

# **ASK AUNT ALICE**

**by Tom Baum**

©Tom Baum 2017

## CHARACTERS

AUNT ALICE. 50s. An advice columnist

PEYTON. 20s. Her niece

The play is set in Alice's living room.

*(Lights up on AUNT ALICE and PEYTON, sitting opposite each other. Between them is a coffee table piled with magazines.)*

PEYTON: —I hope you won't be offended, but I really didn't want to come here. Mom insisted.

AUNT ALICE: Well, the whole world "Asks Aunt Alice," why shouldn't my favorite niece? Just relax and tell me the problem.

PEYTON: See, I don't really think there's a problem. It's Mom. She doesn't want me moving to L.A.

AUNT ALICE: Why not?

PEYTON: Ohmigod, please, I'm the major thing in her life. We're on Face Time all day long, we have lunch like three times a week.

AUNT ALICE: So your mother tells me. What does this boyfriend do for a living?

PEYTON: At the moment he's a bartender.

AUNT ALICE: What's he been in? Apart from student films.

PEYTON: How did you know....Oh. Mostly theater?

AUNT ALICE: Peyton, hand me that magazine. The GQ.

*(PEYTON hands her the GQ. AUNT ALICE leafs through to an ad, shows it to PEYTON.)*

AUNT ALICE: Would you date this dude?

PEYTON: Why?

AUNT ALICE: Just getting a sense of your taste. Taste is a basic Darwinian imperative.

PEYTON: O-kay.

AUNT ALICE: Don't give me "o-kay." Do you want my advice or not?

PEYTON: Yes. All right. Sorry.

AUNT ALICE: A bunch of Indians are walking in the woods. Their supplies have run out and they're starving. They spot some mushrooms. Look delectable. But are they edible? They ask the shaman, what's your vibe on this mushroom? Edible, he says. The shaman tears off a piece, pops it in his mouth, and dies of liver failure. Opinions were matters of life or death—still are, or they wouldn't be killing political cartoonists. So come on, what's your opinion of this dude?

PEYTON: He looks gay to me.

AUNT ALICE: Of course he's gay, it's GQ.

(AUNT ALICE *picks up a copy of Maxim.*)

AUNT ALICE: What about this one? With the bolt-on boobs.

PEYTON: What's she got to do with anything? We're talking about my taste in men.

AUNT ALICE: Sweetheart, don't go all binary on me. Our first love was Mother. She has the power to feed us or neglect us...but unless she tosses us in a dumpster, we pretty much glom onto the female body. How many women have you fucked?

PEYTON: None!

AUNT ALICE: Don't knock it till you've tried it. Let's see a picture of this actor of yours.

(PEYTON *takes out her phone, hands it to AUNT ALICE.*)

AUNT ALICE: He's gorgeous.

PEYTON: I know, right?

AUNT ALICE: The male equivalent of a fungible blonde. What's his name?

PEYTON: Gabriel.

AUNT ALICE: Biblical names are a red flag. Does he want children?

PEYTON: He wants four.

AUNT ALICE: What is he, a fucking Republican?

PEYTON: Ohmigod no, he's very left of center.

AUNT ALICE: What if you got an important job? Say a high-level job at Amazon, and they asked you to “climb the wall,” would he object to the long hours? What if you’re making more money than he is? What if you got pregnant at the wrong time, would he fight you on having an abortion? (*off her look*) What’s the matter, are you pissed at me, or is that your resting bitch face? Peyton darling, your mom doesn’t give a shit if you move to L.A. She’s sick of your lunches and your incessant phone calls. What she’s afraid to tell you, why she insisted you see me, she’s worried you’re making as terrible a choice as she did.

(AUNT ALICE *taps the phone, makes a call.*)

PEYTON: What are you doing? Give that back.

AUNT ALICE: (*into phone*) Hi, Gabriel. No, this isn’t Peyton, this Peyton’s Aunt Alice. Yes, that Aunt Alice.

PEYTON: I’ll never forgive you.

AUNT ALICE: No, you’ll thank me. (*into phone*) Gabriel, what’s your current income?...You’re following your bliss, I understand... Now listen up: say Peyton’s pregnant, gets a fabulous job, but they don’t let her take maternity leave, does she get an abortion?... No, you don’t have to think about it, just answer yes or no...Got it...Answer quickly now: You’re standing on a bridge. Below, a train is hurtling toward five people tied to the track. You can stop the train by pushing a fat man off the bridge onto the track, do you do it?...What if it’s a beautiful woman?...A beautiful fat woman?... Hitler’s mother, age 11?...All right, true or false: “The test of a relationship is whether the couple can be silent with each other...” True or false: “Unless couples work at a marriage, the marriage is bound to fail.”... True or false: “Fighting is part of a successful marriage, so long as the fighting is fair.”...Now be quiet, I’m calculating your score. (*mutes phone; to PEYTON*) How long have you known this bozo?

PEYTON: About a year?

AUNT ALICE: And in all that time you found out absolutely nothing. This is why women have terrible taste in men. They have to sell themselves on the deal, otherwise they’d all be lesbians. Peyton dear, your Gabriel is a momma’s boy.

PEYTON: You could tell that from the test?

AUNT ALICE: Sweetheart, he pushed you off the bridge, and he spared Hitler’s mother-to-be.

PEYTON: Give me the phone.

AUNT ALICE: (*into phone*) Gabriel, hold on, she wants to talk to you.

PEYTON: Gabriel, did you really spare Hitler's mom?...Yes, I would definitely get an abortion, if I wasn't ready to have a child... I didn't know you felt that way, we never discussed it...Yes, my mom made more money than my dad, that's why they split up...OK, at last we agree on something. I'll be by to pick up my things....Yes, she's still here.

(PEYTON *hands* AUNT ALICE *the phone*.)

AUNT ALICE: (*into phone*) Well thank you, Gabriel, always glad to be of service.

(AUNT ALICE *hangs up*.)Yes

PEYTON: I guess I dodged a bullet, huh?

AUNT ALICE: Ask Aunt Alice. That's what I'm here for.

PEYTON: No wonder your site gets so many hits. Thank you, Aunt Alice.

(PEYTON *hugs* AUNT ALICE *and exits*. *The phone rings*.)

AUNT ALICE: (*calls*) Peyton? Your phone!

(*Too late*. PEYTON's *gone*. AUNT ALICE *answers*.)

AUNT ALICE: Yes, hi Gabriel....No, Peyton just stepped out...You scored zero....Yes, the correct answers were false, false, and false. Fighting is useless, silence is fatal, and if you have to work at a marriage it means the marriage is already doomed...Patience and politeness, those are the secrets...No, I have less patience than a four-year-old, that's why I've been married three times...What? Two men, one woman...Well thank you, I've been told I have a bedroom voice...What a lovely suggestion, what time is your shift over?...Oh, you'll recognize me all right, I'll be in red leather, stiletto heels, and I'll be carrying a riding crop...Yes, I knew you'd like that....Because I'm Aunt Alice, darling...Did you really have to ask?

(*Blackout*. END OF PLAY.)