

This Is Not Macbeth  
Joanna Holmes

Cast Breakdown: 7 characters—3 male, 4 female

Cast List:

ALEX—31, a lawyer. Clean cut and quietly handsome with thin-rimmed glasses. Respectful and slightly shy with flashes of humor. Normally the picture of stability, he may or may not be going crazy.

SAM—25, a part time student at NYU. Works as a freelance photographer. Pretty, quirky, intelligent but not Ivy League educated. Dresses like the typical New York art student. Alex's Art Therapist in the final scene.

EMILY—26, Alex's ex-wife. Impulsive, vindictive, and childish, she's also highly compelling and sympathetic. Insecure but attractive in a SuicideGirls type manner.

SARA—28, Alex's little sister. Compassionate, motherly, and sweet. A pediatric nurse, she's both slightly naïve and a devoted little sister. Cute and unassuming in both dress and mannerisms; nosey and unpretentious.

DR CARPENTER—44, a top, New York-based psychiatrist. Reassuring and empathetic, if slightly condescending.

JULIE—18, Emily's little sister. High school senior, works as a waitress part time. Quiet, very mature for her age, very close to both Emily and Alex. Doubles as a waitress at dinner.

ERIC—30, a cocky, self assured lawyer who is friendly with everyone. Slick and casual, he oozes charm. Doubles as a waiter at dinner ("Max"), and as a mental patient in the final scene.

*Due to budgetary and staging constraints, sets should be minimalist and use only the furniture that is necessary. Setting and location should be suggested by lighting, and sound effects where appropriate, as much as possible. Time between scenes should be as short as possible.*

Scene 1

*Scene opens on a coffee shop in Greenwich Village, New York. ALEX sits alone at a table with a mug of coffee and a croissant, which he hasn't touched. A pile of newspapers sits next to his chair, also untouched. At the counter picking up a drink to go is SAM. She has a large, funky shoulder bag decorated with buttons and is carrying assorted photography equipment. After studying ALEX momentarily, she approaches his table.*

SAM

Excuse me, hi. I'm sorry to bother you, but do you mind if I take your picture?

ALEX

Sorry?

SAM

I'm a photographer, and I'm working on a project. Can I take your picture?

ALEX

Uh, I guess. Do I have to do anything?

SAM

*Begins framing her shots, adjusting the lens, etc.*

No, just hold the mug just like you were doing. Ok, relax, you're gripping way too tight now. Ok, great.

*Starts snapping pictures.*

ALEX

Should I smile or say "Cheese" or something?

SAM

No, you're doing fine. Your face isn't in it anyway, just your hands and sweater. Nice sweater, by the way.

ALEX

Thanks. I picked it out all by myself.

SAM

I figured that one out.

ALEX

Oh?

SAM

No ring, you're not married. So unless you live with your mother—

ALEX

I don't.

SAM

Or are gay—

ALEX

I'm not.

SAM

Or were raised in a sweatshop in Fiji where they make brand name cashmere sweaters—

ALEX

I—wait, what?

SAM

Just trying to throw you off. It's a nice sweater.

ALEX

Thanks. I'll call my child-slave relatives in Fiji and let them know you approve.

SAM

You do that. Ok, I think I'm good. Can I get you to sign this release form?

*Hands him a sheet of paper from her book bag.*

ALEX

I thought my face wasn't in it.

SAM

You can put your sweater's name down, then.

ALEX

I think I'll sign on its behalf. *Takes the paper from SAM.* What's the project for?

SAM

It's a coffee table book I'm working on.

ALEX

About...coffee?

SAM

Irony, right? *Sits across the table from ALEX.* No, it's about different artsy coffee shops around the city. Nobody does pretension and caffeine like New Yorkers.

ALEX

I guess.

SAM

*Not a question:*

You're new here, aren't you.

ALEX

How did you guess?

SAM

You don't really have that Fuck You attitude going on. Most people from New York pick that up after a while.

ALEX

You caught me. I just got here.

SAM

How long ago?

ALEX

....Ten minutes.

SAM

Seriously? Dude, where's your stuff?

ALEX

I don't really have much, it all fit in the car.

SAM

You managed to get a parking spot on the first day? Look at you.

ALEX

*A little embarrassed:*

Yeah.

SAM

Kudos. Did you take the faceplate off the stereo?

ALEX

What?

SAM

You should do that. Put it in your briefcase or something, so nobody steals your shit. If you've got an out of state license plate, it's your only hope.

ALEX

It's just a rental, it'll probably be ok for a couple hours.

SAM

Suit yourself. *Takes a bite of ALEX's croissant. ALEX looks at her, slightly incredulous. SAM notices his stare, prodded belatedly into good manners:* That looks good, mind if I have a bite?

ALEX

No, go ahead.

*SAM begins eating his croissant in earnest, and eventually finishes the whole thing.*

So this coffee book, my name's not going to be in it, is it?

SAM

Depends. Ex-wife, ex-children, or parole officer?

ALEX

Excuse me?

SAM

*Brandishing the croissant for emphasis:*

You're sitting in a coffee shop in Greenwich Village with not very much stuff, not a lot of big city experience, and from the look of that stack of newspapers you've got going on there, not really anything to do. You look a little too old to be out finding yourself, and too young for a midlife crisis. So are you running away from an ex-wife, child support, or did you rob a bank out in Omaha or Kansas City or wherever it is you came from?

ALEX

I'm—I'm not running away, really. More like just trying to get a fresh start. *Beat.* Ex-wife.

SAM

Knew it!

ALEX

How?

SAM

You twitched, earlier when I said you're not married.

ALEX

That'll do it.

SAM

Was it recent? The divorce, I mean.

ALEX

Fairly recently, yeah. I've been moved out for a couple months, though.

SAM

Any kids?

ALEX

No, we'd only been married for three years.

SAM

I've heard a rumor it only takes nine months.

ALEX

I suck at math.

SAM

Don't we all. Let me guess: You wanted them, she didn't.

ALEX

Um, yeah, actually. How did you know that?

SAM

Been there. So was that it then?

ALEX

No. She had an affair with her secretary.

SAM

Damn. You married a lesbian?

ALEX

Male secretary.

SAM

Ah, gotcha. Have you been seeing anyone since then?

ALEX

Are you always this nosey?

SAM

If I'm invested in the situation. So have you?

ALEX

Therapy's not really my thing.

SAM

You know what I mean. *Beat.*

ALEX

No.

SAM

*Gently.* Do you want to ask me for my phone number?

ALEX

Yes.

SAM

So do it.

ALEX

Can...may I have your phone number?

SAM

*Writes down a number, pushes it across the table, and smiles wryly.*  
There you go.

ALEX

Thank you.

SAM

Not at all. So what are you planning on doing here, Mr. Rental-Car-Sucks-At-Math Guy?

ALEX

I have a job, starting on Monday. I thought I'd take a few days, try and get oriented first.

SAM

What, are you a hitman?

ALEX

Close. Lawyer.

SAM

Nice. Aren't you supposed to be in a suit or something?

ALEX

Actually,

*Looks around before leaning in conspiratorially*  
This is my disguise. Everyone hates lawyers. The cashmere works much better, lets me blend in without getting my tires slashed.

SAM

Wow, that was almost...conniving. Good job, player.

ALEX

I'm really not, I promise.

SAM

It's ok, embrace the label. *Glances at watch, then looks closer.* Oh, shit. I've got to go. *Starts gathering her things together.*

ALEX

Work?

SAM

Class. I'm taking a few courses at NYU, trying to 'supplement my education', as they say.

ALEX

You have time to go to school and do a book at the same time?

SAM

*Sheepishly trying (and failing) to underplay the confession:*

Nope, but I have time to do some freelance projects, go to school, and flirt with handsome strangers in coffee shops under completely false circumstances.

*Long, awkward pause.*

ALEX

You're not writing a book then.

SAM

Afraid not. I was on assignment earlier.

ALEX

Why take my picture?

SAM

*Holds up his release form.*

Now I have your name and number. *Reads.* "Alex Parker". Nice to meet you, Alex.

ALEX

You could have asked.

SAM

I'm shy.

ALEX

You ate my croissant.

SAM

I'm shy and hungry. Don't get so offended, Alex. You got my phone number out of it.

ALEX

Is it really your number?

SAM

Try it.

*ALEX dials the number. Brief pause, then SAM's phone starts ringing.*  
What did I tell you?



ALEX

Sorry.

SAM

It's ok. I don't believe a third of the things I say either. But the rest of it was true.

*Gets up to leave.*

ALEX

It's a fake last name.

SAM

What?

ALEX

On the form. My last name isn't Parker.

SAM

Yeah?

ALEX

It's Colins.

SAM

Well look at you. Guess we have something in common after all.

*Turns around and starts toward the door.*

ALEX

Wait.

SAM

What?

ALEX

What's your name?

SAM

You just lied to me about your name, and expect me to tell you the truth?

ALEX

You lied about your job. Call it even?

SAM

*Pause, then SAM smiles.*

It's Sam.

ALEX

Sam.

*SAM smiles and exits. ALEX looks down into his coffee, smiling.*  
Nice to meet you, Sam.

Scene 2

*SARA's living room, with a staircase visible (implied if necessary), and exits leading out of the house and in to the kitchen, stage right. ALEX enters stage left through the front door, puts his briefcase down, and takes off his coat. He loosens his tie, takes off his watch, and puts it on the table. EMILY is waiting for him, sitting on the stairs.*

EMILY

How was work?

ALEX

Fine.

EMILY

Just fine?

ALEX

Yes.

EMILY

It was your first day at a brand new firm, and all you've got to say is fine?

ALEX

It was...I don't know. Fine. It's a job.

EMILY

Were the people nice?

ALEX

I guess. Yeah, they were.

EMILY

Any pretty female lawyers?

ALEX

Not particularly. Maybe, I didn't really notice.

EMILY

Right. You're still hung up on that girl you met at the coffee shop.

ALEX

Don't.

EMILY

*Mockingly, eyelashes fluttering* "Sam."

ALEX

Don't start.

EMILY

What? I'm your wife, I feel like I've got a vested interest here.

ALEX

You're not.

EMILY

Not what, interested? Of course I am.

ALEX

Not my wife.

EMILY

We're still married, you know. Eyes of God, and all that.

ALEX

I don't believe in God.

EMILY

Yeah? Got news for you, pal: He doesn't believe in you either. But the Bible says our marriage is forever.

ALEX

You've never read the Bible.

EMILY

It was in our marriage vows.

ALEX

I'm pretty sure there was a 'Til Death Do Us Part' clause in there.

EMILY

*Beat.*

Ouch. *Beat.*

You're really something, you know that?

*ALEX pours himself a drink, scotch.*

ALEX

I know that.

EMILY

Just making sure.

ALEX

I do. I know. *Beat.*

Please just leave me alone.

EMILY

Oh, that's rich. I don't think so.

SARA

*From offstage*

Alex? Is that you?

ALEX

I'm in here, Sara.

*SARA enters stage right*

SARA

I thought I heard your voice. Who were you talking to?

ALEX

*Searching...* Yeah, I just—I was just giving Dad a ring.

SARA

Did you tell him I said hello?

ALEX

No, I guess he was out. I just left a message telling him the first day went well.

SARA

I was just about to ask about that. You like the new firm then?

ALEX

Yeah. Yeah, it was good.

*EMILY watches with some amusement as ALEX becomes more and more unnerved by being asked the same questions twice.*

SARA

Were the people nice?

ALEX

Yeah, they were.

SARA

Any pretty female lawyers?

ALEX

Sara.

SARA

I'm sorry. You just got home and I'm pestering you. I'll stop.

ALEX

No, it's...it's fine. I'm fine. I just have a headache. *Pause.* I think I'm going to like working there.

SARA

That's great, Alex. Really.

*Slightly awkward pause. SARA grasps at words, filling the silence as ALEX looks anywhere but at her.*

I'm glad you're starting to remake your life again. Bury the past, you know?

ALEX

I love you.

SARA

*Ruffles his hair*

I love you too, you big lug. Want something to eat? I made lasagna, it should be ready in a minute or two.

ALEX

Sure. Sounds great.

SARA

'Kay. I'll call you when it's done. And get you some aspirin. *Smiles, then exits SR*

EMILY

"Bury the past, remake your life." Wow. If only she knew, huh.

ALEX

Stop.

EMILY

Stop telling me what to do. I'm not making fun of her. I like Sara.

*Pauses, thinking.*

She's the only one in your whole family I like, truth be told.

ALEX

She liked you.

EMILY

She's the only one who treated me like part of the family. We had lunch one time, without you, before the wedding. Did I ever tell you that? She was so happy we were getting married, because she was finally getting the sister she'd always wanted.

ALEX

That's Sara.

EMILY

The nice one. Welcoming me into the family, letting you stay here while you "figure things out", she's just taking in strays all over the place, isn't she.

ALEX

Stop.

EMILY

I thought I told you to cut that out. You're always telling me what to do. It's obnoxious.

*She takes a sip of ALEX's drink*

I think it's the reason our marriage ended, to be honest. You're far too controlling.

ALEX

Our marriage ended because you had an affair.

EMILY

That's your story.

ALEX

That's the truth.

EMILY

Is it? Is it really? Or is that just what you have to believe in order to justify what you did?

ALEX

*Trying to ignore her, eyes closed*

It's what happened.

EMILY

*Menacing:*

Stop deflecting, Alex. You can lie to yourself all you want, but don't you dare lie to me.

ALEX

I'm not.

EMILY

Fuck you.

*Slight pause before EMILY changes tactics.*

Fine. Lie all you want, if it helps you sleep at night. Does lying to yourself make you feel better? Does that make it okay? Does it, Alex?!

ALEX

*More forcefully*

I didn't do anything wrong.

EMILY

Like fuck you didn't do anything wrong!

*EMILY pulls back her hair on the left side of her head to reveal a bullet wound: matted hair and still shining blood*

This isn't wrong? I mean, I don't know Alex, you're the smart one. Does this look okay to you?!

ALEX

Stop it, I didn't do it!

EMILY

Yes you did, you piece of shit! You put a gun to my head and pulled the trigger. You *shot* me. I would have given you the divorce you wanted, but you wouldn't even give me the chance. You murdered me.

ALEX

I didn't! I swear to God I didn't!

*SARA runs in, SR*

SARA

*Concerned, but perhaps not as freaked out as her next line would indicate:*

Alex! Oh my God, Alex, are you ok?

ALEX

Wha—Sara...oh, Jesus.

*SARA sits ALEX down on the couch and tries to comfort him. ALEX is visibly affected by EMILY's words.*

SARA

You scared the shit out of me, yelling like that. I thought you were dying or something.

*ALEX flinches visibly. EMILY smirks.*

Oh. *Beat.*

Oh, no. Was it the dream again?

EMILY

I'm a dream now?

ALEX

Yeah, I must have...I guess I fell asleep.

EMILY

I can't believe you.

SARA

Oh, Alex. It's ok. It's ok.

EMILY

*Slowly pours ALEX's drink into his briefcase.*

Does this look like a dream to you?

ALEX

I just—I...

SARA

What? What is it?

ALEX

Nothing. It's nothing, just...just a bad dream. I'll be fine. I'm fine.

SARA

Alex, I know we've talked about this, and I know you think I'm being overprotective. But I really think you should reconsider seeing someone.

EMILY

*In her best phony accent.*

Yes Alex, tell ze good Doktor Freud everyzhing.

ALEX

I—*Beat.*

Maybe. I might.

*SARA looks at him, sternly. ALEX sighs.*

I'll think about it. Promise.

SARA

That's a start.

*She ruffles his hair once again, then climbs off the couch*

Come on, dinner's ready.

ALEX

I'll be there in a minute.

*SARA nods and exits SR.*

EMILY



This isn't over. And I'm not going to just disappear.

ALEX

I know that.

EMILY

Just making sure.

*She sits back on the stairs where she began.*

Have a nice dinner.

**BLACKOUT.**

### Scene 3

*Bar table in an almost farcically hip restaurant. ERIC and ALEX are having drinks, ALEX is waiting for SAM to arrive. The lighting should be fairly tight around the table, with sound cues to suggest other diners in a busy restaurant, if available..*

ERIC

Ah, Friday. Almost makes the rest of the week worth it.

*Toasts his glass*

Congratulations on surviving your first week, it's all downhill from here.

ALEX

Thanks. And thanks for the drink.

ERIC

Don't mention it. Sure you don't want to come out with the guys? Best cheeseburgers in the city, and you get enough dirt on the competition once they've had a few drinks to insure your legal career for life.

ALEX

No, thanks, but I can't.

ERIC

Ah, yes, the lady friend. What time is she coming?

ALEX

Seven thirty. What time is it now?

ERIC

*Checking his watch*

Seven forty.

ALEX

Yeah, she said she might be running a little late, she's coming from work.

*ERIC rolls his eyes*

What?

ERIC

Alex, have you ever dated a woman before?

ALEX

Umm, yes. Why?

ERIC

‘Coming from work’ is the oldest girl trick in the book. Gives them an excuse to arrive fashionably late, plus it lowers your expectations, so when they show up looking fabulous, you show proper reverence. You need to get in the game more often.

ALEX

Yeah, well, I’m working on it.

ERIC

Yeah, clearly.

*SAM enters stage left, looking, of course, fabulous.*

And if I’m not mistaken, your very pretty date just arrived, which is my cue to exit stage left.

ALEX

*Sees SAM*

Sam! Over here.

*SAM catches his eye and waves on her way over.*

SAM

Starting the party without me?

ALEX

Not at all. This is Eric from the office, he was just leaving. Eric, this is Sam.

SAM

Nice to meet you, Eric.

ERIC

And yourself. Good to know Alex wasn’t bullshitting us in order to get out of Guys Night.

SAM

Said that, did he?

ERIC

Something like that. Course, it’s not hard to beat an evening of booze and disease-ridden hookers with a bunch of aging legal dinosaurs, but what can I say? The old guys are stuck in their ways.

SAM

Hey, I can't think of a better way to blow a stack of ones. Let's go.

ERIC

I like you.

*To ALEX:* I like her. Don't screw up.

ALEX

I'll do my best not to.

*SAM smiles*

ERIC

*Shoots back the rest of his drink.*

All right, I'm off. You kids have fun.

ALEX

Night, Eric.

*ERIC salutes and exits. Stage left, of course.*

*To SAM:* Ladies and Gentlemen, your tax dollars at work.

SAM

Love it.

ALEX

You look great, by the way.

SAM

Thanks. Sorry I'm so late; I got paint in my hair during Artistic Nudes, so I had to go home and shower.

ALEX

They have a class called Artistic Nudes?

SAM

We call it that, but it's actually called Figure Modeling. I'm thinking the name has something to do with parents footing their kids' tuition bills, and not being happy about seeing 'the naked' on the course schedule.

*Uses quotation fingers in the appropriate place.*

ALEX

Completely understandable. Want something to drink?

SAM

Sure.

*Raises and had to flag down JULIE.*

Excuse me, can I get a glass of white wine, and do you want another drink?

ALEX

No thanks, I'm still working on this one.

SAM

Just the one, then.

JULIE

Sure, I'll be right back with that. Can I get you two some menus?

SAM

That would be great, thanks.

*JULIE smiles at her and exits.*

ALEX

So besides getting paint in your hair, which I can imagine was a pain, how was class?

SAM

Meh, nothing special today, but they can't all be gems. I'm getting pretty close to a breakthrough on one of my character studies though, which is great.

ALEX

Character study?

SAM

Yeah, it's an art therapy thing. I hadn't made any progress on it for a few months now, and was almost ready to scrap it.

ALEX

What happened?

SAM

I don't know. It started speaking to me.

*Enter JULIE*

JULIE

Your glass of white, and here are your menus. I'll give you two a couple of minutes to look them over.

SAM

Thanks. Where's the restroom, please?

JULIE

Oh, straight past the bar, take a left down the hallway. You can't miss it.

SAM

Thanks.

To ALEX: I'll be right back.

ALEX

Okay.

*JULIE takes Eric's glass, starts to pick up SAM's wine*

ALEX

Umm, I'm sorry, I don't think she's done with that.

JULIE

Alex, what are you doing here? What's wrong?

ALEX

Nothing, I'm just having dinner with—wait, what?

JULIE

You look awful, you should go home.

ALEX

What are you talking about?

JULIE

I'm off in twenty minutes, I can drive you back.

ALEX

How do you know my name?

JULIE

What do you mean? What's going on, Alex?

ALEX

How do you know me?

JULIE

*Getting upset*

Why are you acting like this? You know who I am. I mean it Alex, you're weirding me out. Knock it off.

ALEX

I'm sorry, but I don't know who you are or what you're talking about.

JULIE

Alex, I know you're fighting with Emily right now, but that's not my fault, so don't take it out on me, okay? Come back when you feel like being less of a jerk.

*Stalks off in a huff with SAM's wine.*

ALEX

Wait. Wait! How do you know about Emily? How do you...

*Trails off.*

Oh, God.

*Puts his face in his hands, collects his thoughts, and starts preparing to leave just as SAM re-enters*

SAM

Sorry, the line was ridiculous. Are we going somewhere?

ALEX

Sam, I am so sorry. I just remembered something I had to do, and I've got to go.

SAM

Now?

ALEX

I'm so sorry. Can we reschedule for another time? I'm really, really sorry.

*Drops a couple of \$20s on the table and takes off.*

SAM

Alex! Wait, what...

*He is gone. SAM sits back down slowly, visibly confused.. MAX enters SL with a glass of wine, sporting a visible bicep tattoo.*

MAX

Your glass of white. Are you ready for the menus?

SAM

*Still shell shocked*

Um, it's just going to be me for dinner, my friend just kind of...flaked out.

MAX

*Vaguely amused, then quickly turns professional:*

Was that the guy who almost broke the door frame on the way out just now? Is he all right?

SAM

Who knows. He'll be fine.

MAX

*Hands her the menu*

Just flag me down when you're ready to order.

SAM

Sure, thanks.

## Scene 4

*SARA's living room. ALEX sits on the couch, doing absolutely nothing. There are two glasses of wine on the table. SARA enters with two plates of food. She sits down in a chair facing ALEX after handing him his plate.*

SARA

Dinner is served; get your feet off my table. I burned the potatoes a bit, but they should still be ok.

ALEX

*Visibly lying:*

No, they look...great. You're a culinary genius, Sara.

SARA

Oh, stop it. Do you want some more wine?

ALEX

No thanks, I'm fine.

SARA

Okay. *Beat.*

Salt? Pepper?

ALEX

Still fine.

SARA

*Sorry. Silence as SARA starts to cut her food, then stops, then starts and stops again, clearly debating what to say.*

ALEX

*Affectionately annoyed:*

Sara, just say it.

SARA

What?

ALEX

You want to know how the appointment went. I can read you like a book, it's my job.

SARA

No, of course not. I mean, of course I care, but it's none of my business if you don't want to talk about it.

ALEX

Sara, come on. You know you're a terrible liar.

SARA

*Ruefully*

Oh, I know. I am. How did it go? Was it ok?

ALEX

Not as bad as I thought. Dr Carpenter is...I don't know, a little strange, but harmless enough, I guess. We mostly just talked about work and the move and such today.

SARA

Do you think you'll keep seeing him?

ALEX

I don't know. I guess. I mean, I feel like I probably should. I...just want to get back to normal, you know? Get out of your hair, be myself again.

SARA

Alex. You're not in my hair. Is that what you think?

ALEX

No, not at all. I just don't want to be a burden.

SARA

You're not a burden, you're my stupid big brother, and like it or not, you're staying here until you're back on track. That's final.

ALEX

Always the bossy one.

SARA

Sorry.

ALEX

*Slowly, unburdening:* No, I'm sorry. I really appreciate you letting me stay here. I guess I'm just...everything's just been... since...

*Pause.*

There's this big part of me that wants to start living again, doing things, enjoying life. But the other half thinks it's too soon, like I'm not ready to move on yet.

SARA

Maybe you should talk about this with Dr Carpenter.

ALEX

Maybe.



## Scene 5

*Late at night, SARA's living room. ALEX's files are spread out over the table, with a big stack on the edge. ALEX is pacing, talking on the phone to SARA.*

ALEX

Sara, it's fine. *Pause.* No, really. The world isn't going to end if I have to make dinner for myself one time. *Pause.* I'm a grown man, Sara, not one of your patients. *Pause.* Sara—Sara—Sara! It's fine. I'll be fine. Stay at the clinic, I'm fine. I'll just order a pizza and get some work done. *Pause.* *Hollow:* Yes, I know where the coupons are. *Pause.* Yes, I will call you if I need anything. *Pause.* Sara, if you don't go do your rounds, you aren't going to get home until midnight. I love you. Goodbye.

*ALEX hangs up the phone and sighs heavily into his hands. He pours himself a glass of scotch, but doesn't drink. He stares at it broodingly for a moment. The doorbell rings, startling ALEX, who drops the glass.*

ALEX

Shit. *Louder:* Just a minute!

Shit. *He looks around for a towel, a dustpan, anything. Nothing catches his eye, so he quickly takes off his sweater and uses it to mop up the alcohol before answering the door in a t-shirt. SAM's voice is heard at the door.*

SAM

Hey stranger.

ALEX

Sam, I—hey. What are you doing here?

*He lets her in. SAM is holding her coat, and once again looks fabulous.*

SAM

I was in the neighborhood. Thought I'd stop by.

ALEX

Come on in. I was just...*Trying to think of a way to excuse the mess as SAM lays her coat on the back of a chair or couch.*

SAM

*Helping him out:* Not expecting company?

ALEX

I was just cleaning up. *As SAM steps toward the broken glass:* Watch out, there's glass on the floor.

SAM

Shit, ok: not moving. Here, I'll hold that. *Takes ALEX's sweater as he starts picking up the glass with his fingers. Over the next several lines, ALEX finishes picking up the glass and begins to straighten and stack the files.*

Hello sweater, we meet again.

ALEX

A bit worse for the wear, I'm afraid.

SAM

*Sniffing the fabric.* Yeah, smells like it. Should we be signing it up for a twelve step program or something?

ALEX

Maybe. Let's start it off with a rinse cycle and some laundry detergent, and if that doesn't do the trick, I'll make some phone calls.

SAM

Sounds like a plan. Working late?

ALEX

Yeah, one of the senior partners just retired pretty suddenly. We're splitting up his case load, but it means some extra work for everyone.

SAM

They've really made you hit the ground running, huh?

ALEX

Ha, yeah, I guess.

SAM

And how does that make you feel?

ALEX

*Flash of clarity.*

What?

SAM

What?

ALEX

*Flash is gone. Slightly confused:*

I...nothing. It's—it's nothing.

SAM

Yeah. You know, if you're actually a schizo or something, you can tell me. I won't judge.

ALEX

I'm not.

SAM

Actually, that's a lie. I'll probably judge.

ALEX

No need. I'm not crazy.

SAM

Come on, Alex. Everybody's a little bit crazy.

ALEX

Not everyone.

SAM

Most people. It's no big deal, Alex, this is New York. I work with crazy people all the time. And you, my friend, definitely qualify.

ALEX

I don't think I do.

SAM

Please, you are like textbook neurotic. I keep wanting to ask how your childhood was or if you think you're Napoleon or something. Relax, it's not major league crazy. It's not like you killed anyone.

ALEX

*Abrupt, ashen*  
What?

SAM

What?

ALEX

I...I don't...can we change the subject?

SAM

Alex, accepting that you're a lunatic is the first step on the long, rock garden lined path to recovery.

ALEX

I'm not a lunatic.

SAM

You've been twitching like a meth addict the whole time we've been talking. You stammer, you suck at eye contact. You totally wiggled out the waiter the other night—

ALEX

Waitress.

SAM

--and apparently you've lost the ability to differentiate between gender as well. It was a guy.

ALEX

No, she was definitely a she.

SAM

His name was Max. One earring instead of two? Combat boots? Dude had a tattoo of a naked lady on his bicep. Sorry, Charlie. Male.

ALEX

I have no idea who you're talking about.

SAM

Let's add memory loss to your list of symptoms, shall we?

ALEX

Why are you doing this? Just stop, all right?

SAM

Stop what?

ALEX

This, psychoanalyzing me.

SAM

I'm just trying—

ALEX

To help? You're picking me apart and diagnosing me.

SAM

Alex.

ALEX

You're saying I'm crazy and a lunatic and neurotic.

SAM

Alex.

ALEX

You keep asking me questions and saying things I don't get, and I'd really appreciate it if you'd just stay out of my head.

SAM

Alex!

ALEX

What?

SAM

Shut up.

*There is a beat, then suddenly SAM and ALEX are kissing passionately. SAM has him by the shirt, and ALEX drops his folders to touch her face, her hair, her neck. Finally, Sam breaks the kiss. They're both breathless.*

SAM

Wow.

ALEX

Yeah, I—  
*Agreeing*  
Wow.

*The next lines are rather rapid fire as they interrupt each other and begin gathering the files.*

SAM

You, uh, you dropped your—

ALEX

Oh! Right, I—

SAM

Your—your legal shit—

ALEX

Yeah, um—

SAM

Here, let me—

ALEX

No, its okay, I—

SAM

No, let me help.

ALEX

Thanks, just shove the papers back in, I'll sort through them later.

SAM

Right, yeah. Okay.

*A moment or two of scooping and stacking files, until ALEX picks one up and looks at it slowly, stunned.*

ALEX

Sam?

SAM

*Still gathering*  
Yeah?

ALEX

This is her. This is the girl, the waitress from the other night.

SAM

Alex, there was no waitress from the other night.  
*Points at her bicep.*  
Naked lady, remember?

ALEX

Sam, look at this picture.  
*He holds up a mug shot of JULIE*  
It's her, I swear.

SAM

*Glances at the photo.*  
I've never seen her before.

ALEX

It's her.  
*Reads:*  
"Julie Mullens". This is the girl.

*Beat.*

SAM

Okay. You know what I said before, about you being minor league crazy? I may have been wrong.  
*SAM stands up, slowly picks up her coat.*

I like you a lot, Alex, but you seriously need therapy.

ALEX

Sam.

SAM

You should really think about getting a psychiatrist, or some happy pills, or something. Call me when you're less nuts, ok?

ALEX

Sam.

SAM

Good night, Alex.

*Lights Down.*

## Scene 6

*Stage is dark. In a pool of light sits ALEX, desperately grasping a telephone receiver. He sits, half curled, on the arm of an easy chair, the base of the phone on a small wooden table against the opposite arm.*

*The phone rings once, twice, three times before DR CARPENTER picks up. His voice is almost magnified from offstage, if the equipment to do so is available.*

DR

*Groggily*  
Hello?

ALEX

Dr Carpenter?

DR

Yes.

ALEX

It's Alex. Alex Colins.

DR

Ah, yes, Alex. It's two in the morning, Alex, what's wrong?

ALEX

No, I know, I'm—I'm sorry for calling so late, but—

DR

Its okay, Alex, just tell me what happened. What's wrong?

ALEX

I don't know. Something really strange is going on, and I'm not sure...what to do about it. It's like—people who aren't supposed to be here are here, and people keep saying things to me that are completely out of context, and talking to me like, like I should understand them, and I don't.

I think I might be completely losing it.

DR

Calm down, Alex. It's okay. It sounds to me as if you might be experiencing some sort of hallucinations, would that be accurate?

ALEX

I—I'm not sure. I mean, they seem real, but they can't all be. I don't know. Maybe. Probably.

DR

Okay, that's fine. Have you taken anything? Drugs, alcohol, prescription medications?

ALEX

No, no, of course not, no.

DR

Okay. Have you been sleeping at all?

ALEX

I guess, some sleep. Um, about normal.

DR

All right, that's fine. This question is very important, so I want you to make sure you think about it and answer me truthfully, all right?

ALEX

Okay.

DR

Do you feel like you might be tempted, or have any inclination at all, to hurt yourself?

ALEX

No! No, I—it's not me, it's—no, I don't want to hurt myself. I'm not suicidal.

DR

But these people, these hallucinations, they might want to hurt you?

ALEX



*Beat.*

I don't know what they want. I...

DR

All right. I'm going to need you to give me your address. I'm going to send a cab to come and get you, and bring you to the hospital, all right? All you have to do is watch for the cab and take it when it gets there.

ALEX

Thank you. Thank you.

### Scene 7

*ALEX sits in a chair dead center stage, under a spot light. DR CARPENTER sits extreme down right, in a lab coat and holding a clipboard, possibly wearing a stethoscope.*

ALEX

This is where it all happened.

*Spotlight up on DR CARPENTER*

DR

Are you concentrating?

ALEX

Yes.

DR

Good.

ALEX

I don't think I can do this.

DR

This is necessary, Alex. It'll all be over soon. Can you tell me where you are?

ALEX

My house in North Carolina.

*Lights come up slowly to reveal ALEX's living room, but they remain dim, overpowered by the spotlights. There is a table placed a few feet down right of ALEX's chair, with a chair on either side (stage L and R) of it.*

DR

What day is it?

ALEX

It's the 9<sup>th</sup>. March. It's evening.

*Pauses, looks off stage left. To EMILY:*

It's the night you died.

*EMILY enters slowly stage left.*

You were waiting at the table when I got home from work.

*EMILY sits at the table, facing away from him. To DR:*

She was different, somehow... edgy, frantic. We'd been fighting for days, both saying nasty, awful things to each other. Just being...spiteful. Vindictive.

*To EMILY:*

I didn't mean to hurt you.

DR

What happened when you got home?

*Over the next few exchanges, ALEX moves from his chair to stand behind the table, facing EMILY, who continues to look and speak stage right, interacting with air.*

ALEX

I'd made up my mind right before I came home to tell her that I couldn't do this anymore. That I wanted a divorce.

DR

And how did Emily react?

EMILY

*Pleading, beseechingly.*

Alex, no. Please don't do this.

ALEX

She got upset. Crying, pleading with me.

EMILY

Alex, don't leave! We can fix this, we can, I promise!

ALEX

It was so unlike her. I thought she was on drugs.

EMILY

Alex!

ALEX

She'd taken a bunch of her anti-depressants and washed them down with the rest of my Jack Daniels.

DR

How did that make you feel?

ALEX

Everything changed.

*Lights up in full, ALEX moves stage right of the table, facing EMILY for the first time. He is now in the scene with her.*

Jesus Christ, Emily! What were you thinking?

EMILY

*Sobbing, grasping at his shirt.*

I—I just—

ALEX

Just what? What? Do I make you that fucking depressed? Tell me!

EMILY

No! Alex, stop! We can fix this!

ALEX

How the hell can we fix this? Look at you, you're fucking trashed at 730 on a Tuesday night, for Christ's sake! I can't even look at you right now.

*Turns to leave. Makes it about half a step before EMILY stops him.*

EMILY

*Pissed, completely losing control:*

Don't you fucking walk away from me!

*She throws a glass from the table at ALEX on the word 'fucking'; it misses ridiculously and smashes on the ground.*

ALEX

*Incredulous:*

What the fuck is your problem!?! You're the one who had an affair! You're the one who wrecked our marriage! This is your fault.

EMILY

Oh fine, blame me for fucking everything, everything's always my fault! Why can't you man up for once in your life and accept some goddamn responsibility instead of blaming me for every little thing that goes wrong?

ALEX

Accept—are you kidding me? This is completely and totally, one hundred percent your fault!

EMILY

Fuck you! And yes!

ALEX

Yes what?

EMILY

Yes, you make me that fucking depressed! I wish I were dead when I'm with you!

ALEX

Yeah? Well I wish you were dead too!

*The scene freezes. Lights begin to dim on the scene, the spotlights are back up: one on ALEX and EMILY and one on DR CARPENTER.*

DR

Hindsight is a bitch, isn't it Alex?

ALEX

*Grasping EMILY's shoulders, trying to get a response. Nothing.*  
I didn't mean that. I never did. I shouldn't have said that.

DR

What happened next, Alex?

ALEX

Emily, please talk to me. Emily.

DR

What happened next, Alex?!

ALEX

*Pleading:*  
Emily, come back, please.

DR

What happened next, Alex!

ALEX

I don't know what happened next! I don't remember!

DR

*Intense:*  
I'll tell you what you did, Alex. You put a gun to my head and pulled the trigger.

*DR is now repeating EMILY's speech from scene 2—at this line, EMILY seemingly awakes from her stupor and begins repeating the lines with DR CARPENTER. ALEX hurtles back several feet, but is steadily paced down by EMILY.*

DR and EMILY

You *shot* me. I would have given you the divorce you wanted, but you wouldn't even give me the chance. You murdered me.

ALEX

Stop it! I didn't!

To DR: Who are you? What do you want from me?

*Enter ERIC.. He slowly walks toward ALEX just as EMILY is doing.*

ERIC

Congratulations on surviving, Alex. It's all downhill from here.

ALEX

Go away. Leave me alone!

*Enter JULIE. Same deal.*

JULIE

Why are you acting like this? You know who I am.

ALEX

Stop it. Go away, please!

*Enter SAM.*

SAM

*Mocking his lines from before.*

Why am I asking you all these questions, Alex? Why can't I just stay out of your head?

ALEX

No. no no no no....

*The circle begins closing in on ALEX, at first repeating their lines at a whisper, then getting louder and louder until finally:*

STOP IT!!

*Blackout. Beat. Gunshot.*

## Scene 8

*Lights up in a hospital waiting room. It is not immediately clear, but the setting is a mental institution in urban New York. SARA and JULIE are waiting, not even pretending to read the*

*magazines scattered on the coffee table in front of them. JULIE's head is on SARA's shoulder as she waits, listlessly. DR CARPENTER enters.*

DR

Hello Sara, I'm so sorry to keep you two waiting. One of my patients was just having a breakthrough. Or a breakdown, it's hard to tell sometimes.

*Pause, slightly embarrassed into professionalism, painfully aware that his attempt to lighten the mood has fallen flat.*

That's, of course, not funny. You must be Julie. I'm Dr. Carpenter, your brother-in-law's psychiatrist.

*Offers his hand*

JULIE

Nice to meet you, Dr. How is he?

DR

Well, it's tricky, Julie. The team feels as though Alex has been getting much stronger, emotionally speaking. However, until we can help him reconstruct in his mind the episode that led to the psychotic break—

JULIE

My sister's death.

DR

*Nodding* Progress will be difficult.

JULIE

I want to help, I just don't know how much I can.

SARA

It's okay, Julie, just do what you can.

*Squeezes JULIE's hand*

DR

Whatever you can tell us about that night, anything at all, might be useful.

JULIE

Like, what, exactly?

DR

Anything you remember. The event itself, your impressions of the situation, anything you remember about Alex or Emily in the days leading up to her death, anything.

JULIE

Okay.

*Beat. JULIE swallows. She's been preparing for this, but actually doing it is quite another thing.*

I knew they'd been fighting. Emily wouldn't tell me why, but she sounded awful on the phone. They'd been separated for about a month, and she'd just been....really depressed. When Alex moved back in a few days before, I thought things were going to be okay, you know? That they were going to try and work out whatever was wrong. But...

DR

Its okay, Julie. Take your time.

SARA

Do you want some water, sweetheart?

JULIE

No, I—I'm fine. I talked to Emily, the day it happened. I called after school, because I was working at the restaurant that night and I wanted to see if she wanted to come. We're never busy on Tuesdays, so she could sit in my section and I could keep her company.

DR

How did she sound on the phone?

JULIE

Awful. Even worse than the last time we'd talked. I wanted to skip work and come over, but she said no, that I should go in. That she loved me, and would see me later.

*Beat.*

I'm sorry. I don't think I can do this.

SARA

It's okay, it's all right, sweetheart. Doctor, I think that's enough for now.

*ERIC enters through the dayroom doors holding handfuls of crayons*

ERIC

Doctor, doctor, doctor, we have lots of work to do, Doctor, we have legal dinosaurs to chase, Doctor. It's coming apart at the seams, Doctor, come out with the guys, we have to go!

SAM

*Running in behind ERIC*

Eric! You get back here, come on.

*ERIC continues to mutter to himself as SAM gathers him and the crayons together*

SAM

I'm so sorry, Doctor, he just took off.

DR

No harm done. Julie, this is Sam, the director of our new Art Therapy program. She's been working with Alex since he came here.

*To SAM:* Julie's just finished high school in North Carolina, and made the trip up to visit Alex.

SAM

Hi Julie, nice to meet you.

JULIE

Thanks, you too.

DR

Do you think you could take Eric back to the dayroom and fill out some visitor's paperwork for Sara and Julie?

SAM

Sure, no problem. Sara's on the weekly register, but I'll need to get Julie's information.

SARA

I can help you with that.

*To JULIE:* I'll be right back, honey.

SAM

Great.

*To ERIC:* Come on, you Houdini, lets go.

*SAM, SARA, and ERIC all exit stage left, into the hospital.*

DR

Tissue?

JULIE

No thanks, I'm okay.

DR

*Trying to level with her, build a rapport:*

This is all kind of warped, isn't it?

JULIE

Yeah, a bit.

DR

Well Julie, you seem like a very strong person. You're bearing up remarkably well under the circumstances. Straight A's, Sara told me.

JULIE

Yeah. I just miss them a lot, you know.

DR



I know. There's just one more question I need to ask you, and I hope it's not too upsetting. I wouldn't ask, but it could be critical to Alex's recovery.

JULIE

What?

DR

The police reports used your statement and the drugs in Emily's system to rule her death was a suicide, but the forensic evidence was very ambiguous. Sara is very adamant that Alex would never have done anything to harm Emily, but she was up here, and you were a much bigger part of their lives than Sara was. Saw more of their interactions than she did.

JULIE

*Cutting the DR off*

Doctor, I think I know what you're about to ask, and I'd rather you didn't. I've wondered. I have. I've had three months with my sister dead and my brother in law in the nuthouse to think about it. And I don't know. There's no good answer, either she shot herself or he murdered her. And I've lost them both. Knowing what happened doesn't change that.

*Gets up from her chair*

I don't want to blame anyone. I just want to see him. I'm sorry I can't help you.

*Exits through the hospital doors, where SARA exited previously, toward Alex's room.*

END OF ACT I