MOVE ON/SLOW DOWN
A one act play about family, lost love, and soufflés.

Laura Barker
CAST OF CHARACTERS

DIANNE KITT: A harried lawyer in her mid forties. Mother to Andy and sister to Gloria.

ANDREA ‘ANDY’ KITT: Dianne’s sixteen year old honor roll/soccer star daughter.

GLORIA KITT: Dianne’s delusional twin sister.

EDWARD ‘EDDIE’ KITT: Gloria’s teenage son, a drug dealer.

FLOWER KITT: Gloria’s six-year old daughter

SCENE

A small apartment in downtown Chicago. Modern day.
SCENE ONE

(Light rises on a minimalistic apartment with a living room, kitchen, and doorway. Two characters enter from opposite sides. From stage left is DIANNE KITT, a harried looking 30-something in a stylish business suit. Her hair is falling out of its perfect bun. Her sixteen-year-old daughter ANDY KITT walks in from the other side, still in her soccer uniform. DIANNE is talking busily into her phone while ANDY plays with her soccer ball. They move around the apartment, oblivious to each other, as they put up Christmas decorations: a fake tree, some snowflakes from the ceiling, a wreath. DIANNE moves to the kitchen, and starts cooking furiously. ANDY crouches in front of the oven)

ANDY: Yup. It’s burning.

DIANNE (tensely): It’s not burning. It can’t be, the book says to put the soufflé in for forty-five minutes, and it’s only been thirty-three.

ANDY: Why do you even bother cooking all this? You know they aren’t going to eat any of it. Besides, it’s not like Aunt Gloria’s somebody you need to impress. You two grew up together, she knows you’re not Martha Stewart.
DIANNE: (ignoring her daughter) So the soufflé has about another 12 minutes, the turkey will be done twenty, and—where’s the pie? Andy, where’s the pie?

(Beat)

ANDY: I thought you were supposed to pick it up.

DIANNE: (slams dishtowel down onto countertop) You forgot the pie. Jesus Christ.

ANDY: Mom, calm down.

DIANNE: That one thing that you—That pie is my saving grace for this entire day, that is the only thing I get to look forward to in this nightmare of an afternoon, and you forget it. The one—

(she stops. Composes herself).

You know what, forget it. It’ll be fine. Everything’s fine. I just need to...finish the rolls.

(DIANNE busies herself cooking. ANDY sits on the counter, watches her)
DIANNE: They’ll be here in twenty minutes, what are you doing in your sweaty gym clothes? Go shower and put on something more appropriate. And make sure your room is clean. And you have to...go. Just go.

ANDY: (picks up her ball) Can we talk for a second?

DIANNE: No time. Tell me later, okay? Go change.

(ANDY leaves and goes to her bedroom. She changes into nice jeans and a button-up shirt. DIANNE finishes cooking and wipes her hands on her apron. She walks around the kitchen, wiping everything down one last time. She pours herself a glass of wine before going to her own bedroom. DIANNE takes off her jacket to reveal a pink sweater. Slowly, she lets her hair down. For a second, she looks young. She quickly pulls it back into a bun. She fusses with her make-up, hair and outfit, trying to make it perfect. She walks back outside and runs into her daughter.)

DIANNE: Where’s your dress?

ANDY: I’m not wearing it.

DIANNE: Oh yes, you are.
ANDY: It looks stupid on me! I look like one of those creepy dolls Grandma Porter keeps in the attic.

DIANNE: But you look perfect in it.

ANDY: I don't want to look perfect, I want to look my age, which, heads up, isn't five! You can't tell me what to wear!

DIANNE: I can, and I will. Go change before I lose my temper.

ANDY: Mom, please, can't we just talk about it for two damn seconds?

(DIANNE’s phone rings)

DIANNE: I do not have time for this.

(to the person on the phone)

Hey, Hank, how are you? No, not at all, you caught me at a perfect time.

(she snaps at her daughter and mouths ‘Go Change’)
ANDY: God, who cares? Aunt Gloria’s fucking crazy anyways, I could be stark fucking naked and she wouldn’t notice.

(Beat)

DIANNE: Language.

(Frustrated, ANDY gives up. She goes back into her room to change again. DIANNE talks on the phone until ANDY reemerges in a ill-fitting dress meant for a girl half her age).

DIANNE: Oh, my beautiful girl! You look perfect!

ANDY: I look like I’m on How To Catch a Predator.

(DIANNE ignores this and continues to fret about the last minute decorations)

ANDY: Mom?

DIANNE: (Still in a trance, looking out the mirror) Yes?

ANDY: I know you said the soufflé’s not burning, but there is a large amount of smoke coming out of the kitchen.
DIANNE: Shit.

*(DIANNE runs into the kitchen and removes the smoldering soufflé. Both ANDY and DIANNE stare at it.)*

ANDY: Shit.

DIANNE: Language.

*(DIANNE runs a finger along the blackened surface)*

DIANNE: If I cover it with frosting in leave it in the fridge for a bit, it'll be as good as new. Okay, I need frosting, sprinkles, whipped cream-Christ’s sake, Andy, move-it can still be perfect if-

*(The doorbell rings. DIANNE and ANDY freeze)*

ANDY: They're here.

DIANNE: *(checking her watch)* They were supposed to be here at 6:30, it's barely five.
(They both look at the burnt soufflé)

(Beat)

ANDY: Out the window?

DIANNE: Get the door. I'll take care of this.

(ANDY walks over to the door, slowing down the closer she gets. DIANNE is hurriedly spreading icing across the burnt soufflé. She pauses when ANDY reaches the door. Neither character moves. Then the doorbell rings again, and Andy opens the door)

ANDY (to the unseen guests): Auntie Gloria! Eddie! Flower! Come on in.

(GLORIA, a tall wiry woman whose hair is in a messy bun with hair sticking out at all the wrong places, walks in. Her hands are constantly moving, fiddling with each other, jumping, twitching. Her teenage son, EDWARD, walks next to her, holding the hand of his younger sister, FLOWER. FLOWER is around six)

(GLORIA walks in, pulling on the ends of her hair. She wraps her arms around herself, like she’s protecting herself from the cold. While GLORIA walks around, DIANNE puts the soufflé in a glass case and grabs her glass of wine. She listens quietly to what’s happening.)
GLORIA: It’s cold.

(beat)

It’s cold.

ANDY: Hey, Aunt Gloria.

GLORIA: It’s cold in here. Are you cold, Edward?

EDWARD: No, Mother.

(ANDY bends down to say hello to FLOWER. Instantly, she hides behind EDWARD’S leg.)

ANDY: Hey Flower

(FLOWER remains hidden).

You aren’t even going to say hi to your favorite cousin in the whole world?

(FLOWER shakes her head no. EDWARD chuckles, and gently pries FLOWER’S hands off his legs, but still holds her hands)
EDWARD: Can you say hi to Cousin Andy?

(FLOWER looks up at her big brother expectantly. He smiles down at her serious face. Finally, she waves at ANDY. ANDY holds out her hand for a high-five, which FLOWER gently returns)

(While this is happening, GLORIA wordlessly starts wandering through the house, touching things she’s not supposed to. In ANDY’s room, she picks up a small trinket and pockets it.)

ANDY: Mom! Come say hi.

(DIANNE gulps down the last of her wine and enters the room)

DIANNE: (Warmly) Edward (she embraces him).

EDWARD: Hey, Aunt Di.

DIANNE: (pulls out of the hug and looks him up and down) God, you’re tall. Last year, you were barely up to my shoulder.

EDWARD: Thanks. The goal is to catch up to Andy.
DIANNE giggles. ANDY scowls.

DIANNE: And congratulations on the internship at the Chicago Tribune, Andy told me all about it.

(GLORIA freezes at the sound of her sister's voice. She rushes back into the main room, staring at her sister like she's the only one in the room)

DIANNE (folding her arms over her chest) Gloria. (falsely cheery). It's been too long.

GLORIA (rushes towards her sister and grabs her arms. DIANNE remains frigid):
Dianne, Dianne, Dianne, I have news, I have wonderful news! About Kent!

DIANNE: Not in front of the kids, Gloria.

GLORIA (speaking over her): Well, my neighbor Gaby, she used to be friend's with Kent’s college roommate, so she could find out where he’s working, where he’s living now, don’t you see, Dianna, it’s a sign!

DIANNE: (gently freeing herself from GLORIA’s grip) Why don’t we discus this in the kitchen, while the kids go play?
(DIANNE snaps at her daughter).

I’ve got a nice bottle of Chardonnay, and there’s a pie just coming out of the oven.

(DIANNE leads her sister to the kitchen. DIANNE lingers behind in the doorway for a second to snap again at her daughter)

DIANNE: (in a quieter voice) Living room.
SCENE TWO

(DIANNE and GLORIA in the kitchen. DIANNE is sitting on the edge of her stool, while GLORIA is standing in the middle of the kitchen. DIANNE is taking long sips of a new glass of wine, while GLORIA just plays with hers)

GLORIA: He’s going to leave his whore girlfriend. The second he sees me, he’ll remember how much he loves me. We’re meant to be together. Last time I saw him, he said he was counting the sleeps until we’re together again. Isn’t that precious? And he’ll want to get married as soon as we can, that romantic fool. Do you think it’s too early to book Saint Michael’s?

DIANNE: (dryly) The restraining order might make that a little hard.

GLORIA: Oh no. No, you don’t understand. Kent and I, we’re meant to be together. He loves me. He wants kids. One boy, and one girl.

DIANNE: You already have kids. And they’re such great kids. Edward is wonderful. He’s a charming young man.

GLORIA: Kent?
DIANNE: No, Edward. Your son.

GLORIA: Oh.

(Awkward silence. DIANNE takes a long drink of wine)

GLORIA: And Andrea...she's well?

DIANNE: Oh, she's perfect. Always has been. She’s my little superstar. You know, I don’t know how she can be honor role and varsity soccer at the same time. And no trouble at all, she likes to spend her weekends studying in her room. Perfect daughter. Couldn’t ask for anything more.

(Silence. GLORIA is staring off into the distance)

DIANNE: Work is great, too. I love it. Just challenging enough without taking over too much of my life. I can come home and be with Andy, but still have a rewarding job. Life couldn’t be better.

(More silence)

DIANNE: So, Andy told me Edward is doing great in school as well. Top grade in AP Chemistry, I hear?
GLORIA: What if she tricked him?

DIANNE: What if who-

GLORIA: What if that stupid slut he’s dating brainwashed Kent into thinking he loves her?

DIANNE: (tired) Gloria, can't we just... please...

GLORIA: (talking over her) I mean, it’s entirely possible, isn't it? I read in The Enquirer that hypnotism is real, and that nasty bitch has probably using that dark magic to make him forget us, forget me.

(GLORIA stands up)

I have to go save him

(she starts hurriedly grabbing her coat and purse)

I have to go save my darling Kent, he’s probably locked up in the crazy whore’s deranged...
DIANNE: Gloria! Please, just sit down. Kent’s probably fine, he’s just... just one more glass of wine. Please.

GLORIA: No, you don’t understand, I have to go-

DIANNE: Just one more glass. One more.

(DIANNE forces a glass into her hand. GLORIA looks at her. For a second, both sisters’ hands are on the cup).

GLORIA: One more. Then I’ll go.

DIANNE: One more.

(GLORIA sits down with her drink. Visibly shaken, DIANNE returns to her seat.)

GLORIA (with sudden brightness): He’s counting the sleeps until we’re together again.

(scene fades as DIANNE takes a long drink from her glass)
SCENE THREE

(ANDY and EDWARD in the living room, sitting on the floor. Flower is looking excitedly through the presents.)

FLOWER: There are four presents for me, three for Andy, two for you, and two for Aunty Di.

EDWARD: Four presents for you? You must have been extra good.

(ANDY and FLOWER play with a model train set up around the base of the train. EDWARD pulls out his phone and plays Walking in a Winter Wonderland. The three sing along, laughing and being silly. A sudden crash silences their fun. ANDY and EDWARD exchange a look)

FLOWER: Crash! (Laughing at the noise. She starts playing with the trains again, but this time crashing them into each other, making it violent).

EDWARD: (grimaces) Sorry.

ANDY: No worries. She seems to be doing better.
EDWARD: She’s been having a good day. How about yours?

ANDY: Same as always. She’s in meetings all day and chugging wine all night. And the snapping. I can’t stand the fucking snapping. *(Mimicking her mother’s snapping)*
Andy, go back to studying. Andy, go clean the dishes. Andy, stop giving in to your depression, you promised me you’d get better. She acts like it’s something I can control, something that’s not clouding my fucking head twenty-four seven and choking me.

*(ANDY tears up. EDWARD puts an arm around her)*

EDWARD: Aren’t the medications helping?

ANDY: Mom makes me go pick up the prescriptions myself, but sometimes I don’t have the car. She says I have to pick them up to prove I’m an ‘independent adult’, but she just can’t deal with having a daughter that doesn’t want to live. I keep trying to talk to her about it, but she’s always running off to her next meeting, next book club, away...

EDWARD: You know, if you want, I can get you something to make the pain go away.

ANDY: What?
EDWARD: I got myself a second job. The internship at the Tribune doesn’t pay shit. I’ve got a guy in Englewood who can hook us up with whatever you want.

ANDY: Ed, are you sure this is a good idea?

EDWARD: Hey, I made five-fifty an hour at Pizza Palace, and now I’m making two hundred a day. Do you have any fucking idea how expensive Mom’s medication is?

ANDY: Doesn’t insurance cover it?

EDWARD: You really think Mom remembered the deadlines for those?

ANDY: I’m sorry. Fuck. I’m just fucking everything up today.

EDWARD: Hey, it’s okay. No crying now. You want me to go pick up your prescription for you? Farnsworth Pharm, right?

(ANDY nods. EDWARD grabs his coat and leaves.)

(Another crash. ANDY sits quietly. Silence. FLOWER stops playing with the train. Wordlessly, ANDY gets up and plugs in the tree. She sits back down, and the two look at the beautiful lit up tree.)
FLOWER: Beautiful!

(ANDY picks up EDWARD’s phone and resumes playing *Walking Through a Winter Wonderland* on the phone, and the two sit in the glow of the tree.)
SCENE FOUR

(Back to the kitchen. GLORIA and DIANNE are watching the television. GLORIA is half-singing along to the commercial. DIANNE keeps checking her watch.)

DIANNE: More wine?

GLORIA: No.

(DIANNE pours herself another glass, her fourth or fifth. She drinks while GLORIA watches the television. Suddenly, GLORIA laughs.)

DIANNE: What?

GLORIA: Remember when we were kids, back when you were little Miss Valedictorian, and we were always desperate to get alcohol? We would’ve sold our soul for a fifth. And now, I don’t even like it. But you drink enough for the both of us.

DIANNE: (dryly) Those were the days.

GLORIA: Remember Charlie? Your old boyfriend? Whatever happened to him?

GLORIA: You and him were supposed to be best man and maid of honor at our wedding. Green satin for you, and a classic suit on him. You would’ve made a lovely couple. You made a lovely kid.

DIANNE: Perfect kid. Perfect.

GLORIA: You know, there’s still a chance you and Charlie could get back together. Than we could have a double wedding at Saint Michaels, and Flower could be our flower girl. That’s what I named her for, anyway.

DIANNE: (pressing her wine glass to her forehead) No, I don’t think that’s going to happen.

GLORIA: What do you mean? Of course it can happen. Anything can. Love doesn’t die, Dianne, it doesn’t. Kent loves me. And Charlie could still-

DIANNE: Gloria, no. Just stop.

GLORIA: Is that all you know how to say? No? Do you know any other word? It’s always no, no, no, no, NO!
DIANNE: (looking at the door) Keep it down, the kids-

GLORIA: The kids, the kids, the fucking kids. Stop using them as a distraction! You're always trying to hush me and hide me away. Are you embarrassed of me?

DIANNE: Of course I'm not, you're my sister.

GLORIA: I know it. You're jealous.

DIANNE: (choking on her wine) I'm what?

GLORIA: Admit it. You are. You were always so uppity with your fancy college and internships, but you never found love. And I did.

DIANNE: (trying to keep it together) That's not true.

GLORIA: (touching DIANNE's arm) It's okay. I understand. You'll find someone someday.

DIANNE: (standing up, suddenly angry) Alright, I can't take this shit anymore. You're not getting married to Kent at Saint Michaels, you're not going to have a double
wedding with Charlie and I, you’re not getting married at all! How are you supposed to marry a man who you had a one night stand with twenty fucking years ago?

(Silence)

GLORIA: You _bitch._

(She picks up the coffee cup and throws it at DIANNE. DIANNE ducks)

DIANNE: You can’t live like this, Gloria! You have to move on!

(The sisters battle. GLORIA throws glasses, cutlery, whatever she can find.)

GLORIA: You disloyal whore! You bitch, you nasty bitch, you-I can’t think about this right now.

(she sinks to the ground)

I can’t, I can’t, I can’t-

(DIANNE softens and goes to touch her sister’s shoulder).

GLORIA: DON’T TOUCH ME, WHORE!
(She throws a cookie jar at DIANNE, which hits the wall and breaks.)

(FLOWER enters)

FLOWER: Momma, where’s Eddie?

GLORIA: Not now, baby, Momma can’t think about that night now.

FLOWER: (voice starting to tremble) Momma, where’s Eddie?

GLORIA (pulling on the ends of her hair): I can’t deal with this right now, I just can’t. I can’t, this is too much, this is just too much, and I can’t...

FLOWER: (visibly distraught at her mother’s state) I want Eddie.

GLORIA: (harsh) Well, he’s gone, because you’re being a bad girl. You’ll have to deal with that.

(FLOWER starts to cry. GLORIA knocks her wine glass on the floor, making it shatter. FLOWER cries even harder.)
DIANNE: Gloria! (she goes to pick up FLOWER, but FLOWER throws herself onto the floor in full temper-tantrum mode. GLORIA covers her ears at the sound.)

GLORIA (groaning): Make it stop, Dianne.

ANDY: (rushing in) What's going on?

DIANNE: (handing FLOWER to ANDY) Just take Flower and go, just go away.

(Front door slams. EDWARD enters with a brown paper bag. He stops when he sees the scene)

EDWARD: What the hell?

DIANNE: Language!

GLORIA: (rubbing her temples) Shut it up, will you, Edward?

(For a second, it looks like EDWARD wants to kill his mother. Then he hurries over to his little sister and scoops her up)

EDWARD: Hey, it’s okay. I’m here. It’s going to be okay.
(he smooths her hair, and she slowly calms down)

TANSY: I’ll be a good girl, I promise. Then you won’t have to go away.

(EDWARD's hand freezes in his sister's hair. Pause)

EDWARD: You’re a good girl, Tansy. Such a good girl.

(to his mother, through his teeth)

Why couldn’t you just tell her I would be back?

GLORIA: (covering her face with her hands) I don’t deserve this. Kent will take me away from this, and we'll live happily ever-

DIANNE: No, you won’t.

(GLORIA freezes. She stares at her sister. Suddenly, GLORIA grabs the soufflé and it's glass case and throws it on the floor while everyone screams ‘no’.)

GLORIA: Edward. Flower. Grab your coats. We’re leaving.

EDWARD: Mother, no.
GLORIA: Now.

(Silently, EDWARD and FLOWER get ready to go. DIANNE and ANDY stand shocked in the kitchen. GLORIA buttons up her coat. GLORIA turns to leave, but pauses in the doorway)

GLORIA: We'll end up together, Kent and I. You'll see.

(GLORIA takes FLOWER's hand and walks away. EDWARD starts after them, but remembers the paper bag. EDWARD runs back and hands it to ANDY. They all look at the ruined soufflé together.)

EDWARD: Merry Christmas.

(EDWARD runs to catch up with his family. ANDY and DIANNE stand motionless)

DIANNE: I guess we'd better clean it up.

(she notices the bag)

What’s in the bag? Never mind, no time now, just tell me later.
(DIANNE starts getting out the cleaning supplies. ANDY clutches the bag. She opens her mouth, but shuts it and helps her mother clean.)

(BLACKOUT)