

David's Play

A play in two acts

By Tom Rowan

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

AMANDA, a dancer, 32

MOLLY, a wife and mother, 32

LEO, a critic, married to Amanda, 33

IAN, a schoolteacher and director, 31

BARRY, a comedian, 32

JOSHUA, an actor, Ian's friend, 24

DAVID, a memory, 21

SETTING

Amanda and Leo's condominium on the 22nd floor of a new building on Eighth Avenue in the low fifties, Manhattan. There is a front door to the hall, with an intercom beside it. We can see the living room, part of the kitchen, and doors to the study and the bedroom. The living room couch can open up into a bed. Bookshelves, and a credenza with drawers. On stage left is the balcony, overlooking Eighth Avenue, separated from the living room by a sliding glass door. The whole apartment looks pristine and new, decorated in a comfortable but clean-lined, modern style.

TIME

The present. Spring.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

(It's around four o'clock on a Thursday afternoon in April. MOLLY is standing alone in the center of the room, taking in the décor; her purse and a suitcase are beside her. She speaks to AMANDA, who is just offstage, bustling around in the kitchen.)

MOLLY

Are we getting old, Amanda? Because the cab driver on the way here from Penn Station called me "Madam." Cab drivers used to call me "Miss." Do I look like a Madam to you?

AMANDA

(Entering the living room with two glasses of iced tea, complete with mint leaves) Well I don't know; that shade of lipstick is kind of bright on you.

MOLLY

(Laughs) That's not what I meant! I mean what I really don't want to do tonight is act all touristy. Will you promise to yell at me if I act touristy?

AMANDA

Leo will.

MOLLY

Because I lived here. For four years! I did the Actress In New York thing too, I pounded the pavement, I read *Back Stage*. I knew how to hail a cab! I don't want to come across like this lady from New Jersey who can't believe how tall the buildings are, you know?

AMANDA

Don't worry.

MOLLY

By the way, I can't believe how tall your building is! The twenty-second floor?? Little Mike would love it.

AMANDA

Bring him in next time. I'll bet he's gotten so big I'd barely recognize him.

MOLLY

Don't you *know* he's going to be a basketball player? He's six, but people sometimes guess eight; it seems silly that we call him "Little" Mike. And can you believe Andrew's almost toilet trained?! I'm thinking another couple or three weeks.

AMANDA

How's Big Mike?

MOLLY

Oh, *he's* toilet trained.

AMANDA

Not what I meant.

MOLLY

He works twelve-hour days, what can you do, but we think he may make partner this year! You guys've got to come out to Summit and spend a day. Or a weekend! It's only an hour on New Jersey Transit; Mike does it twice a day.

AMANDA

If the show's a hit I won't be able to leave town on a weekend for at least a year. But we have Mondays off; maybe once the run has settled into a rhythm...

MOLLY

(*Squeals*) *Notorious!* I can't believe you're actually IN A BROADWAY SHOW!

AMANDA

I know; it must be a fluke.

MOLLY

I didn't mean that!--you're bad. I always knew you'd make it, you've always been... I mean, we always dreamed about the day one of us would... and now look at you!

AMANDA

Look at me.

MOLLY

You *deserve* this. You've earned it!

AMANDA

Paid for it anyway.

MOLLY

And everybody's keeping the promise? We're all really showing up?

AMANDA

Looks that way. Unless you count...

MOLLY

(Quietly) Yeah.

AMANDA

Here! Let me grab your stuff. *(She picks up the suitcase and bag.)*

MOLLY

I love the way you've done the place up. Crate and Barrel, right?

AMANDA

We got a few pieces from there. We're putting you in the study, which has a very comfortable couch. Ian will be out here on the sofa bed, and his friend Joshua gets the sleeping bag. *(She carries the bags into the study.)*

MOLLY

His what?

AMANDA

(From offstage) Didn't I tell you? Ian's bringing some actor friend of his from Lincoln, Joshua Something-or-Other. Ian said he's never seen a Broadway show, never even been to New York, so could he bring him.

MOLLY

Really? That's... Oh. It's just that I thought it was gonna be just us. The Six—I mean the five of us. That's why I didn't even invite Michael, not that he would have come, but... you know?

AMANDA

(Coming back into the living room) I hear you. But you know Ian when he gets a Great Idea.

MOLLY

I love Ian and his beautiful ideas! Haven't seen him in three years! I miss him so.

AMANDA

He said he's got a big announcement to make this weekend.

MOLLY

Oh gosh, do you think he's finally coming out??

AMANDA

No, probably nothing like that; he said a *surprise*.

MOLLY

(Laughs) We're so bad.

AMANDA

Honey, sit down! You're here now.

MOLLY

I'm too excited to sit! Can I see your view first?

AMANDA

Oh, absolutely. *(She leads the way to the balcony and opens the sliding door.)* Now that it's spring Leo and I will be having breakfast out here most days. We're far enough up that it's pretty quiet.

MOLLY

(Stepping out onto the balcony) Oh gollywompers! You can see half of Manhattan from up here. Mandy, when you said you two had bought a place in Hell's Kitchen, I pictured... I mean, back when I lived in the city, Hell's Kitchen was tenements and porn shops and cheap Mexican restaurants. And diners. And cheap Greek restaurants. And Indian! Cheap Indian restaurants. *Good*, but cheap. And *tenements*, did I say? Not luxury high-rise condos!

AMANDA

That stuff is still here, most of it: just walk over to Ninth Avenue. But here on Eighth there's been a ton of development. *(She leans on the balcony rail.)* Look down that way; you can see two Broadway theatres.

MOLLY

Oh, Mandy. *(She looks down.)* You are just in the thick of it, aren't you? Or just sort of... floating over it! In your own private aerie. Queen of all you survey.

AMANDA

Not quite.

MOLLY

(Grinning) So. When are you two going to start a family?

AMANDA

Where did *that* come from?

MOLLY

No place. I was just—what? Was that the wrong--? I mean, look at you! The two of you! Everything's falling into place, right?

AMANDA

(*Forced smile*) The American Dream!

MOLLY

Our dream! Opening in a new Broadway musical?! Tonight??! You seem so calm. I'd be a spastic mess. Look at me! I *am* a spastic mess! And it's *your* opening!

AMANDA

It's just another performance tonight, really. We've been in previews for five weeks; I think I'm over it. I could do the show in my sleep at this point.

MOLLY

(*Beat*) Okay.

AMANDA

I'm really glad you could be here, though.

MOLLY

Honey, *of course*, what are you talking about? We all made a vow.

AMANDA

A drunken, graduation-weekend vow.

MOLLY

Aren't those the best kind?

AMANDA

Are you sure I can't get you a glass of wine?

MOLLY

It's too early. We'll drink a toast when the guys get here.

(*The intercom buzzes.*)

AMANDA

And as if on cue! (*She goes to the intercom on the wall and presses the button.*) Yes?... Send him up. (*to MOLLY*) It's Barry.

MOLLY

Ah, Barry. How is he, Amanda?

AMANDA

I guess the same. He hangs in there. Told me he was excited about seeing you.

MOLLY

He's always been so funny and talented. I thought he'd have his own TV show by now, or something.

AMANDA

Oh, he thought that too. But he finds ways to... keep his hand in. He's... irrepressible, I think is the word Leo used.

MOLLY

And Leo's good with words.

AMANDA

That he is.

(The doorbell rings; AMANDA runs and answers it.)

AMANDA

Hi, Barry.

BARRY

(Bouncing into the room, holding a paper bag, singing.)
"I'm just a Broadway Baby! Pounding Forty-Second Street! Waiting for my one big chance! To be in a shooo-oooow!" *(He dances AMANDA around and kisses her.)* I'm proud like a Papa! *(Sees MOLLY)* And Miss Molly! Hi, Molly! Even purtier'n I remembered.

MOLLY

Not as skinny as you remembered.

BARRY

You look perfect to me. *(Kisses MOLLY)* Missed you.

MOLLY

I've missed you too.

BARRY

Didja??

MOLLY

I did. *(Slightly awkward pause)*

AMANDA

Barry has a new job.

BARRY

(Looks at AMANDA) I do? (Beat) Oh, that! Yeah, The Job, whatever. Strictly temporaneous. I just came from there.

AMANDA

Can I get you a glass of wine? Leo and Ian should be here any minute.

BARRY

Sure, or a beer. I brought the beer, actually. And some chips and dip! (He brandishes the bag.)

AMANDA

Oh dear; I'll take that. Leo has some lovely hors d'oeuvres underway, actually. I'll get you a glass. (She takes the bag and heads to the kitchen.)

BARRY

I can't get over how quick you guys got the place fixed up, Amanda. Crate and Barrel?

AMANDA

(Poking her head in from the kitchen) Maybe a couple items.

BARRY

It rocks.

MOLLY

Tell us about your new job.

BARRY

It sucks. I'm working at the TKTS booth in Times Square.

MOLLY

I remember! Selling tickets to Broadway shows?!

BARRY

Well, no. I guess I should say I work near the booth. The producer of this Off Broadway murder mystery thing hired me to hand out leaflets and ballyhoo their show to people standing on the line.

AMANDA

(Reentering and handing him a beer in a lovely glass) What's the show?

BARRY

Musical Murders. It's at this sort of cabaret theatre on Restaurant Row. Wanna hear my spiel?

AMANDA

That's okay—

BARRY

(*Pulling a flier out of his pocket*) Afternoon, Ma'am. Check this out: it's a hit comedy that's been playing Off-Broadway for the past four years! *Musical Murders*, now starring former soap star Jason Scott Morgan!

MOLLY

(*Playing along*) I don't know; it sounds interesting. But I already have tickets for the opening of *Notorious* tonight. A friend of mine from college is in the cast!!

BARRY

Notorious, isn't that the new jukebox musical? I'd kill for a ticket to that.

AMANDA

Please, you guys. I hate the term "jukebox musical."

BARRY

That's what they're calling it, though, right?

MOLLY

I think a musical using all songs by Duran Duran is a *great* idea.

AMANDA

From your mouth to Ben Brantley's ears. (*Changing the subject*) That sounds like a fun job, Barry. Right there on the Rialto; you'll probably meet some important people.

BARRY

Or get fired. I had to leave early today because of your opening.

AMANDA

How late were you supposed to work?

BARRY

They say eight o'clock or whenever I run out of flyers. Whichever comes first. So I just tried to give them out faster today.

MOLLY

How many do you have left?

BARRY

(Pulling out a huge, thick stack of flyers) This many?

MOLLY

Ouch.

AMANDA

Don't lose your job on my account, Barry. You could meet us at the theatre later; it's not even four-thirty.

BARRY

Hey, I promised you guys twelve years ago that I would be here for this, and I meant it. They can take their minimum wage job and stuff it! Plus, I can easily hand out the rest of these on the way to the theatre later, right?

AMANDA

I guess.

BARRY

How come the show starts at six-thirty? Broadway shows start at eight.

AMANDA

This is opening night, Barry. They do an early curtain so we can all get to the party sooner.

BARRY

You're taking us to the CAST PARTY??

AMANDA

Uh, yeah? Did you miss that part? As your, how shall we say, snazzy outfit would suggest?

BARRY

I guess I must have! Major schmooze alert!

MOLLY

(To AMANDA) So tell us what songs you're singing in the show!

AMANDA

I don't sing that much. A duet on "An Ordinary World." I'm mainly the lead dancer.

MOLLY

The *lead* dancer. Wow.

BARRY

Does your character have a name?

AMANDA

Uh-huh.

MOLLY

And...?

AMANDA

(Beat. She looks at them and says flatly:) My name is Rio.

MOLLY

(Laughs) I love it!

BARRY

Do they make you up to look Mexican?

AMANDA

Kinda. I wear this curly dark wig. It takes a million pins to make sure it doesn't fly off when I'm dancing.

BARRY

"Just like that river twistin' through the dusty land," huh?

AMANDA

I do my best. It's silly, you guys.

BARRY

It's Broadway! You won, Amanda. The first one of The Six Characters to make a Broadway debut!

MOLLY

And I guess the only one, the way things have turned out.

BARRY

Hey. Give me a year, eighteen months tops.

MOLLY

Oh, sorry; I didn't mean... I mean, you've been focusing on the standup stuff, right? You're gonna be on TV.

BARRY

That too. But you know I'm a Broadway baby! I won't really be happy till I'm up there on the Great White Way.

AMANDA

Be happy now.

BARRY

What?

AMANDA

Right now is your life, Buckaroo. So buck up and enjoy it! By the time you get what you thought you wanted, everything else will have gone to shit.

MOLLY

Well that's optimistic, Amanda!

AMANDA

I'm just saying. Have another beer.

(The front door swings open, and LEO enters, followed by IAN and JOSHUA, each of whom has a backpack and a duffle bag. AMANDA and MOLLY scream in delight.)

LEO

Look who's here! *(Kisses AMANDA)* We made great time from LaGuardia; beat the rush hour. Their flight actually got in a few minutes early.

(IAN goes straight to AMANDA and embraces her warmly.)

IAN

Hey, gorgeous. How are ya? I'm so proud of you, Mandy.

LEO

It's Amanda now; nobody calls her Mandy anymore.

AMANDA

Ian can call me Mandy. *(to IAN)* I'm good. Better now! You look great; you never change.

BARRY

Tell me about it! *(Hugs IAN)* There must be a wicked scary picture of you in some attic someplace!

IAN

You Character!

BARRY

You Character!

(They high five each other.)

IAN

And Molly! Molly the Mommy! How's your beautiful family?

MOLLY

(Hugging IAN) They're perfect! Can you believe they let me out of the house for a whole night? It's so wonderful to see you! You too, Leo!

IAN

I want you all to meet my good friend, Joshua. Josh, these are the rest of The Six Characters!

JOSHUA

It's an honor to meet you all. I've heard so much about you from Ian.

AMANDA

Don't believe any of it. It's lovely to meet you! I'm Amanda, and this is Barry and Molly.

BARRY

Hi! Great to meetcha.

JOSHUA

(Shaking their hands) Hi, Barry; I'm Joshua. Molly..

MOLLY

We're so glad you could be part of this weekend! Amanda said you've never been to the city before?

JOSHUA

That's right. Always wanted to, though!

AMANDA

He's adorable, Ian.

LEO

We'll show you some of the sights tomorrow. Can I get you some white wine?

JOSHUA

Um... sure.

LEO

The champagne we're saving for *after* the show. Ian?

IAN

Just something... whatever you have that's non-alcoholic.

LEO

Ginger ale? Sparkling water?

IAN

Ginger ale's great.

AMANDA

(*to LEO*) I'll get the drinks, dear. Can you help Ian and Joshua find a place to stow their bags?

LEO

Uhhh... sure. Maybe over here behind the couch?

AMANDA

You guys are going to be out here; we're putting Molly in Leo's study. The sofa bed is kinda lumpy, I'm afraid; the two of you can fight over who gets the floor! Molly, is your iced tea okay? Are you ready for some wine?

MOLLY

Sure; what the hey.

IAN

(*Tucking his duffel bag behind the couch*) It's great of you guys to let us stay here. One night in a New York hotel would cost more than I make in a week.

MOLLY

Teachers never get paid anywhere near what they're worth.

IAN

I know, right? Especially in public schools.

BARRY

(*Ruefully*) As long as you're making rent...

IAN

Where are you living these days, Bar?

BARRY

Brooklyn. New place with a coupla buddies.

MOLLY

Very cool! I hear Brooklyn's getting *pretty* trendy.

BARRY

Some neighborhoods are.

LEO

He lives in a cupboard. Here, try some of these salmon sandwiches. I'm gonna go heat the goat cheese. (*He goes into the kitchen.*)

IAN

(*to BARRY*) A cupboard?

BARRY

It's not a cupboard; Leo's being a dick as usual. (*Calling out to the kitchen*) It's not a cupboard, Leo, shut up when you don't know what you're talkin' about. (*to IAN*) It's a walk-in closet.

IAN

You live in a closet?

AMANDA

You can relate to that, right, Ian?

MOLLY

Amanda.

BARRY

It works fine, you guys. As a short-term thing, strictly temporaneous, till I get back on my feet fiscally. See, these two dudes I met at the comedy club, Joel and Randy, they already had the place, but they were having trouble making rent some months. So they needed a third, and Randy came up with the idea to turn this great big old-fashioned closet-thing they have into another bedroom.

IAN

How big is it? I mean I'm trying to picture a closet big enough to put a bed inside...

BARRY

Well, it's not that wide. But it's got this really sturdy iron rod running all the way across, you know, like where they used to hang the coats from? It's real sturdy, really strong. So I

figured out a way to hang a hammock from one end to the other, and that's where I sleep. It sort of... dips down in the middle, you know, like hammocks do, so it's not as long as a bed. It keeps my back curved a little bit, which is very healthy for the spine, so that's another benefit. Underneath I've got a little chest of drawers, and my CD player. And in the morning, I just unhook one end of the hammock and push it off to one side and that leaves plenty of room to, you know, stand around.

JOSHUA

That's really clever. It sounds cozy.

AMANDA

You do what you gotta do in New York.

IAN

Your place is so big, Mandy. And beautiful.

AMANDA

Thanks, sweetie.

IAN

I mean it, I love what you guys have done. I'm thinking... Crate and Barrel?

(Pause)

AMANDA

I'm going to have to hurt you.

IAN

What did I say? I like Crate and Barrel!

AMANDA

Yeah, well so does everybody apparently.

LEO

I told you we should have gotten more things at Pottery Barn.

IAN

You guys are such yuppies. Who'da thunk?

LEO

We're in our mid-thirties, Ian. It's time to live like grownups. Sure you don't want some wine?

IAN

I'm sure. *(Beat)* I'm in my early thirties.

MOLLY

(*Explaining to JOSHUA*) Ian skipped third grade; he's a year younger than the rest of us.

LEO

Which he hated at the time but loves to remind us of now.

IAN

(*Still checking out the apartment*) I guess the rent on a place like this would have to be astronomical.

LEO

You mean the mortgage payment?

AMANDA

(*Smiles*) We're homeowners! It seemed like a good time to invest, especially in this neighborhood.

BARRY

You thinkin' about finally moving here, Ian?

IAN

(*Laughs*) You know I've been thinking about that for ten years.

MOLLY

Is that what your big announcement's about?

IAN

What big announcement?

LEO

You told Amanda on the phone that you had a big announcement you were planning to make this weekend.

IAN

Ah, so I did.

MOLLY

(*Hinting*) We like Joshua, Ian.

BARRY

How can you tell? He hasn't said anything.

MOLLY

He has a great smile, though. See? I can tell he's nice. (*To JOSHUA*) I can tell you're nice.

JOSHUA

(*Embarrassed*) Thanks.

AMANDA

And attractive. He's very attractive, did I say?

IAN

Yes, you did say. You guys, this is not—

LEO

See how well adjusted I am? I have no problem with my wife telling other men they're attractive right here in my living room.

AMANDA

I thought I'm allowed to look at gay men, though, right? Because there's no chance of anything..

LEO

Famous last words.

AMANDA

And he's gay. You're gay, right, Joshua?

JOSHUA

Yes.

AMANDA

See?

IAN

Amanda! I'm sorry, Josh. Don't pay attention to them; they're being awful.

AMANDA

We're just trying to make this easier for you, Ian. I mean, how long has it been?

IAN

How long has *what* been?? Joshua and I are NOT... we are just friends, and colleagues, if that's what you're hinting at. And I'm not—that's not what my announcement's about. At all.

BARRY

So what is it about?

MOLLY

Yeah, Ian. Out with it.

IAN

Not yet, you guys. This is Amanda's night. We'll talk tomorrow.

LEO

Ian, Amanda's opening in a new Broadway musical. Whatever your little announcement is, I don't think you need to worry about upstaging her.

IAN

(Raises an eyebrow) You never know.

MOLLY

See?? That is just so typically Ian. Get us all curious about something and then leave us dangling. Ian, you're as infuriating as ever.

IAN

(Innocently) Molly, I never knew you thought of me as infuriating.

MOLLY

Yes you did.

IAN

Okay I did.

AMANDA

Joshua, do you know what Ian's big secret is?

JOSHUA

I might.

AMANDA

Well come sit by me. Would you like another glass of wine?

IAN

Josh, don't you dare.

JOSHUA

Don't worry.

LEO

New topic, please. Ian's going to direct more attention onto himself by *not* telling us his little secret than he would by divulging it.

AMANDA

Good point; he's a character.

IAN

You're a character!

JOSHUA

What's the "character" thing?

IAN

That's what they called us in college.

AMANDA

The five of us and David.

IAN

"The Six Characters."

LEO

It's a literary reference to—

JOSHUA

Pirandello?

LEO

(*A bit surprised*) Correct.

AMANDA

Ian, he's smart too.

IAN

Josh was a lit major.

MOLLY

We all went to this little New England liberal arts school where we just *ruled* the theatre department.

BARRY

We were the smartest, the hippest, the bitchiest, the most talented...

AMANDA

The rest of the kids were all scared of us.

LEO

As well they should have been.

BARRY

And we were such charactuhs!

MOLLY

Such charactuhs!

LEO

And there were six of us.

IAN

So somebody started calling us The Six Characters and it just stuck. *(Beat)*

JOSHUA

What were you in search of?

(Pause)

LEO

Very good question, young man. I don't think we knew.

IAN

I think we had a pretty good idea.

AMANDA

David knew. Sometimes I wish he was here so I could ask him!

MOLLY

(Musing) What were we searching for?

BARRY

Stardom! On Broadway! *(Grins)* Right, Amanda?

IAN

Was that really it, though?

BARRY

Whaddya mean?

IAN

I like to think we were searching for something bigger than that.

LEO

Everybody thinks they're going to change the world when they're in college; it's a part of growing up. Then you get out in the real world...

AMANDA

And *it* changes you instead.

IAN

Maybe not.

MOLLY

Good for you, Ian. (*They all look at her.*) I mean it. I don't think Ian's been changed as much as the rest of us. He even looks the same!

LEO

That's because Nebraska's not the real world.

IAN

Oh it isn't?

MOLLY

Leo, don't be a New York snob.

BARRY

New York snobs suck!

MOLLY

Remember that famous *New Yorker* cover of the map of the world, as seen from a *New Yorker's* point of view? (*Laughs*)

LEO

Truest thing ever printed.

AMANDA

Leo loves it; we used to have a framed print of it hanging in the living room, in our old apartment.

IAN

Why'd you get rid of it?

AMANDA

(*Glances at LEO*) Probably because *The New Yorker* became the competition.

JOSHUA

(*to LEO*) Are you a journalist?

LEO

Indeed. I'm the head theatre critic for *Manhattan Weekly*.

JOSHUA

(to IAN) I remember you said one of them was a critic.

BARRY

And you were assuming it was me, right? Based on my erudite demeanor.

AMANDA

Leo is considered the third most influential critic in the city.

MOLLY

That makes me so proud. What do you want to bet he'll be number one by the time we turn forty?

AMANDA

Why would I bet against my own husband?

LEO

Because that would be the smart thing to do. I don't see Mr. B leaving the *Times* any time soon. And if he did I don't think they'd come poaching around *Manhattan Weekly* looking for a replacement.

MOLLY

You never know. But I'd be happy with number three.

AMANDA

I'm fairly happy with Number Three.

IAN

Don't you miss it, though, Leo?

LEO

Miss what?

IAN

The theatre.

LEO

Are you kidding? I go to the theatre four times a week.

IAN

I mean *doing* it. You were fantastic onstage. And a pretty decent playwright, too.

LEO

Adolescent scribblings.

IAN

Don't you get frustrated writing about other people's work when you should be doing your own?

LEO

The criticism *is* my work. It's very demanding and quite rewarding.

IAN

But if the perfect role came along and you could get back up onstage, don't tell me--

LEO

No way. I've moved on from that. We're not in college anymore, Ian.

IAN

Thank you, Toto.

LEO

Why don't you put your money where your mouth is?

BARRY

Yeah, Ian. New York awaits! The Lincoln school system could do without you.

JOSHUA

They'd miss him, that's for sure. He's great with those kids.

IAN

Contrary to popular belief, you don't *have* to live in New York to do theatre. I still direct at least a couple shows a year, outside of the school.

LEO

And when's the last time you made more than, what, five hundred dollars doing it?

AMANDA

Leo. That's a personal question.

LEO

Hey, he was questioning *my* choices. I'm just pointing out--

MOLLY

You guys, time out! Nobody's attacking anybody else. Life takes you in different directions than what you expected sometimes. I'm proud of all of us.

BARRY

Nicely said.

LEO

Anybody want more hors d'oeuvres?

MOLLY

And you ended up with the perfect husband, Mandy. Mike can't even pronounce the word hors d'oeuvres, much less cook any.

LEO

It's three words, actually. With the last two elided.

AMANDA

See, Molly? You did okay; it's all trade-offs.

BARRY

Let's have some of the chips I brought! Amanda, what did you do with those? I had hot bean dip and everything.

AMANDA

I don't think they go with the menu Leo has planned, Bar.

IAN

They sound good, actually.

BARRY

Thank you, Ian.

LEO

We haven't even started the chicken balls with peanut sauce. I think you may find those to your liking.

BARRY

Did you say chicken *balls*?

LEO

(*Irritated*) Barry...

MOLLY

Time out! Time out! How 'bout we keep it classy for the cocktail hour, and then late tonight after the party we can pig out on junk food and beer just like the old days in the dorms?

LEO

Fair enough.

IAN

You're good at playing referee, Moll.

MOLLY

When you have a six year old and a three year old and a one year old, you get plenty of practice. Which reminds me... *(She starts to take out her cell phone.)* I'd better check in with the babysitter. She's not used to having them at this time of day.

AMANDA

Molly, put that away. They're *fine*. This is your night out; just enjoy.

MOLLY

(Dialing) And I'll be able to if I know everything's peachy dory. *(Into phone)* Hi, Cheryl, it's Molly!! Just checking in!! *(Beat)* Do I hear crying? What's the matter? Can somebody not find his Power Ranger? Good thing I called... *(She moves towards the balcony to avoid disturbing the others.)*

JOSHUA

Could I ask a question?

AMANDA

Of course you may, honey.

JOSHUA

Leo, since you're a critic, does that mean you have to review your own wife's performance in the show?

IAN

Thank you, Josh, I was wondering about that too.

LEO

No, of course not. That would be a conflict of interests.

IAN

But doesn't your magazine have to cover every Broadway opening?

LEO

Yes. And I send the reviewer I think is best suited for the assignment. I have two second-stringers and a freelancer under me.

AMANDA

So who did you pick for *Notorious*?

LEO

Denny. (*Smiles slyly*) His I-Pod is loaded with eighties music, so I thought...

AMANDA

Ooooh, sneaky.

BARRY

How could you go wrong with that music?

AMANDA

Keep thinking those thoughts.

BARRY

Do you guys do "Don't You Forget About Me"? That's my favorite. (*Sings*) "Don't you, dadadaDADADA, forget about me. NO, NO, NO, NO, Don't you"--

LEO

(*Shakes his head*) That's Simple Minds.

BARRY

Always the critic, Leo. Just 'cause I don't listen to Berlioz and Bartok like you--

IAN

No, he means that's not a Duran Duran song. The group that recorded it was called Simple Minds.

BARRY

Well maybe there should be a musical of their songs, too.

MOLLY

(*Still on the phone*) That's right, baby. And I know I can trust you to be very, very grown up and not give Daddy a hard time at bath time. Okay? No soap fights, okay? Okay! I'll call back before the show. Okay? Bye! (*She hangs up*) Whew! It's a good thing I called. Tracy hid Little Mike's Power Ranger again and he always cries until he gets it back. The sitter thought she'd looked every place.

LEO

And you knew where it was.

MOLLY

(*Smiles*) The upstairs clothes hamper. (*Shrugs*) She repeats herself. So what did I miss?

AMANDA

(Dryly) We were just talking about the inspiring work that gets done on Broadway these days.

BARRY

That's why you should move here, Ian. We need you!

MOLLY

That's right, Ian. Come up with some brilliant ideas: theatre that matters!

BARRY

Build a stage between two abandoned buildings..

AMANDA

Oh! That was so beautiful.

LEO

I can't believe we got away with it.

IAN

It's still one of my favorite memories.

JOSHUA

What?

(Pause. The others look at each other, sharing a memory.)

MOLLY

It was Ian's biggest inspiration the whole time we were in school.

BARRY

There were these two old broken-down dorms on the west side of campus; they were scheduled to be torn down...

LEO

Campus Gothic Style.

MOLLY

And there was a big courtyard in between them.

BARRY

So Ian came up with the brilliant idea to direct... well, tell him, Ian!

IAN

(to JOSHUA) We did *Romeo and Juliet* in that courtyard. It took me weeks to get permission from the administration, because the buildings were practically condemned.

MOLLY

But Ian can be very persuasive. When he's passionate about something.

IAN

We played it so that the dorm on the left was the Capulets' house, and the one on the right was the Montagues', and the courtyard was the street. So in the fight scene at the beginning, the families leaned out all the windows, yelling and throwing things at each other.

MOLLY

It was springtime, so it was still light out when we started the show.

IAN

And just starting to get dark by the time we got to the Capulets' ball. So in that scene, everybody came in carrying actual flaming torches...

AMANDA

And Lady Capulet lit the candles in a big candelabrum.

LEO

If the fire marshall had found out I'm sure they would have shut us down.

AMANDA

(*Mischievously*) But there was only one performance, so by the time anybody knew...

IAN

The whole play was lit by torches and candlelight. We didn't use any electricity at all.

BARRY

This was all Ian's idea; he's a genius.

IAN

And at the end of each scene, some character would blow out a candle or take a torch offstage as they exited, so by the time we got to the tomb scene at the end...

JOSHUA

(Grinning) Oh my god.

LEO

It was illuminated only by Romeo's lantern.

MOLLY

And just a little bit of moonlight.

IAN

But by then, the audience's eyes had adjusted to the dark, like I knew they would have, so they could still sort of see everything. Because they had been there the whole time, as it gradually got darker and darker—like the play. It was as if the whole experience was a kind of secret ritual, and they were a part of it. All of us were part of it, together.

MOLLY

It was so quiet. You could hear a pin drop when Romeo held up the lantern just so, so he could see Juliet's face one last time.

IAN

Amanda played Juliet. And she was radiant. Provided as much light as all those candles, just by being... who she is. *(To AMANDA)* I knew that night you were going to be a star someday.

AMANDA

Ian, if you make me cry I'm going to have to hurt you.

MOLLY

Oh, gollywompers, I remember every minute of that night like it was yesterday!

BARRY

We made that happen, you guys. I mean, it was mainly Ian—

IAN

It was all of us.

JOSHUA

Wow. I wish I could have seen it.

IAN

I wish you could too.

JOSHUA

Who played Romeo? *(Pause)* Oh. Sorry.

LEO

That would have been David.

BARRY

David the golden boy.

MOLLY

He was so beautiful. I couldn't take it.

AMANDA

The way the poetry just sort of... sailed out of him. I almost forgot to say my lines sometimes I was so fascinated just listening to him. He made me feel like I didn't know what I was doing.

IAN

Hey, what are you talking about, you were brilliant together.

AMANDA

He just killed me, that guy.

LEO

He killed *me*. (*Beat*) I mean in the duel scene he killed me, literally. I played Tybalt.

JOSHUA

I would have guessed you were Mercutio.

LEO

Why thank you, Joshua. It's unfortunate you weren't around at the time to tell Ian that. He cast *himself* as Mercutio.

IAN

(*Shakes his head*) The overweening pride of youth. I thought I could do everything.

BARRY

You did a great job! The Queen Mab speech rocked!

AMANDA

Totally. I've never seen anybody play it like you did; you made it so obvious that Mercutio was in love with Romeo.

IAN

What?!

LEO

Exactly. And that's why he's so... emphatic in his *rejection* of the whole idea of love.

IAN

You guys, that's not what I was playing at *all*. See, Josh, I told you it was a good thing I gave up acting.

MOLLY

Hey, I did some major soul searching over that show too. I cried all weekend after Ian didn't cast me as Juliet!

IAN

I never knew that!

MOLLY

Yes you did, you jerk.

IAN

Okay I did. (Beat) I'm sorry, Moll.

BARRY

(To MOLLY) You were adorable as the Nurse though.

MOLLY

Well as I remember, you were a... unusually zany Friar Laurence.

BARRY

(to JOSHUA) I played him nearsighted. Like I had him always losing his glasses, or just forgetting where they were, even when they were on a chain around his neck! (Laughs at himself)

IAN

(Dryly) Yes, that was inventive. Added ten minutes to the running time of the show.

BARRY

Yeah: in laughs! (Beat) We should do it again! I say let's find two old buildings in Alphabet City or someplace--

AMANDA

Oh please, I was too old for it then.

BARRY

I'm serious, Ian my man. New York needs you.

IAN

(Shakes his head) I can't imagine doing that play without David.
(Pause)

MOLLY

I think I miss him more than ever tonight.

BARRY

Is this really the first time the five of us have all gotten together since...

IAN

Uh-huh.

MOLLY

It seems like we all should have come together at some point to have a... or, you know. Say goodbye.

LEO

That's the thing about vanishing without a trace. There's nothing to bury.

AMANDA

His Mom used to talk about having a memorial of some kind. But then she'd always decide she wasn't ready, 'cause that would feel like giving up and she still had hope.

IAN

Exactly.

BARRY

If he'd just left a note or something...

IAN

What kind of a note?

BARRY

You know.

IAN

No, I don't know. What kind of a note, Barry? (BARRY just gives him a look.) David did not kill himself.

MOLLY

I can't imagine that either.

IAN

Thank you. He's a life force. I've never known anybody with that kind of intense love for the world.

LEO

I don't know. Sometimes those are the people who... I mean, that kind of intensity can have a flip side, as it were.

IAN

Did you get a psychology degree when we weren't looking?

AMANDA

I know what Leo means. David could overwhelm you with his energy, absolutely, but sometimes I'd catch a look into those eyes and feel... I don't know. It was scary almost.

LEO

There were always dark things in him.

IAN

Not suicidal things.

AMANDA

Okay, Ian.

BARRY

Hey. I thought we weren't gonna do this tonight.

AMANDA

It's okay. It's something each of us has to deal with in our own way. (*Looks at LEO*) So I think it's time we told you guys... Leo and I have made our peace with it, finally.

IAN

You did what?

LEO

(*He put his hand on AMANDA's shoulder and they face the room together.*) Last November, actually. We took a framed picture of him and went to that fountain in Central Park that he loved so much and lit a candle.

AMANDA

It was at sunset, since that was his favorite time of day. We told each other a couple of our favorite stories about him, and thanked him for what he brought into our lives, and then we said a prayer for his soul. It was the first time I'd prayed in I don't know how long.

LEO

(Nods) It was hard but it felt... it felt good in a way, too. Like it was the right thing. It was time.

(Silence. Suddenly, IAN stands up and looks at AMANDA for a moment, his eyes blazing, and then rushes out onto the balcony.)

AMANDA

Oh, shit. I'm sorry, that wasn't... I was hoping... I don't know what I was thinking.

MOLLY

It's not your fault.

BARRY

The poor guy thinks he's still alive.

AMANDA

(Heading for the door) I'd better go talk to—

JOSHUA

(Standing up) No, it's okay. I'll go. (He walks to the door, then turns back to them.) It'll be okay.

(JOSHUA goes out onto the balcony, where IAN is leaning against the rail, looking down and trying not to cry. JOSHUA quietly slides the door closed behind him.)

IAN

Leave me the fuck alone.

JOSHUA

Okay.

IAN

(Turns and sees him) Oh, Josh! I'm sorry; I didn't know it was you.

JOSHUA

No worries. (He goes to him and stands beside him, looking out over the city. Pause) You gonna be okay?

IAN

I cannot believe she fucking said that. I've been trying not to make an issue out of it, because this is her big night. But why

did she have to go and *do that*? (Beat) I am not going to cry; I refuse.

JOSHUA

(*Gently touching his back*) Cry if you need to. You're entitled.

(*But he doesn't. Inside the apartment, AMANDA paces.*)

BARRY

He'll be okay, Mandy.

MOLLY

Does he really believe that, still? That David could still be alive? It's been over three years.

BARRY

He believes it.

LEO

Or he tells himself he does.

AMANDA

I just want him to get a life, you know? I mean, dammit! I love Ian, but I think he deserves to have a life.

MOLLY

He loved David so much.

AMANDA

That's right, and David loved him. But they weren't *lovers*. Maybe they should have been, but they were not.

BARRY

Do you think Ian's ever had a...

LEO

I don't think he has.

AMANDA

I'm sure he hasn't.

BARRY

Shit.

AMANDA

I was *hoping* maybe this guy Joshua, he seems so nice, but...

LEO

No, it's classic. Ian can't let go of David so he can't let go, period.

MOLLY

That's so sad.

AMANDA

It's ridiculous is what it is. If we can all see it why can't he? I mean, I feel awful that I hurt his feelings, but after this weekend, it could be years before we see him again. *(Beat)* You need to help me. I don't want to send him back to Podunksville or wherever--

MOLLY

Lincoln.

AMANDA

--without shaking some sense into him. Right?

BARRY

I hear ya.

(IAN comes back in from the balcony, followed by JOSHUA. He has gotten himself back together, and faces AMANDA.)

AMANDA

Hey, baby. I'm so sorry.

IAN

Apology accepted. *(Quietly)* I just want to say one thing. I knew David better than I've ever known anybody. We shared our best creative work, we shared incredibly important things. I feel him in here. *(He touches his heart.)* And if he was no longer on this planet, I would know. I am telling you right now, I would feel that.

AMANDA

Ian, what can I say? *(She goes to embrace him.)* I love you a lot. It means so much to me that you're here. And right now, I have a show to go do.

MOLLY

Oh my gosh. *(Looks at her watch)* Amanda.

LEO

It is that time.

JOSHUA

How do you get to the theatre?

AMANDA

I walk. It's just down on Forty-sixth Street. (*She's getting her stuff together.*) You guys'll walk too.

LEO

We'll have one more drink, then stroll on down to Restaurant Row. I made a reservation at a great little Italian place.

IAN

Not too expensive I hope.

LEO

Don't worry about that; it's on us tonight.

BARRY

I think we should have a toast before Amanda leaves.

AMANDA

No no; there'll be plenty of those *after* the show. I can't be late.

LEO

Knock 'em dead, sweetheart.

MOLLY

Break a leg! You're gonna be spectacular!

AMANDA

Thanks. I love you guys! I'm so thrilled that you're here. (*She's at the door.*) I'll see you at the stage door after! (*And she's gone.*)

BARRY

I don't think I've been this excited about seeing a show since I was like nine and my parents took me to the circus.

LEO

I'm even nervous and I see three or four plays a week.

MOLLY

How 'bout you, Joshua? Your very first Broadway show.

JOSHUA

I know! I'm like that nine-year-old kid right now. Thanks so much for including me.

LEO

Not a problem. How did you two meet?

JOSHUA

We met at the gym, in Lincoln. *(Beat)* Where we work out?

MOLLY

Intriguing. What were you wearing? *(Beat)* What was *Ian* wearing?

IAN

Molly.

JOSHUA

The day we met? He had on a Colorado Shakespeare Festival T-shirt. Navy blue running shorts, white tube socks, blue and white basketball shoes. And a white sweatband around his left wrist.

LEO

Very observant.

MOLLY

Okay, Ian. Let's see who wins. What was Joshua wearing?

IAN

(Embarrassed) I don't remember.

JOSHUA

Probably a towel. We were in the locker room.

MOLLY

How could you forget that, Ian?

IAN

Shut up. You guys are ridiculous. Josh was new in town, he was studying acting, he saw the theatre logo on my shirt and introduced himself. End of boring story. *(To JOSHUA)* Josh, pay no attention to my goofy friends who are in their thirties and still act like they're in junior high.

JOSHUA

No worries.

LEO

Ian, I absolutely insist that you have some wine. You need it. *(He pours some into a glass for IAN.)*

JOSHUA

So we got together for coffee a couple times and hit it off. Ian told me about this production of *The Tempest* he was doing in a park in town...

IAN

I'm the Joe Papp of Lincoln.

JOSHUA

...and I went to the auditions.

IAN

He was great. I ended up casting him as Ariel.

JOSHUA

Which was a stretch. Ian was very patient with me; I'd never done Shakespeare.

IAN

He has all the right instincts. It was magical. Reminded me of David when he played Puck sophomore year. Remember?

MOLLY

Of course; he was amazing.

BARRY

Hey, Molly, do you remember my Bottom? (*Pause. They all stare at him.*) My Bottom! I played Bottom in that production!

IAN

(*Laughs*) That's right, and you were hilarious.

MOLLY

Yes, Barry, I have vivid memories of your Bottom.

BARRY

I liked yours too.

MOLLY

Ahem; moving along. Ian! I wish I could have seen your *Tempest*.

IAN

I wish you could have been in it. I miss working with you guys.

BARRY

Hey, buddy, you offer me the right role and I'm totally there. I'm looking to do more regional work.

LEO

You mean amateur theatre?

IAN

That's not what... *(He glares at LEO.)* I'd love that, Barry. But the theatres are small, they probably couldn't afford to put--

BARRY

Hey dude, I don't need fancy digs. You know what they say: "Do what you love, the money will suck!"

LEO

Ian, just sling a hammock in your broom closet; it's what he's used to.

IAN

How 'bout you, Molly?

MOLLY

Oh, no, honey. That's a thing of the past for me.

IAN

With your talent?

MOLLY

I tried working with a community theatre out in Jersey when we first moved to Summit. But it drove me crazy; nobody was taking it seriously. They felt threatened when I showed up actually knowing my lines! And the kids need me home in the evenings.

BARRY

Ian, listen, I used to fantasize, when Dave was still... around, that you'd come to New York and direct us all in another show.

IAN

(Suppressing a smile) Really?

MOLLY

Oh, wouldn't that have been fun?

BARRY

Because the six of us together: Wow. *That* was the energy, you know, the synergy or whatever.

IAN

We did bring out the best in each other.

MOLLY

I was so happy when I was with you guys! Because you got me. You saw what I could do. Who I was! Three years of auditions in New York with my measly little college résumé and I ended up thinking I must be invisible or something. *(Beat)* You guys made me feel special.

BARRY

You are special.

MOLLY

Now only my kids make me feel that way. *(Pause)*

BARRY

So what do you say, Ian my buddy?

IAN

What do I say about what?

BARRY

Come to New York. Just for a few weeks. Direct us all in some brilliant concoction out of that beautiful brain of yours. Make the magic happen again!

(Pause)

IAN

Okay.

BARRY

(Beat) What? *(Beat)* That was easier than I expected!

IAN

I wasn't going to spring this on you until after the show tonight. But it seems like the conversation just naturally... *(Looks at JOSHUA)* I don't know, Josh. What do you think? I should wait till Amanda's here.

JOSHUA

Whatever you want to do.

LEO

Is this the big secret announcement you've been threatening us with?

MOLLY

Out with it, Ian. We can't take any more suspense!

(Pause. IAN is indecisive.)

BARRY

If you don't tell us now, we'll be all... preoccupied and we won't be able to enjoy *Notorious*! Now would *that* be fair to Amanda?

IAN

(*Thinks a moment*) Okay, you guys. Just wait a sec. (*He retrieves his backpack from behind the couch and pulls out a manila envelope.*) I've got something here you all need to know about.

(Pause)

LEO

Yes?

BARRY

Enough suspense already!

IAN

About six weeks ago I got a letter from Emily. David's Mom. (Pause) She told me she had finally sorted through the boxes of his belongings she'd packed up from his apartment after... after we all realized he wasn't coming back any time soon. She had stacked everything in a corner of his old room at home in Pittsburgh, until she felt strong enough to really go through everything and look at it. And she found... this manuscript. It's a full-length play David wrote, probably just before he went away. She said she thought he'd want me to have it. I don't know what it's called because there's no title page—maybe he hadn't decided on a title yet—but I've been calling it *The Midnight Carnival*. (*He takes the manuscript out of the envelope.*) It's absolutely fascinating, you guys. Really beautiful; it reminds me of the poems he used to write. It's about a young boy, just called "The Boy," who gets trapped in this kind of bizarre, surreal traveling carnival after closing time. And all the weird carnival characters kind of... torment him, and seduce him, and, I don't know, teach him the meaning of life or something, or inspire him to figure it out... It's very elliptical and full of symbolism. Complex!—just like David. And the amazing thing is... it has parts for all of you. Amanda too. I think he wanted... I'm pretty sure he wrote it as something for us all to do together.

LEO

(*A little dubious*) With you directing?

IAN

I hope so. I mean, I'd like to think so.