



# ENGAGEMENTS

BY LUCY TEITLER



DRAMATISTS  
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ENGAGEMENTS  
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*For my Mom and Dad*

ENGAGEMENTS received its world premiere at Barrington Stage Company (Julianne Boyd, Artistic Director; Tristan Wilson, Managing Director) in Pittsfield, Massachusetts on August 19, 2015. It was directed by Louisa Proske; the scenic design was by Brian Prather; the costume design was by Beth Goldenberg; the lighting design was by Yi Zhao; the sound design was by Kenneth Goodwin; and the production stage manager was Paul Vella. The cast was as follows:

LAUREN ..... Amanda Quaid  
ALLISON ..... Kate Loprest  
MARK ..... Robert David Grant  
RYAN ..... Adam Gerber  
CATHERINE ..... Phoebe Strole

ENGAGEMENTS had its New York premiere at Second Stage Uptown (Christopher Burney, Artistic Director; Ryan McGlone, Manager of Artistic Development), in New York, New York, opening on August 4, 2016. It was directed by Kimberly Senior; the set design was by Wilson Chin; the costume design was by Beth Goldenberg; the lighting design was by Jen Schriever; the sound design was by Ryan Rumery; the production stage manager was Donald Fried. The cast was as follows:

LAUREN ..... Ana Nogueira  
ALLISON ..... Jennifer Kim  
MARK ..... Michael Stahl-David  
RYAN ..... Omar Maskati  
CATHERINE ..... Brooke Weisman

Special thanks to: William Finn, Artistic Producer, and Stephanie Yankwitt, Director of New Play Development, at Barrington Stage. RJ Tolan, Graeme Gillis, Billy Carden and Youngblood at the Ensemble Studio Theatre. George Lane and Liz Grobel. And to Cecilia Corrigan and Isabel Teitler.

## CHARACTERS

### *The Bostonians:*

LAUREN, late 20s, PhD candidate, “not the hot one.” Coltish and physically powerful and fighting against that. There’s something both repressed and unhinged about her sexuality.

ALLISON, late 20s, Lauren’s best friend, “the hot one.” A queen bee whose mean days are over, but whose popularity is forever. She’s the life of all the play’s parties.

MARK, 30-ish, affable, supportive, handsome enough, gainfully employed, husband material. The man Allison should marry, and he’s shown up exactly on time (it appears at first).

### *The Out-of-Towners:*

RYAN, early 20s, PhD candidate, an earnest young man who thinks he understands everybody better than they understand themselves.

CATHERINE, early 20s, recent college graduate, looking for reassurance, looking for identity, looking for her life (and apologizing for it).

## SETTING

Present-day Boston as if it were an English country manor.

## COSTUMES

The Bostonians always look like they’re dressed for a sorority formal. Lauren and Allison wear dresses. Mark is always wearing the appropriate suit or sports jacket for the occasion. They are products of the privileged suburbs where they grew up. The Out-of-Towners are less polished, more alternative. They’re dressed for campus life. Ryan is obstinately anti-fashion. Catherine is “trying things out” with her appearance, usually wearing one item or one pattern too many.

## **NOTE ON THE DIALOGUE**

When there is not a period after a line of dialogue, it indicates a short ellipsis. The character pauses briefly to think of the right next word, or just to leave an idea dangling, and another character jumps in.

### **GENERAL NOTE**

No matter how outrageous their actions, the characters should always feel real. They inhabit an absurdist comedy, but the comedy is driven by recognizable psychology at every turn—even, or especially, when the characters say the opposite of what they mean. They are always thinking and they always have plans. They are afraid to make mistakes, which is why they're making so many of them. Make sure to give them credit for their intelligence, even if the larger shape of things makes a fool of everyone. The play is never satire. Its pace is quick, almost like a piece of music.

### **GENERAL NOTE II**

Everything that Lauren does is about Allison, for whom she expresses love at all times, and never envy or resentment.

# ENGAGEMENTS

## Scene 1

### Dalia's Engagement Party

*A beautiful summer lawn party. A gazebo, or something that stands in for one, occupies a downstage corner. It feels as though we are about to see a nineteenth-century comedy of manners.*

*Lauren, dressed for an outdoor summer engagement party, crosses the stage, holding two glasses of Pinot Grigio, one nearly finished, the second not yet started. She scans the crowd, looking for someone. Then, offstage, she sees her friend Allison, and stops to take pleasure in the glorious vision.*

*Lauren speaks in soliloquy, attempting to narrate this scene rather than be a character herself. Oh how she wishes she were that—an uninvested party, with the ironic distance of a great nineteenth century novelist! Instead, she is deeply invested in what she's describing. She's full of longing and wonder as she watches Allison across the room.*

*She doesn't see the audience, but she's always aware of being watched.*

LAUREN. Looks like he already got her another drink. Look at the way she's holding her wine glass. She's always been so good at holding a wine glass like that, the way she crosses her arm in front of her body and lets the stem sort of dangle between her two fingers, like she's forgotten she's holding it. It's completely authentic, that absentness. She gets so animated when she speaks. Like she's forgotten everything except what she's saying.

*Lauren focuses on Mark, the serpent in her Eden.*

She's been talking to Mark for a long time. It's rude to talk to your own boyfriend at a party. They took the train here together, what is there left to talk about that they didn't already say to each other on the train?

*This image of the happy couple traveling to the party—and still having more to talk about once arriving—is a dark cloud on Lauren's Allison-bright horizon. She feels jealous and excluded. What's so great about him?*

He's so average. I guess people will fall in love with anyone—no one is really objectively special. But come on. There's "no one is special" and then there's him. He's so mediocre it's almost ostentatious. Like she's making a point—that she's so beautiful. That she's one of those women who is so beautiful that she doesn't need to be with an attractive man. Look at the way her hair shines in this weather. But then, all weather is kind to her hair. It can be pouring rain, a fucking deluge, umbrellas turning inside out, everyone running for cover, shoes soaked up to the laces, and there will still be that gorgeous shine to her hair, and she'll be the only one who doesn't notice it, because she's too beautiful to care.

*Allison, the subject of this reverie, enters. Also holding a glass of Pinot Grigio, she heads directly for Lauren.*

ALLISON. Hi, the line was shorter at the other bar, so Mark got me a drink.

*Lauren is able to immediately shove all of her feelings out of view. She excels at self-disguise, but there's still something farcical in the speed of this hairpin turn.*

LAUREN. Oh good, now I have a ready refill. I like that nail color.

ALLISON. Really? I feel like it makes my feet look fat.

LAUREN. Not at all.

ALLISON. Swollen. Like I just gave birth or something.

LAUREN. I think it's great with those sandals. So maybe you're bringing fat feet back into style.

ALLISON. A girl can dream. I like yours. Did you get it done at the place?

LAUREN. Half-off weekday afternoons. I'm living in luxury.



ALLISON. I thought you were working for that ancient professor.

LAUREN. I am. For now. Any minute he'll drop dead and then I'll have my afternoons off again. Just kidding. But every time the phone rings, I do think it's the hospital telling me he's died.

ALLISON. Shut up, you make your own hours! Do you know I literally spend between 4:30 and 5 P.M. staring at the clock?

LAUREN. Are you kidding? My life is hell. I'm kind-of-working 24 hours a day.

ALLISON. You get manicures in the afternoon. You're not suffering.

LAUREN. I have to sneak out like an eighth grader. I tell him I'm going to the library.

ALLISON. Do you really? How does he not notice that you come back from the library with different-colored nails?

LAUREN. He's colorblind I think.

ALLISON. Genius. Nice party, right?

LAUREN. So nice. I'm really happy for Dalia.

ALLISON. It's nice, isn't it? She seems incredibly happy.

LAUREN. She was eating those meatballs on a stick, which I thought shows just how happy she is. To risk spilling one of those on your dress at your own engagement party, you must be just, you know, crazed with bliss.

ALLISON. Ha. Totally. Did I tell you I'm not eating meat right now? But Mark said they were good. Where's Peter?

LAUREN. He couldn't come.

*Allison looks at Lauren, with amusement and affection. She knows her tricks.*

ALLISON. Don't lie to me. You didn't invite him.

LAUREN. You know how I feel about bringing dates to these things.

ALLISON. When are you going to let me meet him?

LAUREN. He'd bore you.

ALLISON. I'm not afraid of being bored. I'm bored all the time.

LAUREN. I don't know.

ALLISON. If you like him, I'll like him.

LAUREN. But I don't like him.

ALLISON. Then what are you doing with him?

LAUREN. Actually he's great. I don't know. Don't ask me.

*This too is familiar to Allison, as Lauren's closest friend.*

ALLISON. Sounds like we're going to need to find you someone else.

LAUREN. It might be that time.

ALLISON. Someone so wonderful you go out for dinner with him once and then we never see you again.

LAUREN. (*Intrigued.*) Like a psycho-killer?

ALLISON. (*Playing along with Lauren's intrigue.*) Maybe. I was thinking more along the lines of maybe a foreign architect.

LAUREN. Tall and handsome, I hope.

ALLISON. With great taste in furniture, and a winter home in the Antilles.

LAUREN. Yes, I think multilingual would be good for me at this juncture.

ALLISON. Oh definitely, and not just French and Spanish, or English and German or some bullshit. I want Eastern languages. I want clicking. I want a real Noam Chomsky for you.

LAUREN. Well yeah, he'll need to be prepared to set me up in China when the West falls.

ALLISON. And I'm thinking...family money

LAUREN. Almost too much of it. Almost over the top

ALLISON. But dead parents so no strings attached

LAUREN. And a full head of hair

ALLISON. Obviously. I think that goes without saying.

*Beat. This is a fun game that they've played for a long time.*

LAUREN. Or I'll get two cats.

ALLISON. Oh please.

LAUREN. Or I'm going to be single forever. I could even get three cats. Maybe over time, as spinsterdom settles in, I could accumulate four cats.

ALLISON. Lauren, you've never been single.

LAUREN. I'm always single, sort of.

ALLISON. You always have a boyfriend.

LAUREN. And they never understand me. So it's like being single.

ALLISON. You're so funny.

*Pleased and soothed by this attention from Allison, Lauren risks asking for something she wants.*

LAUREN. Want to go on a vacation? Want to go somewhere in August? Let's go to the Balkans and lie on a topless beach and have sex with strangers and then tell each other about it.

ALLISON. Didn't I tell you? Mark and I are going to Europe. I'm so excited. I'm literally counting the days.

*Pause. An ocean of humiliation, rejection, and envy crashes atop Lauren. For a second, she's lost in this riptide. Her darkest fears of being replaced by Mark feel proven true. She doesn't show it. Well, she shows it by not showing it—we see the depth of her feeling by how deftly she conceals every trace of it. Allison doesn't notice.*

LAUREN. That's so nice. I'm so happy for you. Was that his idea?

ALLISON. Actually, it was my idea. I asserted myself! You'd be proud.

LAUREN. Amazing. Where in Europe?

ALLISON. Not far from the Balkans actually. All along the Adriatic, starting in Italy.

LAUREN. Italy! Amazing.

ALLISON. And then the Dalmatian Coast.

LAUREN. The Dalmatian Coast! Amazing!

ALLISON. I'm so excited.

LAUREN. Allison! That is like ridiculously amazing and exciting.

*Allison catches sight of Mark, offstage. She looks at him, fondly.*

ALLISON. Look at Mark. What is he doing? He's just standing by himself. He has no idea anyone's watching him. Look at his hands in his pockets. He is such a dork.

# ENGAGEMENTS

by Lucy Teitler

2M, 3W

It is summer in New England and every weekend is someone else's engagement party. The wildflowers, specialty cocktails, and artisanal appetizers are perfect, but the people have a lot more to hide. Lauren is not at all ready for everyone to settle down, least of all her best friend, Allison. One night, when Lauren finds herself alone with Allison's boyfriend, Mark, her destructive feelings get the better of her. Surfaces are ruptured, lies become harder to tell, and Lauren must begin to reckon with the true, roiling chaos within herself. *ENGAGEMENTS* is a savage comedy about love and denial, a *Midsummer Night's Dream* with a few screws loose.

*"...bitingly funny...Ms. Teitler writes tangy dialogue rich in sharp-witted repartee."*  
—**The New York Times**

*"...naughty and playful...fascinating...overflowing with big ideas...Teitler takes a loathsome protagonist and makes us actually like her (or at least understand her)."*  
—**TheaterMania.com**

*"Captivating... A question for the culture at large: why is one woman obligated to attend quite so many engagement parties over the course of a single summer?"*  
—**The New Yorker**

*"What helps *ENGAGEMENTS* work—and it does so splendidly...is that it doesn't set out to be a generational anthem. ...At center, it's the portrait of a fascinatingly complex woman...Teitler's writing is whip-smart, and the text is filled with memorable lines."*  
—**The Boston Globe**

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