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CHARACTERS

ALICE: 16, a cynical girl.

RANDALL: 13, ALICE's younger brother; he is not cynical.

TIME

The present, midnight.

SETTING

On top of the pitched roof of a large, new house in a housing development, sometimes called "suburbs" even when there is no major city to be the urban center that the rows of streets and overpriced houses could be the "sub" to.

In the dark, we see ALICE sitting on the roof, comfortably, in whatever clothes she found around her bed when she got dressed. She is barefoot. Her cell phone rings. She looks at it, decides not to take it, puts it down. It rings again, and she looks at it, takes the call.

ALICE: What.

Listens.

No.

She clicks off. After a beat, the cell phone rings again. She turns it off. She hears something, looks down (at the ground below—this would be the front yard of the house), then shouts at someone she sees down there.

DON'T YOU COME UP HERE!! DON'T . . .

But it's no use, the someone is going to come up. She prepares herself for the intrusion.

Why would I think I could have any privacy? Why?

She turns her phone back on and checks the battery power. Shouting down:

Bring my battery charger!

A couple of beats, then RANDALL enters, crawling, scooting toward her. He is dressed in his pajamas. He's wearing sneakers and has a flashlight in his mouth. It is on, the flashlight, so his cheeks are illuminated from the inside, making him look creepy or strangely beautiful, depending on whether you would be glad to see him, which ALICE is not.

Did you bring my battery charger?

RANDALL: No. I brought the flashlight.

ALICE: But I need the battery charger.

RANDALL: We need the flashlight more.

ALICE: My cell phone is going dead.

RANDALL: Who do you want to call?

ALICE: Good point. Neither of us have any friends since we moved to this place. A few months go by and everybody's gone.

RANDALL: I've got my cell phone.

ALICE: Never mind. Lisa is the only one and she's not home.

She turns her cell phone off.

RANDALL: You can use my cell phone.

ALICE: I don't want to use your crappy cell phone!! It's been god knows where. Didn't you drop it in the toilet at school?

RANDALL: That was that kid. Lacrosse team captain.

ALICE: I hardly think he was captain.

RANDALL: He made me call him "captain."

ALICE: Jeez!! You are such a wimp!

RANDALL: Don't call me that. Dad calls me that, too. I don't care.

Silence, listens for the parents fighting.

ALICE: Have you been crying?

RANDALL: Allergies.

He listens.

Uh-oh. They're quiet. They're going to notice we're gone.

ALICE: I don't care.

RANDALL: Of course, you do.

ALICE: Nope.

RANDALL: Well, I care.

ALICE: Wuss.

RANDALL: What if they use the ladder to come up here?

ALICE: Why would they want to come up here?

RANDALL: Because they'll worry about us?

ALICE: When, exactly, would that start? Them worrying about us? Before or after the Big Fight? Or the fight before that? Or the Mother of All Arguments about buying this too-big house that still smells new in that creepy way with chemicals that will probably kill us and whose fault was it that they bought this house?

RANDALL: They bought this house for us.

ALICE: They bought the house for YOU. They've given up on me.

RANDALL: No, they haven't.

ALICE: Case in point. I've been up here for quite a while and has anyone, other than you, come looking for me?

RANDALL: They're busy.

Beat.

ALICE: Parents don't have to like their children. I read an article about it on the Net.

RANDALL: They . . .

ALICE: Yeah? MMMMMMMM?

RANDALL: THEY BOUGHT THIS HOUSE FOR US!!

ALICE: You. And now you're flunking whatever that is. I heard them talking.

RANDALL: Oh God.

Sound down below.

Shoosh.

ALICE: What?

RANDALL: I thought I heard something.

ALICE looks down at the "yard."

Be careful.

ALICE: I've been up here for hours. I know what I'm doing.

She sees something.

I think it's Dad.

RANDALL: What's he doing?

ALICE: I can't tell.

RANDALL: Has he found the ladder?

ALICE: As if . . .

RANDALL: I can't see him anymore.

ALICE: You're too close to the edge.

RANDALL: "As if" what?

ALICE: As if he would care enough to come up the ladder and see about us.

RANDALL: I would worry about him.

ALICE: Worry? Why?

RANDALL: Because he's been drinking and he might fall.

ALICE: You are too good.

RANDALL: Good for what? I totally flunked precalc.

ALICE: Why are you taking that, anyway?

RANDALL: I'm supposed to be premed.

ALICE: You are thirteen years old! How can you be pre—anything???

RANDALL: Mom thinks . . .

ALICE: Mom "thinks?" Mom doesn't think, Randy. She just does stuff. A lot of stuff. At a very fast rate. I think she's ADD.

RANDALL: "ADD?" Adults can't have ADD.

ALICE: Why not?

RANDALL: Because you grow out of it.

ALICE: No, the world just gets bored with you having it. It doesn't go away. And you take too much Adderall . . .

RANDALL: Ritalin.

ALICE: I'm pretty sure it's Adderall.

RANDALL: Ritalin.

ALICE: Which one is the upper?

RANDALL: You take the upper for being too up is all I know.

ALICE: ADD isn't the same as hyperactivity. Right?

RANDALL: I don't know. All I know is that Nam Jin took one of those pills, whichever one makes you stay up, and he stayed up for fifteen hours reading about mollusks and now he knows everything about mollusks. I need some of that stuff. For precalc. I gotta

talk to Nam Jin.

ALICE: Good luck. He's gone back to Korea.

RANDALL: Back to Korea? "Back to?" He's never been there. How do you know?

ALICE: I don't. I just said that. He's in that magnet school.

RANDALL: Stop. Just stop. If there was a magnet school, we wouldn't have had to move here. We could have stayed where we were and bussed to the magnet school. Mom and Dad moved us here for the school we're going to. It's supposed to be the best.

ALICE: It's a crappy school.

RANDALL: No, it's not. It's the only thing about this neighborhood I like.

ALICE: Neighborhood? Where are the neighbors? Look. Do you even see any lights on? Anywhere?

RANDALL: A lot of the houses aren't sold yet. That's why.

Beat.

You've been up here for hours. Don't you have to pee?

ALICE: You crawl into that dormer on the other side of the roof. The window is unlocked.

RANDALL: I thought those were just decorative, those whatever you call them.

ALICE: "Dormers." You haven't been up there? You haven't wandered up there to see what they were?

RANDALL: I thought they were fake. They still have the stickers on the windows.

ALICE: What have you been doing, Randall?

RANDALL: I've been studying!! Trying to keep up!!

ALICE: You have to be careful because the flooring is just to cover up the insulation stuff and you come to the end and there's a little stair thingie that opens AND LOWERS when you step on it . . .

RANDALL: No way!!

ALICE: And that takes you to the hall by the upstairs half-bath.

RANDALL: You've been cheating?? All the time you been up here, you been cheating.

ALICE: I would call it "surviving."

RANDALL: Okay. I don't have to go. I'm just checking.

ALICE: You're just scared to go.

RANDALL: I am not. I climbed up here on that ladder!

Shines the flashlight in the direction of the ladder.

No! The ladder's gone!! Holy crap, the ladder's gone!!

ALICE: We have the dormer.

RANDALL: But who took the ladder?? They know we're up here!!

ALICE: And . . . ?

RANDALL: Now they KNOW: We. Are. Up. Here.

ALICE: And I still say, "And?"

RANDALL: They'll . . . We'll . . .

ALICE: What, Randall? They'll do. . . what? Come and get us? They can't BECAUSE THE LADDER IS GONE. Think about it.

Imitating, aloud, their father's thought processes.

"Ladder? Kids must be on the roof. What shall we do, as good parents? What? Oh, what? I know. We'll remove the ladder. That will fix the problem. Our children, our former babies we adored so much, will be stranded on the roof. That will show them. Good job—us. We are excellent parents. Oh, I'm getting sleepy from all this fighting. I say, Deborah, let's turn in. Yawn."

RANDALL: Our parents wouldn't do that!

ALICE: Witness: absence of ladder.

RANDALL: But . . .

ALICE: I have been up here for hours and no one, except you, even noticed I was gone, let alone, came to look for me.

RANDALL: NOOO!! You are wrong!!! That's NOT RIGHT.

ALICE: You're right that's not right. It's WRONG!! It's WRONG PARENTING!!

RANDALL: I—I—CAN'T BELIEVE—I CAN'T BELIEVE . . .

ALICE: BELIEVE IT, RANDY!!

RANDALL: I don't believe . . . in them, any more. I can't—I can't . . .

He stands.

ALICE: Randall, what are you doing? Sit down.

RANDALL: I'm flunking precalc.

ALICE: Randy. Stop. It's okay.

RANDALL: "Okay?" "OKAY?" It's not okay! And I'm not doing well. I am not doing well at all. Our parents don't love us. Tell me our parents love us.

ALICE: I can't.

RANDALL: Listen . . .

They listen.

ALICE: They're fighting again.

RANDALL goes over to the edge of the roof and jumps off.

RANDY!!!! NO!!!! RANDY!!! MAMA!!! DADDY!!!!!! MA-
MAAAAAAAA!!!!!! DADDY!!!!!!!!!!!!

Blackout.

END OF PLAY