

Black hole

By Mark Bellusci

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CAST

AUDREY - The mother, age 40-50.

FRED - The father, age 40-50.

BOBBIE - The brother, age 20-30.

LORI - BOBBIE'S girlfriend, age 20-30.

ERIC - The stoned, hippy brother, age 20-30.

GABRIELLE - The sister, age 20-30.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR (OFFSTAGE VOICE) - Cynical, angry. Any age.

AT RISE: AUDREY, FRED, BOBBIE, LORI AND ERIC are on stage, in three separate areas. Spot up on FRED and AUDREY, who are relaxing at a table after eating.

AUDREY

Mmmm. No one cooks like you do. (While talking, she leafs through a stack of mail.)

FRED

Not "cooks." Creates. Designs. I'm an *artiste*.

AUDREY

(Still reading mail.) And I'm the *artiste's* biggest fan.

FRED

Well, we've got a long weekend. Treat me right, and I may just -- (AUDREY looks aghast.) What? What is it?

AUDREY

Gabrielle.

FRED

(Chuckles.) Most mothers complain when their daughters *don't* call.

AUDREY

It's an official letter.

FRED

(Nervously.) No. Please. Not again.

AUDREY

(Handing him the letter.) When does it end? When does it--

FRED

All right, let's just ... Maybe it's not her.

AUDREY

Who else could it be?

FRED

A friend of hers. Someone else who needs support and--

AUDREY

(Snatching the letter.) It's her, Fred. It's her.

FRED

Why is it always--

AUDREY

That's a question you should have asked years ago.

FRED

What are you--

AUDREY

The crowd she was with. The crap they read, the places they hung out.

FRED

That's my fault? I should have burned her books?
Destroyed her latte express card?

AUDREY

Hold it, just -- I'm sorry. We're -- *I'm* -- doing it
again. Attaching blame when there is none.

FRED

That's right. We--

AUDREY

We did our best.

FRED

I know, I ... I just wish--

AUDREY

No. No more wishing. We'll deal with it. As best we can.
As a family.

(Lights down. Spot up on BOBBIE and LORI. BOBBIE is
on his computer and LORI is reading a magazine.)

LORI

You promised that we'd go away this weekend, Bobbie.

BOBBIE

(Concentrating on his computer.) I am ... in the process of
... booking a place on the beach.

LORI

(Coming over to hug him.) Now I remember why I put up with
you.

BOBBIE

Annnnnnn ... (Shuts computer.) We are officially gone.

LORI

If we hurry, we'll have our feet in the surf by sundown.

BOBBIE

Just closing up and -- (Computer beeps.) Ooops. Let me
just check this e-mail.

LORI

No! Don't!

BOBBIE

(Chuckling.) Relax. Probably just some spam that -- (He
stares in horror.)

LORI
What? What is it? (She reads over BOBBIE's shoulder.)
I told you not to look!

BOBBIE
(Almost to himself.) She just dragged us through--

LORI
Why didn't you listen?

BOBBIE
How could she do it again?

LORI
What do you expect from her?

BOBBIE
You don't have to--

LORI
No, we don't have to--

BOBBIE
She's my --

LORI
She's *our* albatross. But not this time. Not after we
booked-

BOBBIE
Why don't you head out with your friends, and I'll join you
as soon as--

LORI
No! I'm going away with *you*.

BOBBIE
You know I can't leave her now.

LORI
She's your sister, not your child.

BOBBIE
I don't choose who my family is. You take the cards you're
dealt with.

LORI
Doesn't mean you go bust with them.

BOBBIE
I have to do this.

LORI
She's doing this to destroy our relationship.

BOBBIE

(Laughing.) Yeah, right. She puts herself through this just to sabotage us.

LORI

It's a sick call for attention.

BOBBIE

I don't know what it is.

LORI

(Beat. She sighs and relents.) All right. But I'm doing this for you, not her.

BOBBIE

I really appreciate--

LORI

Don't let it get around. I don't condone this. (They hug. Then, in a softer tone.) Do we really have to --

BOBBIE

(Sighing.) Let me see if my folks can handle it alone.

LORI

Just this once. You know how scary and depressing those places are.

BOBBIE

I know.

(Spot down on them, up on ERIC. Perhaps there is some Grateful Dead on in the background. A phone rings. ERIC pulls it out and bops to the beat. After a while, it stops.)

ERIC

Wonder what'll play next? (Phone resumes with same ring tone.) Same tune? Bogus.

(He shrugs and starts grooving to the phone beat, stares at the phone.)

May be some chick. (He answers.) You some chick? Beat, my sister.... (Suddenly alert.) Again? How'd you -- ... that's, like, tomorrow ... No, I know it's serious. Later. (Hangs up.) Chick's got to learn to be responsible. (Dials the phone.) Let serious bro deal with it.

(Spot up on BOBBIE.)

BOBBIE

Hello?

ERIC

Yo, Boobie.

BOBBIE
(Sighing.) Will you ever stop calling me that?

ERIC
You hear from sis?

BOBBIE
(Rhetorically.) What do you think?

ERIC
Cool, so you're gonna--

BOBBIE
Hold on. (He clicks the phone. Spot on AUDREY.) Ma?

AUDREY
Your sister.

BOBBIE
We know.

ERIC
Looks like you got that covered, so I'm gonna tip and--

BOBBIE
Whoa. You can't bail. You're the one she relates to most.

ERIC
You're just as related as I am.

BOBBIE
If you're not there, she'll freak.

ERIC
Awww man, I don't know what to say when I see her.

AUDREY
And we do?

(LORI nudges BOBBIE.)

BOBBIE
Well, now that Eric brought it up, Lori and I were all set to go away. Maybe just this once, ma, we all don't need to--

AUDREY
I can't believe-- Your only sister?

BOBBIE
But her friends--

AUDREY
How many you think she has left?

ERIC
Ain't right.

AUDREY
Never said it's right. It's family.

(ERIC and BOBBIE sigh.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE

At rise: Five chairs -- three in one row, two in the row behind it -- face the audience. MOM, DAD and ERIC are in the first row, BOBBIE and LORI in back. They are spaced so that all have a clear view forward. All five look uncomfortable, squirming and fanning themselves frequently.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR (OFFSTAGE VOICE)
So you've come to New Angry Young Voices in Drama. So what? You're nothing. Miserable middle class proletariat desperate for some form of culture. So shut up and maybe -- just maybe -- your underdeveloped craniums will pick up something. Tonight, we have a piece by Gabrielle Blackwell.
(They all clap.) Stop that! Don't embarrass yourselves with petty, tribalistic symbols of support until I tell you.

(Lights out. Silence. Then, they are bathed in brilliant light. They all shield their eyes.)

GABRIELLE (OFFSTAGE VOICE)
Witness, the filth of this world.

AUDREY
I can't see her.

FRED
I can't see anything.

LORI
I think I'm blind.

ERIC
I think I'm high!

(Bright lights are turned off. Everyone fumbles around with their hands, as if blind.)

GABRIELLE (OFFSTAGE VOICE)

How am I supposed to see when I am mauled by mediocrity?
How am I supposed to feel when I am enveloped by
automatons? I hate this world! I hate you all! I hate
the old, the young, the healthy the infirm, the ...

(Voice and lights down, beat, then up. MOM is asleep.
DAD has his head in his hands. ERIC is nodding to the
beat of his IPOD. LORI is turned away from BOBBIE,
who tries to comfort her.)

GABRIELLE (OFFSTAGE VOICE)

The dumb, the smart, the conservatives, the liberals, the..
(Lights down, then up.)

The religious, the atheists, the pagans, the ...
(Lights down, then up.)

Did I leave anyone out? Doesn't matter. You're all scum.
Cretins. Maggots. Filth!

(Lights down, then up.)

Oh, did I forget to tell you how vile how you are? How
much you disgust me?

(Lights down, then up.)

I don't know why I do this. You're all too dim witted to
understand. Let someone else try to salvage your wasted
lives. I'm out.

(Beat.)

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR (OFFSTAGE VOICE)

All right, show's over. If you have to do that pagan
clapping ritual, get it out of your system now.

(The all look at each other. Hesitantly, MOM starts
clapping. DAD joins in, followed by BOBBIE and LORI.

Then ERIC starts clapping, screaming and hooting.)

Great, the family's here: a Walton's Disney Christmas.
Pardon me while I barf.

(Beat.)

ERIC

Do we go backstage or--

FRED

No, they beat up anyone who tries. Gabrielle said she'll
come here.

AUDREY

Well ...

BOBBIE

That was ...

LORI
Even worse than the last one.

FRED
Didn't think that was possible.

LORI
I'm never coming to another--

BOBBIE
It's torture. Slow, steady--

GABRIELLE
(Bubbly and vivacious, with a giggle like a
schoolgirl.)
Hi, everyone.

FRED
Tremendous! The show was--

AUDREY
We loved it.

GABRIELLE
Really? I don't know, I thought it was too watered down.

BOBBIE
No!

LORI
Powerful.

GABRIELLE
(Giggling.) Oh, you guys. You're just saying that.

FRED
This one could go all the way.

ERIC
Yep. It's got that romantic comedy feel-good feeling.
(They all look at him.) In a gritty, noir kind of way.

GABRIELLE
Wow. Like, it means so much to me to have you here.

FRED
Are you kidding? A night of theater?

AUDREY
We'd come even if we weren't family.

GABRIELLE

Yeah, it's an amazing trip, isn't it?

LORI

Oh, it's a trip, all right.

GABRIELLE

You just feel the energy. The passion. The love.

ERIC

Was that before or after you spit at us? (AUDREY kicks him.)
But you did it so tenderly.

GABRIELLE

We have so much to talk about at the cast party. You're all coming, right? (All voice reservations.) Come on, it'll be great. We're going to throw stink bombs at strangers.
(More reservations from all. GABRIELLE gets melodramatic.)
No, I understand. My family doesn't want to share in my art. It's okay, really.

AUDREY

Of course we do.

BOBBIE

Guess we could make a little time for a party.

LORI

(Bitter sarcasm.) What else would we do on weekends?

GABRIELLE

(Giggly again, oblivious to the sarcasm.) I'm so glad you feel that way, because next weekend is the world premiere of my new show, "How I would pull your limbs off one by one if I could."

AUDREY

Sounds ... interesting.

GABRIELLE

Wear old clothes. I throw rancid pickles.

FRED

Can't ... wait.

GABRIELLE

Who says people don't support the arts?

AUDREY

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

END