

CASUAL

EPISODE 2

"Friends"

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INT. ALEX'S DINING ROOM - THE MORNING AFTER

Valerie, Laura and Leon sit together at the table, covertly eyeing each other. Nobody says a word for a long beat.

Alex enters with a plate of waffles, oblivious.

ALEX

We're out of buttermilk. Also one of them got stuck in the griddle. But it's fine. I'll eat it. Juice?

Still no response. He pours everyone OJ.

ALEX (CONT'D)

They're better with buttermilk. Which is surprising because buttermilk is disgusting. But when it comes to batter there's really no substitute.

Another beat.

ALEX (CONT'D)

So. Friday. TGIF. What's everyone got going on?

LAURA

Alex?

ALEX

Yes?

LAURA

Will you please pass the syrup?

ALEX

Try the lemon and sugar.

LAURA

Just the syrup.

Alex passes the syrup.

ALEX

You live over in Silverlake, right Leon?

LEON

...How did you know that?

ALEX

You left your wallet on the counter. Also your AAA card is expired.

Valerie shoots Alex a dirty look.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I've thought about moving east but traffic is such a pain. And it's hotter over there. I hope you have AC.

LEON

I do.

ALEX

Central?

LEON

Window mounts.

ALEX

You should get central. It makes a difference.

VALERIE

(abruptly rises)

Can I talk to you for a second?

As she and Alex walk out of the kitchen Leon gives Laura a weak smile. She picks up the Arts section of the newspaper. Nonplussed.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

ALEX

What's up?

VALERIE

What the fuck is wrong with you?

ALEX

Um. Lots of things?

VALERIE

You invited him to stay for breakfast.

ALEX

I wanted to make waffles.

VALERIE

Don't you think you should have asked me first?

ALEX

You said you wanted to make new friends. He's nice. He could be a friend.

VALERIE

He's my one night stand!  
(lowering her voice)  
How do you think Laura feels?

ALEX

She seems fine to me.

VALERIE

Like you have any idea what 'fine' is.

ALEX

You sound stressed. Maybe you should ask Leon for a back rub.

VALERIE

Get. Him. Out of here.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Leon nibbles at his waffle. Laura sips a coffee.

LAURA

(still looking at the paper)  
Good review for King Lear at The Broad.

LEON

You like theater?

LAURA

Nah. You just look uncomfortable. Thought I should say something.

She smiles genuinely. He smiles back.

LEON

So your mom. And your uncle...

LAURA

Regular Bonnie and Clyde.

LEON  
They're close, huh?

LAURA  
Yeah. It's actually pretty normal.  
Except when they shower together.

Leon's eyes go wide.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Leon. I'm fucking with you.

Valerie and Alex return.

VALERIE  
C'mon Laura. You're gonna be late  
for school.

Leon stands with Laura.

VALERIE (CONT'D)  
Don't get up. Just... finish your  
waffle. Alex can see you out.

LEON  
Ok.

As Valerie turns to go.

LEON (CONT'D)  
I'll call you?

VALERIE  
Uhuh. Great. Ok then.

She quickly closes the door behind her. Alex goes right back  
to his breakfast.

ALEX  
Well she's in a mood. Pass the  
lemon?

INT. VALERIE'S PRIUS - MORNING

Valerie drives. Laura fiddles with the radio. Finally turns  
it off.

VALERIE  
I'm sorry.

LAURA  
About what?

VALERIE

You know.

LAURA

The strange man at the breakfast table?

VALERIE

I didn't mean for you to... I mean. With your dad. It's just... You know I'm not trying to replace him. But I can understand if you're uncomfortable.

LAURA

I'm not if you're not.

VALERIE

Ok.

Beat.

LAURA

How was he?

VALERIE

Huh?

LAURA

First times can be awkward. He seemed awkward.

VALERIE

You really wanna know?

LAURA

You asked me after Emile and my first time.

VALERIE

That's different.

Laura shrugs. Willing to let it go.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

...I think it had been a while for him too. He was gentle. A little too gentle. Maybe wounded. I got the sense that he was holding something back. I think it's for the best that we're going our separate ways.

LAURA

You psychoanalyzed him. Like he was one of your patients.

VALERIE

I did not.

LAURA

Sounds like attachment issues.

VALERIE

Those are your words not mine.

LAURA

Definitely attachment issues.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARVARD WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Laura steps out of Valerie's car.

VALERIE

You coming home for dinner?

LAURA

Becca wants to do a girls thing. That ok?

VALERIE

Call me and check in. I love you. Really I do.

LAURA

Love you too.

Valerie watches Laura walk into the idyllic campus. Suddenly a RAPPING on her window breaks her spell.

Valerie turns to find JANET FORD (early 40's but looks 30's with the near perfect work she's had done to her face). Janet is an insufferable gossip.

VALERIE

(to herself)

Shit.

(she rolls down the window)

Janet. Hi. You scared me.

JANET

Sorry hon. How's everything?

VALERIE  
Everything's ok-

JANET  
(interrupting)  
Lovely. Look, I know it's not your  
thing but I have to ask. Minnie  
Marlin just checked in to Promises.

VALERIE  
The rehab center? That's-

JANET  
Awful I know. The poor little lamb  
was sneaking off to Glendale to get  
oxy. Reggie found out and  
confronted her then she had a  
nervous breakdown. Anywho, Minnie  
was on the homecoming committee  
with me and a couple of the girls  
and now we're one short.

VALERIE  
You want me to help you plan  
homecoming?

JANET  
Only if you can. I mean, with what  
you're going through with Drew-

VALERIE  
Really it's fine-

JANET  
It's just so typical. A 20 year  
old. She was 20, right? I can't  
even imagine how that must feel.  
You should see my botox guy. Anyway  
if you're still devastated and not  
ready to be social I totally  
understand.

Valerie considers for a moment. Then takes the bait.

VALERIE  
I'd be happy to help.

JANET  
Wonderful!



EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - MORNING

Leon heads to his car. Alex follows a little too closely behind.

ALEX

So like I said, medium heat. Four minutes each side. And no grass fed beef. You want that cow with antibiotic enriched corn oozing out of every orifice.

LEON

That's a really disgusting image.

ALEX

Right? And that's before it even gets to the slaughterhouse which is a cesspool of disease and agony.

LEON

Why do you still eat meat?

ALEX

Because it's delicious and it eases my suffering.

Leon unlocks his car. Then stops.

LEON

Hey. Can I ask you something about your sister... Sorry if that's inappropriate.

ALEX

It is. But I don't care.

LEON

Should I call her? We had fun but I mean, we kinda left it at, you know. You saw.

ALEX

Hmmmm. You have a minute?

LEON

...Sure.

ALEX

Great. Let's get coffee.

INT. CAFE - MORNING

Alex and Leon sit together drinking their coffees.

ALEX

So the thing with Val is her ex husband is a colossal douche wagon and she's just getting back into the dating scene.

LEON

A douche wagon?

ALEX

Yeah. Like a douche canoe. But worse.

LEON

Right.

ALEX

Anyway. It's great that she's dating because she's great, but also tough because she's not looking for anything serious. I mean this guy literally destroyed her relationship template. At least that's what I overheard her saying on the phone.

LEON

I shouldn't call her.

ALEX

You gotta date around and if it's meant to happen it'll happen.

Leon scoffs.

ALEX (CONT'D)

What?

LEON

Nothing.

ALEX

Talk to me.

LEON

I barely know you.

ALEX

You had sex with my sister. Last night. I made you breakfast.

Beat.

LEON

Ok. The thing is, I've been in kind of a dry spell.

ALEX

Define dry.

LEON

Before last night? 10 months.

ALEX

Woah. Post breakup?

LEON

Dated for three years. Engaged for another. A month before the wedding I found tapes.

ALEX

Tapes?

LEON

Oh, you know. Just a collection of every man and woman she'd ever been with up to and including the time we were together.

ALEX

That's not good.

LEON

No it's not. Since then I've been trying to get back on my feet but I don't really know where to start.

Alex thinks for a moment. Then:

ALEX

Have you ever heard of LAMatch?

INT. HARVARD WESTLAKE HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Students pack their bags in a rush to get to lunch. Laura follows them out until-

MICHAEL (O.S)

Laura?

MICHAEL HORN (late 20's) the English teacher who made you love English (and older men) stands by his desk.

She backtracks.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

This paper you turned in. For the last assignment. It's very good. You have a really mature voice.

LAURA

(smiles)

Thank you. I had a good time writing it.

MICHAEL

I can tell. Look. There are contests for young writers. They give prizes and they publish. Colleges love that kind of stuff. I think you should consider submitting.

LAURA

Really?

MICHAEL

We can go through it. I'll help you clean it up then we take a shot.

LAURA

That sounds amazing.

Michael takes out a pen and scribbles on a scrap of paper.

MICHAEL

Here's my cell. Call me when you have some free time.

Laura takes the piece of paper.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Seriously I'm impressed. Keep up the good work.

LAURA

Thanks Michael.

MIA (O.S)

Laura!

Laura turns. Sees MIA FORD (16), a blond teenage version of her mom Janet and BECCA HAYNES (17), the girl who hit puberty at 9 and was dating by 11.

LAURA

I gotta go.

They share a look then Laura hurries:

OUTSIDE

MIA

What did he want?

LAURA

Nothing. Just talking about one of my papers. He wants to submit it to some contest.

MIA

Wait. Did he give you his number?

LAURA

...Yeah.

MIA

Oh my god. Oh my *fucking* god. You're the one.

LAURA

The what?

Mia and Becca share a look.

BECCA

Every year Michael Horn picks a student-

MIA

Usually it's a senior so he can wait until summer vacation-

BECCA

Last year was Liz Segal-

MIA

The year before Carrie Thompson-

BECCA

I hated that bitch-

MIA

Huge cunt. Anyway-

BECCA

They get close-

MIA

Spend time together out of school-

BECCA  
Things heat up-

MIA  
And then-

MIA/BECCA  
They fuck.

LAURA  
They fuck?

MIA/BECCA  
They fuck.

Laura can't help herself from half smiling.

MIA  
You're smiling! You so want him!

LAURA  
Shut up.

INT. VALERIE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Valerie leads a red-eyed TEDDY (40's) to the door.

VALERIE  
You'll be ok, Teddy. Just be  
vocal... And try to stop reading  
her emails. It's only going to  
hurt.

Teddy hugs her tight. Lets out one last sob.

TEDDY  
Thank you.

He exits. Valerie lets out a long breath.

VALERIE  
He cried a lot.

LEIA  
Twenty four minutes. New personal  
best.

VALERIE  
His wife wants to open up the  
marriage. She replied to a group  
sex listing on craigslist.

LEIA  
Gang-bang or swinging?

VALERIE  
Gang-bang. She said he could watch.

LEIA  
Nice of her.

VALERIE  
Any calls?

LEIA  
OCD Owen.

VALERIE  
Please don't give my patients pet names.

LEIA  
He's asking to come in tonight.

VALERIE  
Schedule him for Monday. I can't.

LEIA  
He's gonna do that thing where he snuffles three times every time I stop talking.

VALERIE  
He has a personality disorder.

LEIA  
I know. OCD Owen.

Valerie shakes her head. Is about to go back to her office then stops.

VALERIE  
I met someone.

LEIA  
...

VALERIE  
A guy at a bar last night. I told him to take me home and he did.

LEIA  
And you're telling me now?! Did you sleep with him? How was he? And this morning? When did you kick him out?

VALERIE  
...I didn't. I left him with Alex.

LEIA  
Your brother?

VALERIE  
Uhuh.

LEIA  
Are you sure that's a good idea?

VALERIE  
What do you mean?

LEIA  
I dunno. Doesn't he, like, have  
problems with boundaries?

Off Valerie's look:

INT. VALERIE'S PRIUS - EVENING

Valerie drives towards Beverly Hills, phone ringing on the  
bluetooth.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Alex (wearing a flannel, slim cut jeans and vans) wolfs down  
leftovers.

He picks up his ringing phone. Talks with his mouth full.

INTERCUT

ALEX  
Hey.

VALERIE  
I've been calling you.

ALEX  
I've been busy.

VALERIE  
No you haven't.

ALEX  
Whatever. What's up?

VALERIE  
What happened with Leon?



ALEX

I said I was sorry-

VALERIE

No. I mean when did he leave?

ALEX

Right after you did.

VALERIE

Did you explain the situation?

ALEX

With crystal clarity.

VALERIE

So you didn't give him my number.

ALEX

What do you take me for? He was your one night stand. You're not ready for anything serious. He gets it and he won't be coming around. Chill.

VALERIE

Ok... Thanks. I dunno why I was worried. What are you doing tonight?

ALEX

Might go for a drink. Wallow in self pity. You know.

VALERIE

You could try spending a Friday night at home.

A horn honks off screen.

ALEX

Sure mom. Sounds fun. Bye bye now.

EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - EVENING

Leon, in a similar looking flannel, is parked outside, engine idling. Alex jumps in.

ALEX

Nice shirt. Val says hi.

Leon's car pulls out.

EXT. JANET FORD'S MANSION - EVENING

Valerie takes a breath then rings the doorbell. Janet opens the door. Kisses her on both cheeks.

JANET  
Darling. You made it.

INT. JANET'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

One word: opulent.

The other women on the committee are STELLA FRANCIS (40's), impossibly large lips, KIM CANTER (40's), resting bitch face, and MARIA ALVEZ-SMITH (late 30's), a former Ms. Guatemala 'rescued' into sterile suburban housewifedom.

Janet pours Valerie a glass of white wine.

JANET  
Girls you know Valerie. Valerie.  
Stella, Kim and Maria.

VALERIE  
Hi.

JANET  
So. Valerie. Before we start with  
homecoming, tell us all about the  
divorce.

Valerie frowns.

CUT TO:

INT. LEON'S CAR - EVENING

Leon drives. Alex typing on his phone.

LEON  
You do this a lot?

ALEX  
A fair amount.

LEON  
And it works?

ALEX  
No. But I'm a glutton for  
punishment. Hang a left.

He turns his phone to Leon. On it is his LAMatch app and the profiles of two TATTOOED WOMEN: SKYE (30's) blonde bob & 'LENORE (30's) jet black hair.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Skye and 'Lenore. Any preference?

LEON  
Is that Skye with an 'e'?

ALEX  
And 'Lenore without. I guess vowel switching is in.

LEON  
Look at those sleeves.

ALEX  
Tattoos are the best.

LEON  
They'll look like shit at forty five.

ALEX  
Exactly. If a girl has 'em then you know she's got the right attitude.

LEON  
What attitude is that?

ALEX  
Down to make mistakes.

INT. BLIPSY BARCADE - KOREATOWN - NIGHT

A dark little arcade/bar where people go to be 'ironic'. Skye and Lenore at the bar drinking PBR tall boys. Alex and Leon approach.

ALEX  
Skye? Lenore?

SKYE/LENORE  
Hi.

ALEX/LEON  
Hi.

Beat.

ALEX  
Shots?

EXT. BECCA'S PARENTS' BEVERLY HILLS MANOR - NIGHT

Loud music thumping. You can practically see the house vibrating.

Laura and Emile approach.

LAURA

I don't want to stay too long, ok?

EMILE

Whatever. They're your friends.

LAURA

Just don't leave me.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A medium sized party. Teenagers drinking. The vibe is young.

Emile leads. Becca holding his hand behind. Suddenly Mia and Becca grab Laura and pull her down the hall. Both of them are rolling face.

MIA

Laaaaura. Baby.

BECCA

Come on. Everyone's outside.

Laura gives Emile a parting look like 'help me'. Emile rolls his eyes as the girls head:

OUTSIDE

Where the party continues to rage. Kids swim in underwear and dance around the pool.

Mia runs her hands up and down Laura's back.

MIA

Let's go swimming.

LAURA

I'm ok.

MIA

No. You have to. The water feels so good. It like, rolls over you. And you go up and down. I don't know how to describe it.

LAURA

Like a wave?

MIA

Yeah. A waaaave. God I love that word.

LAURA

You go ahead. I'm gonna go sit over there and pretend like I'm having fun.

Mia and Becca drop their clothes and jump into the pool. Splashing, giggling.

Laura walks off to the side alone and plops down in a chair. She looks out at the youthful reverie around her. Feeling out of place.

She takes out her phone and starts to text.

INT. BLIPSY BARCADE - CONTINUOUS

Alex drinking at the bar with Skye watching as an animated HIPSTER TYPE mashes buttons on a FROGGER arcade game.

HIPSTER

(high fiving his friend)

YES! Level up! You got this, little froggie.

ALEX

I can't take my eyes off him.

SKYE

I know. It's all you've been talking about.

ALEX

I mean, he's so happy. How can anyone be that happy?

SKYE

Maybe he had a pet frog.

ALEX

Or maybe his dad was a truck driver who abandoned him and his mom at an early age and this is some weird sublimation therapy. Like he's the frog and he just wants to get safely to the other side before his dad can run him over.

SKYE  
What are you talking about?

ALEX  
Bad parenting.  
(he gestures to her  
tattoos)  
You know what I mean.

SKYE  
My dad was a CPA.

ALEX  
What's that?

SKYE  
A tax accountant.

ALEX  
Wow. That sounds boring. What does  
he think of your tattoos?

SKYE  
He's dead.

ALEX  
Oh. Sorry. Mine too. At least I  
hope he is.

SKYE  
What did he do?

ALEX  
Mostly slept around. Is Skye your  
real name or did you make it up?

Skye nods at 'Lenore, who is laughing as she talks to Leon.  
Having a good time.

SKYE  
Excuse us.

She and 'Lenore head to the bathroom. Alex walks over to  
Leon.

ALEX  
How's it going with 'Lenore?

LEON  
I don't think I'm her type.

ALEX

Don't think like that. You're everybody's type. And I saw her laughing.

LEON

I dunno. She just seems really jittery.

ALEX

She's probably nervous because you're so charming.

LEON

That's definitely not true...  
Though she did say to come to the bathroom if I wanted to have some fun.

ALEX

...And you're here why?

They both look over at the closed bathroom door.

INT. JANET'S HOUSE

Wine is flowing. Mouths are flapping.

KIM

You don't want the house?

VALERIE

There are a lot of memories in that house. Some of them good. Some not so good.

KIM

...But it's a house.

STELLA

And it's north of Sunset.

JANET

Honey. A piece of advice. Take everything that's not nailed down. You earned it.

MARIA

He took so much from you, you deserve to take some back.

VALERIE

I guess so-

JANET

Really you should thank him. Free before forty with a daughter, a house and alimony? I'd kill for that.

VALERIE

(joking)

You could push Ben down the stairs and claim he fell.

JANET

You really think that'd work?

VALERIE

...No, Janet.

JANET

(sigh)

Me neither. Plus what if he didn't die? If he was just paralyzed and I had to push him around in a wheel chair? What a nightmare.

Valerie exhales deeply. Tries to keep it together.

EXT. BECCA'S BEVERLY HILLS MANOR - NIGHT

Laura sips a beer. Watches as Becca and Mia grope each other in the pool.

A KID walks past her and VIOLENTLY THROWS UP in the bushes. He turns back to her, vomit on his shirt and mouth.

He stares at her drunkenly for a long beat.

LAURA

Yes?

KID

(slurring)

Do you believe in love at first sight?

She stands.

INT. BECCA'S BEVERLY HILLS MANOR - MOMENTS LATER

Laura steps around conversations. Sees a few FACES she may or may not recognize.



LAURA  
Have any of you seen Emile?

FACE  
Who?

LAURA  
Tall guy. Kinda sweet. Clueless.

FACE 2  
Oh. Maybe that's who Danielle was  
talking to. They went upstairs.

Laura's eyebrows furrow as she heads

UPSTAIRS

She peeks her head into bedrooms. Kids making out. Some drinking and smoking. Nothing out of the ordinary. She reaches for the knob of a closed door. Locked. She's about to move on when-

VOICE (O.S)  
FUCK! COPS!

Laura turns and looks down to the first floor where people are scattering. Two bored POLICE OFFICERS stand in the threshold of the front door, blocking her exit.

OFFICER #1  
(to Laura)  
You! Come down here.

Laura looks behind her. Nobody. She walks back down the stairs.

OFFICER #2  
Who's the home owner?

LAURA  
...Probably the bank.

OFFICER #1  
What?

LAURA  
In this economy and this neighborhood? I'm guessing they had to refi. Second mortgage. Maybe third.

OFFICER #2  
Are you being a smart ass?

LAURA  
You asked.

OFFICER #2  
How old are you?

Laura glances back up at the second floor where she sees Emile exiting from the locked room with DANIELLE (17), a bim in a mini skirt.

He and Laura meet eyes.

EMILE  
Hey...

She turns back to the Officers, takes a gulp of her beer then holds out both fists to the officers.

LAURA  
Sixteen.

INT. BLIPSY BARCADE

Alex and Leon outside the door of the bathroom.

ALEX  
Do it.

LEON  
You do it.

ALEX  
She asked you.

LEON  
I have low self esteem.

ALEX  
Everyone has low self esteem. If you don't they commit you.

LEON  
Please?

Alex knocks.

SKYE (O.S)  
Occupied!

ALEX  
It's Leon... And Alex.

Beat.

The door cracks open.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Alex and Leon enter. See 'Lenore cutting up drugs on the toilet.

SKYE  
Close the door.

ALEX  
(re: the drugs)  
You're doing that here?

'LENORE  
So what?

ALEX  
I dunno. Just feels kind of  
unsanitary.

LEON  
Like a slaughterhouse?

Alex shoots him a look.

SKYE  
It's fine. They clean these toilets  
all the time.

Alex looks around. That is clearly not the case.

'Lenore blows a line.

'LENORE  
C'mon.

ALEX  
The last time I did cocaine I  
couldn't sleep for two days. My  
heart felt like it was going to  
explode.

SKYE  
It's speed.

ALEX  
Well in that case...

Skye does a line.

'LENORE  
Who's up?

LEON  
I think I should go.

SKYE  
Don't be such a little bitch, Leon.  
We were having a nice time. Now do  
a line and we'll all go back to my  
place for a night cap.

Leon looks shocked.

ALEX  
One sec.

He pulls Leon into the corner. They whisper together and the  
girls cut more drugs.

LEON  
I don't want to take speed. This is  
a bad idea.

ALEX  
Maybe. Or But maybe this is one of  
those times where it seems like a  
bad idea but it's really a good  
idea.

LEON  
Is that the vibe you're getting?

ALEX  
Not at all. These girls are totally  
crazy. But...

LEON  
You think they might want to have  
sex.

ALEX  
I think they might.

LEON  
The tattoos are pretty cool.

ALEX  
Right? And I bet there's more we  
haven't even seen yet. I'm just  
saying we should think about it.

LEON  
I'm thinking about it.

ALEX  
So am I.

LEON  
You call it.

ALEX  
You sure?

LEON  
I'll regret it either way.

ALEX  
(smiles)  
You know what? I'm really starting  
to like you.

LEON  
Fuck it. Let's do it.

ALEX  
Yeah?

LEON  
Yeah.

Suddenly a loud KNOCK on the door.

ALEX/LEON/SKYE/'LENORE  
Occupied!

The handle continues to jiggle.

ALEX  
What the fuck. Occu-

Suddenly it flies open on a BURLY BIKER-TYPE. He goes right  
for 'Lenore and the drugs. Grabs her by the arm.

Alex steps to him. Takes hold of his shoulder.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Hey asshole. What do you think  
you're doing-

The Biker-type cold cocks him in the face. Leon jumps in. As  
he, Alex and the Biker-type grapple, Skye and 'Lenore slip  
out the door and book it.

INT. JANET FORD'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

One empty wine bottle has become three. Janet stroke  
Valerie's hand while Maria touches her knee. Valerie's  
discomfort is evident.

JANET

It's good that you came. This is why we're here. For each other. As friends. In a circle of trust.

MARIA

And you know. Anything you say here? It stays between us.

JANET

We're all about discretion.

Valerie's phone rings. She quickly grabs it.

VALERIE

(into phone)

Hello?

Her face falls.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

You what? Yes. Of course. Don't say anything. No. Not a word.

She hangs up.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. That was my daughter. I... I have to go. Something came up.

JANET

Can we help?

KIM

What happened?

STELLA

Tell us...

Her phone rings again. Same number. Valerie rips herself away from the grasping hands of her friends.

VALERIE

(into phone)

I'm coming right now-

(long beat)

You what!??

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Laura and Alex sit on a bench together in processing.

LAURA

I can't believe you fought a cop.

ALEX

He was undercover. And it wasn't really like we fought. He mostly just kicked my ass. The guy was massive. And he had a beard.

LAURA

Mom is gonna be so pissed.

ALEX

It'll be fine. You had one beer and made a real estate joke. Let me do the talking.

LAURA

...I think Emile might be cheating on me.

Alex looks at Laura. For once he sees her as the vulnerable teenager that she is.

ALEX

You ok?

LAURA

I dunno. He was in a room with another girl. I didn't see anything but...

Alex takes her hand. Holds onto it.

ALEX

Fuck him. You can do better. Also he sucks at guitar.

LAURA

I know.

Valerie rushes in. Takes one look at them sitting together.

VALERIE

You're grounded.

ALEX

What?!

LAURA

...I think she's talking to me.

ALEX

Oh... Still!

LEON (O.S)  
Hi Valerie.

Valerie turns and registers Leon's presence, sitting on the bench across from them. Shock doesn't begin to describe it.

ALEX  
...I told Leon we'd give him a ride  
to his car.

INT. VALERIE'S PRIUS - NIGHT

Valerie squeezes the wheel tight, gritting her teeth. Laura in the front seat next to her, Alex and Leon in back.

Valerie looks at Alex in the rearview. A death stare.

LEON  
It's just up to the right.

Valerie pulls over. Leon hops out. Looks at Valerie through the front window and Alex through the back.

LEON (CONT'D)  
Thanks. For the ride... Guess we'll  
talk later.

Valerie forces a smile. It quickly fades. As she starts to pull away Alex covertly puts his thumb to his ear and pinkie to his lips and mouths 'call me' to Leon.

LATER

The car is silent as Valerie drives through the night. Neither Alex nor Laura dare say a word.

EXT. ALEX'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Valerie's Prius pulls in to the driveway. She steps out.

ALEX  
Val. I'm sorry-

VALERIE  
Don't. Just don't.

And without another word she turns her back and heads inside.

Alex looks up at the dimly lit stars. Laura heads for the front door. Stops.



LAURA  
Good night Alex.

ALEX  
Good night Laura.

LAURA  
Thank you.

ALEX  
For what?

LAURA  
Being a bigger fuck up than I am.

She grins. Alex can't help but grin back. Off their shared smile we:

FADE TO BLACK.