

# **FUN HOME**

Music by  
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Book and Lyrics by  
Lisa Kron

Based on the graphic novel by Alison Bechdel

## Characters

Alison - 43 years old, a cartoonist

Medium Alison - 19 years old, a college freshman

Small Alison - around 8 years old

Bruce Bechdel - Alison's father

Helen Bechdel - Alison's mother

Christian Bechdel - Alison's brother, around 10 years old

John Bechdel - Alison's brother, around 6 years old

Roy, a young man Bruce hires to do yard work

Mark, a high school junior

Joan, a college student

Pete, a mourner.

Bobby Jeremy and the Susan Deys,  
imaginary television characters

Alison enters, goes to her drawing table, takes up her pen, and begins to draw. MUSIC IN.

Small Alison appears.

SMALL ALISON

*Daddy, hey, Daddy, come here, okay, I need you*

*What are you doing, I said come here*

*You need to do what I tell you to do*

*Listen to me*

*Daddy*

*Come here, hey right here, right now, you're making me mad*

*Listen to me*

*Listen to me*

*Listen to me*

*I wanna play airplane*

*I wanna play airplane*

*I wanna play airplane*

*I wanna put my arms out and fly*

*Like the Red Baron in his Sopwith Camel! No wait-*

*Like Superman*

*up in the sky*

*'till I can see all of Pennsylvania*

Bruce enters with a big, crapped-out box of stuff.

BRUCE

Hey, gimme a hand.

Small Alison drags the box in. Bruce fetches a second one.

SMALL ALISON

What'd'ja get, Daddy?

ALISON

Right, right, right.

BRUCE

It's from Clyde Gibbon's barn. What a haul. He said, "Take what you want," and I said, "You sure, Clyde?" He said, "It's all junk to me," so I said, "Alright, Clyde, alright." Come here. Look.

(MORE)

BRUCE (cont'd)  
(Small Alison looks on as he combs through  
the box.)

You go to auctions, yard sales, comb the dump  
and crap, there's crap, there's crap, there's--  
(Pulls out a clump of cloth.)

Ah! What's this?

SMALL ALISON  
More crap?

BRUCE  
(Rapturously inspecting the wadded  
fabric.)

No--

*Linen  
This is... linen  
Gorgeous Irish linen  
See how I can tell?  
Right here, this floating thread, you see?  
That's what makes it damask  
And the weight, the weight, this drape  
And the pattern, crisp and clear  
See how it's made from matte and shine  
It's tattered here, but all the rest  
How beautiful How fine*

Okay, okay... What else is here...

Crap...

Crap...

Dead mouse.

SMALL ALISON  
Ooh. Can I have it?

BRUCE  
It's all yours.  
(Pulling a grey metal coffee pot out of  
the box.)  
What's this...?

*Silver  
Is this silver?  
Is this junk or silver?  
With polish we can tell  
I love how tarnish melts away  
opening to luster  
And the mark, is there a mark?  
Yes, this stamp, you see right here?  
That's how the craftsman leaves a sign*

*that he was here and made his work  
so beautiful, so fine*

*This has traveled continents to get here  
and crossed an ocean of time  
And somehow landed in this box under a layer of grime  
I can't abide romantic notions of some vague "long ago"  
I want to know what's true, dig deep into  
who, and what, and why and when  
until now gives way to then*

ALISON

*Did you ever imagine I'd hang onto your stuff,  
Dad? Me either. But I guess I always knew  
that someday I was going to draw you. In  
cartoons, yes, Dad, I know you think cartoons  
are silly, but I draw cartoons. And I need  
real things to draw from because I don't trust  
memory.*

*(Taking a coffee pot, identical to her  
fathers, out of identical the box in her  
space.)*

*But god, this thing is ghastly  
You were so ecstatic when you found it  
at a yard sale, no, no, wait, in Mr. Gibbons barn  
It all comes back, it all comes back, it all comes back  
There's you  
And there's me  
But now I'm the one who's 43  
and stuck  
I can't find my way through  
Just like you  
Am I just like you?*

ALISON

*I can't abide romantic  
notions of some vague "long  
ago"*

BRUCE

*A sign that he was here  
and did his work*

ALISON AND BRUCE

*I want to know what's true, dig deep into  
who, and what and why and when  
until now gives way to then*

*All the characters peopling this  
story swoop in and put the Bechdel  
house into place while singing  
various La La's, as Alison, Small  
Alison, and Bruce sing:*

SMALL ALISON  
*Daddy, hey daddy  
come here, okay? I*

BRUCE  
*What is true*

ALISON  
*What is true*

need you.

Airplane I wanna play  
airplane  
airplane I wanna play  
airplane  
airplane

This has  
traveled to  
get here  
Beautiful  
I wanna play  
I wanna play  
Beautiful is  
What is true  
What is true

Bruce lifts Small Alison up into  
the air. Small Alison laughs as  
she flies

ALISON

Caption: My dad and I were exactly alike.

SMALL ALISON

I see everything!

ALISON

Caption: My dad and I were *nothing* alike.

SMALL ALISON

I'm Superman!

ALISON

My dad and I... My dad and I...

Bruce unceremoniously dumps Small  
Alison back down, suddenly more  
interested in something else.

SMALL ALISON

Daddy come back!

ALISON

Caption: Sometimes my father appeared to enjoy  
having children, but the real object of his  
affection was his house.

John and Christian enter, playing  
with blocks and trucks. Helen  
practices her piano.

BRUCE

(returning)

I just got a call from Eleanor Bochner,  
Allegheny Historical Society. She was calling  
about the house tour.

HELEN

Oh. That's wonderful.

BRUCE

She's on her way over right now. I'm not sure  
what to do. This place is... I'm not  
dressed...

HELEN

Go take a shower.

BRUCE

But-

HELEN

Take a shower, get yourself dressed.

He exits.

HELEN

Kids? Kids? An important lady is on her way  
over here to see the house--listen to me,  
please--This is one of those times you need to  
do what I say, quickly, and without any  
shenanigans.

*He wants the Hepplewhite suite chairs back in the parlor  
Move the GI Joe. It can't be on the floor  
He wants the Dresden figurines back in the breakfront  
A slinky messes up the period décor  
Get the lemon pledge and dust the--  
These should face the same direction--  
He wants it vacuumed  
The surface gleaming  
He wants it closer to the door*

*He wants--  
He wants--  
He wants--*

*He wants the brass candelabra set at an angle  
The crayons and the glue should go back in the drawer  
He wants the bust of Quixote square on the mantel  
Sweep that lint away, it's what a broom is for  
Gently wipe the eucalyptus  
Polish up the crystal prisms  
When he comes down here  
He wants it ready  
We've got to get it done before...*

*He wants--  
He wants--  
He wants--*

The bathroom door opens. Bruce  
wearing just a towel around his  
waist, emerges:



BRUCE

Where's my bronzing stick!

HELEN

It's in the--

*Door slam.*

ALISON

*Welcome to our house on Maple Avenue  
See how we polish and we shine  
We rearrange and realign  
Everything is balanced and serene  
Like chaos never happens if it's never seen*

ALISON AND HELEN

*Ev'ry need we anticipate and fill  
And still--*

HELEN AND SMALL ALISON

*He wants the real feather duster used on the bookcase*

HELEN AND CHRISTIAN

*Find all the books we read and carefully restore*

HELEN AND JOHN

*He wants them alphabetized by classification*

HELEN

*A volume out of place could start a third world war*

HELEN AND THE KIDS

*That's an inch out of position  
Watch it, that's a first edition*

HELEN

*What are we missing?  
What have we left out?  
When he comes down here what's in store?*

HELEN AND THE KIDS

*He wants--  
He wants--  
He wants--*

*Bruce re-enters, now fully  
dressed, and inspects the house.*

HELEN, CHRISTIAN, JOHN

*Welcome to our house on Maple Avenue*

ALISON AND SMALL ALISON

*Welcome to our house on Maple Avenue*

HELEN, CHRISTIAN, JOHN  
*See how we polish and we shine*

ALISON, AND SMALL ALISON  
*See how we polish and we shine*

HELEN, CHRISTIAN, JOHN  
*We rearrange and realign*

ALISON AND SMALL ALISON  
*We rearrange and realign*

HELEN, CHRISTIAN, JOHN  
*Everything is balanced and serene*

BRUCE  
*Everything is balanced and serene*

ALISON AND SMALL ALISON  
*Everything is balanced and serene*

HELEN, CHRISTIAN, JOHN  
*Like chaos never happens if it's never seen*

BRUCE  
*Like chaos never happens if it's never seen*

ALISON AND SMALL ALISON  
*Like chaos never happens if it's never seen*

WHOLE FAMILY  
*We're a typical family quintet*

HELEN  
*And yet--*

BRUCE  
(Doing a final check of himself in the  
bathroom mirror.)  
*Not too bad, if I say so myself*  
*I might still break a heart or two*  
*Sometimes the fire burns so hot*  
*I don't know what I'll do.*  
*Not too bad, if I say so myself*

BRUCE AND ALISON  
*Not too bad*

Bruce, composed and charming,  
greet's the (unseen) visitor.

ALISON  
*It all comes back...*  
*It all comes back...*  
  
(simul with the family:)

FAMILY  
(perky but tense)  
*Deet deet...*  
  
*What is he after?*  
*What are we doing?*  
*Right foot is tapping*  
*That means he's stewing*  
*Stay very still and*  
*maybe we'll please him*  
*Make one wrong move and*  
*demons will seize him*  
*Try hard. What else is*  
*family for?*  
  
*He wants--*  
*He wants--*  
*He wants--*

BRUCE  
Mrs. Bochner, pleasure to  
meet you! Come on in!  
(she is dazzled)  
Thank you. Obviously still a  
work in progress. Oh yes,  
yeah, I've done all the work  
myself.  
That's how we're able to  
afford the place. No no,  
historic restoration is an  
avocation for me but that's  
flattering. I teach English  
at Beech Creek High and the  
Bechdel Funeral Home, is our  
family business. So I'm also  
a funeral director.  
(she sees the mirror he  
was working on)  
You have a keen eye! This I  
found yesterday at the dump.  
Isn't it? [.] Actually I  
believe Rococo Revival.  
(she asks if she can  
take a picture)  
Absolutely. Would you...  
like one with the family?  
(calling)  
Kids? Mrs. Bochner wants to  
take a photo.  
(the kids and Helen come  
and arrange themselves  
for the photo)

ROY  
(Calling from offstage.)  
Hello. Anybody home?

BRUCE  
(Calling back.)  
Be there in a minute.  
(Explaining to Mrs. Bochner)  
Young man. Helps out with the yard work.

Roy enters Bruce's view. He's  
young and handsome, and carrying a  
shovel, ready for yard work.  
Bruce's eyes swerve away from the  
camera, toward Roy.

ALISON

*He wants more*

Caption: My Dad and I both grew up in the same  
small Pennsylvania town  
And he was gay  
And I was gay  
And he killed himself  
And I... became a lesbian cartoonist

Camera Flash.

Shift to Medium Alison in her dorm  
room, drawing.

MEDIUM ALISON

(Assessing her work)

*Not too bad*

*If I say so myself*

*This outshines the one I first drew*

(Suddenly)

*I don't know which way's up.*

*I don't know what I'm supposed to do!*

(Back into the comfort of her work.)

*Not too bad*

*If I say so myself...*

Phone rings.

MEDIUM ALISON

Hello?

BRUCE

Yes, I'd like to speak to Alison Bechdel, the  
college student?

MEDIUM ALISON

Hi Dad.

BRUCE

So? How's it going? How are your classes?  
How's your dorm? How's the food?

MEDIUM ALISON

I'm... getting used to it.

BRUCE

A little homesick?

MEDIUM ALISON

No, it's not that, it's just... stupid stuff.  
In Modern Classics today the professor told us  
that Jake's renewal in Spain in "The Sun Also  
Rises" is really an allusion to *Jungian*  
*rebirth*.

BRUCE

What???

MEDIUM ALISON

I almost screamed that's bullshit!

BRUCE

That's bullshit! Jake's not a *symbol*, he's  
Hemingway. That book is a roman a clef.

MEDIUM ALISON

I know! And at dining yesterday I mentioned  
that my family runs a funeral home and everyone  
dropped their forks and stared at me like I was  
Norman Bates.

BRUCE

Typical.

MEDIUM ALISON

I probably just need to find the right people.  
I'm sure there are people here who aren't total  
idiots.

BRUCE

Or maybe not. One surprising thing you learn  
when you go away to college: People just  
aren't as smart as you want 'em to be. Trust  
your instincts, kid. You don't need to twist  
yourself in knots trying to impress people who  
are Not Worthy Of You. Got it?

MEDIUM ALISON

Got it. Thanks, Dad.

BRUCE

Good. Alright, I gotta get over to the Fun  
Home, I've got a viewing in 45 minutes.

MEDIUM ALISON

Who died?

BRUCE

One of that big clan of Hofbruners over in  
Lakeview.

MEDIUM ALISON

Ah. Have fun.

BRUCE

Will do. Hey kiddo -- Remember what I said,  
okay?

MEDIUM ALISON

I will, Dad. Thanks.

Bruce exits. Medium Alison opens  
her journal and writes. Alison  
reads over her shoulder:

ALISON

"September 15.  
Just had a good talk with Dad and I feel so  
much better. (underline, underline, underline)  
I'm going to spend four years reading books and  
drawing and I feel so relieved to let go of  
this insane idea that I'm supposed to throw  
myself out into the world.

MEDIUM ALISON

It's not the world anyway! It's Oberlin  
College!

Medium Alison exits.

ALISON

Wow. I had no idea what was coming.

Shift to the Fun Home. Bruce  
enters the showroom with Pete,  
bumping into a vacuum cleaner left  
in his path, and spots a tape  
recorder left on a casket. He  
moves the errant objects out of  
the way.

BRUCE

So sorry, the kids must have been cleaning in  
here. This is the one we spoke about. Cherry.  
Quite popular.

PETE

(Pointing to another casket.)

This?

BRUCE

Also popular. Why don't we take these  
brochures into the office where you can think  
it over.

PETE

So you say we won't see any of the bruises.  
With the IV's she was awful beat up by the end.

BRUCE

No, no. We remove all the signs of trauma.  
Don't worry, Pete. She'll look very peaceful.

PETE

Thank you. Thanks, Bruce.

BRUCE

Of course. Let's--

PETE

No, I'll, I'll take these home.

BRUCE

Sound good. Take a look and give me a call  
later.

(They shake hands)

Get some rest, Pete.

(The stricken man nods. Bruce sees him  
out, then comes back in.)

Kids, get out of there. Now!

(Christian and Alison appear from the  
closed ends a casket.)

Where's John?

(John appears from behind a flower stand.)

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

JOHN

We were making a commercial for // the Fun Home

SMALL ALISON

Shhh!!

CHRISTIAN

We're sorry, Dad.

BRUCE

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

SMALL ALISON

Ooh, I call directory! Who are they?

BRUCE

(Writing it out for her.)

Muriel Swartz. Dwight Johnson.

SMALL ALISON

Wait - Benny's dad?

CHRISTIAN  
Benny's in my class!

SMALL ALISON  
What happened?

BRUCE  
He fell off a ladder. Broke his neck.  
Get this cleaned up.  
(To himself.)  
It's going to be a long night.

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

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

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

SMALL ALISON  
You guys, we gotta practice the commercial.

She fetches the tape recorder.

JOHN  
Yeah, we messed it up before.

Bruce crosses through, now wearing  
a gown and a surgical mask. The  
kids try and hide the tape  
recorder. He notices, gives them  
a look, but keeps moving through.  
They wait to make sure he's not  
coming back, then continue.

CHRISTIAN  
Should we start at the top?

SMALL ALISON  
Yeah.

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

JOHN  
Yeah, that's right.



SMALL ALISON

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

CHRISTIAN

I guess it's okay. Places everybody!

Christian and Small Alison climb  
back into their caskets. John  
goes behind the flower stand.  
Small Alison turns on the tape  
recorder.

SMALL ALISON

Fun Home commercial. Take seven million  
billion thousand.

Jackson Five style number begins!

JOHN

*Your uncle died. You're feeling low  
You got to bury your momma. But you don't know where to go  
Your papa needs his final rest  
You got, you got, you got  
to give them the best  
Oh--*

SMALL ALISON AND CHRISTIAN

*Come to the Fun Home*

JOHN

*That's the Bechdel Funeral Home baby*

SMALL ALISON AND CHRISTIAN

*The Bechdel Fun Home*

JOHN

*Next to Johnson's Department Store*

THREE KIDS

*in Beech Creek!*

SMALL ALISON AND CHRISTIAN

*The Bechdel Fun Home*

JOHN

*We take dead bodies ev'ry day of the week so  
You've got no reason to roam  
Use the Bechdel Funeral Home*

JOHN  
*What it is what it is*  
*Hoo Hoo*  
*What it is What it is*  
*Now baby*  
*Ooh--*  
*Here come da judge*  
*Here come da judge*  
*Baby*

SMALL ALISON/CHRISTIAN  
*Sock it to me*  
*Sock it to me*  
*Sock it to me*  
*Sock it to me*  
*Sock it to me*  
*Sock it to me*  
*Sock it to me*  
*Baby*

CHRISTIAN  
*Our caskets*

SMALL ALISON AND JOHN  
*Ooh!*

CHRISTIAN  
*Are satin lined*

SMALL ALISON AND JOHN  
*Ooh!*

CHRISTIAN  
*And we got so many models guaranteed to blow your mind*  
*You know our mourners--*

THREE KIDS  
*So satisfied*

CHRISTIAN  
*They like, they like, they like*

THREE KIDS  
*our formaldehyde*

CHRISTIAN  
*Yeah!*

THREE KIDS  
*Here at the Fun Home*

CHRISTIAN  
*That's the Bechdel Funeral Home, baby*

THREE KIDS  
*Come to the Fun Home*

SMALL ALISON  
*We got kleenex and your choice of psalm*

THREE KIDS  
*Stop by the Fun Home*

CHRISTIAN

*Think of Bechdel when you need to embalm*

THREE KIDS

*So there's no reason to roam  
Use the Bechdel Funeral Home  
What it is, what it is  
Hoo hoo hoo  
What it is, what it is  
Hoo hoo*

CHRISTIAN

*Tell em what we got?  
What else have we got, Tito?  
What else have we got?  
What else have we got, you guys?*

*They all look around for more  
things to sing about.*

SMALL ALISON

*Smelling salts for if you're queasy*

JOHN

*Folding chairs that open easy*

CHRISTIAN

*These are cool, you know what they are?  
Flags with magnets for your car!*

JOHN

*These are wire and they hold flowers*

SMALL ALISON

*Here's a sign for the names and the hours*

CHRISTIAN

*Stand right when you sign the book*

JOHN

*This is called an aneurysm hook  
En garde!*

KIDS

*Come to the Fun Home  
Ample parking down the street  
Here at the Fun Home  
Body prep that can't be beat  
You'll like the Fun Home  
In our hearse there's a backwards seat!  
That's why we made up this poem  
We're the Bechdel Funeral Home.*

*What it is, what it is  
Hoo hoo hoo  
What it is, what it is now baby  
Hoo hoo hoo!*

Bruce calls from the embalming  
room:

BRUCE

Alison?

A beat.

BRUCE

Alison. Would you come here, please?

CHRISTIAN

(incredulous)

Does he want you to go back there??

SMALL ALISON

I-- I guess.

CHRISTIAN

Why?

SMALL ALISON

I don't know.

BRUCE

(sharper)

Alison.

Small Alison goes back into the  
prep room where Bruce is working  
on a cadaver. She stares at the  
body, waiting for him to say  
something.

BRUCE

Hand me those scissors on the tray.

She hands him the scissors, and  
waits again, unsure of what's  
expected of her or why she's  
there.

SMALL ALISON

Is that all?

BRUCE

Yeah.

Small Alison leaves the prep room.  
Her brothers are waiting, looking  
at her expectantly.

SMALL ALISON  
(cranky)

What??

She blows by them, fetches her  
diary, and sits down to write.  
Alison reads over her shoulder.

ALISON  
"Dad showed me a dead body today."  
(Small Alison pauses, mulling over what to  
write next. Then)  
"Went swimming

Got a new Hardy Boy book

Had egg salad for lunch"

What was that about, Dad? Why did you call me  
back there? Is that the way your father showed  
you your first dead body? Was it some Bechdel  
rite of passage? Or, am I reading too much  
into this? Maybe you just needed the  
scissors.

Shift to a door marked "GAY  
UNION." Medium Alison reaches  
for the doorknob, then changes her  
mind. She is trying to screw up  
her courage to go in when Joan  
breezes past her, casually giving  
her the lesbian nod.

JOAN

Hey.

MEDIUM ALISON

What? Oh. Hey.

JOAN

Comin' in?

MEDIUM ALISON

Uh, no. Uh, German Club?

JOAN

Oh. Over there.

MEDIUM ALISON

Thanks. Danke.

(Joan goes into the Gay Union. Medium  
Alison slightly crumples under the weight  
of her multiple humiliations.)

Please god, don't let me be a lesbian.

Please don't let me be a homosexual.

(As she exits:)

Danke???

Shift to the yard where Bruce is  
entering with a sapling. The  
three kids, aka, his "free labor",  
are trailing behind.

BRUCE

If we're careful this should bloom in a couple  
weeks. Bring me the peat moss.

(Small Alison grabs a bag)

Hold this steady.

(to John)

Gimme that shovel.

SMALL ALISON

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

BRUCE

No one's lived in that house for 5 years,  
nobody's going to miss it.

He pours peat around the base and  
pats it down.

CHRISTIAN

(Spotting his mom.)

Mom's back from play practice!

Helen enters with bags and  
binders.

SMALL ALISON

Are these your costumes?

HELEN

They are.

JOHN

I wanna see!

CHRISTIAN

Me too!

The kids grab a bag, pulling out  
big, fancy dresses.

HELEN  
Careful, careful!

ROY  
(entering)  
Hey, everybody. Que pasa?

SMALL ALISON  
(shyly)  
Hi Roy.

The kids all shyly sidle up to  
him.

CHRISTIAN  
Hey Roy, what's goin' on?

ROY  
(to John)  
You look like a guy I met the other day. Are  
you the same guy? I know what he looked like  
upside down.

He picks John up and turns him  
upside down, to the delight of all  
three kids.

HELEN  
Hello. I'm Helen Bechdel.

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

HELEN  
Oh. No, Irma's wonderful.

BRUCE  
Come on, you're in a different class. I've  
seen a lot of New York theater, even by those  
standards she's exceptional.

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

HELEN

Mrs. Warren's Profession.

SMALL ALISON

She studied with Uta Hagen. Do you know who that is?

ROY

I don't even know what you just said.

BRUCE

Wanna get started?

ROY

Sure. Whatever you want. Lemme get my tools.

BRUCE

'Kay

Roy heads out to his car, the three kids trailing after him.

SMALL ALISON

Hey Roy, did you see Herbie Rides Again?

CHRISTIAN

Oh, yeah! It's the best movie.

JOHN

Herbie is a car!

ROY

I didn't see it.

JOHN

The love bug? You didn't see the love bug?

HELEN

Who is that? Why is he here?

BRUCE

I hired him.

HELEN

To do what?

BRUCE

To help me out.

HELEN

Where is he from?



BRUCE

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

HELEN

Oh, so he's just hauling.

BRUCE

Hauling. Other things. I don't know.

HELEN

Okay, so...

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

BRUCE

What difference does it make?

HELEN

I-- I-- I just--

BRUCE

Arnie recommended him, okay?

HELEN

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

BRUCE

Crissakes! I know him. He was my student a few years back. Okay? What, do you think I'm bringing some bum around? Is that the bug up your ass?

The chattering group returns.

JOHN

You know something else about the movie that's funny?

BRUCE

(to Helen)

Jeez.

JOHN

It's that the car is called the love bug. // It's a car, but they call it a bug. Even though it's a car.

BRUCE  
(Monster-charging the kids.)

Raaahr!

(The kids laugh and scream.)  
Okay, that's enough. Come on, Roy, let's go  
inside. I'll show you that wallpaper.

JOHN  
Aw!

CHRISTIAN  
No, come on!

SMALL ALISON  
But dad!

BRUCE  
Enough! Bunch of little monsters.

Bruce and Roy exit.

CHRISTIAN  
Mom, can we watch TV?

HELEN  
(Looking after Bruce and Roy.)  
Sure.

ALISON  
*I want to know what's true  
Dig deep into who  
and what and why and when  
Until now gives way to then...*

Shift to Roy and Bruce entering  
the library. Helen is at her  
piano. The kids are watching TV.

Alison is watching Roy and Bruce.

ROY  
Whoa. Nice room.

BRUCE  
So this is the wallpaper. Not William Morris  
but close. It's pretty close.

ROY  
You read all these books?

BRUCE  
Working on it.

ROY  
That is not something I can imagine.

BRUCE  
Yes, I remember from class you're not much of a  
reader.

ROY

Nope. Read some good books in your class,  
though.

BRUCE

My job is to make it interesting.

Helen begins practicing an étude.

ALISON

(Re: Bruce and Roy.)

It's like a 1950's lesbian pulp novel. "Their  
tawdry love could only flourish in the  
shadows."

Small Alison has wandered in to  
hover around her mom.

SMALL ALISON

I like Roy. He's funny.

This brings Alison's attention to  
her mother.

HELEN

Alison find something to do. I'm practicing.

SMALL ALISON

(Peering at the music on the piano.)

Did Chop-In write Chop Sticks?

HELEN

It's Sho-PAHN. Alison stop bothering me.

Small Alison goes back to join her  
brothers at the TV.

Alison turns back to her father  
and Roy.

BRUCE

Sit down. Take a load off.

ROY

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

BRUCE

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

Roy sits on the chaise, puts his  
feet up.

ROY  
This place is like a museum.  
(Re: a carafe on the bookshelf.)  
What's that stuff?

BRUCE  
Sherry. Want some?

ROY  
Is it good?

BRUCE  
Yeah.

ROY  
Sure.  
(As Bruce pours them both a glass.)  
I remember this house before you moved in. We  
used to ride our bikes over here when we were  
kids. You've done a shit-load of work.

BRUCE  
I did. By myself, most of it.

ROY  
You must be in good shape, old man.

BRUCE  
*Not too bad  
If I say so myself  
I might still break a heart or two  
You'd be surprised just what a guy my age knows how to do*

He brings the sherry to Roy.

BRUCE  
Want it?

ROY  
Yeah.

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

ROY  
Is that your wife playing the piano?

BRUCE  
Don't worry about her.

Roy considers, then decides, why  
the hell not, and unbuttons his  
shirt. Bruce gives him the  
sherry.

HELEN  
(at the piano)

*La la la la...*

(Helen stops playing and almost stands. A  
beat, then she sits back down and resumes  
playing.)

*Maybe not right now  
Maybe not right now*

HELEN  
*La la la...*

BRUCE  
*I want, I want, I want--  
I--  
I--*

ROY  
*I know this type  
this type of married guy  
I could just give him the slip but why  
It's not a big deal  
I know he wants me*

| HELEN  | ROY  | BRUCE   | KIDS                               |
|--|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <i>I want<br/>I want</i>                                     | <i>I know this type</i>  | <i>I--</i>  | <i>ba ba ba ba</i>                 |
| <i>I want<br/>I--</i>  | <i>this type of<br/>married guy<br/>I could just give<br/>him the slip but<br/>why It's not a<br/>big deal, I know</i> | <i>could still<br/>break a<br/>heart<br/>or two</i>             | <i>ba ba ba ba<br/>ba ba ba ba</i> |
| <i>La la la<br/>Me and him<br/>Me and him<br/>Me and him</i> | <i>he wants just<br/>Me and him<br/>Me and him<br/>Me and him</i>  | <i>I want just<br/>Me and him<br/>Me and him<br/>Me and him</i> | <i>ba ba ba ba-</i>                |

Shift to :

MEDIUM ALISON

Dear Mom and Dad,  
Thanks for the care package. I was running out  
of granola bars so it came right in the nick of  
time. They sell a kind here that I swear is  
made of paste.

(Joan enters.)

Nothing else worth writing home about (har  
har). Al.

Medium Alison and Joan, in coats  
and with backpacks, walk together.

JOAN

That would be great except it's tomorrow night.

MEDIUM ALISON

I could do it by then.

JOAN

Really?

MEDIUM ALISON

I could do it now.

JOAN

You could?

They enter Medium Alison's dorm  
room.

MEDIUM ALISON

Just some simple drawing, right? Sure.

(She sits on her bed to sketch)

So you want it to say...

JOAN

We just need really good "No Nukes" posters.

MEDIUM ALISON

(Sketching.)

Right, okay, so something like maybe...

JOAN

(Looking at the sketch.)

Oh, that's funny.

That's really good.

MEDIUM ALISON

This? No. This is just quick and stupid.

JOAN

(Looking around the room as Medium Alison  
continues to draw, noticing a photo.)

Who's this in the photo?

MEDIUM ALISON

My dad.

JOAN

That's your *dad*?

MEDIUM ALISON

Yeah.

JOAN

He looks cool. Did he teach you how to draw cartoons?

MEDIUM ALISON

Definitely not.

JOAN

Why's that funny?

MEDIUM ALISON

It's not funny, it's just, he's more... I don't know. Refined.

JOAN

What does he do?

MEDIUM ALISON

A bunch of things, actually. He's a master house restoration, Historical Society kind of guy *and* he's a high-school English teacher *and*, also, he runs the // local - -

JOAN

(thinking she's making a joke)

You didn't have to be in his class, I hope.

MEDIUM ALISON

Why? I was.

JOAN

Seriously? I was joking.

MEDIUM ALISON

Oh. Oh. Yes. What I was going to say is that, everyone in Beech Creek at some point is in my dad's English class, and he's known as a great teacher, so...

JOAN

Oh. Cool.

MEDIUM ALISON

Yeah. He sends me books. We talk about them.

JOAN

He sends you books to read on top of your schoolwork?

MEDIUM ALISON

Yeah.

JOAN

That's a little weird.

ALISON  
(Realizing.)  
Is that weird? That's really weird.

MEDIUM ALISON  
Why?

JOAN  
I don't know. Like, what books?

MEDIUM ALISON  
Like...

JOAN  
Colette??

MEDIUM ALISON  
Yeah.

JOAN  
Your father sent you *Colette*?

MEDIUM ALISON  
Yeah. Why?

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

MEDIUM ALISON  
No! I mean, yes, I guess Colette was a lesbian  
but--

JOAN  
Oh, she was.

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

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

MEDIUM ALISON  
What? I don't think so.

JOAN  
Oh, he's not?



MEDIUM ALISON

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

JOAN

Okay. Why?

MEDIUM ALISON

My parents don't know because I just figured it out myself.

JOAN

Oh.

MEDIUM ALISON

About two weeks ago.

JOAN

Huh. With who?

MEDIUM ALISON

With who what?

ALISON

(Overcome with humiliation at the memory of the awkwardness.)

Oh god.

JOAN

Who were you with?

MEDIUM ALISON

(Confused, then suddenly getting it)

Nobody! Nobody. Oh my god, I'm so embarrassed.

ALISON

(Quietly writhing in the refreshed humiliation.)

Oh god.

MEDIUM ALISON

I was in a bookstore.

JOAN

In a bookstore? Nice.

MEDIUM ALISON

What? No! Two weeks ago I was downtown and I wandered into the bookstore, I was just browsing around and I picked up this book -

JOAN

Ah, "Word is Out".

MEDIUM ALISON

And I was like, "Oh, interviews. This looks interesting." And then I was like, "These people are all-

Small beat.

JOAN

Gay?

MEDIUM ALISON

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

MEDIUM ALISON

- a lesb

JOAN

-a dyke

MEDIUM ALISON

Yes. A dyke. Yes.

MEDIUM ALISON

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

JOAN

Hello.

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

That's a powerful book.

MEDIUM ALISON

It is.

JOAN

So. I should probably go.

MEDIUM ALISON

'kay.

JOAN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

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

JOAN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

Bye, Joan.

Medium Alison sees her out. Then collapses, face-down, onto her bed.

Shift to Small Alison trailing after Bruce.

SMALL ALISON

No, please, Daddy! I can wear my school pants!

BRUCE

No.

Bruce pulls a party dress from Small Alison's closet.

SMALL ALISON

They're dressy!

BRUCE

No. Don't you want to be pretty?

SMALL ALISON

No!!!

BRUCE

That's enough. It's a party, you're a girl. You will wear a party dress.

SMALL ALISON

(With deadly aim.)

I don't know why I should have to. You're wearing a girl color.

Small terrifying beat.

BRUCE

(Laser beam of rage.)

Where's your barrette.

(Roughly shoving it in her hair.)

Do not take this out // again.

SMALL ALISON

Ow. Ow. OW. Daddy please, don't make me wear the dress. Tami made her cat wear a dress and everyone laughed at it and that cat was so humiliated, Daddy! That's what it's like when I put on a dress. Everyone can see it's wrong. It's humiliating.

BRUCE

Enough.  
Five minutes.

SMALL ALISON

Please!

He exits.

Small Alison lets the party dress fall to the floor. She drops the barrette as well. She digs in her closet and pulls out a beloved jean jacket. She puts it on, looks in the mirror, and is reassured to see her true self.

SMALL ALISON

*Hey*  
*Hey*  
*How ya doin'?*  
*Al... ison*  
*Yeah sure. Al for short*  
*Hey*  
*Yeah Oh yeah*  
*This is my Mustang convertible*  
*Yeah, I found it at the dump Pow!*  
*I fixed it up myself Blam!*  
*Want a ride?*  
*I'm going to Paris*  
*No? Alright, see you later. Yeah.*  
*I'm in Paris in my 'stang*  
*On the boo-lay, boo-lay-var.*  
*Oh no, Did that man just shove that lady? Did he make her cry?*  
*Pardonnez moi, Mademoiselle*  
*Je voudrais to make sure everything is, uh.. d'accord here.*  
*(impersonating the mean man)*  
*Mindez-vous your own beezness*  
*(narrating her own actions as a super hero)*  
*I grab his arm and twist it behind his back!*  
*Excusez-moi, Monsieur, but I believe I was talking to the Mademoiselle.*  
*(impersonating the beautiful lady)*  
*Merci! Merci!*  
*You are tres, tres gallant*  
*What is your appel?*  
*(as herself, gallant)*  
*I'm Al... ison*  
*Alison*  
*(being the beautiful lady again)*  
*Aahleesohn.*

*S'il vous plait,  
cood I ride wees you een your mastang?  
I dun know what eet ees about you  
bat you mek me fil so safe  
I dun know what eet ees about you  
bat you mek me fil so safe*

*Yeah sure  
Oh, yeah sure  
Al... ison  
Alison  
Al... ison  
Al for short*

Bruce re-enters, cutting the song short with his look. Small Alison, defeated, picks up the dress.

Shift to Medium Alison's dorm.

MEDIUM ALISON

I wrote to my parents. I did it. I told them I'm a lesbian.

JOAN

Oh.

MEDIUM ALISON

I can't believe I did it.

JOAN

How are they taking it? What do they say?

MEDIUM ALISON

I don't know. I put it in the mailbox just now. I feel tough! I feel so sure of myself. So many things, just suddenly-- So many things make so much sense!

JOAN

Like, oh, that's why I was in love with my first grade teacher!

MEDIUM ALISON

(huge revelation)

That *is* why I was in love with my first grade teacher.

JOAN

(shaking her hand)

Welcome, my friend. Welcome to the club. Tonight there's a party at the Women's Collective. You're coming.

MEDIUM ALISON

Oh. I have a lot of work.

JOAN

What? Come on. It's going to be fun.

MEDIUM ALISON

Yeah --

JOAN

What?

MEDIUM ALISON

I don't know if I fit in.

JOAN

With who?

MEDIUM ALISON

The lesbians. The real lesbians. You know what I mean. They're political and socially conscious and... Real lesbians. Look the only thing I really know about myself is that I'm asexual. I am. I'm not attracted to men but that doesn't necessarily mean I'm attracted to women.

Joan kisses her. Medium Alison is flummoxed for a beat, then lunges at Joan in an uncontrollable and totally inexperienced onslaught of pent up lust.

JOAN

Oh, okay. I guess we're --

Medium Alison leaps on her again.

ALISON

(A sudden humiliation wave at the memory)

Oh my god it's so embarrassing.

(She picks up Medium Alison's journal and reads:)

"Went to a meeting the Gay Union tonight. I was petrified. A lot of political talk. Almost too much, but ultimately a reasonable amount."

What does that mean?

"I signed up to help organize a 'Take Back the Night March.' I don't know why I did it. I don't know what that is." Oh my god.

MEDIUM ALISON

What happened last night?  
Are you really here?  
Joan Joan Joan Joan Joan  
Hi Joan Don't wake up, Joan  
Oh my god last night  
Oh my god Oh my god Oh my god Oh my god last night  
I got so excited  
I was too enthusiastic  
Thank you for not laughing  
Well you laughed a little bit  
at one point when I was touching you  
and said I might lose consciousness  
which you said was adorable  
and I just have to trust  
that you don't think I am an idiot  
or some kind of an animal  
I never lost control  
due to overwhelming lust

But I must say that I'm  
Changing my major to Joan  
I'm changing my major to sex with Joan  
I'm changing my major to sex with Joan  
with a minor in kissing Joan  
Foreign study to Joan's inner thighs  
A seminar on Joan's ass in her levis  
And Joan's crazy brown eyes

Joan, I feel like Hercules  
Oh god that sounds ridiculous  
Just keep on sleeping through this  
and I'll work on calming down  
so by the time you've woken up  
I'll be cool, I'll be collected  
and I'll have found some dignity  
but who needs dignity?  
'cause this is so much better  
I'm radiating happiness  
Will you stay here with me  
for the rest of the semester?  
We won't need any food  
We'll live on sex alone  
Sex with Joan

I am writing a thesis on Joan  
It's a cutting edge field and my mind is blown  
I will gladly stay up ev'ry night to hone  
My compulsory skills with Joan  
I will study my way down her spine,  
Familiarize myself with her well-made outline  
While she researches mine!

I don't know who I am

*I've become someone new  
Nothing I just did  
is anything I would do  
Overnight everything changed I am not prepared  
I'm dizzy I'm nauseous I'm shaky I'm scared  
Am I falling into nothingness  
or flying into something so sublime?  
I don't know  
But I'm*

*Changing my major to Joan  
I used to believe I'd be all alone  
But that was before I was lying prone  
in this dorm room bed with Joan  
Look, she drooled on the pillow. So sweet  
All sweaty and tangled-up in my bed sheet  
And my heart feels--  
complete*

*Let's never leave this room  
How' bout we stay here 'til finals  
I'll go to school forever  
I'll take out a dementedly huge high-interest loan  
'Cause I'm changing  
my major  
to Joan*

Shift to the house.

ALISON

Caption: I leapt out of the closet -- and four months later my father killed himself by stepping in front of a truck.

(She looks at her father, sitting in his chair in his library, reading.)

While I was at college, exploding into my new life -- you were sitting here reading a book.

Helen and Small Alison are working at the kitchen table.

SMALL ALISON

Mom, I have a question.

HELEN

What?

SMALL ALISON

What was the name of that street you lived on in New York?

HELEN

Bleecker?



SMALL ALISON

Yeah, good.

She dives intently back into her  
drawing for a second, then:

SMALL ALISON

Mom, I have a question.

HELEN

What?

SMALL ALISON

When Dad was in the Army in Germany what color  
was your house?

HELEN

Well, it was in apartment, not a house. And --  
I don't remember what color it was.

SMALL ALISON

Alright something else about what it looked  
like then.

HELEN

Uh... Well, we had a balcony, we had a lovely  
balcony and in the mornings friends of ours  
would come over and we'd sit there and talk and  
have breakfast.

SMALL ALISON

Okay, where did you live after that?

HELEN

Here. Your grandfather died while we were  
there, so we came back.

SMALL ALISON

Oh yeah, 'cause Daddy had to run the Fun Home.

HELEN

Yes.

SMALL ALISON

(A new question popping into her head.)

Oh, I know!

(She takes her drawing into the library.)

Daddy, you saw the Leaning Tower of Pisa one  
time, right?

BRUCE

I did.

(Re: her drawing.)

What's that?

SMALL ALISON

(Excitedly showing him.)

It's for school. We're learning maps and globes and Miss Schenck said draw a map to show in class tomorrow.

BRUCE

Map of what?

SMALL ALISON

Places people in our family have lived.

BRUCE

And what's this?

SMALL ALISON

(Bursting with pride.)

Okay, so: This is a keystone because Pennsylvania is the Keystone state. Inside this square? That's Beech Creek, see? Bridge, ford, creek, school, Fun Home, our house, Aunt Jane and Uncle Randy's house. This is Germany. Oh!

(Adding a new part.)

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

BRUCE

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

SMALL ALISON

This is a cartoon. And in a cartoon there's all different parts.

BRUCE

But we can make it better than a cartoon.

SMALL ALISON

I like cartoons.

BRUCE

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

SMALL ALISON  
The Keystone State.

BRUCE  
That's too much. Watch this. I'm going to draw  
our mountains. See that? How I'm shading  
them? See how that gives them dimension?

*Make this part look rugged...*

*Mm mm*

*Allegheny Plateau*

*This dark shaded stripe bum bum bum is the front*

*Paint the long ridges and valleys below*

*Mm mm*

SMALL ALISON  
I want the whole state.

BRUCE  
(Becoming cross.)  
I'm explaining to you that you can't do that.

SMALL ALISON  
Let me try.

BRUCE  
Alison, this is the way it should look.

SMALL ALISON  
But I liked the way mine was.

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

HELEN  
Bruce, it doesn't matter. It's a drawing.

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

SMALL ALISON  
(Holding it out to him.)  
I like the one you did, Daddy.

ALISON

(Taking the page from Small Alison,  
inspecting her father's drawing.)

*Make this part look rugged...*

*Mm mm*

*Allegheny Plateau*

*This dark shaded stripe bum bum bum is the front*

*Paint the long ridges and valleys below*

*Mm mm*

(She begins a new drawing.)

*Our town ... is this dot*

*Quick dashes*

*mark the property ends*

*Beech Creek, a rope that turns and bends*

*Little squares for houses strung along roads*

*the land transfigured into topographic codes*

*Maps show you what is simple and true*

*I'm laying out a bird's eye view*

*Where did he travel, what did he see?*

*A sweeping atlas of my dad's mythology*

*Dad was born on this farm*

*Here's our house*

*Here's the spot where he died*

*I can draw a circle*

*His whole life fits inside*

*Four miles from our door*

*I-80 ran from shore to shore*

*On its way from the Castro to Christopher Street*

*The road not taken*

*Just four miles from our door*

*You were born on this farm*

*Here's our house*

*Here's the spot where you died*

*I can draw a circle*

*I can draw a circle*

*You lived your life inside*

Shift to Bruce's car.

BRUCE

Hey, Mark. Is that you?

MARK

Oh. Hey, Mr. Bechdel.

BRUCE

You wanna lift?

MARK  
I'm not goin' far.

BRUCE  
I'm happy to give you a ride. Too many  
groceries--  
(moving a bag off the front seat)  
--let me put these in the back. Get in.

He reaches across the passenger  
seat and opens the door. Mark  
gets in. They drive.

BRUCE  
So, Mark. How's your summer? You got a job?

MARK  
Yeah, working in the stockroom at Cosgrove's.

BRUCE  
Good. Staying on track. That's great.  
Wanna beer?

MARK  
I don't... I don't think I better.

BRUCE  
It's okay. There's some in the bag.

Unsure of what to do, Mark has  
retrieved one of the beers.

MARK  
Oh, uh, my house is down that way, Mr. Bechdel.

BRUCE  
I know. I just like getting the chance to know  
you a little better. You got yourself a girl?

MARK  
Nah.

BRUCE  
Saving for college? You a senior?

MARK  
Junior.

BRUCE  
Aha.

Shift to :

MEDIUM ALISON

Dear Mom and Dad --  
I assume you got my letter. I haven't heard  
from you. I'd really love *some* sort of  
response...

Shift to Small Alison watching a  
Partridge Family-esque show on TV.

SOUND FROM THE TV

(A kid's voice.)

I guess you're not too bad... for a manager.

(Canned laughter. A man's voice)

And I guess you kids aren't so bad either --

Even if you *do* wear chicken feathers.

(Canned laughter, then a young man's  
voice.)

A-one, a-two, a-one two three four--

(Sound of a family singing-group.)

*Ba Ba Ba Ba....*

*Everything's alright, babe*

*When we're together*

*When we're together*

*'Cause you are like a raincoat*

*Made out of love...*

Bruce enters, and snaps off the  
TV.

BRUCE

God, it's inane.

SMALL ALISON

I was watching it!

BRUCE

That show's awful.

SMALL ALISON

It's the best show! It's about a family that--

BRUCE

I know what it's about. Read a book.

He stands in front of a mirror  
straightening his tie.

SMALL ALISON

How come you're wearing a suit?

BRUCE

I'm going to Danville.

SMALL ALISON

(Making a joke, twirling her finger by the  
side of her head.)

Are you going to the mental hospital?

BRUCE

(Slight beat)

Yes.

SMALL ALISON

... You are?

BRUCE

I have to see a psychiatrist.

SMALL ALISON

How come?

BRUCE

Because I do dumb dangerous things. Because  
I'm bad. Not good like you.

ALISON

Actually it's because you were arrested, Dad.  
On a charge of "furnishing a malt beverage to a  
minor," which I believe is what they call a  
euphemism.

Bruce exits. Small Alison tries  
to digest this information. Helen  
enters on her way to do the  
laundry.

SMALL ALISON

Daddy said he's going to Danville.

HELEN

(Taken aback that Small Alison was told  
this.)

Oh.

SMALL ALISON

He said he's going to see a psychiatrist?

HELEN

He is.

SMALL ALISON

How come?

HELEN

The... um...  
A judge said he had to go. It's been very...  
(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)  
complicated. We thought we might have to move,  
and then--

SMALL ALISON  
Move?? Where would we go??

HELEN  
We don't have to move. The judge said your dad  
could, could-- see someone instead. I can't  
explain it any better. You don't need to  
worry. Everything's going to be fine.

Helen leaves. Small Alison is  
left alone.

ALISON  
Oh yes, it's all fine.  
(She draws, and speaks what she's drawing)  
Slam. Crash.



BRUCE  
Who fucking left these here?  
I just varnished this table!

ALISON  
(Continuing to draw the  
fight we're hearing.)

HELEN  
Bruce--  
(sound of him tearing  
pages out of the books)  
Bruce, what are you doing!  
Those are library books!! //  
Stop it!

... varnished

... library... books

BRUCE  
Take these back to the  
library you crazy, // stupid  
bitch!

HELEN  
Go! Go! Just go! You're  
going to be late for your //  
appointment. Just go.

...stupid

BRUCE  
Don't fucking tell me what to  
do!

HELEN  
Bruce if you miss this  
appointment we are in a lot  
of trouble. // Do you  
understand that?

... trouble

BRUCE  
Thank you for the lecture. //  
I can handle my own business!

HELEN  
If you're not home for dinner  
I'm throwing it in the  
toilet!

Small Alison shuts her eyes and  
covers her ears.

SMALL ALISON  
Ba ba ba ba  
ba ba ba ba  
Ba ba ba ba  
ba ba ba ba ba

To her astonishment and delight  
she her song is taken up by  
everyone in her family, melding  
together with the happy family  
from her TV show.

KIDS, MEDIUM ALISON AND JOAN

*Ba ba ba ba  
ba ba ba ba  
Ba ba ba ba  
ba ba ba ba ba*

Bobby Jeremy and the Susan Deys  
emerge from the TV.

BOBBY JEREMY

*Today I woke up with this feeling that I did not recognize*

KIDS, THE SUSAN DEYS

*Strange feeling yeah*

BOBBY JEREMY

*Our happy life seemed far away and everything was made of  
lies*

KIDS, THE SUSAN DEYS

*Lies yeah*

BOBBY JEREMY

*The sky was turning dark when baby I looked in your eyes  
And that's when I knew*

KIDS, THE SUSAN DEYS

*That is when I knew  
(Bruce and Helen join)  
Everything's all right, babe*

BOBBY JEREMY

*When we're together*

ALL

*When we're together*

BOBBY JEREMY

*Cuz you are like a raincoat  
made out of love*

ALL

*you are like a raincoat*

ALL

*Keepin' me dry*

*Magic shield of love*

BOBBY JEREMY

*protecting me from bad weather*

RAINCOAT CHORUS

*Rain from the sky*

*You are like a raincoat!*

BOBBY JEREMY

*Made out of Love*

HELEN AND THE KIDS

*ba ba ba ba ba ba*

BOBBY JEREMY

*Raincoat of Love*

HELEN AND THE KIDS

*ba ba ba ba ba...*

EVERYONE

*Everything's all right, babe, when we're together*

BOBBY JEREMY

*We're together*

EVERYONE

*Cuz you are like a raincoat*

BOBBY JEREMY

*made out of love*

HELEN AND THE KIDS

*Keepin' me dry*

EVERYONE

*Magic shield of love*

BOBBY JEREMY

*protecting me from bad weather*

EVERYONE

*Rain from the sky*

*You are like a raincoat!*

BOBBY JEREMY

*Made out of love*

*Made out of love*

HELEN AND THE KIDS

*Love love love love love*

*Together Together*

*Raincoat of Love Love*

*Raincoat of Love*

ALL

*Everything's all right, when we're together*  
*Everything's all right, when we're together*

The TV show disappears and Bruce is left alone. Alison watches him continue in this plastic, upbeat mode.

BRUCE

*Everything's all right, when we're together*  
*Everything's all right*  
*Everything's all right*

ALISON

It's only writing, it's only drawing, I'm remembering something, that's all.

The song fades out into the sounds of loud, whooshing New York City traffic. Bruce is now in a small, shabby Greenwich Village apartment. He goes into the bathroom to wash up. Small Alison and Christian are at the front door, holding it closed while John pounds from the other side.

JOHN

Hey! Let me in.

SMALL ALISON

Are you a Land Shark?

She and Christian crack up.

JOHN

(Pounding, nearly crying.)

Let me in!

CHRISTIAN

Land Shark. You have to say Land Shark.

BRUCE

Let him in.

They open the door John bursts through, goes right to his sleeping bag on the floor, where he quickly falls asleep.

BRUCE

Don't play in the hall like that. Ellie told us her neighbors don't like it. She won't let us stay here again if you do that.

ALISON

Caption... Caption... Uh... Clueless in New York. In denial in New York. Family Fun in New York. Child neglect in New York. I don't know...

Christian looks out the open window at the busy street below. Small Alison paws through the shopping bags. Bruce is in the bathroom washing up.

SMALL ALISON

(Pulling a box out of Li-Lac Chocolates out of one of the many shopping bags and starting to open it.)

Can I eat one of these chocolates?

BRUCE

No, those are to take home for your mother. Put them back.

SMALL ALISON

(Taking a huge book out of a Rizzoli bag.)

Can I look at the Baryshnikov book?

BRUCE

Yes but be careful with it.

SMALL ALISON

What's the name of that museum we're going to tomorrow?

BRUCE

The Frick.

SMALL ALISON

Oh yeah.

Christian is looking at a Chorus Line program. He shares a private, deliciously scandalized moment with his sister.

CHRISTIAN

Remember this song?  
"Shit Ritchie, Shit Ritchie"

SMALL ALISON

That was so funny. What about the song about  
the *tits*.

CHRISTIAN

Oh yeah.

Scandalized giggling.

BRUCE

Kids, wash up.

ALISON

(Focused on drawing details of the scene.)

Okay... Sleeping bags, shopping bags, window  
was open, really hot, stinky--no, no...

(Writing:)

*Humectant. "The humectant air."* Something on  
*"The humectant air"* Good phrase. Okay, good.

BRUCE

Get into bed. It's late.

Small Alison and Christian brush  
their teeth. There is a big  
explosion noise outside. A car  
alarm goes off. John doesn't stir  
but the other two jump and run to  
the window. Alison looks as well.

CHRISTIAN

Whoa! I think somebody blew up that garbage  
can.

ALISON

Fireworks.

BRUCE

Just homemade fireworks.

CHRISTIAN

There's so many sailor guys.

BRUCE

It's 'cause there's ships here from all over  
the world.

CHRISTIAN

For the bicentennial?

BRUCE

Yeah.

BRUCE

(Getting them settled.)

Come on. Lay down. Go to sleep. Big day tomorrow.

ALISON

Kids in bags. *Loved* that sleeping bag. On the front door, one two three four locks. Amazing. A coat hook - jackets on it, piled like twenty deep on the one hook. Basket with Village Voices.

(Looking out the window.)

The "Village Cigar" sign.

Bruce turns out all the apartment lights and heads for the door.

SMALL ALISON

Where are you going?

BRUCE

Oh. Just out. Just for a minute. What's a matter, you can't sleep? I'm just running out for a newspaper. I'll be back in a sec. You're going to fall asleep so fast you'll be asleep before I get back.

SMALL ALISON

But where are you going?

BRUCE

I said. I'm going out for a paper. Alright? Pony girl?

(Singing her to sleep.)

*Pony girl ride, ride away  
I knew you'd break my heart someday  
Some folks get the call to go  
Some folks are bound to stay  
Oh, ride, ride, ride away*

He checks. Her eyes are closed.  
He slips out.

When the lock has finished turning behind him, Small Alison sits up, eyes wide, staring at the closed apartment door.

ALISON

Caption: Dad goes out. Dad gets a newspaper. Dad goes cruising? Dad picks up a hustler? No he didn't. Maybe he did. I don't really know. Who knows?

Shift to Medium Alison and Joan.

JOAN

What's the matter?

MEDIUM ALISON

Dad finally responded to my letter.

JOAN

Oh my god. What does he say?

MEDIUM ALISON

(Reading.)

"Dear Al,  
Big week at Fun Home. Couple of kids from Lock Haven wrapped their car around a tree and I ended up working two eighteen hour shifts. Bad for my blood pressure. Anyway, that's why I've been out of touch for a bit. Oh, by the way, we got your letter. Well, kid, talk about a flair for the dramatic.

Bruce enters, continuing his letter.

BRUCE

As far as I see it the good news is, you're human.

MEDIUM ALISON

What does that mean? What else would I be?

BRUCE

Your mother's pretty upset though -- not surprisingly, I guess. But I'm of the opinion that everyone should experiment.

MEDIUM ALISON

Ew.

BRUCE

I can't say, though, that I see the point of putting a label on yourself. There have been a few times in my life when I thought about taking a stand, but I'm not a hero. Is that a cop out? Maybe so. It's hard sometimes to tell what is really worth it.

MEDIUM ALISON

The tone is what I can't stand. It's so typical. So all knowing. He has to be the expert. Lots of wisdom and advice about things he *doesn't know anything about*. I'm gay.

(MORE)



MEDIUM ALISON (cont'd)

Which means I'm not like him, and I've never been like him, and he can't deal with that. He still wants to be the intellectual, broad-minded, liberal, bohemian but he can't pull it off because he can't deal with me and you know what? He never could. He never could.

Shift to a diner, Bruce and Small Alison sitting at a table.

BRUCE

I need more coffee. Where's Betty?

SMALL ALISON

She went home. Lorna's on now.

BRUCE

Oh.

(Re: his newspaper.)

Huh.

SMALL ALISON

What?

BRUCE

Bill Smoot's running for town council. He didn't mention it at Rotary.

(Noticing.)

Hey. Where's your barrette?

(She grudgingly pulls it out of her pocket.)

Put it back in. It keeps the hair out of your eyes.

SMALL ALISON

(Under her breath as she puts it back in.)

So would a crew cut.

BRUCE

If I see you without it again I'll wale you. Go find Lorna. I need coffee.

He goes back to his paper. Small Alison gets up to fetch Lorna but, is stopped in her tracks, as, with the sound of a jingling bell, she sees someone entering into the diner.

ALISON

You didn't notice her at first but I saw her the moment she walked in.

(MORE)

ALISON (cont'd)

She was a delivery woman. She came in with a handcart full of packages. She was an old-school butch.

SMALL ALISON

*Someone just came in the door  
Like no one I ever saw before  
I feel-  
I feel-  
I don't know where you came from  
I wish I did, I feel so dumb  
I feel-  
Your swagger and your bearing  
And the just-right clothes you're wearing  
Your short hair and your dungarees and your lace up boots  
And your keys*

*Oh, your ring of keys*

*I thought it was supposed to be wrong  
But you seem okay with being strong  
I want-  
You're so--  
It's prob'ly conceited to say  
but I think we're alike in a certain way  
I, um-*

*Your swagger and your bearing  
And the just-right clothes you're wearing  
Your short hair and your dungarees and your lace up boots  
And your keys  
Oh, your ring of keys*

*Do you feel my heart saying hi?  
In this whole luncheonette why am I the only one  
who sees you're beautiful--  
No.  
I mean... handsome*

*Your swagger and your bearing  
And the just-right clothes you're wearing  
Your short hair and your dungarees and your lace up boots  
And your keys  
Oh, your ring of keys*

*I know you  
I know you  
I know you*

Bruce has lowered his menu and has seen the butch. A look of disgust crosses his face. Small Alison sees only sees the butch.

A phone ring. Shift to :

BRUCE  
Hello?

MEDIUM ALISON  
Hey, Dad.

BRUCE  
Kiddo. How are ya?

MEDIUM ALISON  
I got your response to my letter.

BRUCE  
Oh. Oh good.

MEDIUM ALISON  
It was a little confusing.

BRUCE  
Ah. Listen, before I forget, d'ja get the book  
I sent? The Joyce. Portrait of the --

MEDIUM ALISON  
Yes, I got it.

BRUCE  
You better damn well identify with every page!

MEDIUM ALISON  
If you don't want to talk to me about my letter  
put Mom on the phone

BRUCE  
Well, she's watching something on TV.

MEDIUM ALISON  
Would you ask her, please, if she'll talk to  
me?

BRUCE  
Sure.

Shift from Bruce to Helen.

HELEN  
Hello?

MEDIUM ALISON  
Hi, Mom.

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

MEDIUM ALISON

It's... fine.  
Are you ever going to talk to me about my  
letter?

A small beat.

HELEN

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

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

MEDIUM ALISON

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

Oh please...

Catastrophe? Could you be a  
little more overdramatic?

HELEN

Alison, your father has had affairs with men.

A beat.

MEDIUM ALISON

What?

HELEN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

Our yard guy? Our *babysitter*???

HELEN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

Why are you telling me this and not Dad?

HELEN

Your father? Tell the truth? Please.

Shift to :

JOAN

That's-- Oh my god. Your *dad*??? Are you okay?

MEDIUM ALISON

(Not sure, then deciding.)

I'm fine.

JOAN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

I don't. I don't want to talk about it, I don't want to think about it. I want to... I don't know. Let's go see what's happening at the Gay Union.

JOAN

(Holding up a joint.)

Wanna go to my room? Smoke a joint?

MEDIUM ALISON

Yes I do.

ALISON

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

(Bruce, searching for something in his tool bag, slams the bag down in frustration.)

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

Helen is preparing to leave the house for school.

BRUCE

Where the hell are John and Christian???

HELEN

John's at Cosgrove's probably.

BRUCE

Why?

HELEN  
(Does he really not know this?)  
Because... He works there.

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

BRUCE  
Since when?

HELEN  
He's been working there almost a month.

BRUCE  
Oh.

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

BRUCE  
Well, where's Christian?

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

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

ALISON  
My life had just started to open.

BRUCE  
(Muttering to himself as he resumes his  
search for the missing tool.)  
Dammit! Goddammit!

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

HELEN  
(Seeing the broken painting.)  
Oh my god. The Brinley. Oh my god, what  
happened? Did it fall?  
(He keeps banging around the tool box, but  
doesn't answer)  
Bruce, the painting. What happened?

BRUCE  
I threw it down the fucking stairs.

HELEN

Why??

BRUCE

I don't // know why!

HELEN

Bruce I don't know // what's

BRUCE

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

HELEN

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

BRUCE

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

HELEN

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

Helen exits.

ALISON

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

Shift to Medium Alison and Joan,  
in their winter coats, with a  
backpacks and a duffle bag,  
approaching the house.

MEDIUM ALISON

This is it. Oh my god, I don't wanna go in.

JOAN

It's going to be okay.

MEDIUM ALISON

How's it going to be okay? Everything's-- Who  
knows? Who knows? Come on in, let me  
introduce you to my *gay dad*. It's only three  
months since I left here! What happened in  
three months?

(She pulls herself together.)

Let's go.

They enter.

MEDIUM ALISON  
(calling out.)

Hello.  
I don't know where they are.  
(calling out)  
Hey! We're here!

JOAN  
(Awestruck. Dumbfounded.)

Oh my god!

MEDIUM ALISON

What?

JOAN

You described it, but I had no idea.

MEDIUM ALISON

Why?  
Oh, yeah, I guess it's...

Helen enters.

HELEN

Oh, you're here.

MEDIUM ALISON

Hi Mom.

HELEN

This is your friend?

MEDIUM ALISON

Yeah, this is Joan.

JOAN

Thanks for letting me come, Mrs. Bechdel.

HELEN

Very nice to meet you, Joan.

BRUCE

(Bounding in.)

Hey there you are! Hey! Welcome home! The  
prodigal returns!!

MEDIUM ALISON

Hey Dad, This is--

BRUCE

Joan!

(Shaking her hand.)  
(MORE)



BRUCE (cont'd)

Nice to meet you. Nice to meet you. Listen, I've gotta pick up some three-quarter inch ply from Bittner's before they close. Hey you wanna go for a drive later?

MEDIUM ALISON

Sure.

He leaves.

MEDIUM ALISON

So.

HELEN

My goodness, it's lunchtime. Are you girls hungry?

JOAN

I'm okay.

(To Medium Alison.)

You?

MEDIUM ALISON

We're fine.

HELEN

Sure?

MEDIUM ALISON

Yeah, we stopped at a diner on the way. But you should go ahead and eat.

HELEN

No, I'm fine. I might have a glass of wine though. Would either of you like a glass of wine?

MEDIUM ALISON

Uh...

JOAN

Oh, no thanks, Mrs. Bechdel.

(Beat.)

Maybe you guys would like some time to talk.

HELEN

Oh.

MEDIUM ALISON

Huh?

JOAN

Cuz I actually wouldn't mind laying down a little bit. I'm still pretty wiped out from last week.

MEDIUM ALISON

Okay. Uh--

(To Helen.)

I thought I'd put her in the lilac room?

HELEN

Sure.

MEDIUM ALISON

(To Joan.)

Upstairs, first room on the right.

JOAN

Great. Come get me whenever.

Joan exits.

HELEN

(Pouring two glasses of wine.)

You must be tired too.

MEDIUM ALISON

I'm okay.

(They sit. Long beat.)

So

How've things been here?

HELEN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

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

HELEN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

Probably.

HELEN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

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

HELEN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

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

HELEN

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

MEDIUM ALISON

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

HELEN

*Welcome to our house on Maple Avenue  
See how we polish and we shine  
We rearrange and realign  
Everything is balanced and-- and--*

*Days and days and days, that's how it happens  
Days and days and days  
Made of lunches and car rides and shirts and socks  
and grades and piano and no one clocks  
the day you disappear*

*Days and days and days, that's how it happens  
Days and days and days  
Made of posing and bragging and fits of rage  
And boys, my god, some of them underage  
And, oh, how did it all happen here?*

*There was a time your father swept me off my feet with words  
We read books, strolled through Munich at night,  
drank beer with friends,  
discussed the places we would go  
And he said I understood how the world made him ache  
But no  
But no*

*That's how it happens*

*Days made of bargains I made because I thought as a wife  
I was meant to and now my life is shattered and laid bare  
Days and days and days and days and days and days and days*

*Welcome to our house on Maple Avenue  
See how we polish and we shine  
We rearrange and realign  
Everything is balanced and serene  
Like chaos never happens if it's never seen*

*Don't you come back here  
I didn't raise you  
to give away your days  
Like me.*

Shift to Bruce and Joan at the  
piano.

BRUCE  
*That's how Mavis, Pearl and Carol  
Fancy hats and parasols  
Ended up together inside that barrel  
Tumbling down Niagara Falls!*

Sang it for the dean's wife!

JOAN  
No!

BRUCE  
Oh yes.

JOAN  
What happened???

BRUCE  
The crowd went wild!

JOAN  
I can't believe you did that!

Medium Alison enters.

BRUCE  
Listen, as far as we knew we were about to be  
expelled anyway, so we thought why not stick it  
to the man on our way out!

MEDIUM ALISON  
Oh god, this story?

JOAN  
You didn't tell me your dad was a troublemaker.

MEDIUM ALISON  
Has he got you polishing silver??

JOAN  
I don't know what to say. He made it sound  
like a great idea.

BRUCE  
I charmed her into it.

JOAN  
He charmed me into it.

BRUCE  
(Play the bottom part of Heart and Soul.)  
Hey Al, come play this one with your old dad.

Medium Alison is also now having a  
good time.

MEDIUM ALISON  
No. Dad!

BRUCE  
(To Joan.)  
Have you heard her play?

JOAN  
I have not.

BRUCE  
Aha! Well, she learned everything she knows  
from me. Keep that in mind. Come on!

MEDIUM ALISON  
Dad!

BRUCE  
Come on.  
*Heart and soul --*

BRUCE AND MEDIUM ALISON  
(With gusto.)  
*Jean Stafford must have loved Robert Lowell  
because he treated her badly  
They took the same romantic path  
as Hughes and Plath  
Heart and soul -*

MEDIUM ALISON  
(Laughing.)  
Enough!

JOAN  
You wrote that?

BRUCE  
It was a collaboration.

ALISON  
There's a different version of this visit, Dad,  
where it's all alright, where it all comes out  
alright.

The piano continues. A bit more  
laughter.

JOAN  
I'm gonna go help your mom with dinner.

She exits leaving Medium Alison  
and Bruce alone together. A beat.  
Bruce tinkers on the piano.

BRUCE  
Joan's a great gal.

MEDIUM ALISON  
Yeah?

BRUCE  
Oh yeah. Quick. Bright.

MEDIUM ALISON  
Yeah, she is.  
Yeah.

(Beat.)  
Hey, Dad?

BRUCE  
Yeah?

MEDIUM ALISON  
I've been wondering...

BRUCE  
Yeah?

MEDIUM ALISON  
I was just wondering  
if you knew what you were doing when you gave  
me that Colette book.

Bruce stops playing for a moment.

BRUCE

Oh.

(Beat as he can't figure out how to answer, then, gathers himself and totally shrugs it off.)

I don't know.

He resumes his idle playing. A beat. Medium Alison exits. Bruce gets up and grabs his jacket.

BRUCE

You ready to go for that drive?  
Alison?

(He looks at Alison)

Hey Kiddo. You ready?

Alison gathers herself.

ALISON

Yes.

BRUCE

(Flipping his car keys.)

Wanna drive?

ALISON

No, that's okay. You can drive.

She follows him into the car. In the course of this walk she moves back into the past. She's not remembering this, she's living it again.

They get into the car. They drive.

BRUCE

So...

(A beat. Gathering his nerve.)

It's uh-- It's uh--

(Small nervous chuckle. A beat, then tries again.)

You uh--

(Can't do it.)

That too much air?

Alison shakes her head no. They drive in painful silence. She looks out the window, her eyes following the telephone wires.

ALISON

*Telephone wire  
run and run  
Telephone wire  
sun down on the creek  
Partly frozen, partly flowing,  
must be windy, trees are bending,  
Junction 50,  
field needs mowing  
Feels like the  
car is floating*

*Say something  
Talk to him  
Say something  
Anything  
At the light  
at the light  
at the light  
at the light*

*At the light  
at the light  
at the light  
at the light*

*Like, you could say,  
So how does it feel to know that you and I are both--*

BRUCE

Hey

ALISON

Yeah?

BRUCE

*Where'd'ya wanna go?*

ALISON

*Oh. I don't know.*

BRUCE

*I know a bar  
It's kind of hidden away  
Seedy club  
for folks like, you know...  
Could be fun*

ALISON

*But Dad  
I'm not twenty-one*

BRUCE

*Oh yeah. Right.*



ALISON

*Telephone wire  
long black line  
Telephone wire  
finely threaded sky  
There's the pond where I went wading,  
there's the sign for Sugar Valley,  
on the mountain light is fading  
I go back to school tomorrow*

*Say something  
Talk to him  
Say something  
Anything  
At the light  
at the light  
at the light  
at the light*

*At the light  
at the light  
at the light  
at the light  
Doesn't matter what you say  
Just make the fear in his eyes go away*

BRUCE

*There was a boy*

*At college*

*My first year there*

*Norris Jones*

*He had black wavy hair*

*Huh*

*Norris Jones*

*Where is he now?*

*Huh*

*Fourteen years old*

*In Swensen's barn*

*It was cold*

*Lots of boys messed around, you know*

*For them, it was a game they outgrew*

*But I always knew*

ALISON

*Dad, me too!*

*Since, like five I guess  
I preferred to wear boys shirts and pants  
I felt absurd in a dress  
I really tried to deny my feelings for girls  
But I was like you  
Dad, me too*

BRUCE

(He hasn't heard a word she's said, still  
deep in his own thoughts.)

Huh

*Norris Jones*

ALISON

Dad?

BRUCE

*Norris Jones*

ALISON

Dad?

BRUCE

Did I mention I've taken on a new project?  
That old house out on Route 150!  
You've seen it, Al. It's been sitting empty out  
there for 40, 50 years at least.

ALISON

*Telephone wire  
Stop! Too fast!  
Telephone wire  
Make this not the past, this car ride!*

*This is where it has to happen  
There must be some other chances  
There's a moment I'm forgetting where you tell me you see me  
Say something!  
Talk to me  
Say something!  
Anything  
At the light  
At the light*

*This can't be our last--*

They are home.

BRUCE

That was fun.

(Looking at his watch, getting out of the car.)

It's earlier than I thought. Comin' in?

ALISON

(Left in the car.)

*Telephone wire  
That was our last  
night.*

Alison tries to right herself with her work, going back to her drawing table.

ALISON

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

BRUCE

(writing the letter)

Dear Al, It was great to have you home.

ALISON

What was I...? What's this?

BRUCE

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

ALISON

I don't want to.

BRUCE

Dear Al

ALISON

I don't want to.

BRUCE

I'll admit I'm somewhat  
envious of the 'new' freedom  
that appears on campuses  
today.  
Dear Al, Did you receive that  
Winograd article I was  
telling you about? You  
should have gotten it by now.  
Do you know I was never even  
in New York until I was about  
twenty?  
Dear Al - I just re-read  
Araby. That could have been  
me - I was rather sensitive  
when I was little, you know -  
Dear Al, I've been working  
like mad on that house I told  
you about. Can't think about  
much else. Can't sleep -  
Dear Al--

ALISON

(Suddenly, fierce,  
facing him directly.)  
What did it feel like to step  
in front of a truck, Dad?  
What did it feel like to see  
it coming right at you and  
not move? And just let it  
hit you? *Why?* Was it  
because of me? I'm afraid it  
wasn't. That's the crazy  
thing. I'm afraid it wasn't.

BRUCE

*I fucking love beginnings  
Flying high  
Hard to know where to start  
It's all so fast I'm trying not to spin  
I guess I'm older  
And it's harder when you're older  
to begin*

*Peeling plaster, sagging roof,  
two missing stairs, a buckled wall  
I'm fired up to do this  
But on my own it all--*

*So much damage, broken windows,  
pipes are shit, crap veneer  
It's hours later. Jesus! I'm still standing here  
Still standing here*

*But when the sunlight hits the parlor wall  
at certain times of day  
I see how fine this house could be  
I see it so damn clear  
What's the matter? Why am I standing here?*

*Bad foundation, twisting floorboards,  
shoddy pipes, a gaping hole  
It's a lot, it's a lot to keep under control  
Something cracking, something rotting,  
piles of ruin and debris,  
killing me, crushing me, pushing me*

*But when the sunlight hits the parlor wall  
at certain times of day  
I see how fine this house could be  
I see it so damn clear  
What's the matter? Why am I standing here?*

*Dear Al, I'm scared  
I had a life I thought I understood  
I took it and I squeezed out every bit of life I could  
But the edges of the world that held me up have gone away  
and I'm falling into nothingness  
or flying into something so sublime  
and I'm a man I don't know  
Who am I now? Where do I go?  
I can't go back  
I can't find my way through  
I might still break a heart or two*

*But when the sunlight hits the parlor wall  
at certain times of day  
I see how fine this house could be  
I see it so damn clear  
Oh my God!  
Why am I standing here?*

Unbearable sound of a blaring  
horn.

Alison, shattered, finds her way  
to the drawing table.

ALISON

Caption.

Caption.

Caption.

Caption. Caption.

I'm the only one here.

This is what I have of you:  
(Sifting through a pile of drawings.)  
You ordering me to sweep and dust the parlor.  
You steaming off the wallpaper.  
You in front of a classroom of bored students.  
Digging up a dogwood tree.  
You working on the house, smelling like sawdust  
and sweat and designer cologne.  
You calling me at college to tell me how I'm  
supposed to feel about Faulkner or Hemingway.

(MORE)

ALISON (cont'd)

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

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

(Picking up her pen and drawing.)

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

SMALL ALISON

(Stepping forward.)

Daddy, hey, Daddy, come here, okay, I need you

MEDIUM ALISON

At the light  
At the light  
At the light  
At the light

Alison takes them both in, then  
draws:

ALISON

What are you doing (question mark)  
I said come here  
You need //to do what I tell you to do --

SMALL ALISON

What are you doing?  
I said come here  
You need to do what I tell you to do --

SMALL ALISON

MEDIUM ALISON

Listen to me  
Daddy  
Come here, hey right here,  
right now, you're making me  
mad  
Listen to me  
Listen to me  
Listen to me

At the light...

How does it feel to know--

I wanna play airplane  
I wanna play airplane  
I wanna play airplane  
I wanna put my arms out and  
fly

That you and I are both  
That you and I are both

I was like you

Like the Red Baron in his  
Sopwith Camel! No wait-

Say something

Like Superman up in the sky  
"til I can see all of  
Pennsylvania

Say something

*Put your feet here like this  
Daddy, do what I say*

ALISON  
(Looking at a drawing.)

*There you are.*

SMALL ALISON  
*Take my hands, give me yours  
Bend your knees, not that way  
When I say go, you start  
pushing me up  
okay?  
Don't let go yet  
There you are  
Okay, higher  
Just a little*

ALISON

*There you are*

*There you are*

ALISON  
*And now I'm flying away*

MEDIUM ALISON  
*Look at me fly away*

SMALL ALISON  
*-- in my wristband and cape*

SMALL ALISON  
*Fly  
Up so high*

ALISON AND MEDIUM ALISON  
*Fly*

SMALL ALISON (cont'd)  
*Our house is over there, and there's our car  
The Fun Home - I see it  
I'm up so far*

MEDIUM ALISON  
*So far*

SMALL ALISON  
*Daddy, there's your school!  
And there's Grandma's house.  
There's Uncle Pete's farm!*

SMALL ALISON  
*I can see all of Pennsylvania*

MEDIUM ALISON  
*Pennsylvania*

ALISON  
*I can see all of Pennsylvania*

SMALL ALISON  
*I can see all of Pennsylvania*

ALL

*Fly away*

SMALL ALISON

*This is the best game. Up in the air*

ALISON

*A picture of my father*

SMALL ALISON

*And I don't even care that it pushes my stomach in*

ALISON

*Made of little marks*

SMALL ALISON

*Fly*

*up so high*

*Fly*

*up so high*

*Fly*

*up so high*

ALISON

*Beautiful*

*Fly*

*Fly*

MEDIUM ALISON

*Fly*

*Fly*

*Fly*

*Fly*

Alison Bechdel's drawing of her eight-year-old self being lifted by her father into a soaring game of airplane fills the back wall.

SMALL ALISON

*I can see all of Pennsylvania*

ALISON

Caption: Every so often there was a rare moment of perfect balance when I soared above him.

END