

## **Alban's Garden**

### **A ten minute play**

#### **Characters**

SHARON, 40, African-American, female

LAURA, 35, white, female

#### **Time**

Very late one afternoon

#### **Place**

Sharon's Living Room in Alban's Garden

**Synopsis:** *Alban's Garden is a play about two neighbors in the aftermath of a murder in their neighborhood. It takes place in the home of Sharon, whose husband has been recently murdered. Laura seeks information from Sharon about the crime, but Sharon is unable to provide it. Sharon seeks compassion and understanding from Laura. The play begins when Laura brings Sharon a tub of White Chicken Chili. The play ends when Sharon dumps the White Chicken Chili onto a table.*

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**Alban's Garden**

**A ten minute play**

*We hear a backing alarm. It stops.*

*SHARON, 35, African-American, is standing in a living room with the lights down low. Everything in the room is upside down: chairs, a coffee table, a lamp, etc., and no one will comment on this or notice it throughout the play.*

*There is a knock at the door. SHARON does not move. The knock is louder. SHARON does not move. The knock is even louder. SHARON moves to the door, which might also be upside down, and looks through a peephole. She opens the door. LAURA, 40, white, is there, holding a large plastic tub with a lid.*

**LAURA**

Hi there. I'm Laura. I live up on Putnam. I wanted to bring this on by.

**SHARON**

What is it?

**LAURA**

White Chicken Chili. It's really so good. I made it just now. That's not why it's good. It IS good, I had some, it's just a great recipe, really so simple. So easy to make.

**SHARON**

Thank you.

*SHARON accepts the tub.*

**LAURA**

It's got jalapeno. I hope that's no problem. There's no added salt, so, to give it some kick // I put in some

**SHARON**

That's very thoughtful of you.

**LAURA**

Oh, sure that's no problem. You're... Sharon, right? Laura.

Yes, you said. **SHARON**

I'd love to come in...just to chat or to visit. **LAURA**

We don't have a/c. **SHARON**

No worries. It's cooler //this evening **LAURA**

This isn't a // good time. **SHARON**

I won't stay too long. I know that you're tired. **LAURA**

Aren't you going to the meeting? **SHARON**

I wanted to come by here first to see you. **LAURA**

Do you think the talk at the meeting will turn to chili? **SHARON**

I'm really so sorry. So terribly sorry. **LAURA**

Thank you. **SHARON**

Everyone's sorry. We all feel just awful. **LAURA**

Everyone? **SHARON**

I speak for the Garden. **LAURA**

You're the first bearing gifts. **SHARON**

**LAURA**

The Garden has never had anything happen before. By “happen” I mean like what happened last // week.

**SHARON**

Nothing like this has ever happened to me. Thank you for the meal.

*SHARON attempts to shut the door.*

**LAURA**

It’s awful how some folks are acting...the posts that are flying online. I think anonymity brings out the worst.

**SHARON**

I guess that explains it. I know you need to get over to that meeting.

**LAURA**

How’s...Brandon? It’s Brandon, your son, am I right?

**SHARON**

Yes.

**LAURA**

I hope he likes chili. He’s doing OK?

**SHARON**

Do you have children?

**LAURA**

Two girls, four and seven. Elise and Nicole.

**SHARON**

How would they be doing?

**LAURA**

Would you please let me give you a hug?

*LAURA hugs SHARON. SHARON lets LAURA in.  
They have to stand.*

I’m trying to think if you’ve been at the tot lot. I’m there every day with the girls right at four. We live just across – garnet shutters and trim? That playground’s the thing we love most in the Garden. It makes Alban’s Garden the place that we love.

**SHARON**

Brandon was already too big for those slides when we moved in.

**LAURA**

Of course. And just when did you get here again?

**SHARON**

Last year.

**LAURA**

Of course. And how old is he now, would you say?

**SHARON**

Nine.

**LAURA**

Third grade. Does he have Mrs. Lake or Miss Becker?

**SHARON**

Fourth, actually.

**LAURA**

How great. Are there grandfolks? To help out, I mean?

**SHARON**

We'll be fine. I imagine // that meeting is starting

**LAURA**

Do you have other family or people nearby?

**SHARON**

You mean will they be coming out to Alban's Garden?

**LAURA**

I want to make sure you're well taken care of. You have the support and the help that you need?

**SHARON**

That Elantra out front is a plainclothes cop.

**LAURA**

Oh my. So you're worried that...whoever did this...

**SHARON**

None of you need to be worried.

**LAURA**

Of course. But if cops are patrolling our driveways...

**SHARON**

There are cops because it's Alban's Garden. And I don't want you to worry.

**LAURA**

Of course. That's so kind. But when things like this happen...

**SHARON**

This has nothing to do with any of you. Be sure to tell them that at the meeting.

**LAURA**

It isn't for me...It's more for the Garden. We just want to know what went on Monday night.

**SHARON**

I've been asked not to speak about it.

**LAURA**

We all heard the shots. Like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Did you see who it was? Did you get a description?

**SHARON**

I'm not allowed to say anything.

**LAURA**

They were still finding casings as late as last night. Somebody said there were forty or more.

**SHARON**

The police have forbidden me from // saying anything

**LAURA**

Some said they heard fifty. That it went on forever. It woke up the Garden on such a nice night.

**SHARON**

There were seven. Seven! Not forty. Not fifty. You can take that to the meeting. Tell them at the meeting that my son and I each counted seven.

**LAURA**

Oh no. Then you saw it? I hate to upset you. I know this is awful. It's such a bad thing.

**SHARON**

We heard it. I tried to keep Brandon from running outside.

**LAURA**

Thank heaven that he wasn't hurt in the melee.

**SHARON**

Oh yes, all he had to endure was watching his father...I'm sorry. I know you mean well.

**LAURA**

There's counselors galore who live in the Garden. Our neighbor would see him for free, if I asked her.

**SHARON**

I've already begun that process through my health insurance, thank you.

**LAURA**

I feel so damn awkward. It's just I don't know you. I should have come over the day you moved in. I'm either at work or I'm chasing my girls.

**SHARON**

But here you are now. And I probably should have gone to the tot lot more. Just because. The first time I was there, when we found out that Brandon was too big for the slides, one of our neighbors, from right here in Alban's Garden, says, "Hi there. May I help you?" Pulls over to the tot lot. Gets out of his Subaru with the Obama sticker.

"Hi there."

"May I help you?"

Still, we had been looking forward to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks this weekend.

**LAURA**

You know you're still welcome. You should come, we make popcorn.

**SHARON**

The only thing I can tell you is that you are safe and you have nothing to worry about.

**LAURA**

Oh, Sharon, I want to believe you so much. But when people come shooting // then we have to

**SHARON**

One person. Not people.

**LAURA**

Who was it? You know him? Or her. Not assuming.

**SHARON**

The police are handling it. Thank you for the chili.

**LAURA**

We're getting Nicole a two-wheeler in August. Next month she'll be riding all over the place. I need to be sure that she's safe when she's out there. We moved to the Garden so our kids would be safe.

**SHARON**

We moved here to be safe as well.

**LAURA**

Of course. I'm so sorry that didn't work out.

**SHARON**

And I am truly sorry that we have caused you so much fear. Tell them that at the meeting.

**LAURA**

I think when we know what went on we'll feel better.

**SHARON**

And then will you stop the posts on the Alban's Garden website about how this is a crack house or a safe house or Section 8 or that we moved in to corner the drug market?

**LAURA**

That's just a few idiots. And I'm sorry they're out there. They don't represent what the Garden's about.

**SHARON**

Then the dead cat on my porch this morning was not a taste of things to come.

**LAURA**

That's awful. I can not believe they would do that.

**SHARON**

Strange happenings in the Garden. And who are they?

**LAURA**

Who are they?

**SHARON**

Who are they that would do that?

**LAURA**

Put a cat on your porch?

**SHARON**

Or post garbage online. Try to scare us on out, send us back where we came from?

**LAURA**

I don't know.



**SHARON**

But you must have suspicions, some inkling. When awful things happen it must be clear why. I'd feel so much better if I knew who it was. Perhaps you'll find out at the meeting tonight? And then you'll come back and you'll tell me who was it.

**LAURA**

I hope you won't let a few closed minds upset you. I'd hate you to feel you'd been frightened away.

**SHARON**

Do you want us to move?

**LAURA**

No, of course not. Why ask that?

**SHARON**

I read my newsletter. I know the rules about invasive species in the Garden.

**LAURA**

I want for the Garden to be a safe place. For you and for me, for our kids, for our kittens.

And I want you and Brandon to savor the chili. There's more where that came from. Perhaps I'll come back.

**SHARON**

It's so very kind of you, Laura. I thank you. I'm sure we'll both savor your White Chicken Chili.

**LAURA**

Can I ask you to sit with us Sunday at fireworks?

**SHARON**

Of course. Could I ask you a small little favor?

**LAURA**

Of course. I'd be glad to help howe'er I can.

**SHARON**

Would you taste just a bit of that White Chicken Chili?

**LAURA**

I'm sorry?

**SHARON**

A moment. I'll fetch you a spoon.

*SHARON goes off. LAURA stands in the living room, and we hear a backing alarm. SHARON returns with a spoon.*

Here you are. I just want to be sure that it's safe.

**LAURA**

I don't under...I made it this...

**SHARON**

Just a taste. Would you like me to heat it up first?

**LAURA**

What are you saying?

**SHARON**

I feel so damn awkward. It's just I don't know you.  
I'm thinking about the October newsletter.  
That wonderful story about Halloween.  
About how to clearly inspect all the candy.  
It got me to thinking 'bout life in the Garden.  
About how you think that you're gonna be safe.

I just want to know that I'm safe, you know, Laura?

Here. Just a spoonful. You said that you'd had some.

*A long standoff over a spoonful of White Chicken Chili.*

**LAURA**

I am so terribly sorry for your loss.

**SHARON**

I hope it's a wonderfully meaningful meeting.

*LAURA is gone. SHARON looks at the tub for a long time. Eventually, she dumps the White Chicken Chili onto the overturned coffee table. She places the tub upside down over it. We hear the backing alarm as the lights fade.*

**END OF PLAY**