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The Restaurant Play

by Scott Gibson

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The Restaurant Play

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CHARACTERS

2F / 3 Male

MARJORIE: *The mother, 40's*

ALAN: *The father, 40's*

KEITH: *Their son, early 20's*

KRISSY: *Their daughter, late teens*

PETER: *Their waiter at the restaurant, 20's*

APPROXIMATE PLAYING TIME

35 Min.

SETTING

Present time: A nice restaurant

The Restaurant Play by Scott Gibson

AT RISE: *MARJORIE and her husband, ALAN, along with their children, KEITH and KRISSEY, seated at a table in a rather upscale restaurant. They study the menu. After a few moments, MAJORIE lowers her menu and looks around the room.*

MARJORIE
What do you suppose people think when they see us?

The others look up from their menus.

ALAN
What?

MARJORIE
When they look at us. What do they see?

ALAN
What makes you think people are looking at us?

KRISSEY
(Going back to studying her menu)
I hope they aren't.

MARJORIE
I'm not talking about right here, right now. I'm talking about in general. *(Beat)* But here, too. What kind of an image do you think we present?

ALAN
We present an image of four hungry people waiting to order food. That's what I think they think. If they think about us at all.

MARJORIE
Don't be obtuse. Everybody notices everybody else. Granted, maybe not so much on a conscious level. But on a subconscious one.

KRISSEY
Can't we please just order our meals? Does there have to be a side of psychoanalytical bullshit to go with it?

MARJORIE picks up her menu and opens it. Everyone continues to study their menus for another few seconds.

KEITH

Since when have brussels sprouts become an appetizer? Have you noticed that? Anymore, they're popping up on restaurant menus all the time. I don't like brussels sprouts as a side dish. Why would I want them as an appetizer?

KRISSY

They've come up with all kinds of new ways to prepare them. They can be really tasty with the right spices and coatings.

KEITH

They're brussels sprouts. No matter what you do to them, they're still gonna taste like brussels sprouts.

MARJORIE

(Hasn't been paying attention to any of this conversation)

The person sitting across from you in a waiting room, for instance. Or when you're in one of those rows of chairs on the concourse before they call boarding for your plane. You look around. You can't help yourself. Without even realizing it, you're evaluating the person walking by you: The clothes he's wearing. What she might be looking at on her phone screen. The little suitcase on wheels that she's pulling. You form an opinion. Whether you want to or not.

The others shake their heads.

KRISSY

No.

ALAN

Huh-uh.

KEITH

I never do that.

MARJORIE

Of course you do.

KEITH

I don't. I really don't.

MARJORIE

Part of it is the age-old instinct for self-preservation, don't you suppose? Harkening back to the earliest days of man, when we didn't know if who we encountered would be friend or foe. It was important to gauge body posture, facial expression, stance. To know whether you

MARJORIE (*Cont'd*)

might be welcomed or attacked. You needed to be prepared for anything. Hence, being hyper-aware of your surroundings.

ALAN looks up from his menu and glances around the room.

ALAN

And who are you thinking might be about to attack us?

KEITH

I hope it's the waiter. I'm hungry.

MARJORIE

That isn't my point. I'm only saying that we *do* notice the people around us. We form an opinion. Whether it's deliberate or not.

ALAN

So what *is* your point, then?

MARJORIE

I already told you. I wonder what kind of an image we present to people who don't know us.

KRISSY

Geez, Mom.

PETER, the waiter (20ish) enters carrying a tray of beverages. He sets a drink in front of each of them.

PETER

Okay, here we are. Have we decided what we'd like? Or are there any questions about the menu?

ALAN glances at the others.

ALAN

I think I know what I want. Everybody?

KEITH

Yep.

KRISSY

(Indicating KEITH but talking to PETER)

He wants a double order of the brussels sprouts.

PETER

(A bit taken aback by that)

Oh. Uh, sure.

KEITH

I do *not* want the brussels sprouts. Not even one of them. I'll have the fettuccine with shrimp.

PETER

(Writing)

Excellent. *(To KRISSY)* And for you?

KRISSY

The poached pear and cranberry walnut salad. With the dressing on the side.

PETER

Great choice. *(To MARJORIE)* Ma'am?

MARJORIE

I have a question...

PETER

Sure.

MARJORIE

What did you think of us when you first walked up to our table?

The other members of MARJORIE's family react with cringes, embarrassment, annoyance.

KRISSY/

(Overlapping)

Mom!!!

KEITH/

(Overlapping)

Jeez.

ALAN

(Overlapping)

Good Lord...

PETER

(Thoroughly confused)

Ma'am?

MARJORIE

The four of us... What did you think?

PETER

Um...

ALAN

Marjorie, stop badgering our waiter. He just wants to know what we want to eat.

MARJORIE

I'm not badgering. I'm inquiring. (*Squinting at PETER's nametag*) Peter, right?

PETER

Yes...

MARJORIE

Peter, what was your first impression? Certainly you must have had one.

PETER

Not, not really. I just thought, "Oh, a new party at table six."

MARJORIE

Okay... Well, but then, you told us about the specials, and you took our drink orders. By then, you must have started to form an opinion.

KRISSY

Mom, will you please just shut up?

MARJORIE

(Ignoring this)

You went back into the kitchen. Or to the bar. What were your thoughts? About us?

PETER

I... I...

MARJORIE

Yes?

PETER

I thought, "They must be a family. Husband, wife, kids. Or maybe one is their kid and the other is a boyfriend or girlfriend of the other."

KRISSY and KEITH look at each other.

KRISSY

Euuwww!

KEITH

Yeah? Well, the feeling's mutual!

MARJORIE

Did we seem nice? Did you think, "Oh, they look like a pleasant family?"

PETER

Um, yeah. I guess. ...Anyway, I should probably take your order.

MARJORIE

Oh, yes, of course. (*Consulting the menu for another few seconds*) I just don't know...
What do you recommend, Peter?

PETER

The prime rib is always popular. Personally, it's my favorite.

MARJORIE

No... I don't eat red meat.

PETER

Well, the grilled salmon is good. It's served in a very nice dill sauce over a bed of rice.

MARJORIE

I'm not really in a fish-y mood.

PETER

Well...

MARJORIE

But the rice and the dill sauce sound good. Does anything else come with those?

PETER

We could probably serve anything you'd like on that. Chicken... Or... or chicken...

MARJORIE

Yes. Let's do that.

PETER

Chicken?

MARJORIE

And the rice and dill sauce.

*MARJORIE hands PETER her menu.
ALAN also hands PETER his menu.*

ALAN

I'll do the prime rib. With a baked potato. And my apologies.

PETER collects the menus from KEITH and KRISSEY.

PETER

It's fine, sir. Anybody want soup or salad?

The others shake their heads. PETER exits.

ALAN

(Looking after PETER)

I wonder if we'll ever see him again.

KRISSEY

(To KEITH)

Boyfriend? Yuck!

KEITH

(To KRISSEY)

Yeah, well, I might as well have ordered the brussels sprouts. I'm not going to be able to eat anything now, anyway.

MARJORIE

See, if people were listening to that, they would think you don't like each other.

KEITH./KRISSEY

(In unison)

We don't like each other.

MARJORIE

Alan, say something to your children.

ALAN

Okay. I don't like them, either.

MARJORIE

Don't do that. I know you're kidding. But other people don't.

ALAN

Marjorie, what is this sudden obsession you have with what other people think of us?

MARJORIE

It's not sudden and it isn't an obsession. It's just that I'm proud of my family, and I would like others to think well of them, too.

KEITH

Even people we don't know? Perfect strangers?

MARJORIE

Of course. Why wouldn't I?

KRISSY

Because we're probably never going to see any of them again.

MARJORIE

I don't think that's an excuse for behaving badly.

KEITH

So, you think we should be fake and artificial whenever we're out together in public.

MARJORIE

Nobody has to be fake or artificial! Just pretend you like each other.

KRISSY

"Pretend we like each other?" Do you hear yourself?

MARJORIE

I just think, if you pretend long enough and hard enough, it isn't pretense any longer. It's reality. We could really like each other, enjoy each other's company, if we put our minds to it.

ALAN

Marjorie... Margie... We *do* like each other. (*To KRISSY and KEITH, pointing at them before they can contradict him*) Both of you little piss ants keep your opinions to yourself, got it?

KRISSY and KEITH, either of whom—or perhaps both—might have been about to say something, keep quiet.

ALAN (*Cont'd*)

You say you're always looking around, evaluating other people. Then you must notice that we're not any different from most of the other families you see. They, all of them, quibble, they natter at each other, they laugh sometimes, and most of the time, they just ignore each other. It's how these things go. It's what families do.

MARJORIE

I suppose...

PETER enters, carrying a cloth-covered basket which he brings to the table and sets down.

PETER

Here's some butter and warm bread. How are we doing on drinks?

MARJORIE

Peter... do you mind if I ask you a question?

ALAN/KRISSY/KEITH

(In unison)

Oh God...

PETER

(With a bewildered glance at the others)

Um... Sure...

MARJORIE

"Sure," you mind, or "sure," I can ask?

PETER

Sure, you can ask.

KEITH

(Muttering)

Wrong answer.

MARJORIE

What is *your* family like?

PETER

My... family?

MARJORIE

Yes.

KRISSY

Mom, don't do this.

MARJORIE

Are they nice? Would you say you come from a happy family?

PETER

I... I... yes, I guess so.

MARJORIE

They're happy. You were happy being a part of them.

PETER

Most of the time, anyway.

MARJORIE

Oh. Okay. Thank you.

PETER turns to leave. He gets a few steps, pauses, then turns and comes back to the table.

PETER

I mean, my parents aren't wild about the fact that I'm working as a waiter. My dad, especially. He says I'm wasting my potential.

MARJORIE

Oh.

KEITH

(Glancing at ALAN)

Gee, where have I heard that before?

ALAN

(To KEITH)

Son, you're twenty-three. You have a college degree, and you work at a car wash. You *are* wasting your potential.

KRISSY

Oh, here we go again.

KEITH

What's wrong with working at a car wash?

ALAN

Nothing. If you're sixteen and between your junior and senior years of high school.

MARJORIE

Alan, this is not the time or place to get into this.

ALAN

(ignoring her)

Or even if you're twenty-three, and not living in your parents' basement. *(to PETER)* Are you living with your parents?

PETER

Um... no.

ALAN

Well, there you go, then!

KEITH

Oh. So you're saying you'd like me to be a waiter, then?

ALAN

I'm betting it pays better than what you're making now.

KEITH shoves back his chair and stands.

KEITH

Fine. You know what? I've lost my appetite, anyway.

KEITH storms out.

MARJORIE

(calling after him)

Keith! Don't go! Keith! *(Turning to ALAN)* Now see what you've done?

ALAN

He'll be back. I have the car keys, and it's too far to walk home.

MARJORIE

Don't make light of this! Go after him.

ALAN

Marjorie, I'm telling you, he'll come back.

MARJORIE

I don't want him to come back! ...I mean, I want you to go tell him to come back. That you want him to come back. You do, don't you?

ALAN

Of course I do.

MARJORIE

Then go find him!!!

ALAN looks at MARJORIE who glares defiantly at him. He tosses his hands up in surrender, throws his napkin on the table, and stands. He exits in the direction KEITH left.

KRISSY

I bet nobody looking at us right now thinks we're a happy family.

MARJORIE

Oh, hush. You don't always have to be a smart aleck. Or a little bitch.

KRISSY

Mom!

MARJORIE

Oh, *sorry*. (To PETER) What a charming group of people you must find us.

PETER sits in the chair that KEITH vacated.

PETER

It's not like I want to be a waiter for the rest of my life. But even if I did, what's wrong with that?

KRISSY

(Bewildered)

What's happening here?

PETER

The tips are good. I make decent money. I meet all kinds of interesting people. You, for example. And, you know, you'd be surprised just how many people I've seen get up and storm away from a table. It happens more than you might think.

MARJORIE

Really? Oh, I know I shouldn't take comfort in that, but I do.

PETER

I work about five hours a night. It gives me all kinds of time to do the things I like. Bicycle. Go to movies. Snowboard...

KRISSY

You snowboard? I've always wanted to learn to do that.

PETER

It's pretty easy. A couple of lessons, and you're good to go. I could probably teach you.

KRISSY

You'd do that?

PETER

Sure. Why not?

MARJORIE

So, you and your dad... You argue like Alan and Keith do? Alan's my husband. Keith's our son. But I guess you knew that.

PETER

Oh, we've had way worse fights than that. I just... I wish he could respect my choices, you know? What's wrong with being a waiter, after all?

MARJORIE

Nothing, of course. The world is always going to need people to bring us our food.

PETER

I'm in my twenties. Aren't your twenties supposed to be when you kick back and just try to find yourself? Figure things out? Before you get weighted down with responsibilities.

MARJORIE

I suppose so... yes.

PETER

Not according to my dad. You graduate college, you find a high-paying job, and then you work until you're dead.

MARJORIE

Oh, I'm sure he doesn't mean *that*. But you went to college?

PETER helps himself to some bread from the bread basket.

PETER

(Nodding)

I have a bachelor's in economics.

MARJORIE

(Impressed)

Economics!

PETER

(Chewing)

I've always been good at math.

KRISSY

Oh, I hated math!

PETER

Me, too. Just because you're good at something doesn't mean you like it.

MARJORIE

I suppose there's all kinds of things you could do if you have a degree in economics.

KRISSY

So, what kind of movies do you like?

PETER

Oh, all kinds.

KRISSY

Like what? Horror?

PETER

No, not really.

MARJORIE

Keith has a degree in forestry. Which I thought was odd, because he never liked camping when we used to go. *(To KRISSY)* Remember when he fell into that patch of poison ivy?

KRISSY

(To MARJORIE) Yeah. *(To PETER)* Super-hero movies?

PETER

Not especially.

MARJORIE

Of course, forestry covers a wide range of topics, I suppose.

KRISSY

Spy movies? Science fiction?

PETER

(Shaking his head)

Uh-uh. Uh-uh.

KRISSY

Not romantic comedies?

PETER

No. ...Well, I mean...

KRISSY

You do! You like romantic comedies!

MARJORIE

Conservation... Geology... He used to have a rock collection.

PETER

Older ones. The classics. *Some Like It Hot. It Happened One Night. His Girl Friday.* I guess that's really what I prefer. Revivals. And independents.

MARJORIE

Fire prevention... Botany... Wildlife management...

KRISSY

I love those! Art house movies! Foreign films!

PETER

You know, there's a Frank Capra retrospective next week at—

KRISSY/PETER

(In unison)

—the Majestic.

KRISSY

I know! I know!! *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington!*

PETER

Meet John Doe! Lost Horizon!

KRISSY and PETER look delightedly at each other.

KRISSY

We should go!

PETER

It's a date!

MARJORIE

Come to think of it, there's about as many opportunities with a forestry degree as with economics. *(Now a delayed reaction to other conversation; looking at the others)* What?

ALAN has re-entered.

ALAN

Well, I looked all over. I can't find him. *(Taking his seat)* Maybe he took a bus home. *(Notices PETER sitting in KEITH's chair for the first time)* Hello...

KRISSY

Dad, guess what: Peter's going to teach me to snow board.

ALAN

(To KRISSY)

He's what? *(To PETER)* You're what?

PETER

(To KRISSY)

How about Wednesday? If that works for you.

Sure!

KRISSY

Now, wait a minute...

ALAN

KEITH enters, carrying two plates, which he sets in front of KRISSY and MARJORIE.

Here we are... The poached pear and cranberry walnut salad for you... and the chicken over rice and dill sauce for you.

KEITH

Keith?

MARJORIE

I'll be right back with the rest.

KEITH

KEITH exits. ALAN and MARJORIE stare after him.

You'll be right back? (To MARJORIE) What happened while I was gone?

ALAN

(To ALAN)
And we've got a date for the movies, too.

KRISSY

(Thoroughly confused)
You... you...

ALAN

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.

KRISSY

Before ALAN can say anything more, KEITH is back with two more plates and a pepper grinder under his arm. He sets a plate in front of ALAN.

Prime rib and a baked potato here...

KEITH

KEITH sets the other plate in front of PETER.

KEITH

And the fettucine with shrimp here. Would anybody like fresh ground pepper?

MARJORIE

No, thank you.

ALAN

(To KEITH)

What do you think you're doing?

KEITH

Oh, didn't you know? I work here now. I'm a waiter! Your fondest dreams have come true.

ALAN

Don't be ridiculous!

KEITH

No fresh ground pepper, then?

ALAN

You don't work here! You couldn't possibly!

KEITH

What... you don't think I'm qualified? *(Turning to PETER)* Peter, table eight would like to order some desserts.

PETER

(Getting to his feet)

Oh, sure. If you'll excuse me?

PETER exits.

MARJORIE

Of course you're qualified, Sweetheart. Alan, try to be a little supportive.

ALAN

Supportive? What's there to be supportive about? Six minutes ago you were a patron. You aren't suddenly on the payroll here!

KEITH

Well, these dinners didn't serve themselves.

KRISSY

Um, excuse me... I asked for my dressing to be served on the side?

KEITH reaches for KRISSY's plate.

KEITH

Oh, my apologies, Miss. I'll take that back and get you another.

ALAN

You're not going anywhere. Sit down and eat your meal.

KEITH

I'm sorry sir. My dinner break isn't until nine-thirty.

ALAN

Enough!!! Sit down... and eat your fucking shrimp fettucine.

Beat. KEITH sits. He puts his napkin in his lap.

KEITH

You're sending a lot of mixed messages, here, Dad. "Be a waiter. Don't be a waiter."

ALAN

(To KRISSEY)

And what's this nonsense about you dating our server?

KRISSEY

It's not nonsense. While you were gone, we had a connection. We like the same kind of movies.

ALAN

That's not a connection. It's a coincidence.

KRISSEY

It's a start.

ALAN

And a finish. You are not going on a date with him.

MARJORIE

He did seem nice.

ALAN

Marjorie... *(He actually can't think of anything to say to her, so after a second or so, he turns back to KRISSEY)* I won't have it, that's all.

KRISSEY

You won't *have* it? I'm over eighteen. You can't stop me.

KEITH

If you'll excuse me, it looks like table eleven is ready for their check.

KEITH starts to stand.

ALAN

(To KEITH)
Sit down. *(To KRISSEY)* He's a perfect stranger. You don't know anything about him.

MARJORIE

(Helpfully)
He has a degree in economics.

ALAN

Margie, that isn't helping.

KRISSEY

I'm in college. I've gone out with a lot of guys I barely knew. Some real weirdos, in fact. One or two that would make your hair stand on end.

MARJORIE

Oh, my.

ALAN

And this is supposed to make me feel better about your judgement?

KRISSEY

My point is, I'm still here. Nothing bad has happened.

ALAN

Yet. And now, I have an awful feeling that your definition of "something bad happening" is different than mine.

KRISSEY

If that's your roundabout way of asking whether I've had sex, the answer is yes.

ALAN groans. PETER enters and crosses to their table.

PETER

How is everything so far?

KRISSEY

(Gesturing to PETER, but looking at ALAN)
And who knows? I might have sex with Peter when we go snowboarding next Wednesday!

Beat. ALAN, MARJORIE and KEITH all look at PETER. KRISSEY continues to look at ALAN.

PETER

Um... I'll come back later.

PETER exits.

ALAN

He'd better not come back at all.

MARJORIE

Oh, Honey, be realistic. Did you really think Krissy was still a virgin at this stage of the game?

ALAN

I... I'd hoped! I mean... I didn't really want to think about it one way or the other.

KEITH

(To ALAN)

You should really eat your baked potato before it gets cold.

MARJORIE

After all, Alan, the first time you and I slept together, we were even younger than she is.

KRISSY/KEITH

(In unison)

Euww!!!

MARJORIE

So isn't it rather hypocritical to assume that our kids aren't sexually active by now?

ALAN

I really wish I had just stayed home tonight.

MARJORIE

And if Krissy is going to sleep with somebody, well, Peter isn't the worst choice.

KRISSY

It isn't definite. I'm just saying the thought crossed my mind.

ALAN

The thought crossed your mind?? You've only known him fifteen minutes! No, you don't know him at all. He's just some guy who handed you a menu and brought you a drink.

KRISSY

So, you're saying that just because he's a waiter, he isn't good enough for me? I had no idea you were such an elitist.

ALAN

No, I'm saying you know nothing about him at all! And... and *no*, he's not good enough for you.

KRISSY

Not that it should matter, but he isn't planning on being a waiter his whole life.

MARJORIE

(To KRISSY)

Sweetheart, you're Daddy's little girl. No man is ever going to be good enough in his eyes. For what it's worth, *my* father—your grandfather—absolutely loathed your dad on first sight. Hated him.

ALAN

I wouldn't say he *hated* me...

MARJORIE

Oh, he definitely hated you. Would have rejoiced if you'd gotten hit by a bus or something. Up until the day he died, he was still saying to me, "Marjorie, you could have done so much better."

ALAN

Well, that's hurtful. I always thought, as time went along, we'd developed a pretty good relationship.

MARJORIE

No, you hadn't. He just got better at concealing his outright contempt for you.

PETER enters. He starts to cross to the table, then thinks better of it and stops a few steps away from it.

PETER

Keith, Chef is yelling... wants to know where you are. The plates for table nine have been sitting on the line for five minutes. You know how he is about things being served promptly.

KEITH

Oh, yeah. I don't actually work here.

PETER

Yeah, well, the chef and people at table nine think you do.

Beat. KEITH looks at ALAN.

ALAN

(Shrugging)

Fine. Go. You don't want to make Chef mad.

KEITH tosses his napkin on the table and stands. He starts to exit, then puts his arm on PETER's shoulder.

KEITH

Can I get a to-go box for my shrimp fettucine?

PETER

Sure.

KEITH exits.

ALAN

Eighty thousand dollars on college tuition, and he's waiting tables.

MARJORIE

Oh, hush. He's figuring it out. And, after all, (*With a smile and a glance at PETER*) aren't your twenties supposed to be for kicking back and just trying to find yourself?

ALAN

That's not what I was doing in my twenties, I know that much.

PETER exits.

MARJORIE

Oh, please! You spent an entire summer following The Grateful Dead across the country.

ALAN

That's... I... I wasn't trying to find myself! I already knew who I was. I had a purpose!

MARJORIE

You slept in your car. You bartered with café owners... a free meal in exchange for washing dishes or bussing tables.

ALAN

It was The Grateful Dead!

KRISSY

Jeez, Dad. No wonder Grandpa hated your guts. You were shiftless *and* a hypocrite.

ALAN

He didn't hate my guts!

KRISSY looks at MARJORIE, who nods. ALAN doesn't notice this.

ALAN

But he certainly had every right to be concerned. Here's this long-haired guy with no visible means of support who's dating his daughter...

MARJORIE

Who's *knocked up* his daughter.

KRISSY

(Delighted)

What???

ALAN

Marjorie!

KRISSY

I always knew Keith was a bastard, but not literally, until now!

MARJORIE

Your brother was not a bastard. We were married eight weeks before he was born. It would have been longer, but he was early.

ALAN

Anyway, that's when I knew I had to settle down and get serious about life. Stop having fun, and get a job. A real one.

MARJORIE

Wait... So, you're saying that the fun ended when you married me?

ALAN

(Flustered)

I... No... Not exactly... I mean, I had responsibilities. With a new wife and a kid on the way, I couldn't be carefree and easygoing anymore.

KRISSY

Daddy, you really should stop talking now.

ALAN

Of course, there was still fun. It was just... a different kind of fun. You know?

MARJORIE

Why, no... I don't believe I do. Could you enlighten us? What was this other kind of fun, exactly?

KRISSY

Don't answer that...

MARJORIE

Because, now that I think about it, the fun sorted of ended for me around then, too. Throwing up every morning for three months. Horrible backaches. Peeing a little every time I sneezed. And I may also have taken on one or two new responsibilities, myself. Hm... Now, what might those have been?

ALAN

Margie, I didn't mean any of it like that. It came out wrong. I was trying to make a point about Keith. And why we should be concerned about Krissy going out with our waiter.

KRISSY

No, let's stay on this topic. This is way more interesting than anything I might wind up doing with Peter.

ALAN

I don't want you doing anything with Peter!

MARJORIE

Did it ever occur to you, Alan, that maybe I had other plans, too? Besides popping out a baby and settling down with you when my life was just getting started?

ALAN

Of course it did.

KRISSY

If it helps to know, I'm on the pill. I'm not going to be popping out any babies.

ALAN looks at KRISSY. Beat. He looks back at MARJORIE.

ALAN

I wanted to stay home and order takeout. But, no. You said, "We should invite the kids out to dinner. It'll be nice."

MARJORIE

And then, when Keith was nearly two and I'd just about made up my mind to leave you, I find out I'm pregnant with this one. (*Gesturing to KRISSY*)

ALAN

What?

KRISSY

What??

MARJORIE

So there went *that* plan.

ALAN

You were thinking about leaving me?

MARJORIE

We talked about it, remember?

ALAN

I don't remember anything of the kind.

MARJORIE

Of course you do. We were going to go for counseling.

ALAN

Oh, that. Well, yeah. But that's not the same thing as leaving.

MARJORIE

It was a *precursor* to leaving. Why would we go for counseling if one or both of us wasn't thinking about ending things? ...But then Krissy arrived, and she was a handful, and Keith got chicken pox...

KRISSY

I was a *handful*? I was a baby! What choice did I have? Babies tend to be a handful!

MARJORIE

And then *she* got chicken pox. And there was Girl Scouts, and selling all those damn cookies, and the time Keith fell off the merry-go-round and broke his arm, and there was teaching them both to drive, and then being worried about where they were and what they were doing. It was just one thing after another and it just never seemed like the right time to leave, and now... here we are.

MARJORIE picks up her fork and take a bite of food while the other stare at her.

MARJORIE

Oh, this is very good! Just the right amount of dill.

PETER enters, carrying a to-go box and crosses to their table.

PETER

How is everything so far? Can I bring you anything else?

ALAN

You could bring my wife some divorce papers. That's apparently what she's wanted all along.

PETER

...I'm sorry...?

MARJORIE

Don't mind him. He's being dramatic. Peter, this chicken is wonderful. Thank you for recommending it.

PETER

I'm glad you like it. (*Looking at ALAN's plate*) It doesn't look like you've touched your prime rib. Is there a problem?

ALAN

I wouldn't know where to begin.

PETER

I'd be happy to take it back and bring you something else.

KEITH enters and crosses to their table.

KEITH

(*To PETER*)

Oh, great! My to-go box! Thanks.

KEITH takes the box from PETER and sets it on the table. He lifts his plate and slides his shrimp fettucine into the box, talking as he does.

KEITH

(*To PETER*)

Did you tell them? (*To the others*) Pete's a rock-climber. He and I are going to go out next week and he's going show me the ropes. Ha! Get it? Show me the ropes? But seriously, he's going to teach me to climb rocks.

MARJORIE

Oh, dear. I can see there's going to be another broken arm in our future. Or worse.

KEITH

No, it's perfectly safe! Tell her, Pete.

PETER

It's *pretty* safe. I mean, there's risk. But there are harnesses, and carabiners, and pulleys and helmets and stuff...

KRISSY

This better not be on Wednesday. Remember, Peter, you're taking me snowboarding then.

PETER

(To KEITH)
How about Friday?

KEITH

(Nodding)
Friday's cool.

ALAN

Great. Both of our kids are dating the waiter, now.

KEITH

Oh, it isn't a date. *(Beat; looking at PETER)* Is it?

PETER shrugs.

KEITH *(Cont'd)*

Anyway, I've gotta get back. Can one of you make sure my fettucine gets home okay?

KEITH exits. PETER picks up ALAN's plate.

PETER

(To ALAN, but with a nod toward MARJORIE)
I'll bring you what she's having. It'll just take a minute.

PETER exits, carrying the plate. KRISSEY stands.

KRISSEY

Oh, Peter, wait! We didn't decide what night we're going to the movie! ...Peter?

*KRISSEY exits after PETER. Beat.
MARJORIE lifts a forkful of food and offers it to ALAN.*

MARJORIE

Would you like to have some of mine while you wait for yours?

ALAN

You were really going to leave me?

MARJORIE lowers her fork to her plate.

MARJORIE

Oh, Sweetheart, that was years ago. So much water has passed under the bridge since then. ...Do you want my carrots? I'm not going to eat those.

ALAN

No, I don't want your carrots. ...But you seriously considered it. Leaving.

MARJORIE

Certainly. A time or two. Didn't you?

ALAN

No!

MARJORIE.

(Coaxingly)

Not even once? ...Alan...?

Beat. ALAN is considering the question.

ALAN

Okay, fine! Yes! Maybe... maybe there was a minute, somewhere along the way, when for just the briefest second... *(Sighs, decides to come clean)* I'd gotten home from work on a particularly horrible day, I'd just parked the car in the garage and was getting ready to come in the door... I could hear you yelling at Keith about something, and Krissy was screeching at the top of her lungs, and I stopped, my hand on the doorknob, and I thought, "Is this it? Is this how it's going to be from now on? Working a job that's stealing a little piece of my soul, bit by bit, just so I can come home to this madhouse every evening?" I actually stepped back from the door, car keys in my hand, and I thought, "Nobody knows I'm here yet. I could back out of the driveway, head to the airport, and be halfway to Nova Scotia or someplace before anybody even starts to wonder where I am..."

MARJORIE

And fantasizing about that, wasn't that the best five minutes you'd had in a long time?

ALAN

It was the best five minutes I'd had all year!

MARJORIE

I used to fall asleep each night picturing myself waking up the next day on a tropical island someplace... no husband, no kids. ...Or at least not *this* husband or *those* kids.

Beat. Both of them are lost in their thoughts, smiling. Then:

MARJORIE

Okay, why Nova Scotia? It's cold and it's damp, and it's far away from everything.

ALAN

Exactly. Not many people. Probably hardly any screaming kids.

MARJORIE

Or screaming wives.

ALAN

And yet, here we still sit after all these years. I know why I'm still here. I'm a terrible procrastinator. You?

MARJORIE

It's what I said earlier: If you pretend long enough and hard enough, it isn't pretense any longer.

ALAN

So, you *pretended* you loved me.

MARJORIE

And the kids. Don't forget the kids.

ALAN

You pretended you loved me and the kids.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes