

Side A

Bruce How many times have you been told Do Not Get In the Caskets.

JOHN. We were making a commercial for//the Fun Home.

SMALL ALISON. Shhh!!

CHRISTIAN. We're sorry, Dad.

BRUCE. We've got two bodies. We've got work to do.

SMALL ALISON. My turn to do the directory! Who are they?

BRUCE. (*Handing her the directory letters.*) Muriel Swartz.
Dwight Johnson.

SMALL ALISON. Wait— Benny's dad?

CHRISTIAN. Benny's in my class!

SMALL ALISON. What happened?

BRUCE. He fell off a ladder. Broke his neck. Get this cleaned up.

(To himself.)

It's going to be a long night.

John and Christian start to clean. Small Alison begins putting the names onto the directory board.

CHRISTIAN. When you break your neck is it just like *crack* you're instantly dead?

JOHN. Probably his head was hanging from his neck and then he couldn't see, and he couldn't eat or anything and then he died from not eating and running into things.

CHRISTIAN. That's not right.

SMALL ALISON. You guys, we gotta practice the commercial.

She fetches the tape recorder.

JOHN. Yeah, we messed it up before.

The kids all try to grab the tape recorder.

SMALL ALISON. Give it to me.

JOHN. I want it.

CHRISTIAN. My turn!

CHRISTIAN. Should we start at the top?

SMALL ALISON. Yeah.

CHRISTIAN. Hold on, should we say Fun Home? We only call it that in the family?

JOHN. Yeah, that's right.

SMALL ALISON. It's our commercial. We can do what we want.

JOHN. That's right too.

CHRISTIAN. I guess.

SMALL ALISON. Come on!

CHRISTIAN. Okay, okay!

JOHN. (*Into a fake megaphone.*) Places everybody!

BRUCE. If we're careful this should bloom in a couple weeks.

(To Christian.)

Hold this.

(To John.)

Gimme that shovel.

(To Small Alison.)

Where's the peat moss?

SMALL ALISON. This bush came from someone else's yard. That's illegal.

BRUCE. No one's lived in that house for five years, nobody's going to miss it.

SMALL ALISON. Fine.

She brings him the peat moss. He pours it around the base and pats it down.

CHRISTIAN. Mom's back from play practice!

Helen enters, carrying bags from her rehearsal.

SMALL ALISON. *(Pulling a bag from Helen's arms.)* Are these your costumes?

HELEN. They are.

JOHN. I wanna see!

CHRISTIAN. Me too!

The kids pull period dresses out of the bags.

HELEN. Careful, careful!

ROY. *(Entering.)* Hey, everybody. Que pasa?

The three kids sidle up to him, shy but thrilled to see him.

SMALL ALISON. Hi Roy.

CHRISTIAN. Hey Roy, what's goin' on?

ROY. *(To John.)* Hey, you look like a guy I met the other day. Are you that same guy? ~~He looked like~~

~~He looks like~~
all three kids laugh and squeal with delight.

HELEN. Hello. I'm Helen Bechdel.

ROY. *(Putting John down to shake her hand.)* Ah, Mrs. Bechdel, yeah, I'm Roy— sorry, I know who you are, my aunt and uncle talk about you all the time, they see your plays, they're crazy about you. They're always saying you're so much better than Irma Hornbacher.

HELEN. *(Blushing.)* Oh, No, Irma's wonderful.

BRUCE. Come on, you're in a different class!

(To Roy.)

I've seen a lot of New York theater, even by those standards she's exceptional.

SMALL ALISON. Our mom's in a play called Mrs. Warner and the Professor!

HELEN. *Mrs. Warren's Profession.*

SMALL ALISON. She studied in New York with Uta Hagen.

Do you know who that is?

ROY. I don't even know what you just said.

BRUCE. Wanna get started?

ROY. Sure. Whatever you want. Lemme get my tools.

BRUCE. 'kay

Roy heads out to his car, with the three chattering kids clinging to him.

SMALL ALISON. Hey Roy, did you see *Herbie Rides Again*?

CHRISTIAN. Oh, yeah! It's the best movie.

JOHN. Herbie is a car!

ROY. I didn't see it.

JOHN. *The Love Bug?* You didn't see *The Love Bug*?

When they're gone, Helen asks lightly:

HELEN. Who is that? Why is he here?

BRUCE. I hired him.

HELEN. To do what?

BRUCE. To help me out.

HELEN. Where is he from?

BRUCE. When we went to the lumberyard last week he was there working for Arnie. Kid has a truck, he does hauling. Arnie said he did a good job and he was looking for more work.

HELEN. Oh, so he's just hauling.

BRUCE. Hauling. Other things. I don't know.

HELEN. Oh. So... You're thinking he's going to be working here, at the house?

BRUCE. What difference does it make?

HELEN. I— I— I just—

BRUCE. Arnie recommended him, okay?

HELEN. Okay. I'm just, I'm trying to get a sense // of—

BRUCE. ~~That's~~ I know him. He was my student a few years back. Okay? What, do you think I'm bringing some bum around? ~~What are you doing up your ass?~~

The chattering group returns.

JOHN. You know something else about the movie that's funny? It's that the car is called the love bug. // It's a car, but they call it a bug. Even though it's a car.

BRUCE. *(Monster-charging the kids.)* Raaahr!

The kids laugh and scream.

Okay, that's enough. Come on, Roy, let's go inside. I'll show you that wallpaper.

JOHN.

CHRISTIAN.

SMALL ALISON.

Aw!

No, come on!

But dad!

BRUCE. Enough!

(To Roy.)

Bunch of little monsters.

Bruce and Roy leave. Helen watches them go.

CHRISTIAN. Mom, can we watch TV?

HELEN. Sure.

Side C

SMALL ALISON. (*Bursting with pride.*) Okay, so: This is a keystone because Pennsylvania is the Keystone state.

BRUCE. This square?

SMALL ALISON. That's Beech Creek, see? That's the bridge, that's the ford, that's the creek, school, the Fun Home, our house, Aunt Jane and Uncle Randy's house—

Bruce points.

That's Germany!

(Getting an idea.)

Ooh, I know.

She draws in a new part.

John, Christian, me. See? Floating in bubbles because we're not born yet—

BRUCE. Okay, that's interesting but let me show you how you can make it better. This is visually confusing; you've got about ten different drawings so you can't really see any of them. Pick one.

SMALL ALISON. But this is a cartoon and in a cartoon there's all different parts.

BRUCE. But we can make it better than a cartoon.

SMALL ALISON. I like cartoons.

BRUCE. Sure, cartoons are fun but I'm showing you here how to do something substantial and beautiful. Listen to me, you have the potential to become a real artist. Do you know that? You do. But that means you have to learn the craft, you have to study the rules. Let's talk about composition. You've got too much going on here. Pick one area.

SMALL ALISON. The Keystone State.

BRUCE. That's too much. Watch this.

He takes her pad and starts a new drawing.

I'm going to draw our mountains. See that? How I'm shading them? That gives them dimension.

SMALL ALISON. I want the whole state.

BRUCE. (*Cross.*) I'm explaining to you that you can't do that.

SMALL ALISON. Let me try.

BRUCE. Alison, this is the way it should look.

SMALL ALISON. But I liked the way mine was.

BRUCE. (*Losing his temper.*) But you cannot do it like that unless you want to ruin it. I am trying to teach you something important.

HELEN. (*Coming in from the other room.*) Bruce, it doesn't matter. It's a drawing.

BRUCE. What do you mean it doesn't matter? She's taking it to school. She's showing it in class. You know what, never mind. You want to take a half-baked mess to school, you want to embarrass yourself like that it's fine with me. Do what you want.

SMALL ALISON. (*Holding the drawing out to him.*) No, I like the one you did, Daddy.

~~Small Alison rejoins her brothers at the TV.~~

BRUCE. Sit down. Take a load off.

~~Alison's attention shifts back to her dad and Roy.~~

ROY. I've been working, I'm disgusting. Don't wanna sweat all over your nice stuff.

BRUCE. What are you talking about, it's *furniture* for chrissakes. Go ahead. Stretch out if you want.

Roy stretches out on the chaise.

ROY. This place is like a museum.

(Noticing a carafe.)

What's that stuff?

BRUCE. Sherry. Want some?

ROY. Is it good?

BRUCE. Yeah.

ROY. Okay, sure.

Bruce pours them both a glass.

I remember this house before you moved in. We used to ride our bikes over here when we were kids. You've done a shit-load of work.

BRUCE. I did. By myself, most of it.

ROY. You must be in good shape, old man.

BRUCE.

~~Not to be afraid of me.~~

~~It still looks like a kid's room.~~

~~You'd be surprised at what a guy my age knows how to do.~~

He brings the sherry to Roy.

Want it?

ROY. Yeah.

BRUCE. *(Holding the sherry back.)* Unbutton your shirt.

ROY. Is that your wife playing the piano?

BRUCE. Don't worry about her.

Side E

JOAN. Your father sent you *Colette*?

MEDIUM ALISON. Yeah. Why?

JOAN. I don't know. It's just... He's like the opposite of my dad. He's just like sending you lesbian books?

MEDIUM ALISON. No! I mean, yes, I guess *Colette* was a lesbian but—

JOAN. Oh, she was.

MEDIUM ALISON. Okay, but he sent it to me because he thought I'd be interested in the whole Paris... Arts... Bohemian... Scene.

JOAN. Yeah but he didn't send you a book about Toulouse-Latrec, he sent you *Colette*. I think it's amazing that he's cool with you being a dyke.

MEDIUM ALISON. What? I don't think so.

JOAN. Oh, he's not?

MEDIUM ALISON. No. I don't know. Can we talk about something else?

JOAN. Sure. Why?

MEDIUM ALISON. Because— I have no idea how my parents feel about— I just figured it out myself.

JOAN. Oh.

MEDIUM ALISON. About two weeks ago.

JOAN. Huh. With who?

MEDIUM ALISON. With who what?

ALISON. (*A wave of retroactive humiliation.*) Oh god.

JOAN. Who were you with?

MEDIUM ALISON. (*Clueless, then getting it.*) Nobody. *Nobody!* Oh my god, I'm so embarrassed.

ALISON. (*Fresh wave of retroactive humiliation.*) Oh god.

MEDIUM ALISON. I was in a bookstore.

JOAN. In a bookstore? Nice.

MEDIUM ALISON. (*Clueless, then getting it.*) What? *NO!* Two weeks ago I was downtown and I wandered into the bookstore, I was just browsing around and I picked up this book—

JOAN. Ah, *Word is Out*.

MEDIUM ALISON. And I was like, Oh, interviews. This looks interesting. And then I was like, These people are all—

(*Suddenly worried she doesn't know the right word.*)

Uh...

JOAN. Gay?

MEDIUM ALISON. Gay. Yes. And *then* I was like, "Oh my god! I'm

MEDIUM ALISON.

a lesb—

JOAN.

a dyke

MEDIUM ALISON. Yes. A dyke. Yes. And I totally flipped out and shoved the book back onto the shelf and I left. And then I came back the next day and bought the book. And then I came back the next day bought all the other books in that section. And then I made myself go to the meeting at the Gay Union. And then, and then, it's now. Hi.

JOAN. Hello.

(*A beat. Then, re: Word is Out.*)

That's a powerful book.

MEDIUM ALISON. It is. (*Joan lingers*)

~~*Joan considers kissing her Medium Alison wonders whether she's about to be kissed*~~

JOAN. So. I should probably go.

MEDIUM ALISON. 'kay.

JOAN. So... Will I see you at the Union meeting tomorrow afternoon?

MEDIUM ALISON. Yeah I'll be, uh, yeah, I will come to the meeting. I'll bring these posters. Finish 'em up.

JOAN. Cool. I'll see you then. Bye, Alison.

MEDIUM ALISON. Bye, Joan.

ALISON. Caption: My newfound queerness was— No. Unable to process this tsunami-like revelation from my father— Tsunami-like??? No.

Bruce smashes down his tool bag in frustration.

Caption: I leapt into my new life with both feet— and I blocked out everything that was happening at home.

Helen is preparing to leave the house for school.

Bruce searches through the bag for a tool.

BRUCE. Where the hell are John and Christian???

HELEN. John's at Cosgrove's probably.

BRUCE. Why?

HELEN. (*Taken aback.*) Because... He works there.

ALISON. I should have been paying attention *Caption!* I should have been paying attention.

BRUCE. Since when?

HELEN. He's been working there almost a month.

BRUCE. Oh.

ALISON. And I— *Caption!* I was, I guess I was *mad* at you, Dad.

BRUCE. Well, where's Christian?

HELEN. At Doug's probably. What do you need?

BRUCE. Nothing. Nothing. I'll do it myself.

ALISON. My life had just started to open.

BRUCE. (*Muttering to himself, still searching for the missing tool.*)
Dammit! Goddammit!

ALISON. I didn't know, Dad, I had no way of knowing that my beginning would be your end!

Helen sees a broken painting.

HELEN. Oh my god. The Brinley. Oh my god, what happened? Did it fall?

He keeps banging around the tool bag, but doesn't answer.

Bruce, the painting. What happened?

BRUCE. I threw it down the fucking stairs.

HELEN. Why??

BRUCE. I don't // know why!

HELEN. Bruce I don't know // what's—

BRUCE. Because no one fucking helps me around here!
Because I can't stand the sound of your hectoring, // shrewish voice, your histrionics, your—

HELEN. You *stop*. You're blaming *me*? After what you've put me through? // I'm on edge every minute. You're so—

BRUCE. Every single person in this town knows what kind of a man I am! *You're* the one with the problem!

HELEN. I have to go to school. I'll be at meetings until late.

Helen exits.

ALISON. I'm drawing. I'm drawing. I'm just drawing. I'm remembering something, that's *all*.

F

HELEN. Hello?

MEDIUM ALISON. Hi, Mom.

HELEN. How are you? How's your school work?

MEDIUM ALISON. It's...fine.

Are you ever going to talk to me about my letter?

(Small beat.)

HELEN.

I'm- I'm really at odds
here. I feel responsible-

I do feel children should
be allowed to make their
own mistakes.

You know that and you
know that I don't like
parents who meddle, but
in this case I'm uniquely
qualified to warn you
against romanticizing
this path. Alison, you
probably don't know
that on more than one
occasion catastrophe has
been narrowly averted
and it is difficult for me
to-

MEDIUM ALISON.

Mom, you didn't cause
this- That's not the way
it works

Oh please!

Catastrophe? Could
you be a little more
overdramatic?

HELEN. Alison, your father has had affairs with men.

(A beat.)

MEDIUM ALISON. What?

HELEN. I don't know how he hasn't been caught or
exposed. There was the thing with Roy.

MEDIUM ALISON. *(Dumbfounded.)* Our yard guy? Our
babysitter???

HELEN. What do you think he was doing when he went out
in the middle of the night, or taking his "trips"? One
time he came back with body lice. It's been going on
for years. For our whole marriage, actually.

MEDIUM ALISON. Why are you telling me this and not Dad?

HELEN. Your father? Tell the truth? Please.

SHIFT to:

(in person)

JOAN. No. What? Your *dad*???

MEDIUM ALISON. I'm fine.

JOAN. Are you sure? Do you need to talk about it?

MEDIUM ALISON. No. No, I don't want to talk about it, I
don't want to think about it. I want to- I don't know.
Let's go see what's happening at the Gay Union.

JOAN. *(Holding up a joint.)* Wanna go to my room? Smoke
a joint?

MEDIUM ALISON. Yes I do.

G

(on the phone)

MEDIUM ALISON. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So.

How've things been here?



HELEN. He bought that old shell of a house out on Route 150. Did he tell you that?

MEDIUM ALISON. Oh yeah, I think he mentioned it in one of his letters. I've been getting two, three, sometimes four letters a week. They're kind of // manic-

HELEN. Years ago he talked about buying it and he looked it over and said it wasn't worth it, it was too far gone and that was back then so I don't know why now that it's even more broken down he's decided he can fix it up. I'm sure he can.

MEDIUM ALISON. Probably.

HELEN. He's out there day and night, like a maniac, not eating, I don't think he's sleeping. Sometimes I walk into a room and he's standing there, not moving, frozen, like a statue.

MEDIUM ALISON. Yeah, I don't know. He's-

HELEN. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of cooking for him and I'm sick of cleaning this museum.

MEDIUM ALISON. It's too much. You've done too much.

HELEN. You know, shortly after we were married we took a drive from Germany where we were living to Paris. He wanted me to meet an Army buddy of his. We had a beautiful drive. And then, just outside of Paris, he just went crazy. Just started screaming at me. Why couldn't I read a simple fucking map? I was a stupid, worthless bitch. I was dumbfounded. I was terrified- it came out of nowhere as far as I knew. Of course, I learned later that this man had been your father's lover.

MEDIUM ALISON. I don't know how you've done it.



ALISON. (S...)

*Telephone was
The phone is high*

Alison tries to pull herself together the way she always has, by working.

This, um... What is this? Table in the living room with-jack in the pulpit. Oh. Oh. That's, uh, I was going to draw that // in this panel.

The table goes away. Bruce enters.

BRUCE. Dear Al, It was great to have you home.

ALISON. What was I...?

She looks for something else to draw.

What's this?

BRUCE. I've been flying high ever since you were here.

ALISON. This. I can draw this draw this in the...

The object disappears.

Oh.

She looks for something else to draw.

BRUCE. Dear Al

ALISON. This is good. This is good. I could... I could...

The object disappears. Alison wheels around to face her father.

BRUCE.

ALISON.

I'll admit I'm somewhat envious of the 'new' freedom that appears on campuses today.

Dear Al, Did you receive that Winogrand article I was telling you about?

You should have gotten it by now.

Do you know I was never even in New York until I was about twenty?

Dear Al, I just re-read *Araby*. That could have been me- I was rather sensitive when I was little, you know-

Dear Al, I've been working like mad on that house I told you about. Can't think about much else. Can't sleep-

Dear Al-

(Fierce.)

What did it feel like to step in front of a truck, Dad? What did it feel like to see it coming right at you and not move? And just let it hit you? Why?

Was it because of me? Did it have *nothing* to do with me? *What Happened?*

J

And then he's gone.

Alison, shattered, reflexively returns to her drawing table, to her work.

ALISON. Caption.

Caption.

Caption.

Caption. Caption.

She realizes the obvious.

I'm the only one here.

She drops her pen. She picks up a stack of useless drawings.

This is what I have of you:

(Paging through them.)

You ordering me to sweep and dust the parlor.

You steaming off the wallpaper.

You in front of a classroom of bored students.

Digging up a dogwood tree.

You working on the house, smelling like sawdust and sweat and designer cologne.

You calling me at college to tell me how I'm supposed to feel about Faulkner or Hemingway.

The next one blindsides her.

ALISON. (cont.) You...standing on the shoulder of Route 150
bracing yourself against the pulse of the
trucks rushing past.

And the next one...is of the one thing she's ever really wanted from him.

You...succumbing to a rare moment of physical contact with me.

She grabs her pen and draws:

Spoken:

{
Daddy (comma) hey Daddy
come here okay (question mark)
I need // you

Small Alison appears.