

DATE NIGHT

by A. Raven

NAME: Ashley Raven

HOMETOWN: New Providence, NJ

BIOGRAPHY: Ashley Raven is an English and drama teacher at Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School. Raven earned her BA in Secondary English Education from The College of New Jersey (Phi Beta Kappa) and her MA in Theatre Studies from Montclair State University. In 2015, the Union County Teacher Recognition Program named her LCJSMS Teacher of the Year. Raven's co-direction of *The Raven* (2010) and *Exhibit This! The Museum Comedies* (2011) won "Best Middle School Production" at the Montclair State University Theatre Night Awards. She is also the winner of the 2020 Jo Anne Fox Newcomer Director award. Raven serves as Secretary of the Edward Albee Society. She presented "Teaching Wilder," a dramaturgy focused drama unit for middle and high school teachers, at the Third International Thornton Wilder Society Conference, and her chapter, "A Queer Reading of Love in Edward Albee's *Counting the Ways*," was published in the third volume of *New Perspectives in Edward Albee Studies: Edward Albee as Theatrical and Dramatic Innovator* (2019). Raven has been staying positive during the pandemic by cooking and baking Ina Garten recipes!

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PUBLISH: Yes

CHARACTERS

LAURA. female, 20s, understated, anxious

MICHAEL. male, 20s, well-meaning, nerdy

AMBER. female, 20s, Laura's roommate, bold, assertive

TIME & PLACE

Enter a living room. Front door, windows, and porch upstage. Usable staircase to unseen bedrooms. Doorway to an unseen kitchen on the opposite side of the stage. Large couch center stage. Furniture pieces are mismatched to evoke a hand-me-down feel. A fireplace. It is midnight. The house is dark.

FORMATTING NOTE

--- indicates a pause in one character's line, cutting another character off

MICHAEL

(From the porch, we see MICHAEL and LAURA through the window. They've just been on a date and are, accordingly, wearing nicer than usual outfits. LAURA's hair is pulled severely back into a bun. MICHAEL speaks, nasally)

I'm bleeding!

LAURA

(Lights up slightly, just so the audience can see some faces, some movement. Leading MICHAEL by the arm through the front door as he covers his face with his hand. MICHAEL hesitates before walking through the doorway.)

Ok, ok. Come in. Come in off the porch.

(LAURA turns to remove her key from the door. MICHAEL continues without her and stumbles into a piece of furniture.)

MICHAEL

Ow!

LAURA

Oh! Be careful! Come over, uh...you know what? Wait here. I'll go get something to put on that.

MICHAEL

I'm bleeding.

(With his hand still over his face, MICHAEL looks around for a place to sit.)

LAURA

No, no. Don't sit down. Just wait. Here.

MICHAEL

But, I'm bleeding!

LAURA

Shh. Shh. Amber's sleeping.

(Quieter)

Better for you to stand when you have a nosebleed. Just...

(Gestures to his head, almost touches him, then stops just short of doing so.)

...tilt your head forward.

MICHAEL

When was the last time *you* had a nosebleed?

LAURA

(Laughs)

Oh, never.

(Pause)

Ok, I'll be right back.

(Still with his hand to his face, MICHAEL surveys the room for a place to sit. Finding the couch, he sits, reluctantly, on the edge. We can hear LAURA and AMBER talking at the top of the stairs, neither is visible.)

AMBER

Is he downstairs?

LAURA

Yes, and he's still bleeding. Do you know where the cotton balls are?

AMBER

I don't know.

LAURA

You used them last!

AMBER

So?

(LAURA continues her search upstairs. AMBER walks down the stairs. MICHAEL's back is to her. Her outline reveals she has long, flowing hair and a short silk robe. She has obviously just woken up.)

MICHAEL

Did you find them?

AMBER

Huh?

MICHAEL

The cotton balls. Did you find them?

AMBER

(Taking full advantage of MICHAEL's confusion, imitating LAURA's voice until otherwise noted.)

Oh, no. Not yet.

(AMBER walks up behind MICHAEL as if he is about to be her prey.)

Let me see what we have that's frozen.

(AMBER exits to the kitchen. MICHAEL, still with his hand on his face, looks around for something to sop up the blood that continues to pour from his nose. A pillow? No. The rug? No. MICHAEL continues his search when as he moves the

cushion of the couch, he hears rustling. He moves the cushion again, sticks his hand down, and reveals a handful of cash. He hears the sound of approaching footsteps and quickly replaces the cash and the cushion.)

AMBER

(As LAURA, still behind MICHAEL)

Here ya go!

(AMBER slams a bag of frozen raspberries on his face. MICHAEL yelps and removes his hand from his face. AMBER continues to hold the bag on his face.)

Better?

MICHAEL

(Vision and voice obscured by the bag)

Not really.

(Pause)

Do you have some tissues? Something?

AMBER

Tissues?

(Puts her hands on his shoulders, massages)

I thought you were a big, tough guy. Here I am sacrificing my smoothie fruit for you, and now you want tissues?

(Considers)

Take off your shirt.

MICHAEL

What?

AMBER

You heard me. Take. off. your. shirt.

(Uncomfortable pause)

To wipe your face.

(Another uncomfortable pause, more assertive)

Do it.

MICHAEL

(Hesitates)

You didn't seem this...bossy...at dinner.

(MICHAEL begins to take his shirt off. A door slams upstairs. MICHAEL stops with his head stuck in his shirt. Muffled)

What was that?

(AMBER takes out her phone and with a few taps, there is music. House music so loud, they have to shout to be understood.)

AMBER

Let's dance!

(AMBER lifts MICHAEL, with his head still caught in his shirt, up off the couch and begins to grind aggressively with him. After a minute, AMBER shoves MICHAEL back on the couch and moves behind the couch again. MICHAEL fixes his shirt. With a tap, AMBER turns the music off.)

Sometimes I just have to get all that energy out! I just feel possessed. Do you ever feel that way?

MICHAEL

Um, no.

(Pauses, considers his bloody shirt)

I think I've stopped bleeding.

(Pauses)

I should get going. It's getting pretty late.

AMBER

(Assertive, as AMBER)

No.

(Qualifying, As LAURA again)

No, I mean, I thought you might want to relax, get to know each other better...

MICHAEL

Well..

AMBER

You're injured. I know anytime I've had a nosebleed, it helps if I relax.

MICHAEL

Nosebleed? I thought you'd never had one before.

AMBER

(Smoothly)

Oh, I was just being silly.

(Laughs, unnaturally forced and light)

MICHAEL

(Obviously spooked)

Yeah, I think I'd better get going.

AMBER

Oh c'mon. Lighten up. Tell me about yourself.

(A medieval trumpet fanfare ringtone goes off from MICHAEL's phone.)

Who's that?

(AMBER leans in over his shoulder.)

Not who, what.

MICHAEL

What?

AMBER

What. Not who.

MICHAEL

What?

AMBER

(*Slightly irritated*)
WHAT. Not WHO.

MICHAEL

Oh my God. I get it. I mean, what is it?

AMBER

Oh.

MICHAEL

(*Pauses, hesitates*)
Have you ever heard of LARPing?
(*Silence*)
Live Action Role Playing?
(*Silence still*)
My app, it found a match. I'm into fantasy, medieval---

AMBER

--Is LARPing even...a thing?

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah, definitely. You get to be someone else. Someone entirely different, somewhere you've never been.

AMBER

(*Skeptical, starts to massage MICHAEL's shoulders again*)
How often do you do this LARPing thing?

MICHAEL

Not *that* often.

AMBER

But, enough to get alerts in the middle of the night?

MICHAEL

I guess so.

AMBER

Tell me about your character. What kind of person do you play?

MICHAEL

Lord Tristan Porter, m'lady,

AMBER

Charming.

(Pauses, searching)

And, what do you--- I mean, what does Lord Tristan Porter do in these LARPing---things?

MICHAEL

Technically, it's called a LARP.

AMBER

Huh?

MICHAEL

Not LARPing *thing*. A LARP.

(Pauses)

You use the word thing a lot.

AMBER

So?

MICHAEL

Just saying. I actually didn't notice how often you use the word thing until we got here.

AMBER

Is that a thing that bothers you?

MICHAEL

Well--

AMBER

--Who would I be in this LARP?

MICHAEL

Oh, gosh, I don't---

AMBER

---c'mon. You've gotten to know me a little. What character do you picture me as?
(AMBER slowly starts to cup the bottom of MICHAEL's chin in the beginnings of what looks to be a headlock.)

MICHAEL

Umm--

AMBER

C'mon, Lord Porter!

MICHAEL

Edrea?

AMBER

(Tightens her grip on him)
 And what does that mean?

MICHAEL

Laura!

(Tightens further)
 Powerful! It means powerful.

AMBER

(Tightens even further)
 Lady Edrea...what?

MICHAEL

Diabolus!

AMBER

That's more like it.
(Releases MICHAEL)
 You know, Michael, it's getting late.

MICHAEL

Oh. Ok.
(Gets up, turns to face AMBER, observes her)

AMBER

Something wrong?

MICHAEL

No, no. You just look...different.

AMBER

Goodnight, Michael.

(MICHAEL cautiously walks to the front door, turns around, considers AMBER, then opens the door and exits. AMBER begins to pin up her hair into a tight bun. As AMBER)

God, I thought he'd never leave.

(Pause, something comes over AMBER, a new posture, straighter, more somber, As LAURA)

Is he gone?

(Pause)

I don't think we're going out again. There just wasn't a...spark.

(As AMBER)

I doubt he'd have a spark if he was on fire.

(As LAURA)

Amber! You're awful.

(As AMBER)

Yeah, but look what I got...

(AMBER reveals MICHAEL's wallet. As LAURA)

You didn't!

(AMBER opens the wallet, a velcro sound is heard. As AMBER)

Ugh, what a nerd!

(AMBER rifles through the wallet and pulls out a wad of cash. As AMBER)

Thank you m'lord!

(AMBER walks to the couch, removes the cushion, and begins to count her cash. As LAURA)

Where did you get *that*?

(As AMBER)

You *know*.

(Pauses, As LAURA)

Jeff? And Kyle? Tom? Mark? Oh.

(As AMBER, nods. Lights go up enough to realize LAURA and AMBER are the same person. LAURA's hair has been repinned, but she now wears the silk robe associated with AMBER. As if waking from a dream, as LAURA, she walks over to the fireplace, turns it on, and, cash in hand, tosses the wallet into the fire. LAURA watches the fire. As LAURA)

Is this all there is?

(As AMBER)

We can go anywhere! *Be* anyone. Isn't that enough?

(LAURA sighs, as LAURA)

Again?

(As AMBER)

Yes. Always.

(AMBER emits a horrible laugh. Lights out.)

END SCENE