

Kyle's Story

by
Serge Kushnier

Cast of Characters

KYLE (30's or 40's) Frustrated suburban elementary school teacher.

FRAN (late 60's) Retired suburban stay at home mother. Kyle's mother.

ALEC (30's) Nice guy suburban pot dealer. Kyle's pot dealer.

ARCHIE (late 60's) Emotionally stunted retired suburban father. Kyle's father.

CECILIA (30's or 40's) Emotionally detached suburban hypocrite. Kyle's sister.

Setting and Time*

Scene 1: Suburban living room of Fran and Archie. Day.
(FRAN and KYLE)

Scene 2: Elementary school teachers lounge. Day.
(ALEC and KYLE)

Scene 3: Suburban driveway of Fran and Archie. Day.
(ARCHIE and KYLE)

Scene 4: Suburban driveway of Fran and Archie. Christmas day.
(CECILLIA, KYLE, FRAN, ARCHIE)

Scene 5: Suburban garage of Kyle. New Years Eve.
(KYLE)

FADE UP:

SCENE 1

KYLE cautiously opens the front door into his childhood living room.

KYLE

Mom?.. Dad?

A thump is heard from upstairs then someone scurrying to the stairs. FRAN comes flying down the stairs carrying an open laptop.

FRAN

I need your help.

KYLE

Are you okay? Your voice message sounded insane.

FRAN

I need your help.

KYLE

Okay. What? I'm here.

FRAN

I need your help getting in your father's computer.

KYLE

What?

FRAN

Hack it?

KYLE

Hack it? What are you talking about?

FRAN

Hack into it. I need to get into it.

KYLE

Mom, it doesn't just work that way plus Dad would be pissed.

FRAN

Your father has lost any standing or right to be pissed. He's not allowed. Hack it, Kyle. I need you to hack it.

KYLE

Stop. First of all you can't "hack it." And second I have no idea how to break into dad's computer.

FRAN

Don't you teach your students computers?

KYLE

Computer science to "at risk elementary students" doesn't make me a hacker.

FRAN

I need your help!

KYLE

Okay... okay. Tell me what's going on first.

FRAN

I think your father is sleeping with another woman.

KYLE dry heaves and buckles over.

KYLE

(to himself)

Oh dear god.

FRAN

I see a lot of phone calls on his cell but the number is blocked and all his text messages are always deleted.

KYLE

Why are you going through dad's phone? I'm sure he's not having an affair. You guys are too ol-

KYLE stops himself from saying old.

FRAN

What?

KYLE

Dad's not having an affair.

FRAN

HACK IT!

KYLE

Okay! His password probably isn't too hard. Do you know any of his other passwords?

KYLE takes the laptop from FRAN.

FRAN

No.

KYLE

Things you guys use passwords together? Netflix?

FRAN

I don't know any of the passwords. Your father does them all.

KYLE

All of them? Don't you write them down?

FRAN

No. Your father does them.

KYLE

Any ideas of what he might use? Things he'd easily remember?

FRAN

Maybe a football thing?

KYLE attempts typing in different passwords.

KYLE

"Packers." Nope.

FRAN

I thought you could go on the main frame or something.

KYLE

What?

FRAN

To hack it.

KYLE

Where are you getting these terms?

FRAN

CSI Miami.

KYLE

I'm not a computer forensics specialist. Why are we doing this? There's no way dad is...

(gross)

cheating.

FRAN

I don't know. Maybe not. But there's something going on. I know there's something going on.

KYLE

Okay. Calm down. Tell me exactly what's happening? You didn't just look at his phone randomly one day.

FRAN

I don't know where he is for hours at a time.

KYLE

Hours? So. That's not- He's not cheating on you, mom. He's just out doing stuff. He's retired now so he's finding things to do.

FRAN

We always know where each other are. We always have.

KYLE

When did you start thinking this?

FRAN

It's been a couple months.

KYLE

Yeah. Retirement. See.

FRAN

Try more football stuff.

KYLE types on the computer.

KYLE

"Cheeseheads." Nope. Have you asked him?

FRAN

Yes. He acts weird and like he's hiding something and we've completely stopped having sex

KYLE dry heaves again.

KYLE

(to himself)

Please stop.

FRAN

We haven't had sex in two months at least. Not even oral-

KYLE

Okay that's- Okay. Enough. I'll keep trying. "Brett Favre."

FRAN

I also saw he had shaved.

KYLE

Why does that matter?

FRAN

Down there.

KYLE

(sick to his stomach)

Oh dear lord please stop this. I can't.

FRAN

I saw him get out of the shower and he looked like a thirteen year old boy down there.

KYLE

I beg you. Stop. Please make it stop."Lombardi." Please "LOMBARDI."

The computer chimes and opens, surprising KYLE.

FRAN

It opened? Did it just open?

KYLE

Mom. I don't think we should be doing this.

FRAN

Did you just hack into it. Did it open? You hacked it.

KYLE

Dad's not doing anything. You're being paranoid.

FRAN

Kyle, I am your mother and you need to do as I ask. Did you hack in?

KYLE shows Fran the computer.

FRAN

YES. Okay. Go in his email.

KYLE

Mom. Please.

FRAN

DO IT!

He does and scrolls through. He's relieved.

KYLE

See. Nothing.

FRAN is defeated.

KYLE

Look. You just need to talk to him. Have you talked to Cecilia?

FRAN

Your sister doesn't answer her phone.

KYLE

(to himself)

Genius.

FRAN

What?

KYLE

Nothing. Please just talk to dad. I know he isn't um... Doing anything.

KYLE looks at the computer.

KYLE

Oh. He has his text messages on here too-

FRAN

What?

KYLE

(regretful)

Nothing.

FRAN

You can see his text messages? He deletes them off his phone. You can see them there?

KYLE

No.

FRAN

Can you?

KYLE

I don't want to.

FRAN

HACK IT!

KYLE clicks around and opens it up. He sees something pop up on the screen and stands with the computer to get away from Fran.

FRAN

What is it?

KYLE

I can see his text messages.

KYLE'S eyes bulge out of his head and he slams the laptop closed and tosses it on the couch.

FRAN

What? What did you see?

KYLE

It's an invasion of privacy. You two should just be talking.

FRAN
What?

KYLE
When he gets home. Talk to him.

FRAN
WHAT!?

KYLE
It's not my place and you-

FRAN
WHAT. DID. YOU. SEE!?!

KYLE takes a deep breath and sits on the couch with the laptop.

KYLE
I'm going to tell you. You need to do something before I do.

FRAN
Fine. What?

KYLE
I need you to sit at the table and promise not to get up.

FRAN
Now you're scaring me. Tell me now.

KYLE
Mom, please. This is for everyone's sake.

FRAN reluctantly sits at the table. KYLE slowly opens the laptop with his eyes almost shut. He cringes when he see's what's on the screen again.

KYLE
Dear, god.

FRAN
Now, Kyle. Tell me now.

KYLE

Dad has been texting with someone and... it's not good.

FRAN

What do you mean; "not good?"

KYLE

I think you might be right. Maybe he is-

KYLE scrolls on the computer. There's a look of terror on his face.

KYLE

Yes. You are in fact right. I'm sorry mom.

FRAN gets up from the table and moves towards KYLE on the couch. KYLE slams the laptop closed.

FRAN

What are you doing?

KYLE

I asked you to stay at the table.

FRAN

I'm not a child. Open that computer again.

KYLE

I'm sorry, mom. I will not.

FRAN

Why?! I have a right to see.

KYLE

You need to just talk with Dad first. I don't want to be involved. I'm gonna go.

KYLE gets up to leave.

FRAN

What? NO!! Show me.

KYLE

I can't. I don't think I can physically do it.

FRAN

Tell me what it is.

I can't.

KYLE

Is it someone we know?

FRAN

KYLE shuts his eyes and reluctantly nods his head yes.

Tell me.

FRAN

KYLE shakes his head "no"

TELL ME!

FRAN

Just ask Dad. Talk to Dad. This not my responsibility. I don't want to be a part of this anymore.

FRAN

Is it that woman from his job? Becka or whatever?

KYLE

Just stop. Don't ask me questions.

FRAN

It is. I knew it. I could sense at the retirement dinner. There was something. Becka. I'm gonna find her on facebook and tell everyone on her page what a trollop she is.

KYLE

It's not. Don't do anything. See this is why you need to talk to dad. Don't go on facebook right now.

FRAN

Who then? Who is it? Who has your father decided to ruin forty-five years over?

KYLE

I'm not-

FRAN

WHO!?!

KYLE

No, Mom.

FRAN
TELL ME!!!

KYLE
AUNT HOLLY- Shit.

FRAN
What?

KYLE
You need to talk to dad.

FRAN
Your father is not sleeping with your Aunt. My sister is not -

KYLE
I don't know if anyone is sleeping with anyone.

FRAN
What are you even saying? See. My sister is-

KYLE
Naked.

FRAN
What?

KYLE
I saw her naked.

FRAN
What!? When?

KYLE
What are you talking about? Just now on the computer. There was a naked picture of Aunt Holly in Dad's texts message. From her.

FRAN
You're lying.

KYLE
Yeah. That's something I wanted to make up for fun. I'm lying because this is the way I like to have fun.

FRAN
How do you know it was your Aunt?

KYLE

Because I've know her for thirty-six years. The image is now burned into my brain and all the tequila in the world will never let me forget it. I'm sure.

FRAN

Maybe it was an accident.

KYLE

What is happening? An accident?

FRAN

Show me.

KYLE

No.

FRAN

I don't believe you.

KYLE

Okay.

FRAN

Why... Your Father wouldn't... Show me.

KYLE

Why? You don't want to see that.

FRAN

God damn it, Kyle. Just show me. We've come this far.

KYLE opens the computer and shows FRAN.

FRAN

I'm going to be sick.

KYLE closes the computer again.

FRAN

Stop closing it.

KYLE

Can you please discuss this with Dad when I'm not anywhere near you?

FRAN

I need you to read the text messages and tell me exactly what they say.

KYLE

You're going to make me look at that again?

FRAN

I can't look

KYLE

She's my Aunt. I'm. I can't believe this is happening.

FRAN

For your mother. You need to do this for me. I birthed you. You are my flesh and blood. You owe me.

KYLE

How is this happening?

FRAN

I can't look. I need you to look. I need to know the truth.

KYLE

Is it possible to be traumatized by your parents at thirty-six? Is this going to effect me for the rest of my life?

FRAN

It's not all about you, son. Now do it. DO IT!!!!

KYLE sits at the table and opens the laptop.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE 2

KYLE stands in a break room of an elementary school.
There's an open window on one of the walls.

ALEC (OFF STAGE)

(loud whisper)

Kyle?

KYLE peaks his head out the window.

KYLE

Here. Just come here.

ALEC strolls up to the window.

ALEC

Hey, man.

KYLE

Wassup. Thanks for coming.

ALEC

This is weird. I think I actually went here.

KYLE

Huh, really?

ALEC

Or like broke in here once. We might have stolen stuff from the science lab.

KYLE

No science lab. It's an elementary school.

ALEC

They don't have science labs in elementary school?

KYLE

Maybe some. Not this one.

ALEC

I definitely remember this place though. Maybe I stole something else.

KYLE

Or maybe you just went here.

ALEC

Maybe. Who knows?

KYLE looks around the room then back at ALEC.

ALEC

We good?

KYLE nods. ALEC hands KYLE some kind of cartridge.

KYLE

Thanks. I couldn't handle the rest of this day without it.

KYLE inserts the new cartridge into a vape pen and takes a big long hit.

ALEC

I get that. Hey do you know any good places around here to get food?

KYLE

Sure there's a couple fast food places down on Watt street around the corner.

ALEC

Not really feeling that stuff right now. Trying to eat a little healthier. Ya know?

KYLE

Sure. Yeah. Not a ton of stuff in this neighborhood like that.

ALEC

That's too bad. Alright. I'll catch you later.

KYLE

You know what. Fuck it. Why don't you come in for a bit? I have some extra food.

ALEC

That's okay, man.

KYLE

Nah. Seriously. My wife made some incredible salad quinoa thing. All locally sourced vegetables. An amazing tuna thing. There's a ton.

ALEC

Really? Like come in?

KYLE

Yeah. There's literally no one else who can or would do my job. They would never fire me. And I don't give a shit anymore.

ALEC

You sure? I'm not gonna get arrested or something.

KYLE

Nah. It's all on me. Plus I schedule my breaks when all the other teachers don't.

ALEC

Cool.

ALEC climbs in through the window. KYLE grabs some food from the fridge.

KYLE

You want a hit?

ALEC

I'm good right now, thanks. Just had a couple really strong gummies.

KYLE

That sounds great. I'll take some of those if you have any.

ALEC

All out. Next time. You're really in need, huh?

KYLE

These fucking kids.

ALEC

Oh yeah? Elementary though. How old are they?

KYLE

I teach fifth and sixth grade art and computer classes.

ALEC

So that's like four years old?

KYLE

No. Like ten to twelve year olds.

ALEC

And they're that bad?

KYLE

You have no idea. A kid punched me in the face last week.

ALEC

What the fuck? Did you lay him out?

KYLE

No. You can't touch them. That's prison time, my man.

ALEC

So some little punk punches you in the face and you can't touch him?

KYLE

Her. I can restrain her but that's dicey. They all film everything now and shit's taken out of context. It's a minefield.

ALEC

See I don't understand that.

KYLE

What part?

ALEC

Not hitting kids.

KYLE

You think teachers should be allowed to hit kids?

ALEC

I think any adult should be allowed to hit any kid.

KYLE

I don't necessarily see it that way but I for sure wanted to hit this kid.

ALEC

I don't mean just hitting kids is okay but discipline, ya know?

KYLE

Tricky debate but you're right. They get away with murder. Kids in my classes just get up and leave or start fist fights in the middle of class. They're all super sexual too. It's really disturbing.

ALEC

That's gross.

KYLE

You have no idea.

ALEC

I think kids have always been awful.

KYLE

Kids have always been shitty but I think they're a little worse these days.

ALEC

I dunno man. I was tortured as a kid.

KYLE

Really?

ALEC

Yeah. Malicious stuff. Really fucked me up for years. I'm better for it now but they pushed me to almost killing myself once.

KYLE

Jesus man. I'm sorry.

ALEC

All good now but yeah.

KYLE

What happened? If you don't mind.

ALEC

Totally fine. I actually tell this story at AA all the time?

KYLE

AA?

ALEC

It's where a lot of my clients are?

KYLE

Dude. That's not cool.

ALEC

No no. Not like that. They're the ones being forced to be there by the court. It's an easy way to hit everyone up for the week. We leave the real addicts alone. Plus most of those people just want pills and booze and shit. I'm the mean green machine.

KYLE

Right. But you... talk?

ALEC

They make you share. To be honest it's been pretty therapeutic. Besides all the god shit and not using drugs, it's pretty great.

KYLE

What's the story?

ALEC

My story?

KYLE

Yeah. If you don't mind.

ALEC

Not at all. It was when I was twelve. I had a crush on Brandy Speak.

KYLE

Brandy Speak.

ALEC

It wasn't like a fleeting crush. It had been building for years, from kindergarten. "Alec Snider" and "Brandy Speak" meant we were always sitting beside each other. Every desk layout, every bus field trip, every gym assembly. Speak and Snider sat right beside each other and she smelled like strawberry erasers.

KYLE

Weird.

ALEC

I loved it.

KYLE

Sure.

ALEC

She must have had strawberry eraser shampoo or some shit cuz she smelled amazing. Anyway. My love for Brandy had been growing for years. She was smart and funny and liked video games. She had it all.

KYLE

She sounds great.

ALEC

She was perfect and then puberty hit us all and it was game over. Brandy became *the* girl.

KYLE

Leah Silverman was ours. *The* girl.

ALEC

I hit puberty like a brick wall. Awkward , gangly, acne. And I was weird. Brandy hit puberty and didn't miss a step in her stride. Went from cute to hot in a day. I was kind of the loner kid who got weirder with no friends. No other real weirdos.

KYLE

Awe. I'm sorry man.

ALEC

It's fine. I'm dope as hell now.

KYLE

Indeed.

ALEC

But not knowing that I was going to turn into the dope dude you see before you made things rough. But what made it go from rough to awful was this one party. Everyone was turning thirteen. You're a teenager all of a sudden and people have boy-girl birthday parties.

KYLE

Right.

ALEC

I was never invited to birthday parties unless it was like a forced thing. When you're younger, parents just send invites to everyone in a class and kids are forced to invite you. Slowly those forced parties dried up and I wasn't invited anymore.

KYLE

Damn it. This story is really bumming me out.

ALEC

Oh. Sorry man. I can stop.

KYLE

No no. I just feel awful for you.

ALEC

Thanks dude. I'm okay.

KYLE

Good. Okay.

ALEC

So. I was fine with not getting invited anymore cuz parties were always worse than school. At school at least you're forced into work groups or like you have a thing to do. Those parties were a lot of me sitting alone until my mom came and I pretended like I had a good time.

KYLE

You never told your parents?

ALEC

Nah. I never liked bumming them out so I just kinda pretended I was good. Home life was my escape so I kept it a secret.

KYLE

Ugh.

ALEC

This party. So. Brandy's birthday was early in the year. She always felt a little older and cooler than everyone. We came back to school after Christmas break and in home room everyone has a birthday invite at their station. Everyone including me. Maybe it was the high I was on from the holidays and like getting a Super Nintendo but things felt good. I felt good and then I saw this invite at my station. It was a boy-girl party but not any boy-girl party, it was Brandy Speak's thirteenth birthday boy-girl party.

KYLE

I'm nervous.

ALEC

Everyone had an invite.

KYLE

You?

ALEC

Yup. Everyone. I played it cool, man. I didn't react I just casually said "Thanks, looks fun" when I saw Brandy walk passed my desk and slipped the invite in my backpack. Just a real calm cool move like it was no big deal. She smiled and said "you bet". I can still hear her voice. "You bet."

KYLE

God damn it. Where is this story going?

ALEC

I didn't take the invite out of my bag the entire day but it was like sitting on a bag of money. I just wanted to rip it open and stare at it but no. I swallowed that instinct and waited until I got home and got to my bedroom. I carefully pulled out the invite and examined it thoroughly. I didn't want to get it wrong. Memorize the date, the location, the time. Commit it to memory in the event I lost it or my mom threw it out or something. At the very bottom of the invite in giant pink letters it said "costume party." Costume party. I was invited to Brandy Speak's thirteenth birthday party and it was a boy-girl costume party. I knew this was my chance to change things. I was going to pick the perfect costume that made Brandy see I was cool. If Brandy thought I was cool everything else would fall into place. I needed to pick a costume that was not only cool but something that showed Brandy I knew who she was. That I was thoughtful and that I was thinking about her.

KYLE

This is some deep shit man. You were a calculated little thinker.

ALEC

Brandy's dad had one of the coolest jobs to a twelve year old. He worked for Hershey's.

KYLE

The chocolate company?

ALEC

Yeah. But like high up. I knew from Brandy Speak-lore that they had a full vending machine in their wreck room with every kind of Hershey's product you could think of. A vending machine that didn't need money. You would just press a button and you could have any kind of chocolate bar you wanted. If that's not the coolest thing you'd ever heard of at twelve, nothing is. I also knew Brandy loved Anime. Especially Sailor Moon.

KYLE

I liked it too.

ALEC

Who didn't? Those ladies were bad ass and hot as shit. So my master plan. A mashup. I scoped the 7/11 recycling for Hershey boxes and saved every wrapper from every candy bar I had. Scoped the lunchroom trash when people weren't looking. Collected tons of wrappers and boxes. I made a costume that was one half Hershey and one half Sailor Moon. There's a character called Tuxedo Mask. He wears a top hat, mask and a cape. I made the top hat and mask out of Hershey boxes and the cape out of wrappers. It took a lot of time and effort but it was solid. A fantastic costume. I knew she liked to draw so I bought a Sailor Moon sketch book and a bunch of like sketching pencils. Perfect gift. Perfect costume.

KYLE

You were a super thoughtful kid.

ALEC

Finally the day came and I made sure to show up “fashionably late”. I’m telling you I planned this day to the tee. It was my ticket out of loser-ville and into normal-land.

KYLE

I hate that I know this story has a sad ending.

Alec pats Kyle on the back. “It’s okay.”

ALEC

My mom dropped me off and I walked up to this giant house. Costume on. Present in hand. I rang the doorbell and Mrs. Speak answered. I can remember this like it was yesterday. She said “wow, what a great costume.” Smiling ear to ear.

KYLE

That’s nice.

ALEC

Then she said. “I can take that present and put it with the others. All the kids are in the wreck room downstairs.”

KYLE

Where the Hershey vending machine is.

ALEC

Right. So this grownup leads me to the basement steps and I walk down. Full costume. Top hat, mask and cap. My heart is pounding.

KYLE

My heart is pounding.

ALEC

When I reach the bottom of the stairs I step around the corner and every single kid from class, with Brandy right in front, are standing waiting for me to come down. Waiting. The first thing I notice is NO one is wearing a costume.

KYLE

Oh no-

ALEC

The second thing I notice is a VHS camcorder is on a tripod pointed right at me.

KYLE

Oh no-

ALEC

And the third thing which I'll never forget were the words Brandy said to me while pointing her finger. "You're even a bigger loser than I thought. What makes you think I'd actually invite you to *my* party? What's your hat made out of, garbage? Go home garbage pale loser."

KYLE

What the actual fuck!? You poor fucking kid.

ALEC

I ran. They laughed and I ran. When I ran up stairs I saw Mrs. Speak sitting in the kitchen smirking sipping a glass of wine. I ran out of that house and down the street as fast as I could. I saw a strip mall that had a McDonalds. So I ran there and order a small coke. I just sat at McDonalds crying for hours then walked home.

KYLE

I know you're fine. But I need to give you a hug.

Alec laughs and they hug.

ALEC

I told you man. I'm totally good now.

KYLE

I have a lot of questions but first. Her mom was in on it?

ALEC

She had to be. No one else had a costume on and she said "Wow. What a great costume", when I walked in. Plus the video camera?

KYLE

And she took your gift. What a monster. Holy shit.

ALEC

Years man. Everyone for years called me Garbage Pale Kid. All the way through high school. I was Garbage Pale Kid. They were all in on it.

KYLE

I'm so sorry, dude.

ALEC

It's okay now. But yeah. I thought about suicide as a kid. Which is insane to think of now.

KYLE

Jesus.

ALEC

I was fucked up by it for years but like I said. I talked about it at AA and it kind of cleared me. It's totally built me into a stronger person. I can really see that now.

KYLE

Do you ever see any of those people from school?

ALEC

Sure. I sell to a bunch of them. They all kind of think of it as a weird funny story and don't really see how bad it was.

KYLE

Really?

ALEC

Yeah. It's okay though. I forgave them. In my head, you know? Kids are shitty. This is my entire point. Like. Kids are shitty and always have been.

KYLE

I guess but Brandy and her mom sound fucking evil. Her mom was an adult. That's insane.

ALEC

Yeah. I know what kind of people they are. Some of the other kids I still talk to say they are still just as shitty. I mostly just feel bad for them. One bummer though. I can't eat chocolate bars anymore. They make me sick.

KYLE

Right.

ALEC

It's gotta be about you. Ya know? You need to learn to accept that other people's lives have no bearing on how you should feel.

KYLE

You're like some kind of guru.

ALEC

Nah. Just a happy guy who sells weed to make people happy too.

KYLE

I wanna be like you when I grow up.

The school bell rings.

KYLE

Ah. Shit. Sorry man. You gotta bounce.

ALEC

All good, dude.

KYLE

Thanks for telling me that story. I'm glad you're a happy guy.

ALEC

My pleasure, my man.

Alec climbs out the window.

ALEC

I'll get you some edibles next time we meet.

SCENE 3

KYLE sits on the stoop of his parents house. ARCHIE, Kyle's father, walks in and out of the garage carrying cardboard boxes of varying sizes to the trunk of his minivan.

ARCHIE

You're not going to help me?

KYLE

I was told to sit. "Don't lift anything." I was told.

ARCHIE

Your mother is finding ever single tiny way to make this more difficult.

KYLE

I don't know if it's Mom, Dad.

ARCHIE

Okay. Fine. It's me. It's all my fault.

KYLE

Did you grab all your toiletries. Mom was very concerned you take everything of yours out of the bathroom.

ARCHIE

I didn't take my soap. She doesn't use the bar soap. Uses the squeezezy kind. But it's not a full fresh bar. I don't feel like traveling a used bar of soap. What do I even put it in? A plastic baggy? Then the baggy is slimy and wet and it's disgusting to take it out. Once a bar of soap starts in a shower it should stay there until it's done. Even those travel cases for bar soap get slimy and awful. The square plastic ones? What's the point? You ever been to a hotel that doesn't have soap? Soap lives and dies in the shower it starts in. Case closed.

KYLE

So you're leaving the soap?

ARCHIE

I'm leaving the soap. She can throw it out if she doesn't want it there.

KYLE

I'm just telling you what she said.

ARCHIE

Well if your mother would just pick up the phone she could tell me herself. You know she won't even answer a text message anymore. How am I suppose to say anything if she's not going to listen?

KYLE

I don't know, Dad. I really don't want to be in the middle of this.

ARCHIE

Your aunt Holly and I aren't sexual active, you should know.

KYLE

WHY SHOULD I KNOW!!?

ARCHIE

I'm just saying if you wanted to pick sides. You're entitled to all the facts.

KYLE

I'm not picking sides.

ARCHIE

You deserve the facts.

KYLE

I don't want them. Stop giving me facts. I want nothing to do with them.

ARCHIE

Well. Why are you doing your mother's bidding then?

KYLE

I really don't know.

ARCHIE

Aunt Holly and I were acting out a fantasy but never completely. It's not something we could control.

KYLE

Dad you have to stop telling me this shit. What am I suppose to do with this information. And stop saying Aunt Holly. Just stop.

ARCHIE

Let your mother know. Since she refuses to talk to me.

KYLE

I promise you I will not be passing any of this information on to mom.

ARCHIE

So then it can be between us.

KYLE

No.

ARCHIE

I can confide in you. A sounding board.

KYLE

No. Talk to a therapist. A friend. Talk to, literally, anyone else.

ARCHIE

I don't have a problem, son.

KYLE

I think you need to reassess that.

ARCHIE

You don't need to respond.

KYLE

You don't need to confide in me. I don't want to know anymore than I already do.

ARCHIE

You should have a complete picture to what happened.

KYLE

No. I shouldn't.

ARCHIE

You already know some but you can't make judgements on it unless you know everything.

KYLE

I'm not making judgements. Not judging anything. Trying to forget and subdue. Opposite of wanting more information. Less. Less information. I want to scrub my brain of all of this and most of my childhood. I'm looking into electro shock therapy.

ARCHIE

You're here.

KYLE

I don't want to be. But something compels me to constantly be stuck in the middle of all your and mom's crap.

ARCHIE

No one asks you to be.

KYLE

Okay.

ARCHIE

I'd be damned if I'm going to let mom be the one to tell just her side of things.

KYLE

She isn't. She didn't. I've seen for myself on your computer.

ARCHIE

Yes. And I think that is illegal.

KYLE

It isn't.

ARCHIE

But unlike your mother, I won't be taking things to insane degrees. Refusing to talk to me. Refusing to let me even explain my side. You know she wouldn't even touch it if I didn't ask.

KYLE

What?

ARCHIE

It. She wouldn't touch it if I never asked her to.

KYLE

Dad. Don't. Don't talk about- just stop talking.

ARCHIE

What? It was my responsibility? "Hey, would you please now touch my penis."

KYLE

Oh fuck come on.

ARCHIE

You know it's a man's right.

KYLE

It is not.

ARCHIE

It's a partnership. She was being a bad partner.

KYLE

Okay, dad.

ARCHIE

Holly understood that. She was really more of a sympathizer in all of this.

KYLE

I saw the text messages, dad. It was or is more than sympathy. It's called an affair.

ARCHIE

Again. That is a breach of privacy.

KYLE

I agree but... Mom.

ARCHIE

And illegal.

KYLE

It's not- and mom.

ARCHIE

What is wrong with you? Blaming your mother.

KYLE

Jesus Christ.

ARCHIE

I need to tell you.

KYLE

Why. Just stop. Please just stop talking about it.

ARCHIE

Fine. If you want to take your mother's side and cover your ears to the truth. Then fine.

KYLE

Thank you.

Archie continues to pack as Kyle sits in silence.

ARCHIE

Mutual masturbation.

KYLE

What the fuck?!

ARCHIE

I touch mine she touches hers.

KYLE

No. I know what- Please just no.

ARCHIE

That was the extent of our sexual encounters... So far. Me and Au- Me and Holly.

KYLE

Dad. I really don't need- Mutual - Isn't... Ugh fuck.

ARCHIE

I never even touched your Au- Her. Holly.

KYLE

Great. What an accomplishment.

ARCHIE

I'm just saying. It wasn't really infidelity.

Archie keeps working.

KYLE

But it was, Dad. That's. Never-mind

ARCHIE

Oh. He does have any opinion. Great. Speak.

KYLE

I really don't think it's appropriate for me to have any kind of conversation like this with either of you. But since you're both literally forcing me into it.-

ARCHIE

You're not being "literally" forced. Your sister doesn't involve herself.

KYLE

Are you blaming me for helping?

ARCHIE

Son, no one said you had to help.

KYLE

Okay.

ARCHIE

We were exploring our fantasy. It really didn't even have anything to do with your Au-with Holly either.

KYLE

I'm thrilled you've decided this is the moment for your own personal sexual revolution.

ARCHIE

I am a human being. I am a man. I am not just your father.

KYLE

Or even.

ARCHIE

We aren't sure how we're going to proceed. It was something we were just curious about. Both of us. I was tired of denying myself.

KYLE

Maybe this was a good one to deny.

ARCHIE

We don't always get to choose when it comes to stuff like this.

KYLE

I would beg to differ on that one, Pop.

ARCHIE

When you've been married as long as I have you'll understand.

KYLE

Cheat. Why not? Go for it. But Aunt Holly.

ARCHIE

You can say Aunt but I can't say Aunt?

KYLE

Have sex with someone at work like a normal person. An old friend from college. Don't have sex with mom's sister.

ARCHIE

I didn't have sex with anyone... yet.

KYLE

Okay.

ARCHIE

And I don't know. We may not. Like I said. That might be the end of it. I don't know.

KYLE

Maybe you should just decide it is.

ARCHIE

Well, just like your mother her sister hasn't really been talking to me either.

KYLE

Good.

ARCHIE

So I'm denied any modicum of happiness?

KYLE

How are you like this and I'm not?

ARCHIE

You're so judgmental. You always have been.

KYLE

Oh. I could be much, much worse.

ARCHIE

So you just want me to be alone. Sad and alone.

KYLE

I don't. I want you to be sane. Reasonable and sane.

ARCHIE

I'm not insane.

KYLE

Okay.

Archie keeps working.

KYLE

Maybe you're better off out of the house. Alone. For a while.

ARCHIE

So you do want me to be alone, lonely and sad.

KYLE

That's not what I said. I want you to be away from mom and definitely away from Aunt Holly. Just be alone for a while. Maybe it'll be a healthy choice for you.

ARCHIE

I'm old, Kyle. I don't have time to just be alone.

KYLE

You're 65. That's not-

(pause)

KYLE

Alright maybe it's a little old but you being out of the house and away from mom could be good for you. A little clarity. Self reflection. I'm sorry that you're being kicked out of the house. I'm sure you understand why mom's doing it. I'm sorry that your relationship with mom went sour but I'm sure you understand it's not just one person's fault.

I'm sorry you made the choice to be with... Aunt Holly. I think you not having contact with her anymore is also a good thing. I just hope you can take a moment and-

ARCHIE

Kyle.

KYLE

Yeah.

ARCHIE

Shut up.

SCENE 4

KYLE and CECILIA pull up to their parents house in separate cars. They both get out and walk to the door at the same time.

KYLE

Merry merry.

They give each other a stilted hug.

CECILIA

Merry Christmas. Where's April?

KYLE

The shop was open this morning and closing early. She'll be here in a hour or so.

CECILIA starts to walk to the front door. KYLE grabs her by the arm to stop her.

KYLE

Wait hang on.

CECILIA

What?

KYLE

I dunno. Just... First time back?

CECILIA

What?

KYLE

Is it your first time back at the house?

CECILIA

Since when?

KYLE

Shut up, since when.

CECILIA

What?

KYLE

You know since when.

CECILIA

I don't know since when.

KYLE

Since them.

CECILIA

Since them... ?

KYLE

You're the biggest pain in the ass. Since *mom* and *dad*.

CECILIA

Yes. Since *mom* and *dad*. First time back.

KYLE

Have you said anything?

CECILIA

To who?

KYLE

Jesus Christ. To them.

CECILIA

What would I say?

KYLE

Like. What the fuck are you doing?

CECILIA

Have you said anything?

KYLE

Constantly.

CECILIA

How's that working out?

KYLE

Maybe if I wasn't the only one doing it.

CECILIA

Then don't do it. Don't be someone who does it.

KYLE

There's a precedence. They expect me to be... They expect help.

CECILIA

That's not my problem. I was just better at this than you were.

KYLE

It's a bit selfish, no?

CECILIA

How so? Why is it my problem?

KYLE

They're your parents too. I'm out here dealing with all this shit. You don't answer anyone's calls or texts.

CECILIA

Still don't see how it's my problem

KYLE

You're part of this family.

CECILIA

So.

KYLE

Fair enough. Have you heard anything about Aunt Holly?

CECILIA

I have actually.

KYLE

Really?

CECILIA

Yeah. She asked if I still had connections in Miami.

KYLE

You mean you actually talked to her?

CECILIA

She called. I talked to her.

KYLE

That's also insane.

CECILIA

Why?

Noise is heard from inside the house. Kyle looks concerned he's talking too loud.

KYLE

Cuz... um... Cuz all of it.

CECILIA

She's still our Aunt.

KYLE

I don't understand how you set your loyalties. You don't talk to them but her? Also Mom's not talking to her anymore. Dad's not talking to her anymore. She's leaving the city. It's kind of understood she's persona non grata. Why would you choose to talk to her?

CECILIA

Persona non grata? Why? Because mom and dad said so?

KYLE

No one said so. It's just understood.

CECILIA

You live your life by these weird "understood" ideals. I don't and never have understood mom and dad.

KYLE

Me neither.

CECILIA

So why do you live by their rules.

KYLE

I don't know.

CECILIA

I'm not one to give out advice.

KYLE

Uh huh.

CECILIA

Can I offer you some advice?

KYLE

I guess.

CECILIA

Divorce yourself from this family. Mentally. Cut yourself off. Stop being loyal. Ignore calls and texts and don't feel guilt for it. You're going to feel guilty. You're going to feel like you need to "help." Don't.

KYLE

They're old people and my parents. This isn't advice. This is just how *you* live.

CECILIA

I came here today, right?

KYLE

Yeah.

CECILIA

Mom and dad will lay out a bunch of shit on me as soon as we walk in. Shit about "why haven't we heard from you? Where have you been? Why don't you answer your phone?" And I always respond with. "I'm just really busy." They whine a bit then stop. Then they love me and we all eat. I leave. Wash, rinse, repeat.

KYLE

You know you're just thought of as a "bad daughter."

CECILIA
Why do I care?

KYLE
I don't know.

CECILIA
Are they good parents?

KYLE
I don't know. They aren't bad parents.

CECILIA
You're financially secure. You don't ask them for things? Money?

KYLE
No.

CECILIA
Good. Me neither. So. Come to Christmas, send mother's day flowers, a card for father's day and be done with their shit.

KYLE
Not my style I guess.

CECILIA
That's you then, man. What thanks did you get for all this shit?

KYLE
What shit?

CECILIA
Aunt Holly, shit.

KYLE
None but.... I'm not going to stop, I guess. I just wish you would help.

CECILIA
I'm not going to.

KYLE
Just like that?

CECILIA
Yeah. See how easy it is? I feel great about it. Not my responsibility.

KYLE

It's insanely selfish.

CECILIA

How do you feel right now?

KYLE

What do you mean?

CECILIA

Do you feel good about being involved in their insane marital crap?

KYLE

No.

CECILIA

Do they ever show appreciation?

KYLE

I don't know.

CECILIA

Whatever man. Do your thing I'll do mine. You got a key?

CECILIA knocks on the door.

KYLE

You know you're more like them than I am.

CECILIA

That's not at all true.

KYLE

Sweeping it all under the rug.

CECILIA

I'm not sweeping shit, dude. I just decide to believe it doesn't or never existed and I'm free and clear.

KYLE

That's exactly what they do. Pretend like nothing happened. Or things aren't... a thing. Pretend it doesn't exist. Move on. "Sweep it under the rug."

CECILIA

It doesn't bother me. I have divorced myself from any emotional attachment and my mind is clear. I feel light.

KYLE

You are sitting on a powder keg of pent up crap and you're going to blow. Just like-

FRAN and ARCHIE answer the door together. They're wearing matching Christmas sweaters with their arms around each other.

FRAN

Merry Christmas!

ARCHIE

Merry Christmas!

SCENE 5

KYLE is molding a sculpture out of clay in his garage. A text message pings on his phone. KYLE smiles at his phone.

KYLE

Hey Siri, read text.

SIRI

Hey Man! Happy New Year! How you been? How's things? It's been forever.

KYLE

Hey Siri. Dictate Text. Wow (period) It has been forever (period) Happy New year to you too (exclamation mark) I've been great -

(pause)

KYLE

Delete delete delete. I've been fine- delete delete delete. I've been okay (period). How you been (question mark) (send)

Text message ping.

KYLE

Hey Siri. Read text message.

SIRI

I'm Great! You out partying? How's April? Just okay? Everything good with you guys? You alright?

KYLE

Hey Siri. Dictate text. Oh no (period) April's great (period) We're great (period) Not out partying (period) I'm sculpting in my studio and April's asleep on the couch (period) we're old people now (winky face)

(pause)

KYLE

Delete. (smirk face)

KYLE looks at his phone annoyed at himself.

KYLE

Delete. (period) Ha (period) It's just my insane family (period) One of the craziest Christmas's on record (period) Long story (send)

KYLE continues to sculpt. Text ping.

KYLE

Hey Siri. Read text.

SIRI

I'm outside having a smoke. Would love to hear what's up. If ya wanna share.

KYLE grabs a near by beer bottle and takes a big drink.

KYLE

Hey Siri. Dictate text. Well (comma) Where do I start (question mark) This past year we found out my dad was having an affair (ellipsis)with my mom's sister (exclamation mark) That's right my aunt. So that was intense. But that wasn't really the crazy part. The crazy part was the fact that they chose to involve me. It's hard to explain how it happened but somehow I was the go between. Somehow I was the "point person" for my parents marriage falling apart. My mom begged me to break into my dads computer and snoop. So I was the one who got to I see everything first. A literal naked photo of my elderly aunt. Telling my mom that my dad was sleeping with her sister was REAL fun. Fucked up, right? I'm not even sure if that's the thing that's actually bumming me out. As bonkers as that sounds. I couldn't care less if they weren't married anymore. A divorce would probably be really helpful. Let me clarify something. My dad is no longer sleeping with my aunt and guess what? My parents are back together and are pretending like nothing happened. I went over for Christmas and it never came up. One week my dad is asking me to help him move into a condo while telling me the details of his sexploits... with my aunt and the next week my parents are hosting Christmas dinner pretending like everything was normal. Painted on smiles, stiff hugs, and denial; just like always. The only thing that's different is they're pretending my aunt doesn't even exist.

Like she never existed. Fucking bonkers. She moved to Miami and they never said anything. Just swept it under the rug. I use to think that was dangerous. Pushing things down. Like a poison. I'm beginning to think that's just a way some people choose to exist and it doesn't effect them. I sincerely believe they don't dwell, forget shit even happened and move on. Move on is the wrong term for this. Self inflicted black outs is a better way to describe what's happening. They're memory surgeons that cut out what they don't want to think about and seem totally fine. No apparent brain damage. Fine is a subjective in this case but they resemble humans that are "happy". You always assume that sweeping something under the rug will eventually blow up and make things worse, but they seem happier than ever. So what the fuck do I know, Right? Maybe pretending that bad things don't happen is actually the path to true happiness. Ya know? Ignorance really is bliss. After that though. After this weird semi-incestuous infidelity, it's not even the thing that's bumming me out. I'm bummed because I'm *aware*. Does that make sense? I'm *aware* that my family is brutal. I'm *aware* that I live in a podunk backwards small town. And I'm *aware* that I'm kind of better than all of it. I'm not better than much but I'm better than this shit hole. I'm *bummed* because I'm *aware* I should be out there in New York with you doing "something". Something exciting. Something... better? But I won't. I know I won't. Don't get me wrong. I have a great wife, a stable job, and a very comfortable home. It's even pretty here sometimes. But on the scale of great places to live, this one's low. Low down on that chart... I'm aware, so I'm bummed. But I don't do anything about it. I'm not lazy. I'm self motivated. I create art I give back to my community. I understand the greater picture but I sit here. I choose to sit here and not leave and I don't know why I do that. It's like I'm sad for myself. Not all the time but when I'm being extremely self reflective and step outside myself. "Do something". "Make a change". Right? Yeah. I know. But I won't. I calculate. I look at the process and then I just don't wanna. Maybe that is lazy. But it's also them. My parents. What is this god damn apron string I can't cut? I know if something gets weird again over there and they need me for something, I'll do it. I hate myself for that and I'm completely aware it's within my right to never do anything for them again. But I will. I'm aware but I don't change it. I know you'll say therapy. I go. I talk about all of this. They give me words to say, exercises to do and things to avoid. I do that. I do all that. Overall I feel lighter for a while but not nearly as light as my inane parents appear. What's the answer, ya know? Something *should* change. A new year resolution perhaps. You know what? I gotta thank my wife more. She never says a thing. She listens and nods her head and smiles and says the right thing and that's incredible. She's incredible and that's enough... I think.

KYLE looks down at his phone realizing the insane epic ramble of a text he just dictated. Nope.

KYLE

Delete entire text. Hey Siri. Dictate text. Everything's cool, dude. Actually not that big a deal. April and I will come to New York this spring and we'll grab a beer and catch up. Hear's to a great New Year (period) (send).

END