

DON'T WAKE THE HOUSE: TWO IS EASY

A One-Act Play

by

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Cast of Characters

Calista "Cal":

A mid-twenties Foley artist trying to bring both partners into her parents' house without losing the familial love she still needs.

Spencer:

One of Cal's partners. She is funny, warm, charming, watchful, and tired of being made into this version of love that is easier for the room to digest. She'd rather it chokes on her.

Cyde:

One of Cal's partners. She is bright, direct, avoidant of confrontation, and dressed for dinner. Despite this, she is unwilling to be treated like a guest in her own relationship. She just does not know how to protect herself like how'd she would her partners.

Mãe:

Cal's mother. She is a Portuguese American, loving, spiritual, practical, and skilled in making discomfort and passive aggressive behavior come across polite.

Pai:

Cal's father. He is Portuguese American, goofy, hungry, and just wants his daughter to be happy.

Scene

Cal's parents' house and her childhood home. The dining room, the stairs, and kitchen share the stage. Dinner plates, bread, wine glasses, serving dishes, a visible kitchen sink, and Foley equipment on a nearing counter. The home is very Portuguese.

Time

Evening: before and during dinner.

SCENE 1

(Before dinner. CAL and SPENCER stand at the end of the staircase.)

CAL

So, mom said that you and Cyde can take my old room.

SPENCER

Oh, that's generous, but, what about you? I mean, I can't imagine you being the type to allow Cyde unsupervised in your room. She will go through everything.

CAL

Yeah, I know... But it wasn't really up to me. Couch is nice though!

SPENCER

What? The couch? Are you seri-Cal, this is getting a bit ridiculous now, don't you think? We can all fit in your room. And if the whole 'sleeping with partners before marriage' thing is a no-go, I can respect that, but don't your folks have a guest bedroom?

CAL

Well, that room isn't for people.

SPENCER

I'm sorry?

CAL

That's where the nice furniture is. It's all wrapped in plastic.

SPENCER

Why—

CAL

I—I don't know. It's just always been like that. Never thought to ask. Either way, I will take the couch tonight.

SPENCER

This is BS, Calista. But, don't worry. Message received. Within the confines of this house, I know what place I'm

supposed to fit into. I'll ration the joy. I'll even play nice.

CAL

Spencer, stop, they like you!

SPENCER

They like the amount of me you let in. And what about Cyde? Your mom basically gave her a handshake when we got here.

CAL

She kissed her cheeks!

SPENCER

You know what I mean.

CAL

My parents, they...they already had so much trouble with the whole 'gay' thing. I just got them to like me again, alright?

SPENCER

One: some of you. Two: at Cyde's expense.

CAL

It was her idea to stay here! And...they know enough, stop.

SPENCER

Did Cyde know enough? You don't tell us anything, Cal.

CAL

You don't understand!

SPENCER

Make me.

CAL

Fuck, I hate this. Why is three so hard...

SPENCER

Love was never meant to be easy, babe.

CAL

You're right. Three is us, and us is so damn good.

SPENCER

There she is.

(CYDE enters)

(Cyde appears at the top of the stairs in a light red floral dress. Her hair is pulled back in loose space buns with strands of hair framing her face. She nervously walks down the stairs, catching both Cal and Spencer's attention.)

CYDE

Do I look like I can survive dinner tonight?

CAL

I—you are so beautiful.

SPENCER

I'm not.

(MÃE enters bringing food to the table)

MÃE

Meninas, a comida está pronta.

CAL

Uh, foo—foods ready. Tá bom, obrigada, mãe.

(Cyde rushes the rest of the way down the stairs. Both Spencer and Cal reach for her hands. Cal hesitates for just a second, before grabbing Cyde's hand and guiding her, with Spencer, down the last step.)

(BLACKOUT - END OF SCENE)

SCENE 2

(The dining room. Dinner has started and the table is full. Bacalhau, bread, salad, Vinho Verde (white wine), and more bread. MÃE and PAI are both seated at the ends of the table. CYDE, CAL, and Spencer sit beside each other facing the audience. CYDE is next to PAI, CAL in the middle, and SPENCER is next to MÃE.)

MÃE

Cyde, querida, you eat fish yet?

CYDE

Oh, I uh-no, actually. I can't eat fish. I'm sorry...

MÃE

Calista did not tell me. I am sorry. At least you are enjoying the good salad, yes?

CAL

I did tell you, mãe. I said Cyde is a vegetarian.

CYDE

It's really fine. The salad is so good! O-obra...obri? Thank you.

(MÃE ignores CYDE's attempt to speak Portuguese and sends a zing over to CAL.)

MÃE

Achei que você estava brincando, meu bem.

CAL

Of course, you did.

(MÃE, not wanting to acknowledge CAL's response, turns back to CYDE.)

MÃE

More rice?

CYDE

I'm okay, thank you.

MÃE

No, take more. Please. You barely took any.

Cal

Mãe, para. Ela não quer mais.

CYDE

Really, I'm okay. The salad and bread alone are very filling for me.

MÃE

You do not like my rice?

CYDE

No, I—

PAI

Meu amor, a miúda já aguentou o suficiente. Deixe-a em paz.

CAL

Mãe, she doesn't want the—

MÃE

Calista, I did not raise you to be useless. Pass the rice to your friend, now.

(CAL passes the rice over to CYDE with sympathetic eyes. As she does so she knocks a nearby utensil against the plate. The sound is small, but CAL takes notice of it anyway.)

CAL

Sorry...

CYDE

Shh, stop, you're fine.

(PAI notices SPENCER's empty glass.)

PAI

Spencer, wine. You want more?

SPENCER

No, thank you. One glass was more than enough. Thank you.

MÃE

Good girl, water is better.

(CYDE smiles. It costs her something inside, and SPENCER sees it.)

SPENCER

Speaking of water, Cyde loves water. She's basically obsessed.

CAL

Yeah! Oh my gosh, I always thought she was like a secret mermaid.

CYDE

Guys, stop, I am not. I can't even swim all that well!

CAL

Well, any least you're pretty like a mermaid! That has to count for something.

SPENCER

And you're fantastic at floating!

PAI

...Like a dead fish?

CYDE

I float because I can barely swim, guys!

MÃE

You three jokes a lot.

CAL

Yeah, we do.

PAI

Better than fighting.

SPENCER

Depends on the fight.

CYDE

Spence...

CAL

Spencer.

SPENCER

Oh my God, guys, I was talking about Parcheesi. Duh.

MÃE

I know that game. Calista used to cheat.

CAL

I would love to know how you think that.

MÃE

You always got good dice.

CAL

And? You saw me roll them.

MÃE

I know there are fake dice.

CAL

I was eight! Where am I getting this fake dic and how am I swapping it out for when it was your turn?

SPENCER

I can totally see little you rigging a game.

CYDE

Stop! I can so see that. Aw, how cute you must've been. You and your little evil plans.

CAL

I brought you both into my childhood home, so maybe pick a side with more mercy, aye?

SPENCER

I am on your side.

CYDE

We both are, always.

(A small, accidental tenderness enters. CAL looks at CYDE first, and her eyes gently welcome in CAL's questioning gaze. SPENCER nudges CAL with her shoulder, ever so gently, and when CAL looks over at SPENCER, it was like falling in love all over again with them both. MÃE sees the looks.)

MÃE

Cyde, you and Spencer have everything you need upstairs?

(CYDE glances at CAL. SPENCER stops chewing.)

CYDE

Yes, thank you.

MÃE

Good. Calista will have the couch.

(The fork in CAL's hand taps nervously against her plate.)

CAL

Mmhm.

SPENCER

Actually, I was thinking I could take the couch.

MÃE

No, no. You are a guest.

SPENCER

So is Cyde.

MÃE

I mean, yes. She is.

SPENCER

Right.

MÃE

I only mean, Calista is my daughter. She knows the couch.

CAL

I do know the couch.

CYDE

That's not the point, though.

MÃE

What is not the point?

PAI

Eat. Eat before. It all gets cold.

(Everyone tries, and for a few seconds, there's only dinner sounds. Forks. Glasses. Chewing. Bread being torn. A chair creaking. From the kitchen, the faucet starts dripping.)

CAL

Did someone leave the faucet open?

MÃE

It has always done that.

CAL

No, it hasn't?

(The faucet keeps going. Drip. Drip. Drip.)

MÃE

I put Cyde and Spencer upstairs together because you both are guests and I thought it to be the easiest fix. Two upstairs, one downstairs. Why make with complicated? Two is easy.

(Everything freezes. MÃE and PAI are both frozen in their actions. The faucet keeps dripping. CAL, SPENCER, and CYDE are still at the table, but the room changes around them. They do not hear each other. These are thoughts, not conversation. The music comes from dinner sounds: fork against plate, glass rim, the faucet, a chair leg against the floor.)

SONG: TWO IS EASY

CAL

Two is easy.
Two can pass.
Two can sit in family pictures
and nobody has to ask.

Two is easy.

I know that part.
I said one truth in this house once
and it came for my whole heart.

I got back in.

I learned the room.
I learned the prayers before the meal.
I learned which words make mothers quiet.
I learned which quiets heal.

I can say it.

I can say it.
I can open up my mouth.

But the walls know my name here.

And I don't want to wake the house.

SPENCER

Two is easy
when you're the one
they almost understand.

Two is easy
when they reach
for your name with both their hands.

They ask if I want coffee.
They ask if I need sheets.
They call me warm.
They call me funny.
They save me the better seat.

And I hate that I can breathe here
when Cyde holds in her breath.
I hate that I can win a room
by letting someone else get less.

I could smile.
I could swallow.
I could make the evening nice.

But I know what nice can cost us.
I know who pays the price.

CYDE

Two is easy
when you're not two.

You learn the shape of doorways.
You learn what chairs are not for you.

You laugh a little faster.
You say, no, this is fine.
You let the mother fill your plate
so nobody sees the line.

I wore the dress.
I did the hair.
I checked my face before the stairs.

I thought maybe if I looked like dinner,
I would not look like a dare.

I don't need a speech.

I don't need a fight.
I don't need the whole damn sky tonight.

But I am not a cousin.
I am not a friend.
I am not the girl you bring along
until the visit ends.

CAL
Don't wake the house.

SPENCER
Wake it.

CAL
Don't shake the table.

CYDE
I'm already at the table.

CAL
Don't make them choose.

SPENCER
They are choosing.

CYDE
Every time they count to two.

CAL
I can't lose them.

SPENCER
You are losing us in pieces.

CYDE
Not all at once.
That would be kinder.

CAL
I know.

SPENCER
Then move.

CYDE
Then look.

CAL

I am looking.

SPENCER

Not at us.

CYDE

Not where it counts.

CAL

I am trying to keep a roof over this love.

SPENCER

A roof is not a home when someone sleeps outside it.

CYDE

A room is not a room when I have to vanish inside it.

CAL

I know.

SPENCER

Then move the chair.

CYDE

Say my name.

SPENCER

Say both.

CYDE

Not perfect.

SPENCER

Not brave.

CAL

Just true.

ALL THREE

Two is easy.

Three is not.

Three is a chair pulled closer.

Three is a hand that won't get dropped.

Three is a plate, a glass, a place.

Three is no one keeping score.

Three is not a problem.

Three is who walked through the door.

CAL

If I wake the house...

SPENCER

Then let it hear you.

CYDE

Let it know I came.

CAL

If I wake the house...

SPENCER

Then stand there with me.

CYDE

Say my name.

ALL THREE

Two is easy.

Two is clean.

Two can pass for something smaller
than what all of this has been.

But love is not a hallway.

Love is not a couch.

Love is not a quiet dinner
where the truth cannot sit down.

So wake the house.

Wake the room.

Wake the saints on every wall.

We are already here.

We are already here.

We are already here at all.

*(The music stops. The room snaps back into dinner. MÃE
finishes the sentence as if no time has passed.)*

MÃE

Simple. Two is easy.

(The faucet stops dripping.)

CAL

Mãe.

MÃE
Hm?

CAL
Cyde should sit here.

MÃE
She is sitting.

CAL
No, I mean here.

(CAL stands. The chair scrapes too loud. Everyone looks at her. She picks up her own plate and moves it one seat down, making space between herself and SPENCER. She nods to CYDE's chair.)

CAL
Come here.

CYDE
Cal.

CAL
Please.

CYDE
You don't have to do that.

CAL
I know.

SPENCER
Do you?

CAL
Yes.

(SPENCER watches her, not letting her off the hook, but not leaving her alone either. CYDE stands with her plate. PAI looks between the chairs.)

PAI
The table is too small.

CAL
It's fine.

MÃE

Calista, don't make a mess. We just started eating.

CAL

I'm not making a mess.

MÃE

You are moving plates during dinner.

CAL

Yeah. That is where we are as a family right now.

(SPENCER almost laughs. CYDE sits beside CAL. CAL stays standing a second too long, then sits. Their shoulders touch.)

MÃE

You could have asked before.

CAL

I didn't know I was allowed to.

MÃE

Allowed?

PAI

She is not a child.

MÃE

I know she is not a child.

PAI

Then let her move the plate.

(MÃE looks at PAI. He returns to his food like he has not said anything useful. CAL looks at him, surprised.)

CAL

Thank you.

PAI

It was blocking the salad.

SPENCER

Very moving, Pai.

PAI

Eat.

(They eat. It is not better, but it is different.)

MÃE

Cyde, more rice?

CAL

You've got to be kidding me.

CYDE

No, thank you.

MÃE

You are sure?

CYDE

I am sure.

MÃE

Okay.

(The word is small, but MÃE lets the serving dish stay down.)

SPENCER

That fish is really good, by the way.

MÃE

Of course it is.

SPENCER

I love that there was no fake modesty there.

MÃE

Why would I lie?

CAL

That question is so funny coming from you.

MÃE

Excuse me?

CAL

Nothing.

MÃE

No, say.

CAL

No.

MÃE

Calista.

CAL

I said nothing.

SPENCER

She said it with her whole face, though.

CYDE

She did.

CAL

Both of you are having a lot of fun for people I am trying to protect.

(The table goes quiet again. CAL did not mean to say it like that.)

MÃE

Protect?

CAL

I mean...

SPENCER

Don't clean it up.

CAL

I'm not.

CYDE

You are about to.

CAL

I know, I'm trying not to.

(PAI puts his fork down.)

PAI

Protect from who?

CAL

I don't know.

MÃE

From us?

CAL

Mãe.

MÃE

No, you said it.

CAL

I know what I said.

MÃE

Then explain.

CAL

I can't do a whole thing right now.

MÃE

A whole thing?

CAL

Yes, a whole thing. The thing where I talk and you get quiet and Pai pretends the bread is suddenly very interesting.

(PAI looks at the bread already in his hand.)

PAI

It is good bread.

CAL

See?

SPENCER

To be fair, it is good bread.

CYDE

Spencer.

SPENCER

What?

MÃE

You think I do not want to know your life?

CAL

I think you want to know the parts that don't scare you.

MÃE

That is not fair.

CAL

Maybe not.

MÃE

We love you.

CAL

I know that.

MÃE

Do you?

CAL

Yes. That's the problem.

MÃE

Love is the problem now?

CAL

No. Loving you back is. Because I keep trying to do it in a way that doesn't upset anybody, and then I look around and I'm the one upsetting everybody.

CYDE

You're not upsetting me.

CAL

Cyde.

CYDE

You hurt me. That's different.

(CAL takes that in. SPENCER looks down at her plate. MÃE hears it, even if she does not understand all of it.)

MÃE

Why would she hurt you?

CAL

Mãe, please.

MÃE

I am asking.

SPENCER

Because Cyde matters to her.

MÃE

I know. They are friends.

(CAL closes her eyes for one second. Not long. Then she opens them.)

CAL

No.

(MÃE waits.)

CAL

Spencer and Cyde are here.

MÃE

I can see them, Calista.

CAL

No, mãe. Please don't make me say it fifteen ways before you let yourself hear the first one.

(A long silence. PAI reaches for his glass, then decides not to.)

MÃE

Calista.

CAL

I love Spencer.

(MÃE goes still.)

CAL

And I love Cyde.

(CYDE's hand moves under the table. CAL takes it. Above the table, she takes SPENCER's hand too. It is awkward because of the plates.)

CAL

I'm not asking you to understand it in the next ten seconds. I'm not asking you to say the perfect thing. I just need them to be in the room as what they are.

MÃE

And what are they?

CAL

Mine.

(SPENCER looks at CAL. CYDE does too.)

CAL

No. Sorry. That sounded weird. Mine like... my people. My loves. The people I came with. The people I am not sleeping away from because the house can count to two but not three.

PAI

The couch is bad for your back.

(Everyone looks at him.)

PAI

It is.

SPENCER

That is your first note?

PAI

I am starting with the furniture.

MÃE

This is not about furniture.

PAI

The furniture is part of it.

MÃE

Joao.

PAI

What? She said the couch.

CAL

I did.

PAI

Then nobody sleeps on the couch.

MÃE

There is not room.

PAI

There is room if we take the plastic off the furniture in the guest—

MÃE

That is not a bedroom.

PAI

Neither is a couch.

MÃE

You are missing the point.

PAI

Maybe. But I found the first problem.

(CAL laughs once, very small, because she cannot help it. CYDE wipes under one eye quickly. SPENCER squeezes CAL's hand.)

MÃE

You think this is funny?

CAL

No. I think it's very us.

MÃE

Calista, I don't know what to do with this.

CAL

I know.

MÃE

Do not say it like you expected me to fail.

CAL

I didn't.

MÃE

You did.

CAL

I expected it to hurt.

MÃE

And does it?

CAL

Yes.

MÃE

For you or for me?

CAL

For everybody, I think.

(MÃE looks at SPENCER. Then CYDE. She is not cruel. She is not ready. Both are true.)

MÃE

I need a minute.

CAL

Okay.

MÃE

Do not follow me.

CAL

Okay.

(MÃE stands and takes her plate. She goes toward the kitchen. PAI starts to rise.)

MÃE

No. Sit.

(PAI sits. MÃE exits into the kitchen. The faucet starts again. Drip. Drip.)

CAL

I should go.

SPENCER

She said not to.

CAL

Yeah, well, she also said two is easy, so clearly not every sentence tonight is sacred.

CYDE

Cal.

CAL

Sorry.

CYDE

Don't make a joke because you're scared.

CAL

I make jokes because I'm gifted.

SPENCER

You make jokes because your nervous system is a raccoon in a pantry.

CAL

How are you bringing that up now?

PAI

We don't have mice in the pantry.

CAL

What?

PAI

I know the animal. I mean, why is it in the pantry?

SPENCER

Do you?

PAI

Yes...?

(CYDE turns to CAL)

CYDE

Are you okay?

CAL

No.

CYDE

Good.

CAL

Good?

CYDE

I mean, honest.

CAL

Right.

SPENCER

That was a start.

CAL

Was it terrible?

SPENCER

Yes.

CAL

Great.

SPENCER

But it was a move.

CYDE

I am too mermaid like to be a friend anyway.

CAL

That is true.

(CAL looks at CYDE fully.)

CAL

I'm sorry.

CYDE

I know.

CAL

I'm going to say it again later when nobody is holding fish.

CYDE

Please do.

PAI

The fish is not the issue.

SPENCER

Pai, I have to tell you, you are really growing on me.

PAI

I was already here.

SPENCER

Exactly.

(MÃE is heard in the kitchen. A plate touches the sink. The faucet stops. No one moves.)

MÃE

Calista?

CAL

Yeah?

MÃE

Bring the dessert plates.

(CAL looks at SPENCER. Then CYDE.)

CAL

Okay.

(CAL starts to stand, still holding both their hands. For a second, she cannot figure out how to stand without letting go. Then she does. But before she leaves the table, she bends and kisses CYDE's cheek. Then flicks SPENCER's shoulder playfully.)

(PAI looks down at his food. SPENCER stays still. CYDE breathes out.)

MÃE

Calista?

CAL

Coming.

(CAL goes into the kitchen.)

PAI

Dessert is flan.

SPENCER

Thank God.

(CAL reappears in the kitchen doorway with dessert plates. MÃE stands behind her, holding the flan. Neither woman looks fully ready, but both are still in the room.)

MÃE

Careful. These are the good ones.

CAL

I know, mãe.

MÃE

No. You don't. These are actually the good ones.

(CAL almost smiles. She brings the plates to the table. MÃE follows with dessert.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF PLAY) ★