

ALL YOU CAN EAT

Written by

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ALEX MORWITZ, anxious middle child (18, female)

GUS MORWITZ, merciless eldest child (23, male)

PENNY MORWITZ, adorable youngest child (7, female)

MOM MORWITZ, overbearing mother (49, female)

DAD MORWITZ, mid-life crisis father (52, male)

GRANDMA MORWITZ, no-nonsense elder with a vague Middle Eastern accent (72, female)

GIULIANO THE WAITER, passionate waiter with a cheesy smile (41, male)

GREG FROM TABLE 11, awkward butt of the joke (27, male)

SETTING

An all-you-can-eat restaurant, Jade Palace.

TIME

Dinner time, the present.

STRUCTURE

Scene 1: SETTING THE TABLE

Scene 2: MEET THE MORWITZ FAMILY

Scene 3: THE FIRST COURSE

Scene 4: THE SECOND COURSE

Scene 5: THE THIRD COURSE

Scene 6: THE FOURTH COURSE

Scene 7: THE DUEL

Scene 8: NO ROOM FOR DESSERT

SCENE 1: SETTING THE TABLE

(There is a dining table with a white tablecloth and six chairs surrounding it. An empty vase sits at its center. A spotlight appears. Overly elegant dining music cues. GIULIANO enters from the right stage, holding a singular red rose in his mouth. He gracefully dances around the stage, dressing the table with plates, cutlery and cups. Once complete, he removes the rose from his mouth and places it in the vase. He walks back towards the right stage to make his exit. Before doing so, he practices his greetings for his future patrons. Content with his rehearsed "hellos", and the appearance of the table, GIULIANO finally exits.)

SCENE 2: MEET THE MORWITZ FAMILY

(Cue intensely dramatic opera music. In SLOW MOTION, each member of the MORWITZ family enters from left stage. MOM, DAD, GUS, PENNY, GRANDMA and ALEX enter one after the other. They each take a seat around the table, leaving a spot for ALEX between MOM and DAD. ALEX, meanwhile, approaches the front stage. The music cuts off abruptly, and everyone returns to normal.)

ALEX

(aside)

Have any of you lot ever been to Southampton, Ontario? Not many people have. It's basically just a shipping town. Importing. Exporting. That sort of thing. The occasional inflatable bouncy castle might pop up. Truth is... there isn't all that much to do around here.

(pause)

Well, we've got this place. Jade Palace.

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)

It's an "all-you-can-eat" joint. Sort of the best restaurant we have in these parts. I mean, we sure seem to like it.

(ALEX looks around the table, realizing she had failed to introduce her family.)

ALEX

Right -- um -- this is my family. Oh, I'm Alex by the way. Probably should have led with that. I'm Alex Morwitz.

(pointing to each family member)

Over there is my older brother, Gus, and my younger sister, Penny. That's my Mom and my Dad. And my Grandma is that ray of sunshine at the end of the table there. She clearly forgot that we were going out tonight and ate before we got here.

GRANDMA

(vague accent)

I did not!

ALEX

(to Grandma)

We picked you up, Grandma! You have barbecue sauce all over your shirt!

GRANDMA

No!

ALEX

(aside)

Nevertheless, I'm leaving town. I have this great opportunity lined up far far away from here. Don't ask me what the opportunity is, quite frankly it's weird that you even care. Get off my back about it, actually. But, come tomorrow, I'm hitting the road. Everything in front of me; Southampton in the rear view. Metaphorically, of course... I will be traveling by plane.

(a sudden somberness)

Here's to my last night in Southampton, Ontario. I'm spending it at Jade Palace, the 'all-you-can-eat' restaurant.

(ALEX cautiously walks to her spot at the table, taking a seat. GIULIANO enters from right stage. He approaches the table, smiling ear to ear. It's time to put the practice to good use.)

GIULIANO

Hey gang! Welcome to Jade Palace. The best, and only, 'all-you-can-eat' restaurant in Southampton.

(MORE)

GIULIANO (cont'd)

My name is Giuliano and I'm going to be your waiter for this evening. Is this your first time around?

GUS

(aggressively)

Hardly.

GIULIANO

Well... just a reminder then -- All you have to do is hand me your orders on this little piece of paper, and I hand it to the chefs. Nice and easy.

(GIULIANO extends a little notepad with a pencil to DAD, but GUS stands up and rips it away from him. Both DAD and GIULIANO are confused.)

GIULIANO

(perturbed)

I hope you brought you appetites.

(GIULIANO exits from right stage. GUS stands up and makes his way to front stage. He paces with his arms behind his back like a drill sergeant. As he paces, he writes down specific orders on the notepad.)

GUS

Game plan. I'm taking the reins of this operation. We're going to optimize stomach space and maximize food categories.

MOM

Is this really necessary, Gus?

GUS

NEVER GO IN WITHOUT A PLAN OF ATTACK. First, we start with soups. Something light to prepare the gut. We transition into solids with a round of entrees. Nothing too salty; water is the stomach filler.

PENNY

I want bread!

GUS

Empty carbs.

PENNY

Rice!

GUS

Expands in the stomach.

PENNY

Fresh fries!

GUS

Don't be obtuse, Penny.

DAD

Gus!

GUS

No need to thank me, Father. Someone needed to take control.
Weather the chaos! Mitigate the menu!

*(shifts focus to
ALEX)*

Unless little miss "big brain" wants to step up...

ALEX

(sarcastically)

You have my wholehearted support, Gus. You're going to make a great dictator.

(GUS returns to his seat.)

GUS

I appreciate the endorsement.

ALEX

I really don't give a shit.

*(GIULIANO enters from left stage.
GUS hands GIULIANO the first piece
of paper from the notepad. GIULIANO
exits from right stage. Meanwhile,
PENNY begins frantically patting
her pockets. She stands up in a
panic and sneaks to the other side
of GRANDMA. She kneels beside her.)*

PENNY

Grandma! I have a problem!

GRANDMA

So why are you bothering me?

PENNY

I lost Alex's going away gift. It was in my pocket. Now, it's gone! It's not stuck to your hands, is it?

GRANDMA

Why would it do that?

PENNY

Daddy says you have sticky fingers.

GRANDMA

(under her breath)

Ah. Well, your father will not be saying much when I have fingers wrapped around his throat...

(Meanwhile, on the other side of the table, MOM and DAD are going over ALEX's flight plan for tomorrow.)

MOM

So we'll take you to the airport tomorrow at around 3pm. Give us a call when you arrive at your gate. Then call us when you land. And maybe call us when you settle in. Also just call us before you go to bed.

DAD

And don't forget to call-

(RING RING! DAD's getting a call.)

DAD

Sorry, I need to take this. It's the warehouse.

(DAD stands up and walks towards front stage. He paces back and forth during the phone call, with GUS following his father's movements with the utmost attention.)

DAD

What is it? I'm at dinner with my family right now.

(beat)

Well, those were supposed to be shipped out yesterday.

(beat)

I don't know, Bob. My Dad only ever kept physical copies. Please just ship them out tonight.

(beat)

Yeah. Bye.

(DAD hangs up the phone, angry. He walks back to his seat with palpable stress.)

GUS

Is everything alright at work, father?

DAD

It's fine.

SCENE 3: THE FIRST COURSE

(GIULIANO enters from right stage. He's holding a tray with multiple bowls of soup. He walks around, giving each MORWITZ a bowl. Once finished, GIULIANO walks right stage to make his exit. PENNY, however, grabs him by the arm and pulls him towards the front stage.)

PENNY

Excuse me, Mr. Waiter.

GIULIANO

Please, call me Giuliano.

PENNY

I don't know if I can.

GIULIANO

Not really much I can do about that...

PENNY

Geyoulhianu, I lost the present I was going to give to my sister. I really need your help finding it.

GIULIANO

My help?

PENNY

You're the only person I can trust.

GIULIANO

You just met me.

PENNY

Exactly.

(beat)

It's in a little green box. Please please please help me find it.

GIULIANO

I'll see what I can do.

(PENNY skips back to her seat. GUS walks up to GIULIANO and hands him another paper with a new order. GIULIANO nods and exits from right left stage. Meanwhile, MOM grabs a digital camera and walks to the front stage.)

MOM

Okay! Okay everyone! Let's just take a picture in honor of my baby's last night!

(The MORWITZ' group together for the picture. GRANDMA is eating. PENNY puts bunny ears on GUS. GUS refuses to smile. DAD hugs ALEX. ALEX looks dejected. CLICK! The picture is taken.)

MOM

This was always your favorite restaurant, right Alex? Your eyes would get so big every time a new plate was put in front of you. I don't know where you got those eyes from. Sometimes, you wouldn't even finish the first plate before you were off to the next one.

GUS

(scoffs)

Yeah, you're a real glutton Alex. I will now be taking orders for the chicken course.

(MOM returns to her seat, annoyed that her emotional monologue was cut short.)

GUS

Father, would you like chick-

(BUZZ BUZZ! GUS is interrupted by the sound of DAD's phone. DAD checks his phone and immediately groans.)

GUS

What is it? What's going on at the warehouse?

DAD

Bob's just- never mind. It doesn't matter.

(BUZZ BUZZ!)

DAD

Son of a-

(DAD picks up his phone, stands up and exits from left stage. GUS scratches down the next order on the notepad, angry. GIULIANO enters from right stage bringing the next course of food, this time noodles.

GIULIANO picks up GUS' new order in
the process and exits left stage.)

SCENE 4: THE SECOND COURSE

*(DAD reenters from left stage.
He frantically rubs his head
in anguish as he returns to
his seat.)*

DAD

Sorry about that. I'll take some sweet and sour chicken,
please.

GUS

Too late. I gave in the order.

DAD

What? I didn't get to order!

GUS

Can't have you slowing down food output, can we?

DAD

That's ridiculous! Well, then give me a paper so I can order
my chicken!

GUS

Negative. It'll upset the flow.

DAD

The flow?

ALEX

Quit gate-keeping the orders. Just let Dad get what he wants.

GUS

I recall being appointed dictator.

ALEX

(mocking tone)

I was being sarcastic.

DAD

My God! It's fine! I'll just take some of whatever Grandma
got.

GRANDMA

Like hell you are.

DAD

You ate before we got here! You're not even hungry!

GRANDMA

I've never been more hungry in my entire life!

(ALEX stands up and takes a moment away from the chaos. She walks to front stage.)

ALEX

(aside)

Get me out of this fucking restaurant.

(PENNY walks up to ALEX, meekly. She awkwardly extends her arm. Confused, ALEX cautiously takes her hand.)

PENNY

Alex, you're going to come home, right?

ALEX

What?

PENNY

After you're finished... out there. You're going to come home, right?

ALEX

I- I don't know, Penny.

(PENNY lets go of ALEX's hand. Beat.)

PENNY

Can I come visit?

ALEX

You better.

(beat)

You can even bring Gus too, if you want.

PENNY

(disappointed)

Oh.

(PENNY skips back to her seat. ALEX stands solemnly for a moment. Finally, ALEX returns to her seat. Everyone just returns to eating in silence. However, ALEX turns towards GRANDMA, noticing she has fallen asleep with a dumpling in her mouth.)

ALEX

Grandma?

MOM

Mum?

(GRANDMA's eyes shoot open and the dumpling falls straight out her mouth.)

GRANDMA

What? Are we ready for the next order?

MOM

You need to stop eating, Mum.

GRANDMA

I'll stop when I'm dead.

(GIULIANO enters from left stage with a brand new set of dishes.)

GIULIANO

That's what I like to hear! Sort of.

SCENE 5: THE THIRD COURSE

(PENNY stands up with a glass full of water. She walks towards front stage, looking over her shoulder and trying to act super inconspicuous. Completely and utterly on purpose, PENNY throws the cup of water on the ground. It spills everywhere.)

PENNY

(terrible acting)

Oh no! A freak accident!

(GIULIANO rushes over and starts wiping up the water with a rag.)

PENNY

(whispering)

Giuliano, that was not an accident. I spilled it on purpose.

GIULIANO

Okay... why?

PENNY

How's it going with the search for the present?

GIULIANO

I've checked the front desk and the bathrooms. Nothing yet. It might help to know what the present is.

PENNY

It's a surprise.

GIULIANO

Yes, for your sister. It is not a surprise to me, Giuliano, the waiter.

PENNY

You may be in cahoots with her!

GIULIANO

You said you trusted me!

PENNY

Let's keep it that way!

(PENNY leans in close and gives GIULIANO two taps against his cheeks, like a mafia boss. She then stands up and returns to her seat. GIULIANO finishes cleaning up the spill and exits from left stage. Back at the table, the MORWITZ' eat silently. BUZZ BUZZ! DAD is receiving a text. Everyone at the table turns towards him, but he simply ignores it. Beat. BUZZ BUZZ! Again, everyone turns towards DAD but there's no reaction. Longer beat. BUZZ BUZZ! DAD finally snaps. He picks up the phone and chuckles it. The phone hits a character off stage.)

GREG (O.S.)

OW!

(Nonchalantly, DAD goes straight back to eating as if he didn't just overreact. GUS stands up, going to retrieve DAD's phone.)

DAD

Sit down, Gus!

(beat)

Please.

(*GUS sits back down. GIULIANO enters from left stage, holding DAD's phone in his hand.*)

GIULIANO

Excuse me. It seems your phone accidentally slipped out of your hands and violently hit Greg from table eleven.

DAD

Ah, yes. My mistake.

GIULIANO

(*scolding*)

This is a family restaurant, sir.

(*Dramatically, Giuliano drops the phone on the table and walks off left stage.*)

MOM

Anyways... Alex, what are some things you're excited to do once you get there? I'd tell you to take it easy before you settle in, but we both know that's not going to happen.

ALEX

I don't know. I'll probably-

MOM

Let me guess... join a club? Write a novel? Learn karate? The karate scene is huge over there, at least that's according to Marlene.

ALEX

Who?

MOM

Jessica's Mom!

ALEX

No, I-

DAD

Never thought I'd see the day that a Morwitz gets let loose.

ALEX

Yeah, I mean-

(*The lights begin to close in on ALEX. The family continues to berate her as the SPOTLIGHT gets tighter and tighter and tighter...*)

GUS

Try to stay on target for once, eh? Nothing's more important than that, no matter what that big dumb brain of yours tells you.

ALEX

But I can do more-

PENNY

And you can come home if it doesn't work out!

ALEX

Penny, but I have to-

GRANDMA

Are you going to finish your chicken?

ALEX

What? Seriously?

GRANDMA

If you stop eating, you're as good as dead.

(The spotlight is solely on ALEX. The rest of the MORWITZ' exit the stage. ALEX's breathing becomes heavy, her hand holding her chest. She is having a panic attack. The lights change colors to a dark purple. Suddenly, GIULIANO emerges from right stage as music cues. Something very sad and dramatic, like a Sufjan Stevens song.)

ALEX

What- what's going on?

(GIULIANO is holding a tray filled with various dishes. He proceeds to dance around, circling the table and putting more and more food in front of ALEX. Eventually, the rest of the MORWITZ' emerge from the left and right stage. They dance their way over to ALEX. MOM and DAD then pick up ALEX by the chair and carry her to the front stage. GRANDMA, GUS and PENNY grab the dishes and bring them to the front stage. Each MORWITZ has a dish in hand. They begin to circle ALEX, force feeding her the food.)

ALEX*(mouth full)*

No. No, I'm not hungry.

*(They don't stop. She continues to eat and eat and eat...)***ALEX**

Please, I don't want anymore!

*(It's no use. All she can do is eat.)***LIGHTS DOWN:**SCENE 6: THE FOURTH COURSE*(LIGHTS UP. Everything is back to normal. The MORWITZ' have returned to their respective spots, eating.)***MOM**

Alex? Alex? You've hardly eaten.

*(ALEX jumps up)***ALEX**

I have to go to the bathroom.

*(ALEX scurries off towards the bathroom, raising suspicion in MOM. The bathroom is a white, back lit curtain on stage. Upon entrance into this area, the shadows are displayed on the curtain. ALEX is inside pacing. MOM stands up and walks towards the bathroom area. She knocks, concerned)***MOM**

Alex, honey, is everything alright in there?

ALEX

What? Yeah, Mum, I'm fine.

MOM

Is it diarrhea?

ALEX

No! Mum!

MOM

It's just you got up in such a hurry, and it looked like you were clenching...

ALEX

Mum!

MOM

Do you want me to take a look?

ALEX

What part of this conversation makes you think I want you to take a look?

MOM

Okay. I'm coming in.

(MOM steps behind the curtain, much to ALEX's chagrin. The light behind the curtain slowly fades out. Meanwhile, back at the table, the rest of MORWITZ' continue to eat.)

DAD

Is anyone going to eat the last eggroll?

(GUS stands up with sheer determination and aggression, akin to The Manchurian Candidate.)

GUS

(stately)

I want the last eggroll.

DAD

I was mostly asking as a courtesy, Gus, but we can order you another one when Giuliano comes around.

GUS

I don't want to order another eggroll. I want that one.

DAD

Okay... then pass me the paper so I can order myself another...

GUS

No can do. We're off course as is.

DAD

Gus! Either give me the paper or I'm taking the last one right now!

GUS

Over my dead body, you are!

(GUS and DAD both jut forward, reaching for the eggroll. However, GRANDMA manages to sneakily grab it first.)

GRANDMA

I've had enough of your foolishness tonight. Fighting over eggrolls like it's pumpkin in a pigpen. How about you both take a deep breath, relax and use your heads for one second...

(beat)

You're going to have a duel.

PENNY

Fight! Fight! Fight!

DAD

Duel? What do you mean?

GRANDMA

I explain you the rules.

(GRANDMA, DAD, GUS and PENNY all stand up. PENNY takes a few steps, but is quickly stopped by DAD.)

DAD

Not you, Penny. This is for the grownups.

(PENNY sits back down, sulking. Meanwhile, GIULIANO enters from the right stage with a present wrapped in green paper. He walks over to PENNY and hands her the box.)

GIULIANO

I found this in the back. Is this the gift you've been looking for?

(PENNY holds up the little green box, observing its shape. She then proceeds to shake it violently.)

PENNY

No... Mine doesn't make this noise when you shake it.

GIULIANO

Are you sure? Because I feel like this meets the criteria that you gave me.

PENNY

(tearing up)

IT'S NOT IT!

GIULIANO

Okay! Okay! Look, I don't know, maybe try retracing your steps?

(PENNY stands up slowly, calming herself down.)

PENNY

Right. Yeah. Maybe I just need to retrace my steps.

(PENNY walks up to the front stage. The music from her entrance earlier begins to play, now in reverse. PENNY skips backwards, retracing her steps. Meanwhile, the light behind the bathroom curtain turns back on, with MOM and ALEX's silhouettes now visible. The lights in the dining area dim, as their conversation can now be heard.)

ALEX

Mom! What are you going in here?

MOM

Please tell me what's going on.

ALEX

There's just a lot going on right now, okay?

MOM

Yes! We're all very excited!

ALEX

Well maybe I'm not... anymore...

(beat)

You guys have so much riding on me, and I don't know If I'm the one to do any of it.

MOM

What do you mean "you don't know"? Honey, I've never seen someone push themselves the way you do. I've never seen someone attempt as much as you do. I've never seen--

ALEX

You've never seen me commit to anything. Ever. I've worked so hard to get to this one point, and now I'm just here.

MOM

Exactly! You are becoming this strong and ambitious young woman. And I wholeheartedly believe that, for you, the sky's the limit.

ALEX

Yeah, well, if that's the case then I'm bound to fall at some point, Mum.

MOM

You're scared of failing?

ALEX

I'm scared that I've been failing this whole time. It was just disguised as ambition.

(There's a sudden sound of a fly front zipper being zipped up. ZIP!)

ALEX

What the- who goes there?

(Another shadow emerges from behind the curtain, behind MOM and ALEX.)

GREG

Just me.

MOM

Who the hell are you?

GREG

Greg... from table eleven...

MOM

What are you doing in here!?

GREG

This is the bathroom.

(beat)

This is the men's bathroom...

MOM

Get the hell out of here!

GREG

(nervously)

Okay!

(GREG emerges from the curtain, just as GIULIANO is entering from the right stage. Greg goes to flag Giuliano down.)

GREG

Oh! Hey! Giuliano!

*(Giuliano looks Greg up and down.
There's an air of disgust.)*

GIULIANO

Who the hell are you?

GREG

(sighs)

I'm Greg, man... Greg from table eleven.

GIULIANO

Of course. What can I do for you Greg?

GREG

I was wondering if I could get my ring back.

GIULIANO

Your ring?

GREG

Yes, my ring. I left it with the host to keep it in back until I was ready to pop the question.

GIULIANO

(excitedly shouting)

You're proposing!

(GREG panics, hoping that no one heard about his secret intentions.)

GREG

Yes! Okay, yes. Just keep it down. I'm proposing but I sort of need the ring to do that.

(GIULIANO's face drops, knowing exactly where this next line of questioning is going.)

GIULIANO

You don't say. The ring wouldn't happen to be in a green packaging, would it?

GREG

As a matter of fact, it is.

(GIULIANO's eyes light up with a panic as a fake smile creeps across his face.)

GIULIANO

Well, kick me in the throat and call me Sally.

(An incredibly awkward beat)

GREG

No? So you'll go get it, right?

GIULIANO

When have I ever let you down, Greg. You know you can always trust me.

GREG

I just met you...

GIULIANO

Exactly.

(GIULIANO gives GREG two taps on the cheek, mimicking PENNY's mafia moves from earlier. He then nervously walks towards right stage, which quickly changes into a run. GREG exits left stage.)

SCENE 7: THE DUEL

(DAD and GUS walk back towards the front stage, both with Chinese Soup Spoons in one hand and a piece of chicken in the other. They position themselves, standing back to back. They rest the soup spoons on their shoulders, like its a musket. GRANDMA takes a seat at the table, directing the duel for the fate of the eggroll.)

GRANDMA

You both understand rules and what's at stake?

GUS

Yes.

DAD

Just to be clear, it's still an eggroll right?

GRANDMA

You each have one general Tso chicken. He who is struck by chicken first will lose the fated snack.

GUS

You're going down, old man.

DAD

I don't even like eggrolls all that much...

GRANDMA

STEP!

(GUS and DAD both take a step forward, their backs still to each other.)

DAD

Are you happy, Gus? Is this what you wanted?

GUS

What I want is for you to respect me!

DAD

What are you talking about?

GUS

Why won't you let me do more around the warehouse? You act like I'm useless, like because I'm not Alex I can't do anything right. But I am capable! More capable than anybody gives me credit for!

GRANDMA

STEP!

(GUS and DAD both take a step forward.)

DAD

Is that what this is all about? Of course you're capable! I know that!

GUS

So what's the problem?

DAD

Gus... I don't want you to waste away for your father's business just like I did!

GUS

What?

GRANDMA

STEP!

(GUS and DAD both take a step forward.)

DAD

You think I wanted to work in a warehouse my whole life? My father's warehouse? I didn't get to do anything-- TRY ANYTHING-- I was stuck. There is so much more you could do, Gus. More than I ever did!

GUS

That's not your choice, Dad!

GRANDMA

STEP!

(GUS steps forward. DAD, however, turns around.)

DAD

No! I'm not doing this stupid duel anymore. Gus, I'm not making the same mistake my father made. Believe me, this isn't what you want.

GUS

You don't know what I want!

(Suddenly, ALEX storms out from the bathroom curtain, walking directly through the duel. MOM follows suit. Neither of them are aware of the chicanery between DAD and GUS.)

MOM

Alex, get back here!

GRANDMA

FIRE!

(GUS turns around and launches a general Tso chicken towards DAD. However, MOM is unfortunately caught in the crossfire. MOM is hit dead in the face with a piece of chicken.)

MOM

What in the world!?

(GUS and DAD look at each other with genuine fear in their eyes. They speak over each other.)

DAD

Gus did it!

GUS

Sorry!

(MOM channels some serious "mom anger.")

MOM

Everybody.... SIT! DOWN!

(ALEX, GUS and DAD rush around the table and take back their original spots. PENNY, however, is still out looking for the gift.)

MOM

You boys have got to be kidding. We go to the nicest restaurant in town and you go ahead and act like barbarians! Flinging chicken around all willy nilly! Like it grows on trees! For WHAT? Tell me?

DAD

(nervous; under breath)

I wanted the eggroll...

GUS

(overlapping; no eye contact)

Eggroll...

MOM

Figures as much! I leave for one second and pandemonium breaks loose! You are two adults fighting over something you can order infinite amounts of! And so help me God, Mum, put down the spoon. YOU ARE NOT HUNGRY!

(GRANDMA, who was raising a fork full of food to her mouth, slowly drops it. She was just minding her business.)

MOM

And Alex. Do you not understand the potential you have? The potential we see in you? Are you looking at what I'm working with here? It kills me that you're going, but I would be heartbroken if you stayed. Why would you ever question yourself like this? You have so much to give!

ALEX

What happens when the novelty fades, Mum? When being ambitious stops being special and starts becoming real. What then?

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)

I can't shake the feeling that I've been encouraged to chase a delusion, only to wake up when I'm thirty with nothing to show for it. I don't have the slightest clue what I'm looking for out there or whether there is even anything to find.

(beat)

What happens when all that there's left to do is come back? I don't think I'll have the heart to do that.

(beat)

I really did it, Mum. I made it this far. And maybe that's enough.

MOM

What then? You think it's better to stay?

(ALEX lets out a chuckle.)

ALEX

You said it, this is my favorite restaurant. A shitty 'all-you-can-eat' joint.

(GIULIANO, who has been sitting in PENNY's seat throughout this entire sequence, shoots up. He gets atop the chair, commencing some grandiose speech.)

GIULIANO

It's ironic, isn't it? The "all-you-can-eat" restaurant.

(Everyone around the table turns towards GIULIANO, shocked. They had not even realized he was there the entire time.)

GUS

What the fuck?

ALEX

Is that the waiter?

GUS

How long have you been there?

DAD

(looks around)

Where is my daughter?

GIULIANO

In the days of kings and queens, all the rich and wealthy would gather for an enormous feast. It was a sign of power. A sign of prosperity. But now, the real showing of wealth is going to a fancy restaurant.

(MORE)

GIULIANO (cont'd)

Getting the smallest morsel of food imaginable and paying an arm and a leg for a glorified crumb. And I don't think that there's anything necessarily wrong with that. There's a market for it. But you know, as far as I like to see it, an 'all-you-can-eat' restaurant is the only place fit for royalty.

(gets down from the
chair)

Something to think about.

(Beat.)

DAD

Seriously. Where is Penny?

(Suddenly, PENNY runs up from the
audience holding up the GIFT. It's
wrapped in a green package.)

PENNY

Alex! I found it! I found it!

(PENNY runs on to the stage from
the front, gleefully parading
around the gift as she circles the
table.)

ALEX

Penny?

MOM

Penny!

GIULIANO

PENNY.

(GIULIANO chases after PENNY.)

GIULIANO

I NEED THAT GIFT BACK!

(GIULIANO grabs the gift in PENNY's
hands.)

PENNY

What? It's mine!

(PENNY tenses her grip around the
gift. Her and GIULIANO begin to
fight over it, pushing and pulling
back and forth. Finally, the gift
goes flying.

PENNY screams in terror as the gift is propelled up in the air and lands hard on the group. PENNY rushes over to check on her gift. GIULIANO watches as the gift is opened, only to find it wasn't what he expected.)

GIULIANO

That's not a wedding ring...

PENNY

It was supposed to be a compass! Now it's broken!

GIULIANO

Wait so you don't have the ring? Then... who does?

(GRANDMA reaches into her purse, pulling out the initial little green gift.)

GRANDMA

I took it.

DAD

Typical.

(GRANDMA chucks the ring in the air, and GIULIANO runs up to catch it. He immediately makes a break for it, exiting right stage.)

GIULIANO

I'm coming Greg!

(ALEX walks to front stage, kneeling next to PENNY. PENNY is holding back tears, sitting with her now broken gift)

ALEX

Penny, why did you get me a compass?

PENNY

I wanted to make sure you'd be able to find you way home. For when you come back.

(ALEX takes the compass from PENNY's hands, observing it)

PENNY

It wasn't supposed to be broken...

ALEX

That's okay, Penny. I think it'll work just fine.

(*ALEX and PENNY hug. ALEX gives the compass a shake. It emits a strange noise.*)

ALEX

Did you make this yourself?

PENNY

It's filled with loose macaroni noodles.

(*They stop hugging. PENNY walks back to her seat, leaving ALEX alone at front stage. ALEX takes a seat on the floor, her face collapsing into her hands. MOM walks up to Alex and puts her arm on her shoulders. She sits next to her, waiting in silence for a moment. DAD also approaches, pulling up a chair behind them*)

MOM

What do you want, Alex?

ALEX

I just-- I just don't think I want--

MOM

No no. I didn't ask you what you don't want. I asked you what you want.

(*Beat.*)

ALEX

I guess- I guess I want to feel like everything's going to work out. I want to live up to everyone's expectations. I want to live up to my expectations.

MOM

What else?

ALEX

I want... I want a dog. A beagle, and then eventually a golden retriever.

MOM

(*egging on*)

Okay...

ALEX

I want to go to New Jersey. See more of the world. I want to try a juicy drop pop. I never had one as a kid and I think about it a lot. I want to buy someone a beer from across the room. I want to get really good at cooking one specific meal, like it's the thing I'm asked to bring to a potluck. I want to be invited to a potluck. I want to become more comfortable with dancing. I want to chase a chicken and get the best of it.

DAD

Keep going...

ALEX

I want to sit on the wings of a biplane. I want to get punched in the face, at least one time. I want to design a roller coaster. I swear I'd make the best one, none of that corkscrew shit. I want at least one more water fight in my life. I want to... have sex? I want to be comfortable navigating an entire city without a GPS. I want to siphon gas out of a car like a goddamn cowboy. I want to witness one flash mob, but NEVER second one. I want to hit a high note at karaoke. I want my childhood bully to see me now, only for me not to care what he thinks. I want to matter. And more than anything, I don't want it to matter, even if I don't get any of this.

(Moment of silence. GUS stands up and walks over to the front of stage. He hovers over ALEX. Finally, he reaches into his pocket and hands ALEX the notepad and a pencil. ALEX hesitates for a moment, but she eventually grabs hold.)

GUS

What else?

(Beat.)

ALEX

I want broccoli. I want dumplings. I want some shanghai noodles without bean sprouts...

(ALEX stands up and begins to walks around the table, getting more amped up with each listed dish.)

ALEX

Fuck it! I want some french fries! I want some kung pow chicken. I want wonton soup. I want sake--

DAD

Sake is an extra charge...

ALEX

Let's forget the sake! I want some sushi. I want tempura shrimp. I want some teriyaki dipping sauce. I want whatever Penny wants!

PENNY

Fortune cookie!

ALEX

Somebody get this little lady her fortune cookie! Grandma, can you still eat?

GRANDMA

Alex, people like you and me, we never stop eating. Ever.

(GIULIANO enters from the left stage and walks towards the table.)

GIULIANO

I just wanted to let you guys know that the kitchen is closing soon. So, we'd recommend getting your last orders in now.

(ALEX rips her page off the notepad. The page extends to comic effect, unfurling all the way to the ground.)

GIULIANO

Dear God...

ALEX

Yeah, we're hungry.

LIGHT DOWN:SCENE 8: NO ROOM FOR DESSERT

(LIGHTS UP. The MORWITZ family has finished eating, their clothes and faces covered in grease and sauce. They all let out a collective groan of satisfaction.)

MOM

I think that just about does it. Everyone good to head out?

ALEX

Yeah. Let's get out of here.

(PENNY and GRANDMA are first to stand up. PENNY helps support GRANDMA as they walk off left stage.)

GRANDMA

What? That's it? I thought we were going out for dinner?

(GUS and DAD stand up next.)

DAD

Gus! Wait. Look, maybe it's not fair for me to push you away from the warehouse. I just don't want you to feel trapped, like I did.

GUS

I won't, Dad. I don't need any more than that. And I think that's okay.

DAD

Yeah. Yeah, that's more than okay. Come on, let's get you started.

(DAD puts his arm around GUS and they exit off left stage. MOM and ALEX stand up next. ALEX takes a moment to look around her favorite restaurant.)

MOM

Are you ready?

ALEX

Yeah, just give me a second.

(MOM kisses ALEX on the cheek and exits left stage. Meanwhile, GIULIANO enters from the left stage.)

GIULIANO

Oh, you guys are still here. I hope everything was to your liking. See you all soon.

ALEX

Wouldn't count on it. Thanks, Giuliano.

(ALEX smiles and walks off left stage.)

GIULIANO walks over to their catastrophe of a table, plates stacked high and dirty. GREG enters from the left stage)

GREG

Hey.

(GIULIANO doesn't even bother acknowledging GREG.)

GREG

(holding up ring finger)

He said yes, by the way.

GIULIANO

(couldn't care less)

Yeah, that's great, Greg.

GREG

How'd it go over here?

GIULIANO

(sigh of relief)

They're going to be just fine.

GREG

No, like, did they tip well?

(Beat.)

GIULIANO

No. No they did not.

CURTAIN.