



Alexandra

by Cecilia Rubino

Characters:

Alexandra

Liz

Alexandra's Mother

Scene: late in the evening. Liz is finishing her homework when she hears someone knocking at the front door.

ALEX: *[whispering]* Liz! Liz, it's me, Alex. Let me in.

LIZ: Alex? *[Liz opens the door and gives her friend a hug.]*
Alex, are you all right? Everybody is looking for you.

ALEX: *[nervously]* I didn't want to ring the buzzer. Is your mother home?

LIZ: She's at the hospital. She doesn't get off work till late. Don't worry: my dad and Ralph are already asleep. Where were you? It's been almost a week. Why didn't you call me? We've been so worried.

ALEX: I couldn't talk. *[rubbing her bruised forehead]* I didn't want anyone to see me like this.

LIZ: Alex, I'm so sorry. Jack really beat you, didn't he?

ALEX: He found out I was seeing Ray. The man is not even my father, and nobody I hang out with is good enough for him. They're too old, they're going to get me in trouble, they're no good. I mean, Jack has something to say about *everyone*. Are you sure nobody else is here?

LIZ: Nobody's here. Alex, are you OK? Your mother's going crazy trying to find you.

ALEX: Good; serves her right. It would serve her right if they found me dead somewhere, and then she would have to live with that the rest of her life.

LIZ: Come on; don't say that.

ALEX: It's true. You heard the fight?

LIZ: Everybody on the block heard the fight. People said Ray broke your stepfather's arm.

ALEX: After he saw what Jack did to me, Ray went after him with a baseball bat. The cops came. They were going to take Ray in. Jack had to go to the hospital. They wanted to take me to the hospital, too, for the cut on my head, but I said no. I couldn't stand being anywhere near that man. And all the time my mother is screaming about me, saying, "It's her fault, she started this, going out with that scum."

LIZ: I can't believe this happened.

ALEX: You know, Ray and I had been keeping it kind of quiet. Then a couple of nights ago I'm on the phone, and Jack comes in. When he finds out it's Ray, he pulls the phone out of the wall.

LIZ: Out of the wall?

ALEX: That's the way Jack is. Sometimes he just goes off. And then he really started to give it to me. I had to run out of the house. I mean I ran out in my nightgown and walked all the way to Ray's in my bare feet. The next day, I called my mother and I said, "I can't stay in that man's house anymore. I'm afraid of what he's going to do to me." I said, "Ma, I've got to come and get some of my things for a while. I need my books for school and my clothes." I had to borrow clothes from Ray. But I told her I couldn't come when Jack was there.

LIZ: You're mother's been so upset. She's been here crying. I feel so bad for her.

ALEX: [*bitterly*] You listen to what she did. I called her that night, and she told me he was out of the house. But the whole thing was a set-up. She lied, she out-and-out lied to me. I walked in the door, and he was waiting right there to grab me. She helped him get me into my room. She stood there and let him hit me like that. She didn't do anything.

LIZ: I'm so sorry. I can't believe he hurt you like that.

ALEX: That man has been going after me since the day he moved in with us. He hits me, he hits her, and she doesn't do anything to stop it. Remember when she went to the hospital around Christmastime?

LIZ: She sprained her arm?

ALEX: *Jack* sprained her arm. They had a fight about me. Every time something happens, my mother always says things are going to change, but nothing ever does. It just happens again. And she says, "Oh, you just never liked him, and that's why he gets mad," and "He's so good to you; he just wants you to behave."

LIZ: You never told me he hit you.

ALEX: When I was younger, he'd hit me for anything. I always thought it was my fault. I guess I thought it was normal. I'd talk back or I'd spill something; maybe he'd be drunk and wham!

LIZ: Why didn't you ever say anything?

ALEX: I didn't know how to tell anybody. I remember one time in gym I couldn't even sit cross-legged because he hit me so bad. The teacher asked me what was wrong, but I didn't know what to say. I mean, I guess I thought it was my fault. Your father never hits you? He's so strict.

LIZ: He's never hit us. He threw a shoe at me once. One time, he was so mad at Ralph for running into the street, he said he was going to get his belt if it happened again. I remember going in later, Ralph and I, and opening up his drawer to look at this brand-new red leather belt and imagining what it would be like to get hit with that—but he never took it out.

ALEX: I thought it was me. I guess I thought I deserved it. I was being bad. I got into trouble a lot. I didn't want other people to know how bad I was. I still feel like it's my fault.

LIZ: It's not your fault, Alexandra. It's not.

ALEX: Things were better for a long time. Jack was going to AA meetings, my mother was going to some other kind of meeting, I was doing OK. But then everything fell apart all at the same time. Jack had that accident at work, you know, when the guy ran into him with the forklift, and he had to get his leg stitched up.

LIZ: I thought he got laid off.

ALEX: He did. Right when he was out with his leg, the airline started laying guys off, and he couldn't get his old job back. So he's just been sitting around. Now Mom is working all the time. Then they found out I was seeing Ray.

LIZ: But where'd you go after it happened? I mean, I went looking for you and you weren't even at Ray's house.

ALEX: When the cops took Ray in, I thought they weren't going to let him out. I didn't have anywhere to go. So I spent the night and all the next day just riding the trains. I didn't know where to go. I couldn't stop crying. I'd be sitting there on the train, I couldn't stop thinking about everything, and in front of all those people I'd just start to cry again. After that, I went to Ray's, but he

■■■■ THINKING ABOUT THE PLAY

1. Why doesn't Alexandra tell anyone about her stepfather's behavior?
2. Why do you think Jack behaves the way he does?
3. Why do you think Alexandra's mother allows her husband to hit her daughter?
4. Why does Alex say that everything at home fell apart at the same time?
5. Where else could Alex have gone for help?

■■■■ THINKING ABOUT THE ENDING

Liz has just learned some very disturbing things about Alexandra's family. Does she decide to let Alexandra's mother in, or does she lie to her about where her daughter is?

Write an ending for the play in which you include Liz's response to Alexandra's mother and how the other characters react to it. Use what you've learned about the characters to craft the ending.

was supposed to keep it quiet. I didn't want my mother to find me.

LIZ: Tell me what I can do, Alexandra. I feel so bad for you.

ALEX: *[crying again]* I don't know, Lizzie, I don't know. I can't sleep. When I do, all I dream about is him coming at me. I can't eat, I'm crying all the time. I can stay for a while with Ray, but I'm not ready to live there. I've got to get it together. I need my stuff for school.

LIZ: Alexandra, you know you can come and stay here. My parents would be totally fine about that.

ALEX: I can't. I'm too scared. Every time I set foot on this block, I think I'm going to see him and it'll happen all over again. Ray says I should press charges, but I don't want another scene. I just want to disappear. I don't want to fight anymore.

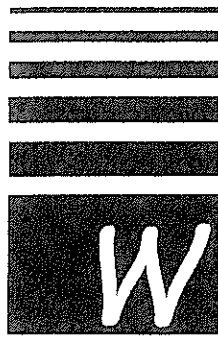
[The buzzer rings, startling both girls.]

ALEX: I've got to get out of here. Don't open it, Lizzie.

LIZ: Don't worry, let me just go see who it is.

ALEX'S MOTHER: Liz, Liz! Are you there? Mrs. Menna said she saw Alexandra on the block a few minutes ago. She said she came in here. *[crying]* Please Liz, please help me, I'm her mother. I just want to see Alexandra. I just want to talk to her. Everything's going to change. I don't care about Ray. I promise. I just want her back. *[knocking frantically]* Please let me in, Liz! I have to talk to you! She's my only daughter. Just tell me if you've seen her!

LIZ: . . .



Who's Got the Keys?

by Steven Otfinoski

Characters:

Tommy

Kim

Jamal

Lisa

Hank

Scene: a suburban street at night. Tommy and his friends Hank, Lisa, Jamal, and Kim have just left a party at a friend's house. They are walking to Tommy's car.

HANK: That was one crazy time, huh, Tom?

TOMMY: *[throwing an arm around Hank's shoulder]* It was the best party since your parents went away for the weekend, buddy!

KIM: Dave really knows how to throw a party.

JAMAL: Yeah. Lots of beer and good music.

LISA: Don't remind me of the beer, please. I drank *way* too much.

[Tommy awkwardly fishes out his car keys from his pocket. He starts to open the door on the driver's side.]