

Alex

The teenage daughter cannot bear to act like nothing is wrong anymore.

"I never have friends over because I don't want them to see my father. I'm ashamed of him and invent all sorts of excuses to cover up his abuse. I often dream about being in someone else's family - away from mine."

"He hides the bottles but I find them. And for every bottle I become more desperate and wounded. It seems like mom doesn't understand what is going on. Or maybe mom understands - is she afraid as well? That dad drink so much I take as proof that he is completely indifferent to me, Mom and Kim."

She cannot understand why dad treats them like that. Why he doesn't care about them. Why else would he drink all the time? It makes her feel completely worthless. If she and her family had any value he would stop.

"Our family life is built a hundred percent around dad. Everything revolves around him - whether he is sober or drunk, angry or happy - the rest of us just fall in line."

But she also understands why dad would rather be rid of her. It's her own fault for provoking him when he comes home tired from work.

Alex feels bad that she destroys the good mood. Not least for mom's sake. She pities mom because of what she has to face. But Alex is also bitter that mom puts up with it. Alex listens to her and help as much as she can.

Alex protects her younger brother Kim. She is the lightning rod, so dad gets mad at her instead. She tries to prepare Kim for dad's failures. But she is still mad at Kim because he is blind to dad's faults. It makes her ashamed to think about it.

"I can't concentrate in class because I constantly think about dad and the drinking. So the world fits really very well together. Both at home and at school my feelings are wrong and I'm not good enough."

She is beginning to realize that the family's life is not normal but there isn't room for her feelings. Alex is trapped in a vicious circle. Her clashes with dad make her feel even more wrong which in turn makes it even harder for her to control her emotions.

The Family

The family is a middle class family in a small, provincial town. Mom and dad's names are Erik and Kirsten but the kids don't use their names. He is a middle-aged salesman, she has a small hair salon. The two children are 13 year old Alex and 8 year old Kim.

When the game begins there is a tacit agreement in the family to help dad hide his drinking. His wife comforts him and listens to him when things go wrong. Kim looks up to him and secretly dreams of saving him. Alex has outgrown that dream and is beginning to realize that

they don't live like a normal family lives. Conflicts loom but don't come out in the open until after the addiction becomes impossible to hide.

Your Role

Seek confrontation and escalate the conflict, both directly and indirectly by destroying the good mood.

Involve others in the conflict and show Alex's conflicting feelings for them.

You must at once support dad and his player. Dad needs Alex's pity, while you pour gasoline on the fire for his player when you criticise dad. Your role is mainly to stoke the fire but Alex's bad conscience about spoiling the atmosphere also justifies dad's position.

Your Freedom

How do you seek confrontation? Is Alex defiant and provocative? Does she confront dad directly, forcing the others to choose sides? Or does she convince her mom and Kim first, so they can confront dad together?

How does her relationship with mom and her younger brother develop? Can Alex and her mom still confide in each other if they are on opposite sides? Will Alex turn against her younger brother if he continues to support dad?

Advice for Playing Relapse

You will get the most rewarding experience from this scenario if you find the balance between open conflict and tense, unspoken feelings – and if you trust your fellow players completely, both emotionally and in bringing the narrative forward.

Say it without saying it

A lot of the time you are subject to the family rules and cannot mention alcohol or show your true feelings. Use body language and implied glances to show your true feelings and say things in between the lines.

Telegraph

Let what you want to happen shine through in the way you play. This makes it easier for the others to play in the same direction.

Use the time between scenes

Things happen in the family between scenes. You can establish events by referencing them in the next scene. If you say that another character acted in a certain way, he did. Or at least that's how your character saw it.

Bring the others into play

Use the other characters' inner conflicts. This is especially true for dad whose player depends on the rest of you giving him equal parts compassion, shame and guilt.

Make interesting choices

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Kim

The little adult dreams of saving dad.

"I quickly fell into the role of the "little adult ". Half past four I pick up mom from work and give her a "forecast", as we call it."

"I try to figure out who might be at the grocery store right now and how I can hide my purchases. As soon as the coast is clear at the counter I head to the wine section, grab it, pay and leave before anyone sees me."

He is much more mature than he should be. He covers for dad just like the others. But no one talks to him about it. They probably imagine that he doesn't know what is going on.

"When I come home, I always wonder how dad is doing today. I have two fathers: one is "healthy" and the other is "sick". They take turns , and I never know when he's sick. Then it doesn't matter if we had a nice time the day before. Nothing matters. The certain oppressive feeling tells me if I can sing or have to sneak quietly in the door."

He always has an eye on dad. If anyone sees, if he is sick or healthy, happy or angry. Still, Kim often makes dad angry or upset . Dad says he "can not stand it." Kim does not know what "it" is, but tries everything he can to avoid doing "it".

Maybe "it" is being with Kim. That's probably why dad so often forgets when they plan something. Kim pretends it doesn't get upset him, so the others don't get mad at Dad.

"I am convinced that I am to blame for when dad gets sick. It is simply the only logical explanation I can find. I dream about being the hero of the family . Because if I can get him to never get sick, then everything is okay and we can live happily ever after!"

He is caught in a vicious circle. The more he tries to avoid making dad angry, the more he feels guilty when dad gets sick, and the more important it becomes to avoid it. His self-esteem is totally dependent on dad. If Kim's love is not enough to save dad then Kim can't be worth anything at all.

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Your Role

Find the balance between adult knowledge and child-like logic . Play him as if he is an adult, but let his naive notion of the father's problem shine through in his logic. His only child-like trait is that he reacts very quickly and dramatically. Everything is completely good or completely bad.

You must at once support dad and his player. Dad needs Kim's pity, while you pour gasoline on the fire for his player when you criticise dad. You must find the balance between compassion, guilt and shame. Even though Kim is let down by dad again and again, he loves him unconditionally. But Kim is also a child who becomes disappointed and reminds dad of all the times he has failed.

Your Freedom

Will he continue to support dad? Does his illusion come crashing down? Does he turn against mom and Alex, when the conflict comes to light?

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Kirsten

It becomes impossible for her to sweep her husband's addiction under the rug.

"What frightens me most is watching helplessly while his personality changes. When he drinks it's like a grid comes down. My husband can't get out, and I can't get in. It's hard to talk about the problem because it doesn't exist."

She takes care of the family. Erik does his job so how can she tell him not to have a beer when he unwinds?

"I've always covered for him. He takes care of all the fun and I get to do all the practical things. All my energy is spent hiding the state of things from friends and family and most importantly from my kids. My son still loves his dad but I know that he understands more than you think."

She hides it from the kids and helps them avoid triggering his anger when he is drunk. She comforts and listens to him when things go wrong. After all it's the alcohol that is to blame.

"Even though it's scary and feels insecure, this is what I know. In a strange way it's comforting to live with the facade."

She has pushed away friends and family to keep them from finding out. The only person she can talk to is her teenage daughter Alex. The youngest, Kim, is fortunately still ignorant and idolizes his father, despite the disappointments. She imagines that she stays for the children's sake. And what would happen to Erik if she left?

"But the truth is that I am ashamed that I put up with it. Ashamed of not having the strength to leave. But if I leave, everyone will find out what a lousy mother I am and that I haven't been able to take care of my children and myself. I can just imagine the gossip in the salon."

She is ashamed that she puts up with it. But she would be even more ashamed if everyone found out that she has let the family's life revolve around an alcoholic for years. It's easier to imagine that it's not so bad. She is caught in a vicious circle. The more she hides the more there is to be ashamed of and the harder it is to admit to others.

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Your Role

Play her loyally and nuanced. She knows what she ought to do, but she is trapped under so many layers of self-deception that she is not able to be rational and constructive.

You must at once support your husband and his player. Erik needs her pity while you pour gasoline on the fire for his player when you criticise him. You must find the balance between compassion, guilt and shame.

Adjust the pacing. Your role in the conflict is to pour oil on troubled waters. You can dampen things down if the game escalates too quickly. Conversely, you can escalate the conflict by standing back at the right time.

Your Freedom

She insists that hide the problem despite ever more unreasonable terms? She tries to get her husband to stop? She blackmails him with his love - "if you really loved me, you would not drink"? Does she scold him, ridicule him and treat him like a child?

How will her relationship with her children develop when the conflicts come to light? Can she and Alex still confide in each other if they are on opposite sides? Will Kim turn against her if she confronts her husband?

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Erik

His abuse gets out of control and has serious consequences for the family.

"I deserve a small glass of red wine with dinner. Kirsten agrees. I love the smell and taste of red wine, and I know a lot about good vintages and grapes. Once it is open, it would be a shame to let it go to waste, so I empty the bottle. Red wine makes me relax, so I can go the extra mile at work."

"I have become very calculating. I can drink two glasses of red wine after the morning car ride, if I have two hours before the next trip. If they are six hours apart, I can drink three glasses of red wine. It's simple math. "

He doesn't drink to have fun or because he doesn't care about his family. He drinks to get through the day. He drinks for their sake. When he drinks, he can relax and forget his worries.

"It's an either or mood I'm in, when I drink. Either I'm in a good mood or I'm completely black. And then you just can't contradict me."

"Everyone else gets the blame. I like to be the funny guy, but I'm definitely not when I'm unconsciously looking for a fight. "

But alcohol causes him to do things he regrets. He fails the family again and again. Forgets appointments, is always late, gets worked up over trifles. They know that he is easy to provoke after a few beers. Why do they push him until he loses control?

"My feeling of defeat is a large, abysmal hole. I cannot see the point of anything. The world falls apart."

He is ashamed of the things he does while he's drunk. He loves his family, and needs their sympathy and pity. But he can still feel their reproachful looks even though no one says anything. He said he was sorry! Why can't they let it go instead of tormenting him?

"How many times hasn't it made my life bearable? Given me happy times. Made me free from fear, given me the courage to dare what I would otherwise not dare say or do. It makes me dare to be myself, or something like it. If I take one more drink, then I will feel even better."

He numbs himself with alcohol to stand it. He is caught in a vicious circle. He hides how powerless he feels - even from himself.

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Your Role

Play him loyally and nuanced. He is erratic, and the whole family adapts to him. He is manipulative, and makes the family feel that it is their fault. He is in despair and ashamed and needs their forgiveness.

Don't play drunk, but erratic and hotheaded. He is used to drinking and you do not immediately notice that he is drunk. But the alcohol makes everything more extreme. He is demonstratively happy, his temper gets shorter and from one moment to the next, he can go from being the life of the party to furious or obnoxious.

Push him relentlessly towards the breakdown. You must show how the abuse gets worse and eventually seizes power from him.

Your Freedom

Does he make a failed attempt to stop? Or does he hide and deny the addiction all the way to the bitter inevitable end? Does he defend himself when he is accused of being an alcoholic? Or is he relieved the secret finally gets out?

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