THE KISS
by Mark Harvey Levine
ALLISON’S apartment, early evening. She is doing laundry and listening to music, and after a few seconds begins to dance and sing *(loudly and badly).* There’s a knock at the door. Allison quickly stops singing and dancing.

Hello?

DENNIS *(O.S.)*

Allison, it’s me...

She opens the door.

ALLISON

Dennis? What are you doing here?

DENNIS *(entering)* Do you have a second? I need your help...

ALLISON

Don’t you have a date with Printer Lady?

DENNIS

Yeah, I’m on my way. But first I have to ask you something...

What?

DENNIS

Well...I don’t want you to take this the wrong way, but-- Can I kiss you?

ALLISON

What?!

DENNIS

...I need to know if I’m a good kisser.

ALLISON *(pause) ....WHAT?!!*

DENNIS

I need to know if I’m a good kisser! Look, you remember Sharon...

ALLISON

The one who did the thing with--
DENNIS
With the bird, yes. Well, when we were breaking up...in the middle of everything...she told me I was a lousy kisser.

ALLISON
Dennis.

DENNIS
I know, we were breaking up, and she probably just said that to--But maybe it’s true!

ALLISON
Dennis, this is Sharon we’re talking about here.

DENNIS
I know...but I think I’m going to kiss Anne tonight, and I want to know if I’m doing it correctly.

ALLISON
You’re using lips, right?

DENNIS
You know what I mean. Can you help me out here?

ALLISON
You want to kiss me.

DENNIS
If it’s not too weird. (she gives him a look) I mean, I know it’s weird, but--

ALLISON
You want to kiss me?!

DENNIS
And then I want a critique. I really like Anne. If I’m a bad smoocher, I need to know before tonight.

ALLISON
Well, how would I -- I mean, it’s not -- for God’s sake, Dennis!

DENNIS
Look, have you ever been kissed... really kissed, long and hard and by someone who knows how?

ALLISON
(smiling) Well...yes, actually.

DENNIS
And have you ever been kissed badly?
ALLISON
Yeah, sure.

DENNIS
Then you can tell the difference.

ALLISON
Is this some sort of strange romantic overture?

Allison...

I mean, really.

DENNIS
I just need --

ALLISON
(tenderly) Dennis...we’ve been friends for what...five years now? If you have some feelings for me...it would be natural. But you’ve got to tell me. Be honest now.

DENNIS
(tentatively, heartfelt) Alright...well...we HAVE been friends for a long time...and you know I...care about you a lot...and I enjoy...being with you...and I was just thinking about you, and-

ALLISON
Okay. I thought something like this was coming. I think it’s been coming for a long time. But as much as I care about you -- and I do, Dennis, you know I do -- I just don’t...think about you in that way. You’re such a good friend; I don’t know what I would do without you. You were there for me during the whole James fiasco, and getting laid-off...but I just don’t...I really just want to stay friends.

Pause.

DENNIS
Yeah, me too. Now can you just tell me how I kiss?

ALLISON
Oh my God.

DENNIS
I can’t believe you made me say all that just so you could give me the “Let’s Be Friends” speech.
ALLISON
You're a terrible person.

DENNIS
I know. Kiss me.

ALLISON
Are you sure you--?

DENNIS
No, darling, I just like you as a friend, too. Now kiss me, you fool.

ALLISON
(pause, exhales) Alright, fine. So what are we looking for, here?

DENNIS
I simply want an honest, sober appraisal of how I kiss. That’s all.

With a “what the hell” sound, she moves to him. He leans in, they start to kiss, and she is shaking up and down. They part; she is laughing hysterically.

ALLISON
(still laughing) Okay, okay...I'm sorry...I think it was the phrase “sober appraisal”.

He moves to kiss her, she starts laughing again.

ALLISON
(calming down) Okay. Here we go. Really kissing now.

But as soon as he leans in to her she collapses in giggles. She falls face first into the couch.

DENNIS
Look, I'm going to take my lips and go elsewhere.

ALLISON
No, I can do this, I can do this.

She shakes out her hands. After a few false starts, they kiss. They part.

ALLISON
Wet your lips more.
He does. They kiss. They part.

DENNIS

Well?

ALLISON
Well...hmmm...it's like technically you're okay...lips firm, yet yielding...making solid contact...

DENNIS

But?

ALLISON
But...there IS something missing...

What?

DENNIS

I'm not sure... try it again.

They kiss.

ALLISON

It's fine, it's lovely, an amusing after-dinner kiss with a top-note of peppermint...

DENNIS

I brushed my teeth about twelve times before coming over.

Yet it lacks...

DENNIS

What? Tell me! This is what I came here for!

...passion.

DENNIS

No passion?

ALLISON

Mmmm...no. Sorry.

DENNIS

Okay, okay, great, now we're getting somewhere. This is what I want. Okay. Let me try to add a little more passion in the mix.
He grabs her face and kisses her hard. He pulls away.

ALLISON

...Ow.

DENNIS

Ow?

ALLISON

That wasn't passion, that was velocity.

DENNIS

Okay, lemme try again.

He kisses her again, his hand slipping to her side.

ALLISON

Hey, woah, what was that?

DENNIS

What was what?

ALLISON

That was a grab.

DENNIS

That was NOT a grab.

ALLISON

You were trying for second base.

DENNIS

Oh my God, we're in Junior High.

ALLISON

You totally grabbed for my boob.

DENNIS

I wasn't in the same time zone.

ALLISON

Just stay away from the whole breastal area.

DENNIS

I'm trying to add passion here.

ALLISON

Well do it with your lips, not with your hands.
DENNIS
Look, I'm ready to bag this whole thing.

ALLISON
Oh, don't be a baby. Now kiss me like you mean it.

DENNIS
Sure you don't wanna spin a bottle first?

ALLISON
I'm going to HIT you with a bottle if you don't--

He kisses her, very passionately. He pulls away.

ALLISON
(flustered) Whoo...now we're talking...

DENNIS
No, that was angry kissing.

ALLISON
Well...You might be onto something. Can you get pissed off at Anne tonight?

DENNIS
Sure, I’ll have her give me the “Let's Be Friends” speech.

ALLISON
Dennis--

DENNIS
Seriously, how is it every woman in the world knows that exact same speech?

ALLISON
They hand it to us in health class. Are you mad at me now?

DENNIS
I think you WANTED me to be in love with you, just so you can have the thrill of rejecting me.

ALLISON
Oh, yes, I really enjoyed breaking your heart.

DENNIS
My heart's fine. Sorry to disappoint you.

ALLISON
Why would I be--?
DENNIS
You want me to be madly in love with you! Just like every woman
wants her male friends to be in love with them, without, of
course, having to actually love them back.

Oh, please!

DENNIS
It's true!

ALLISON
Excuse me, who came over wanting to kiss whom?

DENNIS
That's got nothing to do with--

ALLISON
I think YOU'RE angry because I'M not in love with YOU!

DENNIS
Oh, yeah, right.

ALLISON
Think about it. It's an inherent rejection! Here I am, warm,
funny, beautiful! Why don't I love you?

DENNIS
You're not that warm.

ALLISON
Why don't I love you?!

DENNIS
(deflating) I don't know...

ALLISON
(tearing up) Why don't you love me?

DENNIS
Oh Allison...

He hugs her.

ALLISON
(through tears) Why don't we love each other?

DENNIS
I don't know...

ALLISON
We're nice people. We're kind. We’re fun. Aren’t we fun?
DENNIS
We’re huge, ten pound sacks of fun.

ALLISON
Why don't we love each other?

DENNIS
We do... We just--

ALLISON
--Don't love each other.

DENNIS
Like you said... there's no passion.

ALLISON
We're too comfy.

DENNIS
No fear of rejection.

ALLISON
Oh my God... Romance actually needs fear of rejection?

DENNIS
Maybe.

ALLISON
I must be the most romantical person in the world.

DENNIS
That's why I love you. (pause) Well. I'm going to go meet Anne now.

ALLISON
Okay.

DENNIS
Say something discouraging...

ALLISON
She'll hate you.

DENNIS
Thanks.

He starts to leave.

ALLISON
But I never will.
He pauses a moment. He goes and kisses her gently on the top of the head, and then exits. Allison stays and stares after him.

LIGHTS FADE