn't belong, young lady!

LAUREN

Into your life, you mean! You certainly don't have any qualms about poking yours into mine.

KATE

I'm your mother--

LAUREN

Believe me, you've made that point more than a few times.

KATE

And I intend to do whatever it takes to protect you.

LAUREN

Mom, you've done that. What it takes now is letting go.

KATE

Letting *you* go wherever you want, you mean.

LAUREN

No, that's not what I mean! But I am 18 now, and free to do that if that's what it takes to have a life of my own.

KATE

Isn't your life of basketball all your own?

LAUREN

Yes, it is! And I intend to ride that ticket right—out of this town if I have to.

KATE

Fine. You take any ticket you want, but you're going to find out that leaving involves a lot more than distancing yourself from something.

LAUREN

What does that mean?

KATE (exiting, breaking)

Doesn't matter. Go. Just go. Go to school wherever you want. I don't care.

LAUREN

Mom. Mom! (She goes to door.) I'm sorry, okay? Okay? (A beat.) I'm not the first kid to go away to college you know.

(She drops her head against the door as  
the LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY.)

ACT I, SCENE IV

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP in the boarding area of an airline terminal. AARON KINGSLEY, 40, a former NBA All-Star is seated next to his wife, LISETTE, 25, who is seven months pregnant. Aaron is tall, as close to 6'4" as possible, and ruggedly handsome, but as he stares straight ahead with a lost expression, he looks older than his years. Lisette is a drop-dead gorgeous cheerleader-type and totally determined to make this marriage (Aaron's third) work.

VOICE (off)

Continental Flight 2003 is now boarding at Gate 27. All ticketed passengers should proceed to Gate 27 at this time. Please have your boarding pass and photo ID available for the ticket agent.

LISETTE

Aaron. (No response.) Aaron!

AARON (coming out of it)

What?

LISETTE (shaking him)

Honey, that's your flight.

AARON

Right—my flight.

LISETTE

Honey, you need to focus. You have a flight to catch.

I'm on it. AARON

Not yet, you're not. LISETTE

I know, I'm just . . . AARON

Where were you? LISETTE

Right here. AARON

No, you weren't. You were—a long way from here. LISETTE

I was just—thinking. AARON

It was more than that. You were—in that place. LISETTE

What place? AARON

That place you go sometimes; that dark place where you go and won't let me in. LISETTE

No, Honey, I was just thinking about this trip—the meeting, next season, whether I can convince any of these athletes to give Wesleyan a try. AARON

Okay. Just don't leave me again. LISETTE

Honey, recruiting is part of the job. AARON

I don't mean geographically. It's just that when—when you go—to that other place, I don't know if you'll come back. I get very lonely when you go away. LISETTE

AARON

I could never leave you, Babe. (They stand and he picks up his carry-on bag.)  
Where do I go first?

LISETTE

LA. You have the NCAA scheduling conference and two recruits to see there:  
Amy House and Lauren Alexander. Then on to Seattle, Kansas City, Memphis and  
finally Detroit.

AARON

When do I get home?

LISETTE

Thursday. I'll pick you up.

AARON

You don't have to do that.

LISETTE

I didn't have to marry you either. I did it because I wanted to.

AARON

Okay, thanks.

(They embrace.)

LISETTE

Love you. (No response.) Aaron, I said I love you.

AARON

That is just so unbelievable—that somebody like you could love somebody like  
me. God, Lisette, I love you. I adore you. I worship you.

LISETTE

That's more like it. You know—after our daughter is born, if she can play, maybe  
she's one recruit you won't have to go across country to get.

AARON

Which means I wouldn't have to leave you.

LISETTE

To find another girl.

AARON

That's the least of your worries. (They kiss.) I love you, Babe.

LISETTE

You'd better get going. We'll be here when you get back.

AARON (as he exits)

Take care of yourself and—the kid.

LISETTE

Call us every day.

AARON

I will.

LISETTE

Promise!

AARON

Every day *and* night. I promise.

(AARON EXITS. Lisette watches him go, pats her abdomen, smiles, then turns and walks away as the LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT I, SCENE V  
SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on WEINSTEIN  
as before with KATE and LAUREN on  
either side of her.

LAUREN  
I don't really have to go very far away to get away from her.

KATE  
Lauren is willing to jeopardize her entire future just for spite.

WEINSTEIN  
How so?

LAUREN  
She doesn't drive, you know . . .

WEINSTEIN  
I didn't know that.

LAUREN  
Except for me . . . you know . . . crazy.

WEINSTEIN  
She drives you crazy, and you . . . drive her . . .

LAUREN  
Everywhere.

KATE  
She has this ridiculous notion of going all the way across country to school.

WEINSTEIN  
Since you don't drive, why does it matter if she goes to UCONN or USC?

KATE

I didn't tell you I didn't drive.

WEINSTEIN

What else haven't you told me?

LAUREN

She walks or rides a bike everywhere; that's how she stays so fit. She *never* works out. With her life centered in Westwood, she doesn't need to drive—just to be driven. That's where I come in. Since I got my license, I take her everywhere "beyond her range." By the time I was eight-years-old, I could walk five miles and never bat an eye. When I started participating in competitive athletics, I naturally excelled because I was in so much better shape than anybody else.

WEINSTEIN

She *still* doesn't drive.

LAUREN

Other than me crazy, no. Like I said.

WEINSTEIN

I can't imagine not driving in LA. New York, of course, but LA?

KATE

The driving experience is vastly overrated in my view. And if you structure your living environment logically, one can get by quite well without driving one of those awful machines. They are, in my view, primarily responsible for the downfall of Western civilization.

LAUREN

Mother is a control freak. On the freeway, you can't control what someone will do. That's why she doesn't drive.

WEINSTEIN

Are you—troubled by the fact that Lauren seems to be intent on making her own decision about school?

KATE

I'm only troubled by the fact that she is so unwilling to accept some—guidance.

LAUREN

Mother hasn't a clue about basketball—about what it takes to be a player.

KATE

Lauren knows nothing about becoming a scholar; she's exceptionally bright, but she has no discipline. She has this vague notion that she wants to write, but she doesn't realize that she has to be able to think before she can write.

WEINSTEIN

What did you think at her age, Kate?

KATE

I don't remember what I thought at her age.

WEINSTEIN

Or if you thought at all?

KATE

Right now I'm thinking you're a pain in the ass, Weinstein.

WEINSTEIN

Don't flatter me, Kate.

LAUREN

Mother is afraid to let me think for myself.

KATE

I think kids that think for themselves invariably end up at the wrong schools for all the wrong reasons. I know a great deal about academia, and Lauren will not serve herself well by going to some small liberal arts college in New England.

WEINSTEIN

Which one?

KATE

*Any* of them!

LAUREN

She just won't admit that she doesn't want me to go away at all.

KATE

My daughter is my life, Dr. (A beat.) If she leaves . . .

WEINSTEIN

*When* not if.

Don't say that!

KATE

Kate . . . life is hard.

WEINSTEIN

"Life is hard."

KATE

She puts me on this guilt trip about leaving.

LAUREN

"Life is hard?"

KATE (louder)

She knows you have to go; it will just take some time for her to get used to the idea.

WEINSTEIN

Did you actually say, "Life is hard", Weinstein? Check your notes.

KATE

I'm afraid I did, and I already regret it.

WEINSTEIN

For \$150 an hour I get, "Life is hard." Jesus, Weinstein, what next: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going?"

KATE

It was an over simplification.

WEINSTEIN

It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game, huh, Weinstein?

KATE

Kate, please.

WEINSTEIN

And don't forget this one: It ain't over until the fat lady sings with who brung her.

KATE

What?

WEINSTEIN

KATE

Jesus, Weinstein, I knew life was going to be hard the first time I noticed the difference between little boys and little girls. But coming from you some 30-years later is just—too much. Now give me something to work with here. My only child is considering abandoning me, and I don't know what the hell to do about it.

WEINSTEIN

All right, I don't ordinarily do this, but in this case, I will tell you what to do about it.

LAUREN

She never listens.

KATE

I'm all ears.

WEINSTEIN

Do nothing.

KATE

That's easy for you to say.

WEINSTEIN

But much more difficult for you to do.

KATE

I don't know how to do—nothing!

WEINSTEIN

I'll tell you that too: Decide what you would ordinarily do, and then don't do it.

LAUREN

If she would just—let me be.

WEINSTEIN

Be what?

LAUREN

Me!

WEINSTEIN

Give her a chance.

To what? LAUREN

Grow. Change. WEINSTEIN

Mother can be as hard and unyielding as stone. LAUREN

Even the hardest rocks gets ground to dust in time. WEINSTEIN

I don't have that much time, Weinstein. And I have to shop before I go off to school—and shopping is hard. LAUREN

Isn't it though? WEINSTEIN (smiles)

How 'bout this, Weinstein: I'll just take things one day at a time. That work for you? KATE

Whatever works for you, Kate. Our time is up. WEINSTEIN

It ain't over till it's over, Weinstein. KATE

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE. )

ACT I, SCENE VI

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on DAVID outside Lauren's kitchen. He's sitting on the stoop and sorting through the contents of a manila envelope. After a few moments, LAUREN ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN. She is carrying a large scrapbook.

LAUREN

Here it is. This is really all I know about him.

DAVID

I'll check this against what I got off the Web.

LAUREN

The story's about me; why do you need to know about my dad.

DAVID

Because people will be interested in where your natural athletic ability came from.

LAUREN

Believe me, it has more to do with hard work than it does with genes.

DAVID

I know that, but being gifted doesn't hurt. And people are interested this kind of thing. Bobby Bonds and Rick Barry, Bob Griese, Phil Simms, Bill Walton—all these guys have sons who are gifted athletes that are playing now.

(David starts looking through the  
scrapbook.)

DAVID

Not much here that I don't already have.

LAUREN

Do you have the piece on the accident?

DAVID (looks, then)

No I didn't have that, but . . .

LAUREN

What?

DAVID

What do you know about his parents—your grandparents?

LAUREN

Nothing.

DAVID

What?

LAUREN

Off the record?

DAVID

Of course.

LAUREN

I've never met them. I don't even think they know about me.

DAVID

This doesn't make sense.

LAUREN

Yes, it does.

DAVID (looking in scrapbook)

There are no dates on these clippings.

LAUREN

I don't think they were ever married.

DAVID

What?

LAUREN

I think Mother got pregnant and ran off—because she wasn't married. Maybe he got killed before they had a chance to get married. Maybe he wasn't going to marry her at all. I just don't know. All I know is: Mother moved west, took his name for us, and never looked back. She never even told his parents about me. Are you listening?

DAVID

Yeah, yeah, I'm listening, but—I've got to double-check some stuff. You okay?

LAUREN

I'm fine. Why shouldn't I be?

DAVID

No, you should be.

LAUREN

What's wrong? I know that look; your mind is racing a million miles a second. What's going on?

DAVID

I can't believe a woman wouldn't tell a couple that they have a grandchild—even if illegitimate.

LAUREN

You don't know my mother.

DAVID

Do you?

LAUREN

Well, yeah . . . I think so.

DAVID

Let me take these clippings; I'll be back tonight.

LAUREN

With a full report?

DAVID

Yeah. (Throws her the ball.) Work on those free shots.

LAUREN

I shoot 90 percent from the line.

DAVID

So you got some room to improve. Get to work. I'll see you later.

(DAVID EXITS as Lauren starts shooting around the perimeter of the basketball court, working on her jump shot and lay-ups rather than her free shots. After a moment, AARON ENTERS UPSTAGE, stands in the shadows and watches her. Lauren sees him, keeps shooting, then holds the ball and turns to him.)

LAUREN

Can I help you?

AARON

You sure can.

LAUREN

How?

AARON (moving downstage)

By signing a letter of intent with Connecticut Wesleyan.

LAUREN

You went there?

AARON

Yep . . . Aaron Kingsley. I'm also the women's varsity basketball coach and Athletic Director. I sent you a letter.

LAUREN

A lot of people sent letters. (A beat.) You were an All American and All Pro guard with the Celtics, right?

AARON

A few years ago.

Let's see what you got, Coach.

LAUREN (tosses him the ball)

(He puts up a shot and misses.)

That why you quit?

LAUREN

Wheels went bad on me.

AARON

So Connecticut Wesleyan brought you back to build a program?

LAUREN

Something like that.

AARON

A women's program?

LAUREN

Basketball is basketball. It's all I know, and I needed a job.

AARON

You came all the way out here just to see me?

LAUREN

No, I was in town for the NCAA meeting. I sent you a letter that I'd stop by.

LAUREN

Don't think I got that one, but my mom might have intercepted it. How 'bout some one on one.

AARON

I don't think so.

LAUREN

Afraid of being beaten by a girl?

AARON

I'm not the man I once was.

LAUREN

And I'm not the woman I'm going to be.

AARON

You have a way with words.

LAUREN

Thanks. Have a great jump shot too. Come on.

AARON

All right. I'll give it a go.

LAUREN

Better take off that tie; don't want you to choke.

(He slips off his tie and takes off his dress shirt, but keeps his T-shirt on. They start to play, and Lauren pretty much has her way with him—driving past him for lay-ups and stopping for quick jumpers.)

LAUREN

You're not trying!

AARON

It's the forty years not the effort. The will is there, but not the means. But come on, I'm not done yet.

(Lauren starts to drive, trips on his foot and falls down scraping her knee. She stays down, examining her knee.)

LAUREN

Damn!

AARON (helping her up)

Jeeze, I'm sorry. You okay?

LAUREN

Yeah, I'm fine; it's just a "flesh wound" as they say.

AARON

Still, you ought to clean it up some.

Yeah, I will.

LAUREN

Need a hand.

AARON

Ah—yeah. Come on in. (They start for the kitchen.) By the way, I'm Lauren Alexander.

LAUREN

I know who you are.

AARON

(They enter the kitchen.)

Want a drink?

LAUREN

Sure, thanks.

AARON

(Lauren sits down and looks at her knee.)

LAUREN

Tap water's the best I can offer. There's a glass in the drainer. (He runs water into a glass.) So why should I go to Connecticut Wesleyan when I could go to UCONN or Oklahoma.

AARON

You want to play or ride the bench for a couple of years?

LAUREN

But one of those school will probably win a national championship. Maybe a couple in the next four years.

AARON

Lauren, at the risk of losing you before we even begin, I have to tell you that simply *playing* is what's important. Play as hard as you can; be satisfied with your effort, and have a good time is my philosophy. Any player that gives it their best effort is a winner in my book. Are you with me on that?

LAUREN

I don't know. I like to win.

Makes you feel—what—powerful?  
AARON

I guess so.  
LAUREN

Domineering?  
AARON

Domineering—I don't know. I never thought of it that way. It's just a game.  
LAUREN

That's right, a game. Don't forget that.  
AARON

But if you don't win, you'll be out of a job. You *have* to win.  
LAUREN

And we do. We won 22 games last years, lost eight, and everybody enjoyed playing. In our program everybody graduates, and every athlete has a life outside of basketball.  
AARON

Well, my mother would be impressed. And I never thought I'd hear that kind of talk coming from a recruiter, but still—Connecticut is so far away.  
LAUREN

I can't do anything about that; not even offer you an alumni's jet for weekend trips, but I can assure you and your parents—  
AARON

There's just my mom.  
LAUREN

—that Connecticut Wesleyan is a totally safe environment.  
AARON

Mom knows that. She did some graduate work there back in the 80s.  
LAUREN

Okay, so you could keep up the family tradition.  
AARON

LAUREN (looks at her knee)

Maybe.

AARON

Let me get you something for that knee.

LAUREN

Just wet a paper towel. I'll dress it later.

(He wets a paper towel, goes to Lauren, kneels down and begins washing her knee. As does this, KATE ENTERS.)

KATE

Lauren . . . Lauren!

LAUREN

Hi, Mom. This is Aaron Kingsley, Coach and Athletic Director at Connecticut Wesleyan.

(KATE freezes for a moment as Aaron rises and turns to greet her. When he sees her, he too freezes. Then Kate calmly digs into her handbag for the Beretta, removes it and fires three shots into Aaron's abdomen. He falls to the floor.)

LAUREN (going for the gun)

Mother!

(BLACKOUT TO END ACT I.)

## FREE SHOT

by

David W. Christner

### ACT II, SCENE I

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON KATE. She is a changed woman. She's sitting on a straight back chair in the interrogation room of the LAPD. There is a mirror against one wall. Kate gets up, walks to the mirror, fixes her hair and tucks in her blouse, smiles and waves to whoever may be on the other side of the glass. Then she turns and leans back on the edge of a plain wooden table. After a moment, CORMAC MCCABE, 44, ENTERS. He is a quick-witted and handsome Irish detective, a 15-year veteran of the LAPD. He has a Master's degree in criminology from UCLA and two failed marriages behind him. Years before, Kate taught a seminar on Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*; McCabe was a student in that seminar. McCabe moves across the room and tosses a notebook on the table. He knows who she is, but she doesn't recognize him immediately, although she studies him as if trying to place him.

KATE

Aren't you going to offer me a cigarette?

CORMAC

You don't look much like a smoker.

I'm not. KATE

So why do you want a cigarette? CORMAC

I thought cops used tobacco as a wedge to ply the truth out of suspects. KATE

Can't smoke in here; it's a public building. Bad habit anyway. Might have to call in the vice squad. CORMAC

Sound intriguing—the "*vice squad*." (A beat.) So, if I don't look like a smoker, what do I look like? KATE (flirting)

Look lady— CORMAC

Lady? Do you really think so? KATE

Doesn't matter what I think? CORMAC

I think that—maybe we should have a cup of coffee sometime? KATE

Maybe under different circumstances. CORMAC

For instance? KATE

You don't seem to be too upset by—all this. CORMAC

Should I be? KATE

Look—Miss— CORMAC

KATE

*Dr. Alexander.* I worked very hard for that title.

CORMAC

Okay—*Dr. Alexander.* Do you have any idea of how deep a pile of crap, pardon the vernacular, you're in?

KATE

Is it—Sergeant?

CORMAC

Detective—I worked very hard for that title—McCabe.

KATE

I'm sure you did. Well, Detective McCabe—are you married? Or otherwise involved in a long-term committed relationship?

CORMAC

Not anymore. (A beat.) You?

KATE

Never.

CORMAC

I think I know why.

KATE

The shooting thing?

CORMAC

It's not the kinda thing that gets the phone ringing off the hook.

KATE

Why, Detective McCabe, you have quite a sense of humor.

CORMAC

You need one in this job.

KATE (studying him)

McCabe. McCabe? Not—Cormac McCabe?

CORMAC

Yeah, that's the one.

KATE

Did I—you—we—?

CORMAC

Yeah, a few years ago—a graduate seminar on Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. I was in the class.

KATE

I thought so. I never forget . . .

CORMAC

A pretty face?

KATE

A gifted student. If I recall, you didn't agree with Dostoyevsky's thesis that Man cannot live with a guilty conscience—even if he isn't convicted of a crime he committed.

CORMAC

You have a hell of a memory.

KATE

Some things just stick in your mind. So, do you still maintain that position?

CORMAC

I think there's plenty of evidence to support my position—right here in LA.

KATE

But in Rhode Island, a man recently confessed to a killing a woman that another man, a detective in fact, was convicted of killing years before. And then, of course, there's the case of the Central Park jogger.

CORMAC

Those are exceptions; some people just don't have a conscience at all.

KATE

I think we *all* have a conscience, and that punishment for a crime can be very liberating and sooth the conscience for victim and criminal alike. In any case, your paper took a bold position and you defended it well.

CORMAC

I'll take it as a compliment that you remembered anything about my paper at all.

KATE

Good. It was meant to be one.

CORMAC (after a moment)

I'm sorry we had to have this little reunion under such regrettable circumstances.

KATE

For whom?

CORMAC

You, I would assume.

KATE

Don't be ridiculous. I don't regret a thing.

CORMAC

Dr. Alexander—

KATE

Call me, Kate. Isn't that part of the routine—to gain a certain familiarity with the suspect? To gain their trust so they'll "spill the beans"?

CORMAC

Why don't you just tell me what happened?

KATE

Where shall I begin?

CORMAC

Well, I don't know about you—Kate—

KATE

Would you like to?

CORMAC

—but, I've always been fascinated by why one person would try to kill another person. Maybe that's why I'm a cop—this insatiable curiosity about the dark side of human nature. Just—gimme the facts.

KATE

The facts, ma'am, and nothin' but the facts?

CORMAC

Yeah. To the best of your recollection.

KATE

Well—I arrived home and saw a man's shirt and tie strewn about the lawn. When I went in the kitchen and saw what was going on, I took the Beretta from the Coach.

CORMAC

Hold it right there! (A beat.) The Coach had the Beretta?

KATE

No, I had the Beretta.

CORMAC

Which you took from the Coach?

KATE

Not *the* Coach, *my* Coach—*handbag*.

CORMAC

Okay, so you took the Beretta from your—handbag. And then . . .

KATE

I pumped three rounds from the Beretta into *the* Coach—*not* the handbag. (A beat.) By the way, where is the Coach?

CORMAC

St. Anthony's. It was touch and go there for a while, but he's going to make it.

KATE

I meant the handbag.

CORMAC (think, then)

You want to tell me *why* you shot him?

KATE (thinks, then)

I'd rather my daughter not attend Connecticut Wesleyan.

CORMAC

So you shoot the coach?

KATE

He's also Athletic Director.

CORMAC

Two for one day.

KATE

There you go again, Detective McCabe. You really are a scream.

CORMAC

He's also a husband and soon to be a father.

KATE

I didn't know that.

CORMAC

What did you know?

KATE

Only that he was in my house fondling my daughter's leg.

CORMAC

So you didn't shoot him—intentionally? It was a mistake. You thought something was up?

KATE

Is that what I said?

CORMAC

Dr.—Kate, you're in a serious jam here. The DA wants to throw the book at you  
—

KATE

Which book?

CORMAC

I don't know which book! The book is not the point.

KATE

What is?

CORMAC

She wants to make an example of you; she has political aspirations that go way beyond the boundaries of this city and this state. She wants to show the "people" that she is just as willing to prosecute a white professional as she is a

CORMAC (continuing)

gang member for a small arms violation—equal justice for all. It makes a great press release. She's also a USC graduate.

KATE

Well, that explains it.

CORMAC

I think it has more to do with the shooting.

KATE

My weapon is registered, and I've been properly trained in its use.

CORMAC

Kate, when you pump three shells into someone, it doesn't really matter whether the gun is registered or not. Because guns don't kill people, people kill people. And therein lies the problem—*your* problem.

KATE

Well, I can assure you, the NRA and Mr. Charlton Heston himself, will throw their full support behind me in this situation.

CORMAC

What *situation*?

KATE

I told you. There was a strange man in my house with his hands on my daughter.

CORMAC

Okay. (A beat.) You ever see Coach Kingsley before?

KATE

I don't recall seeing him.

CORMAC

Not even on TV.

KATE

I don't watch television.

CORMAC

Was anyone else in the house?

My daughter. KATE

Besides Lauren? CORMAC

How do you know my daughter's name? KATE

I'm a cop. CORMAC

No, just the three of us. It was a private shooting. KATE

Yeah, I can see that. Look, I don't think the DA will buy the "mistake" story. I know I don't—one bullet maybe, but not three. Three bullets say "intent" in my book. CORMAC

Is *that* the book you're going to throw at me? KATE

I don't throw books; I just gather facts. CORMAC

So where does that leave us? KATE

It leaves you right here in the county jail until you make bail, and it leaves me with a lot of unanswered questions. But that's okay, because that's what I do—dig up answers to unanswered questions. CORMAC

How do I go about making bail? KATE

I'm not your attorney; I'm on the *other* side. CORMAC

I'm asking—as a friend. KATE

CORMAC

There will be a hearing later today. Since this is your first offense, you can probably get out of here by paying 10K or so.

KATE

Do they take VISA?

CORMAC

The bail bondsman will take anything.

KATE

Okay. It's settled.

CORMAC

It's far from settled.

(He turns to exit.)

KATE

Detective—maybe . . . we could have dinner or a cup of coffee sometime.

CORMAC

I don't think so.

KATE

When this is all over.

CORMAC

If you're not in the pokey—we'll see.

KATE

"Pokey." How cute.

CORMAC

Kate, there's nothing "cute" about the pok—state pen.

KATE

Except the way you say it.

CORMAC (pounding the door)

I gotta make some calls.

Do you have my number?

KATE

You're not who I'm going to call.

CORMAC

Well—I think I got yours.

KATE

Maybe . . . we'll see.

CORMAC

(LIGHTS COME DOWN TO END THE  
SCENE AS CORMAC EXITS.)

ACT II, SCENE II

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON AARON propped up in a hospital bed. There's an IV running into his arm, etc. His chest is bare except for a large bandage wrapped around his abdomen. After a moment, CORMAC ENTERS and goes to the bed.

	AARON
Get away from me!	
	CORMAC
I'm not a doctor.	
	AARON
Okay. You can stay then. I just don't want to be poked or stroked anymore. (A beat.) You a reporter?	
	CORMAC
Nope. Cop. LAPD.	
	AARON
What took you so long?	
	CORMAC
Traffic.	
	AARON (laughs)
Oh, don't make me laugh.	
	CORMAC
Is that when it hurts?	
	AARON
It hurts all the damn time.	

CORMAC

Surgeon wouldn't let me in any sooner—said I might disturb you.

AARON

He got that right.

CORMAC

Even so, I need to ask you a few questions.

AARON

Isn't that the way it always is?

CORMAC

How you feeling?

AARON

You ever been shot?

CORMAC

Twice.

AARON

They you know must know it hurt likes hell.

CORMAC

Only when I laughed. (A few beats.) I was telling Dr. Alexander that I'm always fascinated by why one human being would shoot another human being. Maybe it's just me. I don't know, but I was hoping you could may shed some light on the why part of it.

AARON

Maybe she was just having a bad day.

CORMAC

Looks to me like you're the one that had the bad day.

AARON

Maybe she doesn't want her kid going to Connecticut Wesleyan.

CORMAC

Yeah, she said that. (A beat.) So she shoots the coach?

AARON

I'm also the Athletic Director.

CORMAC

She said that too. Okay, so she shoots the coach *and* Athletic Director because she doesn't want her kid in school at Connecticut Wesleyan? That make any sense to you?

AARON

Let me tell you something about recruiting: It's a jungle out there.

CORMAC

I don't care; shooting somebody is a bit rough even in the jungle book. The DA isn't too happy about it either. (A few beats.) You don't know her, is that right?

AARON

What's the name?

CORMAC

Alexander, Kate—Kathryn Alexander. Dr.

AARON

M.D.?

CORMAC

Ph. D.

AARON

Never heard of her.

CORMAC

The daughter—Lauren?

AARON

Every coach in the country knows about her.

CORMAC

And you were in town—to what, recruit her?

AARON

Yeah, that and the NCAA conference.

CORMAC

So she knew you were coming?

Who?  
AARON

Either of them.  
CORMAC

Lauren said she didn't know. All our recruiting efforts go through the parents—  
AARON

So, Kate—Dr. Alexander knew you were coming.  
CORMAC

I suppose so, if she got the letter.  
AARON

So, she walks in and pumps three shells into you for . . . no apparent reason. That right?  
CORMAC

That's the way I remember it.  
AARON

She says—you had your shirt off.  
CORMAC

What?  
AARON

That's what she said.  
CORMAC

I took my dress shirt and tie off. I had on a T-shirt. Jesus, I'm 40-years-old.  
AARON

What were you doing with your shirt off?  
CORMAC

Playing some one on one with the kid.  
AARON

Who won?  
CORMAC

She did.

AARON

Maybe that's why she shot you.

CORMAC

She didn't shoot me; the mother did.

AARON

Right. The mother—for no apparent reason.

CORMAC

Maybe she thought something was going on.

AARON

Why would she think that?

CORMAC

Like you said, I had my shirt off and—and I was down on my knees—washing Lauren's knee or bare leg, I guess it was, if you want to look at it that way . . .

CORMAC

How do you look at it?

AARON

It was nothing like that! I take care of my athletes all season long; it's part of the job. I'd never—Jesus!

CORMAC

Okay, don't bust a gut; I'm just trying to get this straight in my mind. So—as an outsider she might get the wrong idea.

AARON

That's what I'm saying! She made a mistake. She got the wrong idea or maybe thought I was somebody else.

CORMAC

Who?

AARON

How the hell would I know?

CORMAC

Mistake or not. The DA wants to throw the book—send her to the pen.

AARON (thinks, then)

No, no. I think the whole thing was a mistake.

CORMAC

You don't think she tried to kill you?

AARON

No, yeah. I do, but . . . I don't know. I think maybe she thought I was someone else or making some improper advances to her daughter. I don't want to cause a big scene.

CORMAC

Big scene?

AARON

I mean . . . I don't want to blow this thing all out of proportion.

CORMAC

You mean—you don't want to file charges?

AARON

I don't want the school to have all that bad publicity.

CORMAC

So you're going to give her what—a free shot?

AARON

That's one way of looking at it.

CORMAC

She nearly killed you.

AARON

Doc says I'll be fine—and, I really don't want to lose the opportunity to recruit Lauren.

CORMAC

Yeah, and I don't really believe that's all there is to this. (A beat.) You said you don't know her, that right?

AARON

Never heard the name.

CORMAC

But she knew you?

AARON

A lot of people in LA know *of* me because of our series with the Lakers. I was MVP in the playoffs twice. Anyone Laker fan might have shot me.

CORMAC

Yeah, I remember. I've thought about shooting you myself.

AARON

I'd prefer to just let the thing fade away quietly.

CORMAC

Fade away. Yeah, I got the idea. Quietly. (A beat.) Forgot to tell you, your wife is on her way out. Be here later today.

AARON

Lisette, coming here?

CORMAC

Her husband was shot. Wives are like that. Don't ask me to explain it.

AARON

She shouldn't be traveling; she's seven months pregnant. You should have told me.

CORMAC

I just did.

AARON

Before!

CORMAC

Before, you weren't doing so good. Now don't get yourself in a state or they'll be in here trying to hook you on Demerol.

AARON

Look, I don't want Lisette to know about any of this.

CORMAC

She already knows; that's why she's coming out. The surgeon needed her OK to put you back together again, Coach.

AARON

I mean . . . the details.

CORMAC

Hell, Coach, *I* don't know the details.

AARON

The—*circumstances*.

CORMAC

Right, the circumstances. That's different. (A beat.) Who can I talk to back at the school.

AARON

About what?

CORMAC

The circumstances.

AARON

Nobody. Nobody knows anything.

CORMAC

Somebody always knows something.

AARON

Talk to the kid; she was there.

CORMAC

Thanks. I never would have thought of that.

AARON (checks his bandage)

Get a doctor in here; I think I busted a stitch.

CORMAC

You need Demerol?

AARON

No, I've learned to play with pain.

CORMAC

You're not playing anymore, Coach. I'll get the doc, then I've got some more calls to make.

(Cormac starts to leave and then turns back.)

CORMAC (continuing)

One last thing.

AARON

What?

CORMAC

A graduate assistant named Kathryn Adams—you ever hear of her?

AARON

Get a doctor! I'm bleeding here.

CORMAC

Yeah, on my way out.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN as CORMAC EXITS.)

ACT II, SCENE III

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on AARON and KATE later that day. Aaron is sleeping somewhat fitfully; Kate is sitting in a chair watching him. The room is only dimly illuminated, and Kate is seated in the shadows.

AARON (incoherently)

Is that the best ya got? Go ahead. Go on. Get it over with! Is it over yet? Is it over?

KATE

It's over for me.

AARON (waking, but groggy)

Who's that? Lisette, is that you?

KATE

It's not Lisette.

AARON (reaches for buzzer)

Who . . . oh, Jesus. Nurse!

KATE (grabs buzzer)

I'm not going to hurt you.

AARON (scared)

What do you want?

KATE

For you to stay away from my daughter.

AARON

Lauren? I didn't know she was your daughter. I didn't even have any idea of what happened to you; you just—disappeared. How could I know you had . . . oh, Jesus, she's not—

KATE

No! Lauren's mine. All mine.

AARON

But—

KATE

She doesn't know anything, and I don't want her to know anything.

AARON

I don't even know—

KATE

And that's the way I want it to stay. She doesn't know anything, and . . . you don't know anything you don't need to know.

AARON

I need to know if she's my daughter.

KATE

She's not!

AARON

Her jump shot looks damn familiar.

KATE

She watched you on television and copied your shot. That's all. She's not yours.

AARON

How do I know that?

KATE

You'll just have to take my word for it.

AARON

Like I can trust you after—

KATE  
I never did anything to earn your distrust.

AARON  
You shot me!

KATE  
That was a sincere expression of my inner most feelings. They were absolutely genuine. Trust me.

AARON  
Yeah, I can believe *that*.

KATE  
As soon as you can, I want you to get out.

AARON  
Of bed?

KATE  
Of town.

AARON  
You probably think I haven't suffered?

KATE  
I don't care.

AARON  
You can't feel anything, can you?

KATE  
I can now. In fact, I feel great! Better than I've felt for years.

AARON  
You need professional help. You're sick.

KATE  
You're the one in the hospital bed. Me? I'm a changed woman.

AARON  
I've changed too.

Not enough. KATE

How much is enough? AARON

You'll know. KATE

Can we—call it even now? AARON

Sure, we can call it even now. KATE (smiles and chuckles to herself)

Why are you laughing? AARON

Because I have something—that you don't. KATE

Something of mine? AARON

No, mine. KATE

I have a wife; in a few weeks I'll have a daughter. I couldn't ask for more. AARON

Then don't KATE

I'm not . . . like I was. AARON

Neither am I. KATE

I know more about—things. AARON

What things? KATE

Myself. AARON

Then why didn't you put a bullet in your head a long time ago? KATE

I've thought about it. AARON

Sure you have. (A beat.) If I wanted to kill you, I would have put those bullets in your head. KATE

Why didn't you? AARON

Because . . . enough is enough. KATE

I guess I should be grateful. AARON

That's up to you. KATE

I have something to live for now. AARON

That makes two of us. KATE

Maybe more? AARON

Maybe. KATE

I won't say anything to—your daughter— AARON

Good. KATE

AARON

I wouldn't know what to tell her anyway.

KATE

Then don't tell her anything.

AARON

I told the cop the shooting was probably an accident—a mistake. You walked in and got the wrong idea.

KATE

Yeah, I told him the same thing.

AARON

I don't think he believes either one of us.

KATE

He's got no choice.

AARON

I mean, he may not let it go.

KATE

You think he smells blood?

AARON

He's a cop, isn't he?

KATE

I have to go.

AARON

Don't let me keep you.

KATE

No chance of that.

AARON

I guess if I see you again, we'll either be in court or on one.

KATE

We'll be on opposite sides in either case.

AARON  
I guess recruiting Lauren is out of the question?

KATE  
I don't want you anywhere near Lauren.

AARON  
That's your call; I'll respect it.

KATE (starts to exit)  
I thought you would.

AARON  
Miss Adams—

KATE  
Alexander now. Dr. Alexander.

AARON  
This may sound a little weird, but—when you shot me . . . you may have saved my life.

KATE  
That's irony for you. Mine too. (A beat.) Good-bye, Coach.

AARON (quietly, as he leaves)  
Thanks.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END  
THE SCENE AS KATE EXITS.)

ACT II, SCENE IV

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON LAUREN and DAVID late in the evening the same day. They are seated on the stoop outside the kitchen. Light leaks out from the kitchen and from a SPOT light on Lauren's basketball court.

LAUREN

I don't know why! She just—lost it when she saw him there. Out comes the Beretta and bang, bang, bang! Three slugs into Coach Kingsley's gut.

DAVID

Ouch. Was there much blood?

LAUREN

Ye-ah. All over the place.

DAVID

What did you do?

LAUREN

I screamed, and—then I must have jumped up and grabbed the gun from Mom before she could shoot him again. It all happened so fast.

DAVID

She was going to shoot him again?

LAUREN

I don't know, but I wasn't going to take any chances. She had four rounds left—one in the chamber, three in the clip.

DAVID

What happened then?

LAUREN

She went to the frig, got the Gatorade, poured herself a serving, sat down at the kitchen table and started drinking.

DAVID

Did she say anything?

LAUREN

Yeah. "I guess you won't be going to Connecticut Wesleyan."

DAVID

Ho-lee smoke. What'd you do then?

LAUREN

Called 911 while I stuffed a dishtowel in the coach's gut to stop the bleeding.

DAVID

She kept sipping the Gatorade?

LAUREN

That's the weirdest part of all: She *never* drinks Gatorade.

DAVID

Must have been a special occasion.

LAUREN

I'll say.

DAVID

Where is she now?

LAUREN

She just called. She's on her way home. The cops are coming over too.

DAVID

Where's the Beretta?

LAUREN

Cops took it.

DAVID

Did you touch it?

LAUREN

Yeah, when I took it away from Mom.

DAVID  
So it has your prints on it?

LAUREN  
What difference does that make?

DAVID (thinks, then)  
I don't know.

LAUREN  
The coach is going to be okay; he's not going to die or anything.

DAVID  
That's good. Listen . . . when the cops get here—don't tell them anything.

LAUREN  
Why not?

DAVID (thinks, then)  
I don't know.

LAUREN  
You're watching *way* too much television.

DAVID  
Maybe so.

LAUREN  
Why would she shoot him?

DAVID  
Like she said: She doesn't want you going to Connecticut Wesleyan.

LAUREN  
David, stop it! I'm serious. Why would my mother shoot a man she doesn't even know?

DAVID  
Maybe—she does. Or did—back then.

LAUREN  
What are you saying?

DAVID

Did you read the stuff I got off the Web about your dad?

LAUREN

Not yet. I've been a little preoccupied. What? (A few beats.) You know something, don't you?

DAVID

I only know what I read in the paper.

LAUREN

What did you read?

DAVID

It wasn't just what I read; I made some calls to verify what I found out.

LAUREN

Okay. So tell me!

(CORMAC ENTERS.)

CORMAC

Lauren Alexander?

LAUREN

I'm Lauren Alexander. You're not a recruiter are you?

CORMAC (flashes her badge)

Nope. A cop. Detective McCabe. LAPD.

DAVID

You don't have to tell him anything, Lauren.

CORMAC

Who are you?

DAVID

I'm—her attorney.

CORMAC

If you're an attorney, I'm Sherlock Holmes.

He's—my boyfriend.

LAUREN

I am?

DAVID

Aren't you?

LAUREN

Well—ye-ah! (A beat.) So, maybe we ought to go out sometime.

DAVID

I'd like that.

LAUREN (taking his hand)

Look, before somebody bursts out into song here, I'd like to clarify a few details about the incident.

CORMAC

I already told the patrolman everything.

LAUREN

She already told the patrolman everything.

LAUREN

You got a name boyfriend?

CORMAC

David.

LAUREN

Duncan. I work for the *Times*.

DAVID

Which is it—David or Duncan?

CORMAC

David Duncan. And he really does freelance for the *Times*.

LAUREN

David Duncan? I keep running into that name. (Checks his notes.) You been telling people back East you're a cop?

CORMAC

DAVID

I may have implied that I—had an *association* with the LADP. You know, in order to get information.

CORMAC

Well, you just might have if you keep it up, but it won't be the kind of association you had in mind. You with me on that?

DAVID

Yes sir, and I will cooperate fully with the LAPD in this investigation. Maybe we should sit down and compare notes.

CORMAC

Maybe.

LAUREN

He's really very good.

CORMAC

A regular Bulldog Drummond, huh?

LAUREN

Who's Bulldog Drummond?

DAVID

This famous detective that—

CORMAC

Skip it. (A beat.) Now, Miss Alexander, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

LAUREN

Okay.

CORMAC

Just . . . tell me what happened.

LAUREN

Could my mom get the chair for this?

CORMAC

We don't use the chair in the state of California anymore.

DAVID

It's inhumane. Now we shoot'em up with a lethal injection.

Yuk! Could she get that?

LAUREN

No.

CORMAC

That's only for murder in the first degree.

DAVID

You're just a wealth of knowledge, aren't you boyfriend?

CORMAC

I try to keep up.

DAVID

Why don't you try to keep quiet. (To Lauren.) Go ahead, Miss.

CORMAC

Okay . . . so, I'm out shooting baskets—working on my jump shot—and I see this guy watching me. He comes over and introduces himself as Aaron Kingsley, Coach at Connecticut Wesleyan—

LAUREN

He's also Athletic Director.

DAVID

I know he's the goddamn that!

CORMAC

Okay.

DAVID

You okay?

LAUREN (to Cormac)

Yeah, sorry, just go on.

CORMAC

So I know who he is, of course. I've seen him a million times on TV—

LAUREN

How 'bout your mom?

CORMAC

How 'bout her?

LAUREN

She ever see him on TV?

CORMAC

She doesn't watch TV. (Cormac nods.) I know he's some big shot NBA All Star and everything so I challenged him to little game of one on one.

LAUREN

You challenged him?

CORMAC

Yeah, that's what I just said: "I challenged him to a little game of one on one."

LAUREN

I'm with you.

CORMAC

So he takes off his shirt and tie.

LAUREN

But not his T-shirt.

CORMAC

No-oh! He must be like—40 something.

LAUREN

Okay.

CORMAC

So we start to play—winner keeps possession, game to 15. He's lost a couple of steps, and I have a pretty easy time of it driving past him or stopping for a 12-foot jumper. Then I trip on his stupid foot, fall down and scrape my knee—just a flesh wound.

LAUREN

Yeah. Then?

CORMAC

I start to go in to clean up my knee.

LAUREN

Does he follow you?

CORMAC

No. He stays put, so I invite him in the house for a drink.

LAUREN

Of tap water. Courtesy of Mr. Jack Nicholson.

DAVID

Shut up, boyfriend. (To Lauren.) Does he know nobody's home?

CORMAC

How would he know that?

LAUREN

Did you tell him?

CORMAC

Yeah, I frequently tell strange men that nobody is home and invite them to take off their shirts and come in for a drink.

LAUREN

Sorry I asked.

CORMAC

It's our M.O.

LAUREN

Modus operandi.

DAVID

I *know* what it means!

CORMAC

I lure them inside, and Mom let's them have it. Just like Ma Kettle.

LAUREN

Ma Barker.

DAVID

Barker! LAUREN

Okay! You made your point. CORMAC

I mean Coach Kingsley is a well-respected women's basketball coach, not some adolescent male. LAUREN

Lauren! DAVID

What harm could come of it? (A beat.) I sit down at the table and tell him to use a glass from the dish drainer and run a glass of water from the tap. Then I tell him to wet a paper towel for my knee. He does this, comes over, kneels down and starts to wash my scraped knee. That's when Mom come in. I try to introduce him, and Mom starts shooting. LAUREN

So he was actually—touching you when Kate—your mom walked in? CORMAC

Technically, the paper towel was touching me, but it was in his hand. LAUREN

Don't get technical. Then what? CORMAC

Here, it gets a little fuzzy. I think . . . I tried to introduce the Coach, but before I've even finished—Mom starts shooting. (A beat.) I guess she got the wrong idea. LAUREN

What do you mean? CORMAC

She saw a shirt and tie out back, and then she walked in and saw . . . this stranger with his hands on my leg. I guess she mistook it for—something sexual. LAUREN

Did you know Coach Kingsley was coming by? CORMAC

LAUREN

No. I got a letter from the school, but it didn't say anything about him coming to the coast.

CORMAC

Did your mother know?

LAUREN

I don't know. Coach said he'd sent another letter, but I don't know if we ever got it.

CORMAC

One more thing: Did your mother know Coach Kingsley?

DAVID

Yes.

No.

LAUREN

CORMAC

What?

DAVID

No.

Yes.

LAUREN

CORMAC

Which is it?

LAUREN

David?

DAVID

I think—she knew him—before, but I don't know if she *knew* she knew him—before.

LAUREN

Before what?

DAVID

All—this. And—all that—back then.

LAUREN

*What* are you talking about?

(David looks to Cormac for help.)

CORMAC

You know your mom spent a semester at Connecticut Wesleyan in the early eighties?

LAUREN

Yes. She was a graduate student there . . . so?

(She looks to David. Lauren is very confused.)

DAVID

Your mom was the English tutor for the basketball team.

LAUREN

Oh . . . I didn't know that. She never mentioned it.

CORMAC

Aaron Kingsley was on the team.

DAVID

They knew each other.

LAUREN

How do you know?

DAVID

I made some calls.

LAUREN

Doesn't mean anything. (To Cormac) Does it?

CORMAC

There's more.

LAUREN

What? (A beat.) David?

DAVID (sighs heavily)

The dates, Lauren.

LAUREN

What *dates*?

DAVID

On the articles I downloaded from the Hartford Courant. This—Jason Alexander was killed in January of 1984.

LAUREN

January? (A beat.) That's not possible. I was born in December.

DAVID

Lauren, this—Jason Alexander isn't your father. He couldn't be. He was killed before you were even conceived.

LAUREN (to Cormac)

Is that true?

CORMAC

It checks out.

LAUREN (stunned)

Then who is?

(KATE ENTERS, walking purposefully up the walkway.)

KATE

Lauren, where are your manners? Why didn't you invite these two gentlemen in for some refreshments?

LAUREN (lost)

Mom.

KATE

Hello, David. Detective McCabe.

CORMAC

I've got some business downtown. (To David.) You come with me, boyfriend; I *do* want to compare notes.

(Cormac grabs David and more or less drags him away.)

DAVID

Lauren, will you be all right?

I—don't know.

LAUREN

(DAVID and CORMAC EXIT. Lauren tries to hide her tears from her mother.)

Lauren? Honey? What's wrong? Lauren . . .

KATE

Is it true, Mom?

LAUREN

Is what true?

KATE

What they said? What they told me about my father?

LAUREN

I don't know what you're talking about. What did they tell you?

KATE

That Jason Alexander, whoever the hell he is, was killed three months before I was conceived.

LAUREN

What?

KATE

It was in the paper, Mom! David downloaded the same articles you have in the scrapbook, but with the dates. That detective had the same information.

LAUREN

Oh . . .

KATE

"Oh." That's it: "Oh?" (A beat.) Why did you lie to me? For all this time—you lied to me.

LAUREN

Honey—

KATE (reaching for her)

LAUREN (pulling away)  
Don't touch me!

KATE  
Honey . . . something—happened a long time ago, and—

LAUREN  
I know *when*. I want to know *what* happened!

KATE  
Things were very difficult.

LAUREN  
“Difficult?”

KATE  
I . . . was a tutor for the basketball team at Connecticut Wesleyan—

LAUREN  
When Aaron Kingsley was one the team?

KATE  
Yes.

LAUREN  
And . . . ?

KATE  
I . . . made a mistake.

LAUREN  
A mistake? He's my father, right? Do you deny it? Mom!

KATE  
You don't have a father.

LAUREN  
Mom, that is a biological impossibility. Oh, I can see it all now. You get—what some kind of a crush on the All-American basketball player. You have a fling or an affair or maybe just sex and get pregnant. He—rejects you, so—so you run away. Run all the way across the country and concoct this elaborate story about Jason Alexander to protect your—virtue. Is that it?

KATE

That's not how it was. It . . . was a very bad time; I was confused and humiliated. I didn't . . . have a choice of what to do. I wanted you to have a name so I found you one. I remembered the accident and thought . . . never mind what I thought.

LAUREN

Is that why you shot him? Because he humiliated you?

KATE

I shot him . . . because I had the opportunity to do so.

LAUREN

No, you shot him because he *found* me. He discovered your little secret, right?

KATE

He didn't *find* you, Lauren. He was just recruiting an athlete. He never even knew about you; I never told him I was pregnant. *I* didn't even know it when I left Connecticut. It wasn't until I got here that . . .

LAUREN

You concocted this whole fantastic story?

KATE

That's right. To protect you; to give you a name.

LAUREN

You keep my father from me for 18 years, and then when he shows up—you shoot him. Why?

KATE

Personal reasons.

LAUREN

Why did you have me at all?

KATE

Oh, Lauren.

LAUREN

To punish him? Did you want me to be your little secret that you could withhold from him?

KATE

No! Honey—

LAUREN

That's why you didn't want me going to Connecticut Wesleyan.

KATE

Yes! No! Honey—please.

LAUREN

It would have come out eventually—that you were there. That you tutored the team. He would have put two and two together. You didn't want *me* to know.

KATE

That's not true. Stop it!

LAUREN

What is true, Mom? How can I believe anything you tell me now? Lies. It's all lies. Nothing but lies all my life.

(Lauren starts off.)

KATE

No, Honey, you don't understand. (A beat.) Where are you going?

LAUREN

To see my father.

KATE

Honey. Don't—

(LAUREN EXITS as Kate reaches out for her in a futile gesture. THE LIGHT COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE V

SCENE: LIGHTS COME on AARON in the hospital bed later that night. He's looking through a recent issue of *Sports Illustrated*. After a moment, LAUREN ENTERS.

Coach Kingsley?  
LAUREN

Lauren? You—you shouldn't be here.  
AARON

Yes, I should.  
LAUREN

Where's—  
AARON

My mother?  
LAUREN

Yeah.  
AARON

LAUREN  
I don't know, but she's not here. And they took her gun away. Don't worry.

AARON

I'm . . . not supposed to see you. I gave her my word.

LAUREN

I think you gave her a lot more than that.

AARON

What?

LAUREN (thinks, then)

A daughter? Didn't you give her a daughter too?

AARON (not sure)

No.

LAUREN

Yes, you did. You just didn't know it.

AARON

Lauren, this—this is not a good time. My wife is here; she just went to the lavatory. She'll be right back.

LAUREN

Coach Kingsley. My mother told me—well she didn't exactly *tell* me, but I know everything.

AARON

Look, you're mother's not well. She shot me. I don't know what she told you, but you can't believe it.

LAUREN

She admitted to me that *you* are my father.

AARON (quietly)

Oh my god.

LAUREN

Do you deny it?

AARON

It's—possible.

LAUREN

Then don't push me away!

AARON

Oh, Jesus. (A few beats.) Lauren, I swear I didn't know what happened—after—she left. I never knew about you.

LAUREN

I know that; she didn't *want* you to know. She made up this elaborate story about a guy at UCONN being my father. But that was impossible. I figured it all out—you had a fling. She got pregnant; you rejected her, so she left school and never told you anything.

AARON

Is that what she said?

LAUREN

Is it true? Are you my father?

AARON

It certainly looks like you've got my jump shot.

LAUREN

I don't know what to say—to do.

AARON

This is—a shock for both of us.

LAUREN

Of course I'll come play for you at Connecticut Wesleyan.

AARON

No. You—don't have to do that.

LAUREN

Don't you want me to? That's why you came to see me, right?

AARON

I—don't want to—come between you and your mother.

LAUREN

She's been between us for 18 years!

AARON  
Lauren, this is not what I expected. It's much more complicated than . . . I don't know what to do with it.

(LISETTE ENTERS)

LISETTE  
Oh, hello.

AARON  
This is my wife.

LAUREN (taken aback by her age)  
Your wife?

LISETTE  
Lisette. And you are?

LAUREN  
Lauren—Alexander.

LISETTE (moving to Aaron)  
Alexander? Isn't that who shot—

LAUREN  
That was my mother. I've never shot anybody, although I did break a quarterback's arm one time.

LISETTE  
What do you want?

AARON  
Lauren was telling me—she interested in playing for us.

LISETTE  
What? After her mother tried to kill you, you want her to play for you?

AARON  
Lauren, maybe you should go.

LAUREN (thinks, then)  
No! No way. No more lies.

LISETTE  
What lies?

AARON

Lauren, please. You don't know everything.

LAUREN

Then tell me. Tell *both* of us. Your wife has a right to know too.

LISETTE

To know what? (A beat.) Aaron?

AARON

Sit down, Lisette.

LISETTE (sensing something)

All right.

(She sits in a chair close to the bed;  
Aaron takes her hand.)

AARON

Honey . . . a long time ago, I—ah—knew Lauren's mother. She was a tutor for the basketball team when I was an undergraduate.

LAUREN

And an All-American.

LISETTE

The woman who shot you—was your tutor?

AARON

Yes, Kathryn Adams was her name—then. Now it's—

LAUREN

Kate Alexander. She changed it.

AARON

It's—Dr. Kate Alexander . . . Lauren, don't make me do this. I beg you.

LAUREN

Fine. I'll tell her. (A beat.) What your husband is trying to tell you . . . is that I'm his daughter.

LISETTE

What?

AARON

It's probably true. I had a brief—encounter with Kathryn and—

LISETTE

Why didn't you tell me about this? A daughter . . .

LAUREN

He didn't know. Neither of us knew. My mother left school before she even knew she was pregnant. She never told him because she didn't want him to know about me. I think it was her twisted way of punishing him for getting her pregnant.

LISETTE

Why would she leave school if she wasn't pregnant?

LAUREN

Because he rejected her.

LISETTE

Is that true, Aaron?

AARON (woodenly)

Yeah, I rejected her.

LISETTE

She wanted more?

AARON

No, she wanted less.

LISETTE

I don't understand.

AARON

What you have to understand is that—we'd just won the conference championship, qualified for the NCAA tournament. I was the conference MVP. I was on top of the world. I could do anything, have anything; any girl on campus I wanted. You know how it feels Lauren—to be the best. To be able to take what you want . . . to dominate another player.

LAUREN

It's only a game.

AARON

Not to me. It was life in the palm of my hand--there for the taking, and I took the one thing, the one woman on campus that was inaccessible to me.

LISETTE

Don't say anything else, Aaron.

LAUREN

What are you saying?

AARON

It was after the game; at a victory party. I coerced Kathryn into coming with me. I was just a kid—a 20-year old, and they—the school, the fans, my teammates—made me feel like a king. I thought I could have whatever I wanted.

LISETTE

Aaron, don't.

AARON

Lisette, it's the only way out of that dark place; the only way I'll be through with it. I have to do this to get back my life—to have a life to give to you and our daughter. If I don't do this, we won't make it.

LISETTE

We might not make it if you do.

AARON

I have to take that chance. (A few beats.) So . . . I took what I wanted. I had sex with your mother—nonconsensual sex.

( Lisette withdraws her hand.)

LAUREN

You . . . raped . . . my mother?

AARON

That's not the end of it. Then I tried to ruin her to protect myself. When she went to the police, I got a couple of guys on the team to say they'd had sex with her too; she was three years older than me—the older experienced woman, and the school was a lot more interested in protecting their All-American than standing up for a graduate student. She never had a chance. (To himself.) And I didn't know it then, but neither did I.

LAUREN

Oh my god. It all makes sense now. The karate, the rules, the gun, shooting you. It all makes perfect sense. All the pieces have fallen into place. How could I have been so blind?

AARON

I'm sorry, Lauren.

LAUREN

You're sorry? After all your years of glory and adoration and—conquest on and off the court—you're sorry? My mother raised me by herself in fear; afraid to have any kind of a relationship with another human being other than me and you're sorry! You son-of-a-bitch! I hate you!

LISETTE

I think you should go.

LAUREN

Where? Where do you go when—you come into the world like I did? Where do you go when you weren't wanted to begin with? Tell me where to go, and I'll go there.

LISETTE (very tenderly)

Go home, Honey. Go home.

(BLACKOUT TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE VI

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on WEINSTEIN, KATE and LAUREN IN WEINSTEIN'S office. Weinstein's chair is set a little further upstage in this scene, allowing room for Kate and Lauren to pass in front of her.

LAUREN

I'm not anyone's daughter, Weinstein. I'm just the by-product of a sexual assault. Not exactly what you'd call a "bundle of joy."

WEINSTEIN

Lauren, have you ever felt unwanted before now?

KATE

Maybe I did tend to over compensate. I didn't want Lauren to ever feel like she wasn't wanted—because of the circumstances of her conception.

LAUREN

What do I do with this, Weinstein? What do you do when you find out your mother is a liar, and the father you didn't know you had is . . . I don't even want to say it.

WEINSTEIN

I think you embrace love and acceptance from wherever it is offered.

KATE

I could just never bring myself to tell her the truth. After a while, the story got to be so much a part of me . . . that I almost believed it myself. I wanted to believe it . . . to—believe something, almost anything else.

LAUREN

I don't think she *ever* would have told me the truth.

WEINSTEIN

Put yourself in her position. What would you have done?

LAUREN

For starters, I would have broken his arm.

WEINSTEIN

Your mother wasn't physically capable of doing that.

KATE

I saw to it that Lauren would be capable of defending herself from—acts of aggression.

LAUREN

I know how to defend myself physically, but emotionally—I don't have any defenses. How do you stop the hurt when you find out . . . you weren't ever really wanted? How do you make up for finding out that your existence is the consequence of an act of violence?

WEINSTEIN

Kate, exactly what you feared most would happen has happened: Lauren is feeling terribly unwanted.

KATE

Dr. Weinstein, there is nothing in this world, no hardship, no humiliation, that I would not endure for my daughter. She is my life.

WEINSTEIN

You need to tell her that.

KATE

I don't know if I know how.

WEINSTEIN

Lauren, everything your mother did, she did in an attempt to protect you.

LAUREN

Does that make it right?

WEINSTEIN

It does to her.

LAUREN

So what am I supposed to do, Weinstein? Stop taking notes. Stop listening for once and tell me what to do.

WEINSTEIN

What do *you* want, Lauren?

LAUREN

To be wanted. To be loved.

WEINSTEIN

Then you don't have to do anything.

(LIGHTS FADE ON WEINSTEIN and COME UP on KATE and LAUREN on opposite sides of the stage. They slowly move across the stage, approaching each other as the scene plays.)

KATE

I love you, Lauren, more than anything else in this world or any other. I love you.

LAUREN

How can you after—what happened to you?

KATE

You're not hard to love, Baby.

LAUREN

Why did you—even have me after? I—don't know what I would have done if—

KATE

As soon as I felt the first quickening of you in my body, I knew I had to have you. Oh, they tried to talk me out of you; tried to get me to give you away. Said I couldn't do it by myself; said I wouldn't love you enough. But they were wrong. I never didn't want you, not for a second. When I saw you—covered with blood and fluid, my blood, my being, I knew you were me and I was you, and I'd never let them take you away. You yelled like crazy until I tucked you into my arms and you found my breast. Then you were mine, and I was yours. You didn't yell again until you were an adolescent. Honey, even if you weren't a love child, you were a *loved* child. Always will be. And nobody else will ever love you as much. I wanted you Lauren, then, now, forever. That's why it's so hard for me to give you up now.

LAUREN

You're not giving me up, Mom. You're just letting go; so am I. It's something we both have to do. I could never *leave* you. I—love you too much.

KATE

Baby, since I have my own life back, I think I can let you have one of your own too.

LAUREN (breaking)

Hold me, Mom. Just hold me really, really tight. And don't let go.

(They embrace center stage and weep  
openly as the LIGHT COME DOWN  
SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT II, SCENE VII  
SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON KATE,  
LAUREN, and DAVID seated at the kitchen  
table few days later. Lauren is filling three  
glasses with Gatorade.

So, USC, here I come. LAUREN (raising her glass)

Gotta love those Trojans. DAVID

David . . .! LAUREN

What? DAVID

Raise your glass. LAUREN

Honey, you don't have to stay in town. Really, I'll be fine. KATE

I want to stay in LA, Mom. I want you to see me play. LAUREN

She has to stay. I want to see her too. DAVID

And you will. Now, raise your glasses. (They do.) Cheers. LAUREN

DAVID

Here. Here.

KATE

I was thinking that maybe I need to be away from you, more than you need to be away from me.

LAUREN (to David)

That's her oblique way of saying she wants some time alone to spend with Detective McCabe.

KATE

That is not what I was saying. I—simply find Mac—Detective McCabe interesting. He's a former student of mine, and we enjoy talking about—

LAUREN

The good ole days?

KATE

When were they?

LAUREN

Beats me.

KATE

David, what are your plans for next year?

DAVID

UCLA. Bruin born and Bruin bred. And I'll continue to freelance for the *Times*.

KATE

Then I suppose we'll all be seeing something of one another for a while.

DAVID

I'll drink to that. Hit me.

LAUREN (pouring)

Be careful. This isn't lemonade.

DAVID

I'm looking for that elusive electrolyte high.

(LISETTE ENTERS and knocks on the outside door. Lauren goes to the door.)

Oh . . . hello.	LAUREN
Who is it, Lauren?	KATE
It's—for you, Mom.	LAUREN
Yes?	KATE (moving to door)
I'm Lisette Kingsley. I'd like to speak with you.	LISETTE
Oh . . . come in.	KATE
Thank you.	LISETTE (as she enters)
David, we should go.	LAUREN
Where?	DAVID
Malibu to watch the sun set.	LAUREN
On the British Empire?	DAVID
The Pacific Ocean.	LAUREN
I'm with you, Babe.	DAVID
	(DAVID and LAUREN EXIT.)

Please, sit. KATE

Thank you. LISETTE

Can I offer you some—Gatorade? KATE

No, thanks. (A beat.) You're—different. LISETTE

I get that all the time. Maybe too much so. KATE

From what I thought you'd be. LISETTE

What did you think? Man-hater with a gun. KATE

Something like that. LISETTE

I don't hate them all, and the cops took my gun. (A beat.) What—can I do for you Mrs. Kingsley? KATE

Lisette, please. LISETTE

Okay. I guess shooting your husband puts us on a first name basis. KATE

Yes, I suppose it does. LISETTE

In that case, call me: "Kate." KATE

All right—Kate. LISETTE

KATE

I suppose you think I owe you some kind of an apology or something for shooting your husband.

LISETTE

No, you don't owe—either of us anything. I actually came to apologize to *you*—for what Aaron did.

KATE

He already did that or tried. You needn't bother.

LISETTE

He didn't tell you very much at all; he didn't tell you how—*he* has suffered.

KATE

He tried, but I wasn't interested in hearing about it. I'm still not.

LISETTE

Just give me a moment—please.

KATE (sits opposite her)

All right.

LISETTE

When I met Aaron—several years ago now—

KATE

You were a cheerleader or pom-pom girl, right?

LISETTE

Yes, I—was, and Aaron was—a mess. Worse than that actually, he was a despondent drunk, who was getting run out of the NBA, not because he had bad knees, but because he couldn't stop drinking. He'd miss team meetings, transportation and finally even games. He'd had two failed marriages because he—couldn't perform, and if it weren't for Viagra I don't think he could now.

KATE

He didn't have that problem with me.

LISETTE

I'm sorry, I'm just trying to give you a picture of how Aaron has punished himself.

KATE

He seems to be fine now.

LISETTE

Now that you shot him?

KATE

Now that—you've *rescued* him. Isn't that what we women are expected to do?

LISETTE

He's wasn't fine with me; he was much better. He'd stopped drinking, and on the surface it appeared he'd put his life back together, but there was still something dark inside him. I didn't know what it was.

KATE

And now you know.

LISETTE

Yes, now I know. And now . . . it's gone.

KATE

Just like that?

LISETTE

Not quite. It took three bullets in the abdomen and him telling Lauren and me about what he did to you to exorcise the demon that was destroying him. (A beat.) I hope—this confrontation did the same for you.

KATE

I think it did.

LISETTE

Aaron is not the same man that did those things to you. If he was, I couldn't be with him.

KATE

I'm not the same frightened schoolgirl I was then either.

LISETTE

You're both different people now. (A beat.) Can you forgive him?

KATE

I don't have to. I shot him. Can you?

LISETTE  
He's my husband. I have to forgive him.

KATE  
Your choice.

LISETTE  
Yes, it was, and it was a difficult one.

KATE  
I guess that's it then.

LISETTE  
Not quite.

KATE  
What?

LISETTE  
We're going home tomorrow. Aaron—would like to say good-bye to Lauren. If that's okay.

KATE (thinks, then)  
I'll tell her. If it's okay, she'll be here. If not, she won't.

LISETTE  
That's fair enough.

(Lisette rises and starts for the door.)

KATE  
I hear you're having a daughter?

LISETTE  
Yes. In a few weeks.

KATE  
Love her to pieces.

LISETTE  
We will . . . thank you.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN TO END THE  
SCENE AS LISETTE EXITS.)

ACT II, SCENE VIII

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP ON LAUREN shooting baskets the next day. After a moment, AARON ENTERS UPSTAGE AND MOVES DOWNSTAGE.

AARON

Nice looking jump shot you got there.

LAUREN

Comes naturally. (Keeps shooting.) What do you want?

AARON

I'm leaving.

LAUREN

I heard. I'm staying . . . here in LA—to play ball. USC.

AARON

I heard. (A beat.) Will I be seeing you again?

LAUREN

Only on opposing sides of a basketball court.

AARON

I guess I was hoping—for more.

LAUREN

More what, Coach?

AARON

Some kind of a—relationship with you. Some kind of relationship with—my daughter.

LAUREN

I'm not your daughter.

AARON

Got my jump shot.

LAUREN

That's all I got from you. I don't want anything else.

AARON

You know, Lauren. You've got a lot good moves: you can fake left and go right; fake right and go left. What I haven't seen you do is: fake left and *go* left.

LAUREN

What are you saying, Coach?

AARON

Just that—maybe I have something to offer.

LAUREN

I have a coach.

AARON

But you don't have a father.

LAUREN (goes to him)

Look, I don't want a father; I've never had a father, and I sure as hell don't need one now. Just go. Leave me alone.

AARON

Let me ask you one thing.

LAUREN

May not get the answer you want.

AARON

Why did you come see me in the hospital?

LAUREN (spontaneously)  
Because I just found out . . .

AARON  
You had a father?

LAUREN  
So what?

AARON  
So you wanted to see me.

LAUREN  
That was before I knew about you.

AARON  
No, it was *after* you knew about me. Otherwise, why would you have come?

LAUREN  
It was before I knew what kind of man you were!

AARON  
I'm not that kind of man anymore.

LAUREN  
Yeah, right. What kind of man are you then?

AARON  
Just an ordinary guy trying to put his life back together after making a terrible mistake. A guy that works with young women everyday to make them better and stronger and proud of themselves.

LAUREN  
Why don't you teach young men how to be better and proud of themselves instead of like—the way they are?

AARON  
I could do that. Would you help me with a project like that?

LAUREN  
Why should I?

AARON  
Because it could do some real good. Because it could make a difference.

LAUREN  
My mother's proud!

AARON  
She has every right to be. Look at the daughter she raised.

LAUREN (thinks, then)  
Look, Coach—what do you want from me?

AARON  
Give me a chance, Lauren. That's all. Just a chance. Like it or not, I'm as much a part of you as your mother is.

LAUREN (bending a little)  
Why should I give you anything?

AARON  
Because I'm human. Because I need a break. Because—you're going to have a little sister—who might need you.

LAUREN  
I don't need you, you know?

AARON  
Maybe I need you.

LAUREN (torn)  
I don't know. (A beat.) Don't you have a plane to catch or something?

AARON  
Yeah.

LAUREN  
Then leave me alone.

AARON  
I'll tell you what: Let's put it in the hands of Fate.

LAUREN  
What do you mean?

AARON

Just something I used to do when I was a kid. Something I did when I had to make a hard decision. (A beat.) I'd take a free shot. Decide that way.

LAUREN

What?

AARON

Take a shot. If you miss it, I'll walk away, walk right out of your life forever.

LAUREN

And if I hit it?

AARON

You'll give me—us, a chance, a chance to have some kind of relationship. Anything. What'd you say? It's up to you.

LAUREN (think, then nods)

If I *miss* it, you walk away. Right?

AARON

And never look back.

LAUREN

If I hit it?

AARON

You'll call me—whenever you're ready. We can start with that project.

LAUREN (thinks, then)

Okay. I'll take a shot.

(She goes to the free throw line, dribbles the ball and takes a deep breath. THE SOUND OF FANS SCREAMING COMES UP; KIDS ARE YELLING "AIR BALL, AIR BALL" as she lines up the shot. Aaron is watching her every move. After a moment, she shoots the ball into the air. Just as it reaches the peak of its arc, BLACKOUT TO END THE PLAY.)

CURTAIN