

In My Heart: The Adoption Play Project

Created collaboratively by

**Wonderlust Productions,
the talented cast and crew of the original production
and over 200 Minnesotans in the adoption community**

**World Premiere presented by Wonderlust Productions at
Mixed Blood Theatre, Minneapolis, MN
December 2016**

This script may be used free from royalty, but we highly recommend partnership and collaboration with your local adoption community, both in refining the script to localize it and in performing it. For advice from Wonderlust on community collaboration, feel free to contact us. We are at www.wonderlustproductions.org. **Please list the following credit in any playbills associated with public performance:**

In My Heart: The Adoption Play Project was created by Wonderlust Productions, in collaboration with over 200 Minnesotans in the adoption community. Written and directed by Alan Berks and Leah Cooper, with songs by Aaron Gabriel, company management by Deb Ervin, and company collaboration from Ariel Leaf, Tamara Ober, and Adam Whisner.

The information below does not need to be printed in playbills, but included for posterity:

Original Cast and Crew

Written and Directed by Leah Cooper and Alan Berks
Music by Aaron Gabriel
Movement Collaboration: Tamara Ober
Musical Direction: Mindy Eschedor

Stage Management: Deb Ervin
Assistant Stage Management: Tracy Swenson
Assistant to Directors: Sarah Tan

The Cast of Characters

Alice	Nicole Wilder
Jen (Alice's Sister)	Megan Kim Anderson
Rebecca (Alice's Mother)	Sheree Froelich
David (Alice's Father)	Bill Bednarczyk
Eddie (Alice's Uncle)	Adam Whisner
Heidi (Alice's Friend)	Susan Prause
Emma (Heidi's Daughter)	Leah Prause
Jo (Alice's Friend)	Nikki Abramson
Lewis	Josiah Thompson
Beth (Lewis's Mother)	Kimberly Adelsman
Frank (Lewis's Father)	Matthew Delaney

Mary (Beth's Sister)
Stephanie (Mary's Daughter)
Sue (Frank's Sister)

Leslie Brown
Ariel Leaf
Carolyn Levy

White Rabbit
Dormouse (or is it an Elephant?)
Caterpillar
The Duchess
Queen of Hearts
Cheshire Cat
Bureaucrat 1
Bureaucrat 2
Bureaucrat 3
Philanthropist
Social Worker 1
Social Worker 2
Priest
'50s Wife
'50s Husband
Alice's Birth Mother

Erica Fields
Rande Tomas
Delinda "Oogie" Pushetonequa
Aimee Aase
Kimberly Michaels
Brad Kruse
Tyler Park Skone
Ariel Leaf
Stephen Rueff
Leif Wallin
Elizabeth Grambsch
ShaVunda Brown
Brad Kruse
Patience Fields
Matthew Delaney
Susan Prause

The Chorus of Adoption Community Voices

Aimee Aase
Jen Ankeny
ShaVunda Brown
Nicole Duxbury
Patience Fields
Elizabeth Grambsch
Ashley Holmes
Brad Kruse
Stephen Rueff
Tyler Park Skone
Rande Tomas
Dawn Tomlinson
Leif Wallin

The Band

Keyboard: Mindy Eschedor
Percussion: Steve Grisdale
Vocalist: Kimberly Michaels
Bass: Eric Solberg
Guitar: Adam Whisner

Samulnori Drummers

Tyler Park Skone
Dawn Tomlinson

Wablenica Song (Native Adoptee Healing Song)

Written and spoken by Jerry Dearly
Performed at Gathering for Our Children and
Returning Adoptees Pow Wow, November 2016
Organized annually by Sandy White Hawk

The Designers and Crew

Costume Design: Andrea Gross
Scenic Design: Zeb Hulst
Sound Design and Engineering: C. Andrew Mayer
Lighting Design: Mike Grogan
Properties Design: Sarah Salisbury
Costume Assistance: Morgan Groff and Tracy Swenson
Lighting Assistance: Ariel Leaf
Movement Workshop Assistance: Leslie O'Neill
Technical Director at Mixed Blood: Matt Earley

In My Heart: The Adoption Play Project

based on the stories of hundreds of people in Minnesota affected by adoption

Character List

ALICE **A Caucasian adoptee**
JENNIFER **An adoptee from Korea, Alice's sister**
REBECCA **Alice & Jen's mother**
DAVID **Alice & Jen's father**
EDDIE **Alice & Jen's uncle, and the band leader**
HEIDI **Alice's friend, a social worker.**
JO **Alice's friend, a former social worker.**

LEWIS **Alice's fiance**
BETH **Lewis's mother**
FRANK **Lewis's father**
MARY **Lewis's aunt, Beth's sister, a secret birth mother**
STEPHANIE **Lewis's cousin, Mary's biological daughter**

SUE **Frank's sister, a state legislator**

WHITE RABBIT, a bartender, also a birth mother and "search angel"

A DORMOUSE, or is it an elephant ... in the room?

CATERPILLAR, a cook and child of foster care

DUCHESS OF TARTS

CHESHIRE CAT, an academic and scientist

3 BUREAUCRATS

PHILANTHROPIST, a man

SOCIAL WORKERS, one Caucasian, one African American

PRIEST

50s COUPLE Adoptive parents

QUEEN OF HEARTS

CHORUS **Includes many additional VOICES, MOTHERS, FATHERS, DAUGHTERS,
and SONS of many races, ages, backgrounds, and historical settings.**

And A HOUSE BAND

Setting:

The engagement party of Alice and Lewis, at a restaurant/bar/event center.

Prelude

The HOUSE BAND plays. The lights fade.

In the darkness, very quiet, pillow talk.

ALICE

How much do you love me, Lewis?

LEWIS

As much as anyone ever loved anyone, Alice.

LEWIS

How much do you love me?

ALICE

As much as the sky loves the earth.

ALICE

How long will you love me?

LEWIS

You are my home. And I will always live there.

LEWIS

How long will you love me?

LEWIS

Alice? ... Alice? ... Where did you go, Alice?

(A long silence. Still in darkness)

JEN

Do you know me?

OLD WOMAN

Han-gu-gŏ hal jul a-se-yo? [*Do you speak Korean?*]

JEN

I'm Jen. I think my mother named me Yu-jin.

OLD WOMAN

Choe-song-ham-ni-da. Mot A-ra-deut-get-sseum-nee-da. [*I'm sorry. I don't understand.*]

JEN

If only I knew what you were saying. *Umma? . . . Umma? . . .* Are you my mother?

(A long silence. Still in the darkness.)

REBECCA

I'm your mother, Jen. I raised you. . . Jen?

(Pause)

Doesn't she understand how much we love her?

LEWIS

Alice?

JEN

Umma?

REBECCA

Jen?

(Silence.)

Scene 1, Act 1.

Alice and Lewis's engagement party. A band plays and people who work at the event center appear to be wearing subtle Alice in Wonderland costumes.

EDDIE

Hey everybody, I'm Eddie and we are "Eddie and the Snapdragons!" We've got a couple announcements to make. This here party is a cell-phone-free party. So turn 'em off! You don't want you or your fellow party goers to miss anything so be cool, turn 'em off! Also, our party staff and special guests will be coming and going from these here entrances throughout the night, so if you step out, watch out for people coming in. Thanks! Now, relax and enjoy the party!

Spotlight rises on ALICE and LEWIS. Though their conversation is playful and loving, ALICE's body language suggests that she's trying to escape.

LEWIS

Alice, you can't hide at your own engagement party.

ALICE

You know I hate family stuff.

LEWIS

What are you talking about? You're great with my family. Everyone loves you. My mother loves you.

ALICE

Why does it have to be so big? I feel on display. And a band too?

(A waitress, THE WHITE RABBIT rushes by holding a tray of shots.)

WHITE RABBIT

O dear—Peekaboo. Peekaboo.

LEWIS (trying to flag her down)

Excuse us. Can we get—

WHITE RABBIT (pauses for a second, manages to look at her watch without spilling the drinks)
O dear, it's time to get everything set.

LEWIS

The party hasn't started yet. Can we—?

(WHITE RABBIT rushes out.)

LEWIS (To Alice)

Did you see that?

ALICE

Lewis, I'm starting to have doubts about all of this, Lewis.
(babyish)
Leeewis.

LEWIS

Aalice. I love you.

ALICE

I love you too, but—

LEWIS

We might as well enjoy ourselves. Come on, Alice.

They exit as lights rise fully on the party.
The band plays and some people are already dancing. It's a celebration of family.

ALICE and LEWIS reenter, and People at the party applaud for them.

ALICE smiles but looks like she wants to run or melt. LEWIS holds her tightly near him. People rush toward them to hug ALICE, shake LEWIS's hand, etc.

FAMILY

Congratulations/Congrats/Mazel Tov/Blessings!/We're so happy for you.
I'm Lewis's Aunt/Cousin/Uncle/sister-in-law's Mother/Second cousin twice removed/Great Aunt/Uncle/Uncle/Uncle
I'm your mother's long-lost cousin/father's business partner/uncle's sister-in-laws sister.
I'm an orthodontist.

It's like the whole city is here.

ALICE (petrified)

Yes.

LEWIS (amused)

Do you know all these people?

ALICE

No.

LEWIS (laughing)

BETH and FRANK, Lewis's parents, and DAVID and REBECCA, Alice's parents, come out of the crowd. Overlapping excitedly. (Start the next line at the asterisks *.)

O, darlings, congrat*ulations.

BETH

Congratu*lations!

DAVID

O my god. You look so beautiful, *Honey. You look so handsome.

REBECCA (ready to cry)

Congratulations. Thata*boy.

FRANK

LEWIS

Dad, Mom, I want you to meet Mr. and Mrs.—

(REBECCA just hugs BETH. FRANK extends a firm handshake to DAVID who pulls him into a hug.)

DAVID

David. We're family now. *Call me David.

REBECCA

We are so excited that this is finally happening.

BETH (extracting herself from the hug)

Beth. Nice to finally meet you of course. You *must be—

REBECCA

We've heard so much about you.

BETH

Lewis talks about you all the time. Like he wants to trade us in for a newer model.

DAVID

Old models, I'm afraid. No need for you to worry. We were already too old when we finally got our family started.

FRANK

We think Alice is as cute as a bug's ear.

REBECCA (starting to cry)

We should have met sooner. We can be great friends.

ALICE

My Mom is an emotional person.

REBECCA

She means that I embarrass her.

ALICE

I'm not embarrassed.

REBECCA

Wait until I tell them about how when you were little, about how no one could comfort you but—

ALICE

Mooom.

FRANK

We can't promise not to embarrass you too, Lewis.

BETH

Why did this take so long?

DAVID

Back in my day, if you met someone you liked, you got married. That was it.

BETH

Then you made babies. That's the point of marriage.

REBECCA

I like that they took their time.

DAVID

In my day, they still had shotgun weddings.

(LEWIS suddenly giggles and tries to control himself.)

ALICE (quietly, to LEWIS)

Stop it, Lewis.

REBECCA

But our Alice does what she does when she's good and ready.

BETH

O. Alice is the one who wanted to wait? I didn't know that.

(Awkward pause. LEWIS stops laughing and looks around.)

LEWIS

Let's make a toast.

(WHITE RABBIT speeds by wearing rabbit ears.)

Excuse us! Did you see that waitress just run right by us?

ALICE (to FRANK and BETH)

Thank you so much for throwing this beautiful party.

LEWIS (quietly, to ALICE)

That wasn't so hard, was it?

(WHITE RABBIT swings back by with a tray.)

REBECCA

EXCUSE ME!

(WHITE RABBIT stops. DAVID and FRANK take drinks off the tray and pass them around. As soon as one is passed to ALICE, LEWIS takes it out of her hand with a smile.)

LEWIS (to WHITE RABBIT)

Can you bring us something non-alcoholic?

(Freeze. They're not dumb.)

ALICE

Lewis. Not now. Please.

LEWIS

Why not now? When? *(To parents)* We have a little more good news.

ALICE

The doctor said we should wait until—And I don't know if I'm ready—

REBECCA (figuring it out)

No? Are you...?

BETH

O my

DAVID / FRANK

Thattaboy. Thattaboy. / That's good news.

LEWIS (first, to ALICE)

It's good news, Alice. We're happy about it, aren't we?

(Holds up glass for toast. WHITE RABBIT suddenly starts off.)

WHITE RABBIT

Down the rabbit hole, follow me.

LEWIS

In approximately 7 and a half months, you're all going to be grandparents.

(LEWIS drinks. DAVID drinks with him, happily. Then FRANK. Then REBECCA embraces them both and cries. BETH gulps.)

ALICE

I wasn't sure whether we should tell you yet.

BETH

Do we need to move up the date of the wedding?

ALICE

No!

LEWIS

Of course not, Mom. What kind of question is that? We just found out, obviously we're not that far along yet, but it didn't seem possible to keep it from you on a night like this.

(JENNIFER has walked up behind the group.)

BETH

I'm glad you're happy, Lewis, but—

LEWIS

I am happy, Mom.

JENNIFER

Keep what from them?

BETH (very sharp)

Excuse us but we're having a private conversation!

ALICE

Jen!!!! You made it! I'm so happy to see you.

(They embrace and sway and squeeze each other tight. They are close. DAVID and REBECCA stand off to one side awkwardly.)

DAVID

Jen, we didn't even know you were—

JEN

Back, yes, I'm back.

(REBECCA and JEN stare at each other, angrily.)

ALICE

Look at you. You look so normal.

JEN

What does that mean?

ALICE

It means you were wearing all black the last time I saw you. Where's your newest tattoo?

JEN

Lewis. You stuck it out. I guess you turned out to be tougher than you look.

LEWIS

Jen. Hi.

JEN

Come on, Lewis. Let's be friends. We're going to be family.

LEWIS

Of course we're friends.

(He gives her a gentle but welcoming kiss on the cheek but he obviously thinks she's trouble.)

BETH

What does she mean, family?

JEN

What's the news?

ALICE

We're pregnant.

JEN

How do you feel about that?

LEWIS

Mom, Dad, this is Jen, Jennifer, Alice's sister.

FRANK

What does she mean, "How do you feel about that?"

BETH

You're Alice's sister?

REBECCA

You wouldn't know it the way that Jennifer disappears. We haven't seen you in two years.

DAVID

You're OK? You're beautiful. Let me look at you.

JEN

I was in Korea. You knew where I was.

REBECCA

Where in Korea?

JEN

I called. I'm not a child anymore.

REBECCA

You called your father. And not often. I don't exist? You'll always be our child.

ALICE

She's here now. Can you just leave her alone tonight? Leave her alone. Please? She's here.

BETH

Excuse me. You can't be her mother? She doesn't look like any of you.

LEWIS

Mom, she's adopted.

BETH (relieved, momentarily)

O. So you're not her real mother.

REBECCA

Excuse me? I am certainly her real mother.

FRANK

You're Korean.

JEN

You wonder why I disappear.

LEWIS

Please, Jen, be nice. These are my parents.

JEN

I'm American.

REBECCA

We've raised her – changed her diapers – since she was six months old. She was meant to be with us.

JEN (to FRANK and BETH)

I'm sorry you're confused. Imagine how I feel. In Korea, I'm American. But here-- Thank you so much, Mom and Dad for raising me to be the example of the Other everywhere I go.

LEWIS

Don't make a big deal, Jen. I just forgot to warn my parents.

ALICE

Are we supposed to come with warnings?

LEWIS

That's not what I meant, and you know it.

BETH

Is Alice adopted too?

DAVID

Let's everyone calm down here.

FRANK (slowly, as if to a non-English speaker)

Nice to meet you, Kim. We're glad you could make it to your adopted sister's engagement. How do they say "Congratulations" in Korean?

JEN

Jen. Not Kim. And I don't speak Korean. I speak English.

FRANK

I'm sorry. I thought—

REBECCA

She's been with us since she was six months old. You think she was born knowing the language?

LEWIS

She did say she lived there for the last two years so it's not unreasonable—

BETH

She has different vocal chords because she's Korean.

LEWIS

Mom!

JEN (sarcastically)

Awesome! I love that. I didn't know your mom was crazy, Lewis.

LEWIS (to JEN)

Don't—

BETH

Is that wrong? How would I know? I mean—first you tell us that you're going to have a baby and now we learn that we don't know anything about where this baby is from.

JEN

The baby could turn out to be black. Who knows, right?

LEWIS

She is not talking about stuff like that. My Mom is not a racist, Jen.

FRANK

OK now OK. I'm sure you're a wonderful family to adopt two beautiful girls.

JEN

They bought us at the baby store. Don't act like they're Mother Theresa. They couldn't have a kid, so they got us instead.

ALICE

Why do you always have to be so mean, Jen?

JEN

Why do you always have to be so nice? Alice got nice people genes, but my third world birth family, well –

REBECCA

You looked for them?

JEN

What do you think I was doing in Korea for two years?

REBECCA

You already have a Mom and Dad.

JEN

Who lied to me about where I come from.

LEWIS

Jen! Jen! It's our *engagement* party. Can't it be *our* engagement party?

REBECCA

What do you mean? We told you what we were told. We would never lie—

DAVID

Please, Jen, this is not the best time for this conversation. You see how much pain you're causing your mother.

JEN

Sorry! I forgot. Only happy stories in our house. Everything is meant to be. Everything is meant to be. Everything is meant to be.

(Pause, then as kindly as possible)

Like Alice and Lewis. The perfect couple.

(Pause)

BETH (to ALICE)

Do you know anything about your real, um

LEWIS

"Birth"

BETH

Birth parents, Alice?

ALICE

I don't want to know. They didn't want me.

JEN

Alice, the agencies made up stories. Like we were abandoned. Or she was a teen mother. Or she was a prostitute. You have no idea why you were adopted.

ALICE

I don't want to know about it.

BETH

But now that you're going to have a child?

FRANK

You must at least know their names.

JEN

How would she know their names?

FRANK

Everyone has a birth certificate.

ALICE

The original names were blacked out when I was adopted.

JEN

The names on my birth certificate are probably fake.

FRANK

You have to be able to trust a birth certificate.

LEWIS

On our third date, Alice actually showed me. For some reason. Blacked out. New names typed over. I still don't know why you did that.

ALICE

I don't remember doing that.

JEN

Did you do that?

DAVID

O, darling, are you ashamed of something?

JEN

Of course she's ashamed. She's adopted.

REBECCA

Jennifer! Not everyone feels exactly the same way about everything as you feel!

ALICE

I knew this was all a mistake.

LEWIS

Alice? Where are you going?

ALICE

This is why I don't belong in any family. Because it always goes bad. Always.

(She exits.)

LEWIS

What the hell was that?

(to both families)

What did you do? What did you do!?

JEN

I'll talk to her.

(JEN goes after ALICE. People in the background start moving around more.)

LEWIS

Jen, don't. You'll just make it worse.

LEWIS exits.

In the background, in silhouettes, we see ALICE, LEWIS, and JEN, trying to weave their way through the people as though trying to weave through a maze or an obstacle course. The house band adds a falling, trippy musical quality to the movement.

The parents just look at each other until they're absorbed by the maze of people.

Scene 2, Act 1.

Eventually, the people at the party move around and clear away into a new scene.

The WHITE RABBIT, wearing white gloves and rabbit ears, mixes drinks, behind the bar.

EDDIE and SUE stand nearby, watching the party, and waiting to pick up drinks.

EDDIE
Whose side are you on?

SUE
Pardon?

EDDIE
Alice or Lewis? Which family?

SUE
Lewis.

(putting her hand out, as though she's done this before)

Susan. Aeschelman.

(EDDIE shakes and smiles but doesn't recognize her.)

State Representative, District 36A. What district do you live in?

EDDIE
O. I don't do politics. I'm just Alice's favorite Uncle. Eddie. Congrats to us all, Friends and Uncles alike.

SUE
Yes.

EDDIE
That's my band up there tonight.

SUE
Good for you.

EDDIE

I told Lewis that if he hurts Alice, he'll have to answer to me. David, her father, is a softy, and Alice was the closest I ever thought I'd come to a daughter. . . Gay. And permanently single. O my. Are you a Republican politician? Is Lewis a Republican?

SUE

There are no politics with family. Tell me more about Alice.

EDDIE

I remember when we got her.

SUE

You got her?

EDDIE

It was a family event. The family got in the station wagon and drove from outside Mankato to Minneapolis. They got the call after only four or five months. They weren't prepared at all. They didn't have a crib. She slept in a drawer for a few days. She was just one month old.

SUE

O. She's adopted.

EDDIE

July 2nd. Every detail, I remember. We were in our summer clothes with our tans, holding the baby and passing the baby around. It was a road trip, you know, everyone getting together and picking up our baby. I say "our baby". I know. I'm ridiculous . . . They called me because they knew I wanted to be there, Rebecca and I are close. On the way home, we stopped in the roadside rest in Shakopee and put the back part of the station wagon down, and I insisted that I be the first one to change her diaper, and I did that. Out in the open. Out in the sunny bright day, and we got home and the neighbor girls were sitting on the curb waiting for us.

On July 4 we went to the fireworks celebration and Becca held the baby and everyone was just running towards us and gathering around us and it was such a feeling of pride. And I always say that it was the best day of my life so far. Because that was the day – the two days, the week – that we became a family. We had been before that, but we were all gathered, we were all together finally. Rebecca was meant to be a mother and. . . Thank God we got Alice because she's the best of all of us. She's the best person. She cares about people. She listens. She's always sticking up for the underdog. She's so smart.

SUE

You love her very much.

EDDIE

O my god, I do. This is going to sound weird, but I just have this undying need to find her birth mother. Because I need to tell her how much I love her. How much she has helped us make our lives complete.

SUE

What if she doesn't want to be found?

EDDIE

How could she not want to hear me when I have this beautiful story to tell her?

SUE

Promises were made to those women, and they've built their lives based on those promises.

EDDIE

Secrets, you mean.

SUE

What if exposing them would destroy their families and their marriages? They were promised that they would never have to confront their mistake.

EDDIE

Mistake? Alice is not a mistake.

SUE

Of course—but the mother may have had an abortion instead if she thought she would ever—

EDDIE

O. Abortion. Is that the Republican position?

SUE

Adoption may be the one issue that truly does cross party lines. If you paid attention to politics, you would be surprised at which party members feel what about this particular issue. Many people want the birth records opened. Some don't.

EDDIE

--Who doesn't?

SUE

Uncle Eddie. Please. Every year a bill comes before my Health and Human Services committee—

EDDIE

I just think that if Alice's birth mother could meet her—

SUE

Let's not talk about politics. There are no politics with family.

(ALICE stumbles on stage, confused, but not crying.)

EDDIE

How can there be no politics when we're talking about adoption and the laws—

(Seeing EDDIE, ALICE puts on a happy-looking face.)

ALICE

Uncle Eddie, are you making enemies again?

EDDIE

The girl of the hour! Hug your favorite uncle. Congratulations. How do you like the band? You look beautiful.

(They hug.)

I'm not making enemies. Did you know that Lewis is politically connected? This is Sue something-German.

SUE

Sue Aeschelman. House District 36A.

EDDIE

She's a politician. (whispers) I think she might be Republican, but we're overlooking that for now.

ALICE

Don't be a snob, Eddie. You don't know what the difference is.

SUE

I'm not a politician. I'm just a local representative.

EDDIE

She's on the committee that deals with open adoption records—

ALICE (to SUE)

A pleasure to meet you. Uncle Eddie, you should be supportive when women are in charge. I am. Also, you don't know her. If she's related to Lewis, I love her.

SUE

I bet you charm everyone, Alice.

EDDIE

She does. She takes after me.

(ALICE turns to WHITE RABBIT)

ALICE

May I have—

(Before she can finish, WHITE RABBIT produces a brightly colored drink with an exciting amount of steam rising off from it as though it were a magical cauldron.)

EDDIE

Well look at that.

ALICE (picking up the drink and putting it down)

I shouldn't.

EDDIE

You should. It's screaming, "Drink me! Drink me! Drink me."

SUE

You're a good girl, Alice. I can tell.

EDDIE

Drink me.

ALICE

Uncle Eddie. It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss -

EDDIE (interrupting)

Suzy Aeschelman. District 36A.

SUE

Sue.

ALICE

-- honestly, but will you excuse me for a second. I have a surprise for Lewis that I came in here to prepare. I hope you won't think me rude but I would love to have a little space, just for a second.

EDDIE

Of course, Honey.

SUE

Such good manners.

(SUE exits. EDDIE heads toward the exit but turns around.)

EDDIE

I know that look, Missy. The “I will take care of everything now” look. You can’t fool me. What are you upset about?

ALICE

You think about my birth mother, don’t you?

EDDIE

All the time!

ALICE

Why?

EDDIE

Because she made you, and then she sacrificed you so that you could make our lives more beautiful.

ALICE

She didn’t “sacrifice” for us. She didn’t know us. She just gave me up. I don’t think about her.

EDDIE

Why are you asking about this now?

ALICE

Because I don’t know if I can. . .

(Shifting)

Go back to the party, Uncle Eddie. I love you.

EDDIE

Now, Alice, I know—

ALICE

And when I have that “I will take care of everything” look, when have you ever gotten your way?

(EDDIE acknowledges that, kisses her, and leaves. ALICE looks out at the party. But doesn’t cry yet.)

Scene 3, Act 1

WHITE RABBIT (not looking up)
You don't have all the time in the world, Cindy.

ALICE
Did you say something?

(Silence. ALICE goes back to looking.)

WHITE RABBIT
I can help you search, Mindy.

ALICE
What?

WHITE RABBIT
You may not have much more time, Flo.

ALICE
I'm not Mindy. Cindy. Or Flo.

WHITE RABBIT
How would you know?

ALICE
Who are you?

WHITE RABBIT
Who are you?

(ALICE does not answer.)

Wouldn't you like to find out, Sue?

ALICE
Shut up!

(beat)

I apologize. I don't know where that came from.

WHITE RABBIT
(offers ALICE the drink again.)
Don't be afraid.

ALICE

I could use a little sip of something.

WHITE RABBIT

I help people find their origins.

ALICE

Were you eavesdropping?

WHITE RABBIT

You're always surrounded by adoption.

ALICE

Records are closed.

WHITE RABBIT

Does that mean that you're closed too?

ALICE

It would kill my mother. The mother who raised me.

WHITE RABBIT

What would it do to you?

ALICE

If my birth parents wanted to find me, they would have done it by now.

WHITE RABBIT

Unless they think of the same excuses you do. Meanwhile, time flies by. When I finally searched for my son, he was gone. Do you know how old your birth parents would be now?

ALICE

Why are you asking me so many questions? I'm not interested; It doesn't matter. It's not a big deal. It doesn't make a difference.

WHITE RABBIT

You've made yourself so small, haven't you, Alice? So that you won't bother anyone. So that no one will ever reject you again.

ALICE (quietly)

I'm not small.

WHITE RABBIT

Could you bigger be, if you could only see? One other like you, one who wonders too? Wouldn't it be an epiphany, to ask without apology? Do I have an other? Don't you ever wonder?

CHORUS

*The endless guessing, the wanting and wishing.
The endless guessing, the wanting and wishing.*

ALICE

Of course I've wondered. But it's childish to fantasize. None of it's real.

BAND

*You're not George Clooney
You're not the nice lady at the grocery store
You're not the daughter of Desmond Tutu.
You didn't create "save the children dot org"*

CHORUS

*The endless guessing, the wanting and wishing
Never opens any doors*

BAND AND ALICE

*You're not Joseph Campbell or Mother Theresa
You're not Einstein or Florence Nightingale
You're not the inventor of silly putty
You're not the sole protector of the Holy Grail*

CHORUS

*Whether a celebrity or absolute nobody
wondering will always lead to wanting more*

ALICE

*You're not Serena or Venus Williams
You're not Magic Johnson or Tiger Woods
You're not a legend like Jim Thorpe or Pele
Though the chances with Magic and Woods are quite good*

CHORUS

*The endless guessing, the wanting and wishing
Never opens any doors*

ALICE

*You're not Sting or Mahatma Gandhi
You're not Cher or Mary Tyler Moore*

*You're not a Samurai warrior are you?
I could go on and on but what for?*

BAND and ALICE

*No matter my smile or determination
I always battle the need-to-know sensation
No matter how much you resist temptation
That is what you get for having an imagination*

CHORUS

*Whether a celebrity or absolute nobody
Wondering will always lead to wanting more*

WHITE RABBIT

So stop wondering and find out.

Dance in tango style, discovering
resemblance, imagining reunion,
culminating in a mirror between ALICE
and MOTHER. ALICE breaks away,
overwhelmed.

ALICE

Stop. I don't need to wonder. I have wonderful memories of my childhood, with my
parents. Those people are nobody to me.

WHITE RABBIT

Alice, they aren't hypothetical, they are real people, somewhere. It's not about who
they are. It's about who you are.

ALICE

I know who I am. I'm about to marry the man I love. I'm someone who doesn't cry,
and who doesn't go upsetting everyone ... only to be disappointed.

WHITE RABBIT

You are much stronger than you think you are.

ALICE

You have no idea how bad it could turn out to be.

WHITE RABBIT

You have no idea how it could be.

The dance and dancers dissolve, leaving
ALICE onstage alone for a moment.

Scene 4, Act 1

AN ELEPHANT roller skates through as LEWIS enters from one side and JEN enters from another, both glancing back over their shoulders, not sure what they just saw. They see ALICE.

LEWIS

There you are. We've been looking all over.

JEN

Are you crying? you never cry.

ALICE (crying, quietly and only a little at first)

I don't cry. I didn't mean to make anyone worry. Why would I be crying?

(ELEPHANT skates through again.)

LEWIS

Did you see that?

ALICE

What?

(LEWIS thinks he must have imagined that.)

LEWIS

Nevermind. You OK?

ALICE

I just needed some air. I stopped at the bar.

LEWIS

You stopped at the bar?

ALICE

I had a sip. Obviously, I'll be the worst mother ever.

LEWIS

Where's that coming from?

(He sees the ELEPHANT again. Shakes it off.)

My mom upset you.

ALICE

Your mom's fine.

JEN

His Mom is not fine, Alice. It's not fine.

LEWIS

Jen! Can you not—She's right. For once. It's not fine. I'll talk to her. She just doesn't have experience with families that are different than —

ALICE

She's your Mom. She doesn't think I'm good enough for you. She's probably right. She's worried about her grandchild. She's right to be worried.

LEWIS

What she thinks doesn't matter to me.

(The ELEPHANT drifts on stage again. ALICE sees it this time.)

ALICE

It should matter to you. You lived inside her for 9 months. You breathed with her. Her heartbeat and your heartbeat were one. She's with you forever. She held you to her breast when you were born.

LEWIS

What are we talking about? Who are we talking about?

JEN

She's talking about the feelings adoptees have, you Idiot. Never being held by the woman whose body you knew best.

LEWIS

I know what she's talking about, Jen. Can you leave us alone?

(ALICE catches her own breath in her throat. She gasps. LEWIS and JEN turn away from their argument, to her.)

ALICE

I'm fine.

JEN

You're crying.

ALICE

No I'm not.

(Catching her own breath again, noticing that she is crying)

I am. I didn't realize I was. I'll stop.

(She wipes at the tears angrily)

I can't stop. I don't want to ruin everybody's day. It's all good.

(Alice's tears have made a large puddle of water, so large that the ELEPHANT begins to float. He puts on a pair of floaty inflated arm bands, and begins to swim gracefully.)

LEWIS

It doesn't have to be all good. If you're upset, I'm here. I want—

ALICE

You can't do anything for me. I'm just sad apparently. I'm crying. Why am I still crying? Maybe I'll just drown in my own tears. Won't that be strange. And you'll swim away.

(Pause)

You ever notice that look on Mom's face? That sad look? Like she's grieving. You ever think she's grieving not having her own children?

JEN

Yes.

LEWIS

She loves you and Jen more than anything.

ALICE

I know. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm just sad because my birth mom was sad. Maybe that's why she gave me up. Maybe because I'm damaged.

LEWIS

You are the opposite of damaged. You're like a superhero. You're the most amazing, strong, wonderful woman I've ever met. Sometimes I think you must be an alien.

(ELEPHANT swims by, doing the backstroke.)

ALICE

Maybe five years is as long as aliens like me can have relationships before you see how ugly we really are.

LEWIS

When I said, "Marry Me," I meant forever. I will never leave you.

ALICE

That's right, because I'll leave you first.

(That hurts.)

LEWIS

What is this about? –Jen, can't you see we're having a private conversation!

(ELEPHANT. And JEN doesn't leave.)

You told me that you felt adoption was a gift, Alice. You don't have to be limited by your birth family or your adopted family, or anything. You can choose to be anything you want. You're free.

ALICE

I thought that until I found myself with my own child to wonder about.

LEWIS

You'll be a great mother.

ALICE

Must be nice. To be sure of things. I don't know how to be sure of anything. I think I have a part missing in me.

LEWIS

It was me you were missing. Here I am.

JEN (that's too sappy for her to remain silent)

O, Lewis, no no.

ALICE

That's not enough.

LEWIS (feeling rejected, angry)

What will ever be enough, Alice? I can't seem to ever give you enough so that you believe me.

JEN

It's not about you.

LEWIS (to BOTH)

Well, I'm the one standing here telling her I love you while you say that's not enough. How much more of this am I supposed to take without having feelings of my own?

ALICE

You're right. I'm sorry. You deserve better.

LEWIS

.—What is that? Is that an elephant? I can't be the only one seeing it?—

ALICE

It's a dormouse. A dormouse of grief.

LEWIS

It's too big to be a mouse.

ALICE

We've gotten smaller.

LEWIS

It's an elephant. In the room.

JEN

This is a weird party.

ALICE (to ELEPHANT, adamantly)

I'm going to stop crying now.

(to LEWIS, firmly, she's made a decision)

We should call this off.

LEWIS

The party?

ALICE

No, we can smile through the party. We can call off the wedding quietly, afterward. It's not too late to terminate the pregnancy.

LEWIS

Wait? What?

JEN

Alice, I think you're jumping to the wrong conclusions.

ALICE

What do you know, Jen? Remember, I'm the responsible sister. I always know what I'm doing.

LEWIS

What the hell is going on here?

ALICE

It's only 7 weeks.

LEWIS

You can't have an abortion—I mean, you can't just decide this all of a sudden.

ALICE

Adoption then. I guess that makes some kind of sense, right, Jen?

JEN

I don't think—

LEWIS

You don't say anything, Jen. You'll make it worse.

ALICE

Let's be good party hosts. Don't make anymore announcements, Lewis. We'll act happy now and find an adoption agency later.

LEWIS

I don't want to pretend to be happy, Alice. I know you can just turn your emotions off like that, but I can't. I know you can, but I don't think you should.

ALICE (tears are completely dry now)

Well, that's all I got. That's me. I'm an alien, remember. Don't expect me to be normal. I'm going back to the party.

ALICE exits. LEWIS stunned, looks at JEN angrily.

LEWIS

Why didn't you stay in Korea?

LEWIS exits.

JEN (not sincere)

Go ahead. Blame me. Makes me feel like I'm in control for once.

Scene 5, Act 1

WHITE RABBIT glides through, leaving another magical steaming drink on the table behind JEN. She turns just as WHITE RABBIT exits, sees the drink, considers it, then drinks it like a shot and slams the glass back on the table.

CATERPILLAR enters. She's a chef, with tattoos and a hairnet pulling back her long hair. She cuts a kind of intimidating figure. She catches JEN slamming the magical drink. JEN turns, startled and embarrassed. They look at each other.

Who are you?
CATERPILLAR

Good question. Who are you?
JEN

I belong here. I work here.
CATERPILLAR

I'm a guest here. This is my family's engagement party. I was invited. You don't have to make me feel like I don't belong.
JEN

(Silence. They stare at each other. She pulls out an e-cigarette.)

Where do you belong?
CATERPILLAR

Are you smoking pot? Is that a pipe?
JEN

No. It's an e-cig. This is my break.
CATERPILLAR

Can I have a drag?
JEN (disappointed)

No.
CATERPILLAR

JEN

You sure know how to make people feel small.

CATERPILLAR

You belong to that party of people with the money?

JEN

Do I look like I belong to that party?

CATERPILLAR

No.

JEN

Story of my life. I do. Mixed breeds. My family are those Labrador Retrievers over there. Alice, the bride, my sister, She's different, but just like a pointer or a Great Dane. Me, I'm a dolphin, or some totally different species.

CATERPILLAR (considers)

I'm a Caterpillar.

JEN

Weird. That was just supposed to be a metaphor.

CATERPILLAR

Then who are you?

JEN

Stop asking me that.

Stop looking at me like that.

Until I was in third grade, I actually thought I was a white person. We grew up in a small Minnesota town. White was neutral. Everybody. Then, this new kid moved to town. She was Chinese and she walked into class and all the other kids shouted, "Hey look, Jen, your family's here!" I didn't know I looked like her. I didn't know they looked at me like they looked at her, like she was strange, until right then. Anyway, I'm Korean, she was Chinese, but she became my best friend until she moved away too.

Alice was a better fit because she's white.

CATERPILLAR

You think she feels that way?

JEN

No one really knows how she feels honestly. Not even her, I guess.

(Pause. Smoke rises around her head. She considers. She speaks.)

CATERPILLAR

One of my foster families once kept me for a couple years, like they were thinking about adopting me. At first, they took me places, acted like they cared about me, showed me stuff, but then after a while, they stopped. They only put pictures of their other kids, their biological kids, on the fridge. Finally, they planned this vacation and they called my social worker because they said that I would need to find a place to stay while they were gone. Made me physically ill. I could hear the social worker ask, "But what about adoption?" And they said—she said—"Mom" said—"She doesn't show any feelings for us. She doesn't want to be adopted." And they call me out and they say to me, for the social worker to hear, "You don't want to be adopted, do you?" I'm a kid, and I don't know what I feel so. I don't say anything.

But now, I got an apartment. I got this job. I've got everything I have myself. This e-cig. My tats. This is all mine. No one helped me. I didn't need anyone's help. They call me Caterpillar.

JEN

What happened to your parents?

CATERPILLAR

Drugs, alcohol, neglect, whatever. So they say. What I was told. I did the time for my parents' crime. So like my parents screw up and I'm in the institution while my parents walk the streets. But somebody could have helped instead of just taking me away. I had family, other family on the Rez. But no, they just stick you in the system and medicate you. Have trouble concentrating? Don't ask why. Take some meds. Pissed off and angry? Have some more drugs. Like it doesn't matter what circumstance they put me in, I'm supposed to be perfect—When I was 13, I used to walk by the law college, William Mitchell, on my way to school, so one day I walked in and I asked them about my rights. I won't let the system have power over me. Soon as I turned 18, I'm independent, I get myself off the meds – which is almost impossible, and now I take care of myself. By myself. Me.

JEN

You are a butterfly.

CATERPILLAR

Not yet.

(Pause)

What's it feel like to have parents who love you?

JEN

I don't think I know what love feels like. We just never bonded right. I don't think the way I feel about them is the way kids are supposed to feel. I guess I love them—I

wish I didn't hurt them so much— but if you scanned my brain for parent love, it would look different than for a bio kid.

I'm just stuck between worlds. I can't finish anything. I thought I'd go to Korea and make a difference, help single mothers or something, but I couldn't learn the language. Now I'm back here. I know I should go to college. My parents would pay for it. I know. I'm stuck. I'm just stuck.

CATERPILLAR

(She just shrugs. Makes more smoke.)

One side makes you larger, and one side makes you small.

JEN

What does that mean?

CATERPILLAR

You were adopted. You have a home. But

JEN

As long as I pretend. It's a lot to ask in return.

CATERPILLAR
Pretend.

VOICE 1
We can reinvent family.

CATERPILLAR
Pretend.

VOICE 2
You aren't different.

CATERPILLAR
Pretend.

VOICE 3
You don't have doubts.

CATERPILLAR
Pretend.

VOICE 4
You're always grateful

CATERPILLAR
Pretend.

VOICE 5
There's only one truth.

WHITE PEOPLE (sing)

What a beautiful child, so cute so loving and kind.

Did you teach her this or is it because that's just the way her culture is?

What a beautiful child, so shy and and not in the way.

Did you teach him that or is it because of virtues that his people have?

We mean well, we're so sincere (and good at stating things posed as questions.)

But, please assume our indirectness comes with all the very best intentions

JEN

I was told my birth mother was a prostitute, but when I went to Korea, I discovered that they didn't really know. They thought it made a better story if I believed that I was saved, if I thought my birth mother was a prostitute, a whore.

VOICE 1

They told me I was found in a basket, outside a police station. It's like a book. It's too much like a book.

VOICE 5

I was stolen. My mother was in juvenile detention, only because she acted out. My father was arrested because he worked for Malcolm X. They wanted me, and they believed I was always theirs.

WHITE PEOPLE (sing)

What a beautiful child. Precise in intellect. Did YOU teach her that or is it because her people are so good at math.

What a beautiful child. So bold and so very brave. Did you teach him this or is it because his people are all savages?

VOICE 5

There is a price chart for adopting children. On paper, a chart, based on the value of our history, the color of our bodies. American blacks are below Haitian kids because it's assumed our parents were unfit.

VOICE 3

In the street view on Google Earth, I can see where I was born. It's gray and trashy and dirty, so I don't know what I think.

VOICE 2

Don't ask me why I'm so angry. I don't want to be angry. I don't want to be the Other, but what choice do I have?

ADOPTTEES OF COLOR (sing)

So well-meaning. So sincere. So good at building and destroying fences. But don't assume your best intentions don't have unintended consequences.

VOICE 4

Just when I get comfortable around people, someone says something stupid, and then I have to flip into, you know, defend, explain, ignore, whatever. It's easier to just stay on defense.

ADOPTTEES OF COLOR (sing)

What a beautiful child. So humble, quiet and sweet. Did you teach her that or is it because her people are all lazy and fat?

What a beautiful child. So coy, so indifferent. Did you teach him this or is it because his people are terrorists?

VOICE 1

Friends growing up would say I don't think of you as Asian, and I was like, "Oh, cool." But then I was like, "Wait, I am Asian. Why is that cool? Why shouldn't you think of me as who I am?"

VOICE 5

Slavery had price charts too, but we're not supposed to notice that. I carry a backpack full of books. Just trying to get at this history, even if I never get to have my own.

VOICE 6

I kept retelling my adoptive parents where I came from. I remember they were so big, they were giants, and I was so small, but if I stopped talking about it, I knew I would forget it. My mother taking me shopping for nice clothes—I was four years old—then dropping me off at the agency, like she was just coming back, but she never came back. Still, it was so long ago, and I'm so American as an adult, I start to distrust the images in my mind – Are they real? What's real?

VOICE 2

When I moved to a big city, I was like "Oh my god brown people, this is crazy." I grew up a white person, and I don't have to be white anymore, like I can be whoever the hell I want to be. I can brand myself. I did, right here, my tattoo, it says "Korean."

ADOPTTEES OF COLOR (sing)

You can't always choose to leave or stay. You want black and white, what we get is gray. Did you learn all these things or were you born that way?

JEN

When I was in Korea, I saw parents and kids who looked alike, at the beach in Korea, walking down the street, and I hated them. You are going to have a clear identity. You will actually be Korean. I hate you.

CATERPILLAR

Are your ancestors gone because you don't know them?

VOICE 1

I know it's not their fault. It's just that so much of my story has been told from their perspective, like I'm just a supporting character in this savior drama that they're starring in.

VOICE 6

I spent so much of my life just letting everyone judge me and tell me I was like everyone else. But I am AND I am not. So I'm going to be the LOUDEST person here, so you know that I speak English without an accent AND I'm Asian.

VOICE 2

When I see someone being excluded, I have to protect them. I feel a responsibility to make sure no one feels the way I did.

VOICE 5

So, I'm a poet. And an artist. A truth-teller. Because someone has to be.

(Pause. Smoke.)

CATERPILLAR

I've got to get back to work.

CATERPILLAR exits. JEN is left alone, and then enveloped by the chorus.

Scene 6, Act 1

DAVID, REBECCA, BETH, and FRANK sitting at a table together with excitedly steaming drinks in front of them and funny hats on their heads. HEIDI (and her DAUGHTER) & JO, friends of Alice; MARY, Beth's sister, and STEPHANIE, Mary's daughter, also sit at the table with them. Also, SUE and EDDIE. The WHITE RABBIT rushes by.

WHITE RABBIT

Time is ticking. On we go.

DAVID (watching her go by, to FRANK)

Really? Because her name is Alice. Like Alice in Wonderland? You made it a themed engagement party?

FRANK

I don't think so.

(ELEPHANT skates by.)

Was that a dormouse? It looked like an elephant.

REBECCA (to whoever will listen)

When we picked up Jen, she reached right out to me. I took her into my arms and she put her little hand on my ear, and she started to play with my earring. Like she was waiting for me.

JO

She would have done that to any woman who reminded her of Mother.

HEIDI

It's related to attachment issues.

(CATERPILLAR walks by in a puff of smoke..)

FRANK (with DAVID, watching, puzzled)

My assistant arranged it. Alice in Wonderland. Huh.

EDDIE

I like it. How about you, Sue?

REBECCA (to HEIDI)

You weren't there. No one wants to believe in magic anymore, I know, but it was. We waited in Korea for weeks because she was so small, and she got sick, and they had to put her in the hospital. We stayed with her every second. We sang to her. "You're my, Brown Eyed Girl." They said you should just choose another baby, and I said, "You're crazy! This is my baby." You wouldn't leave your baby in the hospital and take another one?

DAVID

Your assistant planned your son's engagement party? Must be nice to be that successful.

BETH (outburst)

O please. You adopted two children. Don't act like you're poor. If you just gave that Mom in Korea the money it cost you to adopt, she probably could have kept her baby!

SUE

Beth!

STEPHANIE

I don't think I've ever seen Aunt Beth drunk.

MARY

We prefer to say tipsy in our family, Honey.

REBECCA

Only filthy rich people think that every issue is a money issue.

FRANK

Are we being honest? So, I want to know which one of you had the plumbing problems? That's why you had to adopt, am I right?

REBECCA

That might be the rudest question I've ever heard.

BETH

O please. Don't act like we're the only ones here who have no manners.

FRANK

I think I need another drink.

(FRANK rises. DAVID rises. Everyone rises. Are they going to fight? Of course not. They all just inexplicably move one seat down, and now BETH is sitting in front of a fresh drink.)

MARY (to David and Rebecca)

I'm Beth's older sister, Mary. Nice to meet you. Alice seems like a lovely girl. This is my daughter, Stephanie.

BETH

Her *daughter*. Really her daughter.

MARY

What does that mean, Beth?

BETH

It means that they don't know where their children come from.

REBECCA

They may not have grown under my heart. They grew inside it.

Hi. Heidi. Friend of Alice. HEIDI

Also friend. Alice. JO

Susan Aeschelman. SUE

“State Representative, District 36A.” EDDIE

Lewis’s aunt, Susan. SUE

Uncle Eddie. Alice’s. Neer-do-well. EDDIE

What do you do, Heidi? MARY

I’m a social worker. I work with adoption actually. HEIDI

See. Their family comes with a social worker. Does everyone get one when you adopt? *This* is what Lewis is marrying into. BETH

I’m a college friend actually. It’s a coincidence that I work in adoption. HEIDI

Hi! DAUGHTER (climbing into HEIDI’S lap)

This is my daughter. HEIDI

A coincidence! BETH

Beth. *(to Heidi)* You have a lovely lovely daughter. You’re blessed. MARY

I know. HEIDI

BETH (to JO)

Who are you? What's your adoption deal?

JO

I'm Jo. I used to be a social worker. In foster care.

BETH

Of course!

JO

Yes, I met Alice through Heidi, and I know Heidi through work so. It's very normal. I don't work in foster care anymore though. It's very hard.

FRANK

Foster care, sure, but raising adopted children is identical to raising regular children, right?

DAVID

Did you just say "regular" children?

FRANK (bristling, he was trying to be nice)

Except that adoptive parents are clearly overly-sensitive.

REBECCA

Are you going to blame us now?

FRANK

No, no, no parents never know how their children will turn out.

BETH

They chose their children. What did they expect when they decided to create an unnatural family?

MARY

Beth, you should stop drinking.

(FRANK, BETH, DAVID, and REBECCA rise slowly, swaying. HEIDI, MARY, and STEPHANIE rise too just to make sure none of them falls down.)

DAVID

I will tell you which one of us has plumbing problems when you tell me about why you only have one child. Problems in the bedroom?

FRANK

How dare you!

WHITE RABBIT glides by.

REBECCA (to no one in particular)

--O. Lewis and Alice! Like Lewis Carroll. Lewis Carroll wrote Alice in Wonderland. I don't know why I've never thought of that before. It is destiny!

DAVID (to FRANK)

How dare you judge how we've built our family?

SUE

I know many adoptive parents are motivated by God's word, by their faith, to care for those in need.

DAVID

Are you saying we need to be more religious in order to justify—

REBECCA

Because I can tell you about the co-workers who said I couldn't get pregnant because my faith wasn't strong enough.

SUE

No, that's not the faith I practice. I simply was complimenting your willingness to reach out to the least among us.

EDDIE

Alice and Jen are in no way least anything!

SUE

That's my faith.

HEIDI (interrupting)

I just want to point out that when people don't fully and openly process their feelings about life-changing situations,

JO

Or when, as a society, we don't allow for real dialogue about these important situations, then

HEIDI

Feelings get pushed down into the subconscious where they get transformed and resurface in other ways.

JO

Defensiveness. Also anger. I couldn't face another un-self-aware adult whose behavior was just so angry.

HEIDI

Not just anger. Also other, really fascinating, sometimes indescribable behaviors.

BETH

Is that an expert opinion?

DAVID

About adoption?

REBECCA

From a gaggle of social workers?

STEPHANIE

I think that's an obvious opinion, Aunt Beth, about this conversation.

BETH

Well, I've never been "politically correct".

MARY

You have not.

BETH

Women who put their children up – give up their own children—

REBECCA

We don't say give up. Think about it.

JO

"Put up" comes from the days orphans were put up on a train.

HEIDI

It's better to say "placed" or "chose" or "made a plan."

BETH

Some plan.

MARY

Sister. Please stop. This is an ugly side of you.

BETH

Give up. They give up.

MARY

It wouldn't hurt you to consider other points of view.

BETH

They're probably drug addicts and promiscuous. Isn't that true, Jo the Social Worker? You know what I'm talking about.

STEPHANIE

O my god. Do people still think like that?

JO

Actually no.

REBECCA

Where in her subconscious does this come from, Heidi?

MARY

People usually have a lot of different reasons for what they do.

BETH

What are you saying, Mary?

MARY

Don't assume they're bad people, Beth.

BETH

I could never give up a baby.

MARY

Beth, you don't know what you would do if your life had gone differently.

HEIDI

The women I work with who choose adoption are some of the most determined, generous young ladies I've ever known who are actively involved in finding good homes where their kids can prosper.

JO

It's our job to help them navigate a society that, in the past but even obviously still today, stigmatizes women unnecessarily for—

BETH

You're a know it all. You know that? Do you have children?

DAUGHTER

Hi.

BETH

That's not who I meant.

STEPHANIE

O my god! Aunt Beth!

HEIDI (to DAUGHTER)

How are you doing, Honey? I love you.

WHITE RABBIT

(Placing a drink in front of MARY)

Time is ticking. What is true?

EVERYONE pauses, puzzled by WHITE RABBIT's question and curious about the drink.

JO

I don't have children. And I'm obviously not old enough to know what it felt like for women in previous generations but—

BETH

I am.

MARY (definitively)

No, Beth, I am. I know what it felt like.

(Pause. Again, they're not dumb.)

EDDIE

I've never met a birth mother.

BETH

She's not saying she's one of those women.

STEPHANIE

Mom?

MARY

I was one of those women who placed a child for adoption. I was 14 years old.

BETH

No? No no no no! Don't make up stuff just to make them feel more comfortable. I would know if you were one of those women—

MARY

You were 8 years old. How would you know? You don't know. Stop talking, Beth!

HEIDI (to EDDIE)

You've met birth mothers and fathers, Eddie, you just didn't know you did.

DUCHESS enters carrying two babies, strides directly over to SUE and addresses her rather formally.

DUCHESS

Are you in charge here? Announce me please.

SUE

Excuse us. I'm just a state representative. We're having a conversation.

BETH

Please just go away.

DUCHESS

I will not go away. They always sent us away, but we are here.

She hands MARY the announcement card.

You can announce me now, can't you? Please.

MARY (reading from the card)

The Duchess. Of Tarts. Is that right? Yes, Tarts. Uhm ...

DUCHESS

There you are, that wasn't so hard. Hello, hello! I have an announcement to make! Sex! People have it, there you are. Babies! Buns in ovens when you'd least expect them! Tarts. Tarts to be taken. Tarts to be secret, Tarts to be shamed.

BAND (sings)

*So I had sex!
And it felt great
I only wish it hadn't been on the first date
We fell in love
Seem'd to make sense
And so we did it again and again.*

VOICE 11

My boyfriend wanted to marry me. We were young but we were in love. He came over, with his mom, to do the right thing, to ask my father, but my father, he said. We're Lutheran. That boy is Catholic. My daughter is not marrying a Catholic.

VOICE 12 and MEN (sings)

*So you had sex
Before God's eyes
But He was not the one on your weak little mind
You broke His law
And you must pay
It rights the wrong to take the baby away*

MARY and WOMEN (sings)

*Back then my friends said: Stand on your head now shake up and down
and then get back in bed
Back then the guy said, "You're way too young. God won't give you a
problem can't take care of"
Back then a condom was not like today
No matter my plan, it did not go my way*

VOICE 9

I wouldn't sign the papers unless they let me hold him. They thought I would get attached to him if I held him. Ha. Like 9 months inside me wasn't enough attachment. I held him close, and I thought about whether I could mark him, cut his skin, and slide my name underneath, something, so that he would always know me, that I loved him. I told him I would find him again. I promised. I will. And when I signed the papers my tears fell on my signature and I saw it and I hoped he would see the crinkled paper one day and know that he was loved.

VOICE 10

I was on probation when I got pregnant, and that was a violation of my parole. So they put me in jail. "What are you in for? Assault. What are you in for? I stole something." What are you in for, they ask me. "I'm having a baby."

VOICE 7 (sings)

*So you had sex
Just like a slut
Your disrespect feels like a kick in the gut
You're not in love
You couldn't be
No one knows what love is at age seventeen*

VOICE 8 (sings)

*Back then, my dad said, "It's for the best. You can focus on school and your grades and your tests"
Back then, my mom said, "Think of your shame. There's only one way for the pain to escape"
Back then the girl was the one you would blame
No matter her plan it did not go her way*

VOICE 14

When I came home, no one knew I had been pregnant, I was alone, but I was just this vessel of liquid. I was bleeding. I cried for days. And milk. I just felt like I had been ripped open. The child was safe inside me and nothing was safe once he was gone. I was so alone.

LEWIS

If we're not happy together, then how can we raise a child to be happy? But adoption? I never thought about it. At all. I always thought babies would be the simplest, most natural thing in the world.—Because I'm a guy. So stupid. Am I selfish? Am I a coward? I am afraid. If I am a selfish coward, then it would be better for someone else to raise our child.

ALL and MARY (sing)

*So I had sex
And it felt great
But everything after took the greatness away
I won't regret youthful desire, falling in love, and simply having a child
How can I regret when I had no say
And what does it matter what I'm saying today? They took you away.
They took you away. They took you away.*

MARY

My arms ached for days, as though I were missing a limb by not holding him. For years, I wouldn't have another child because I thought it was a betrayal of him.

I just wish I knew that he's OK. That's all I wanted. I wanted him to be OK. I want to know if he's OK.

A lullaby plays

MARY (sings)

*Tiny little fingers
Tiny little toes
What will you grow into
Heaven only knows*

*All your little giggles
All your little charms
All your dreams are held in
Some one else's arms*

VOICES (sing)

*Some one else's arms
Some one else's arms
All your dreams are held in
Some one else's arms*

STEPHANIE

I've been sharing you with a ghost all my life, Mom.

MARY

They told us it would be better if we forgot. Tried to forget. You never forget.

DAVID AND REBECCA (sing)

*May the angels keep you
Free from needless harm
And may you find contentment in*

The chorus hums

MARY

Some one else's arms

The chorus hums

DAVID, REBECCA, and MARY

May you find contentment

The chorus hums

Blackout. END OF ACT I

Scene 1, Act 2

At rise, the location is familiar but transformed. The band is still there but they're costumed as Gryphons (half-lion/half-eagles) and Mock Turtles.

The centerpieces at the party have transformed into jungle-like chaotic growths, but beautiful, and 3 BUREAUCRATS in suits with playing card patterns appear to be trying to tame them. This involves some paperwork, some swapping out of vines with more subdued flowers, and some actual painting of the vegetation.

JEN and ALICE enter, joined, holding hands.

JEN
What's going on?

ALICE
Where is everyone? Where are we?

(BUREAUCRAT 1 is stamping paper as quick as he can and passing it to BUREAUCRAT 2 and 3.)

JEN
What are you doing?

BUREAUCRAT 1
We're doing what we're told.

BUREAUCRAT 2
We're doing what we're told.

BUREAUCRAT 3
What we're told.

JEN
What were you told?

(BUREAUCRAT 2 and 3 are catching the paper as quick as they can and finding the "right" table to put it on.)

We were told to follow the rules. BUREAUCRAT 2

We were told to follow the rules. BUREAUCRAT 3

Follow the rules. BUREAUCRAT 1

What are the rules? ALICE

The law. The law is the rules. BUREAUCRAT 1

The law is the rules. BUREAUCRAT 2

The law. BUREAUCRAT 3

What is the law? JEN

(BUREAUCRAT 2 and 3 also have paint brushes that they use to change the colors of the centerpieces.)

The Queen of Hearts BUREAUCRAT 3

The Queen of Hearts BUREAUCRAT 1

The Queen— BUREAUCRAT 2

There's a Queen of Hearts?— ALICE

Awesome. JEN

Desires harmony. BUREAUCRAT 3

Harmony. BUREAUCRAT 1 (harmonizing)

Harmony. BUREAUCRAT 2 (harmonizing)

Why does she desire harmony? JEN

Happy families. BUREAUCRAT 1
(waving a stamped paper around for BUREAUCRAT 2 to retrieve)

Happy BUREAUCRAT 2

Families! BUREAUCRAT 3

All the flowers should look like all the other flowers. BUREAUCRAT 2

All the flowers should look like BUREAUCRAT 3

All the other flowers. BUREAUCRAT 1

You're painting flowers. JEN

SHHHH! BUREAUCRATS

Don't tell. BUREAUCRAT 3

Don't tell. BUREAUCRAT 1

Don't tell. BUREAUCRAT 2

They don't always grow the same colors. BUREAUCRAT 3

BUREAUCRAT 2

Or in the right garden.

JEN

Painting them won't make them the same.

BUREAUCRATS

SHHHH!

BUREAUCRATS

If we don't talk about it, no one will know.

(WHITE RABBIT rushes on, as always, in a rush, but this time she wears a full rabbit suit. She looks at the work of the BUREAUCRATS.)

WHITE RABBIT

O dear. You're working too slow.
The Queen will be so angry.

(The 3 BUREAUCRATS work even faster than they were before. Some flowers get thrown up into the air. The band plays faster.)

JEN

I need a drink.

(As though seeing ALICE and JEN for the first time, the WHITE RABBIT jumps, startled and nervous.)

WHITE RABBIT

O!

JEN

Hi. Can I get another drink?

WHITE RABBIT

O good. You're here. You know games, I think.

JEN

Depends on the game. Alice is usually better at that stuff.

WHITE RABBIT

Find the child a home. We call it "Best Interests."

JEN

I've heard of that game. "Best Interests of the Child."

WHITE RABBIT

For that game, The Queen goes wild.

ALICE

Tell us the rules.

WHITE RABBIT

O dear.

BUREAUCRAT 1

No one knows the rules.

BUREAUCRAT 2

The rules keep changing.

BUREAUCRAT 3

Faster. Paint. Faster.

JEN

Then how do you decide who wins and who loses?

WHITE RABBIT

That's part of the game. It depends on who chooses.

ALICE

That doesn't sound like a good game.

WHITE RABBIT

It's better than it was before. Before there were no rules at all.

A BUREAUCRAT paints "the 1850s" the wall. As this scene progress, they'll paint dates in other places. Remove old painted signs. It will become a mess—and there's probably something amusing we can do with the tangle of colors and cloth—like BUREAUCRATS (and CHORUS members) getting wrapped up in their own confusion.

WHITE RABBIT (continues)

If a child lost their parents, then they were cared for by family, and if they had no family, well. . . Eventually, some nice people started orphanages and some not-so-nice people started orphanages, but there were still no rules. And many kids stayed on the street.

(The PHILANTHROPIST roles onstage in a old-fashioned suit followed by the SOCIAL WORKER (female) pushing a desk after him.)

PHILANTHROPIST

The streets are crawling with destitute children. It's a public nuisance.

SOCIAL WORKER (sitting, tired)

We don't have room for them in our orphanages, and we can't control them if we did.

PHILANTHROPIST (pulling her up)

Listen to me. Only work, education, and a strong family life can help them develop into self-reliant citizens. We'll gather them up and take them to the bread basket of the country. There are so many spare places at the table of life. It'll be in the best interests of the children.

ALL BUREAUCRATS (whisper)

Best interests of the child.

(PHILANTHROPIST climbs on top of the desk as though he were on a train rolling through small towns in Indiana and calls for attention. SOCIAL WORKER (female) pushes the train car. BUREAUCRATS make train noises.)

PHILANTHROPIST

Gather round, ye farmers, and good Christian working folk! You've got land, we've got labor. These specimens have been tested and found to be well-meaning boys and girls anxious for homes. Raise them as your own. . . Or your money back.

CHORUS

(General hubbub of "I want one!" "I'll take two!" "Can they do pig farming?" etc.)

(PHILANTHROPIST climbs down, satisfied)

SOCIAL WORKER

The poor children are being worked like slaves. We've got to establish at least a few rules in the children's best interests.

(He climbs back up and speaks to the same crowd of imaginary farmers.)

PHILANTHROPIST

You've got to promise to send them to school through fourth grade and take them to church!

(He steps down again satisfied. SOCIAL WORKER and PHILANTHROPIST shake hands. PRIEST enters.)

PRIEST

Just a minute now. You've got Catholic children placed in Protestant homes. This isn't in the child's best interests. This is child stealing.

PHILANTHROPIST

Excuse me. My intentions are entirely good.

PRIEST

We'll take over from here.

(Stepping up on the desk, which SOCIAL WORKER continues to push, speaking to crowd. **BUREAUCRAT paints "The 1880s."**)

PRIEST (continues)

Lutherans with Lutherans. Catholics with Catholics. Jews with Jews. And so forth. Something needs to be done with the natives.

PHILANTHROPIST

Are they without parents?

PRIEST

They're without Our Father, the Lord. We'll put them in boarding schools since no white family will adopt them.

(BUREAUCRATS approach, attempting to be helpful, forcing papers onto SOCIAL WORKER which she signs in a daze.)

BUREAUCRAT 2

We need to teach them the importance of private property, material wealth, and the monogamous nuclear family.

BUREAUCRAT 1

We can give them white names, forks and spoons,

BUREAUCRAT 2

And teach them how to celebrate Columbus Day and Thanksgiving.

CATERPILLAR

Indigenous People's Day.

BUREAUCRAT 3

“Kill the Indian. Save the man.”

SOCIAL WORKER

Is this really in their best—

(To great fanfare, QUEEN OF HEARTS enters. The BUREAUCRATS, PRIEST, and WHITE RABBIT bow down—the BUREAUCRATS bow very low. The SOCIAL WORKER looks confused then bows.)

EVERYONE

It’s the Queen. It’s the Queen. The Queen of Hearts.

(JEN and ALICE aren’t sure whether to bow and decide not to, but don’t know whether that is the right decision. **BUREAUCRAT paints “The 1900s.”**)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

As a representative of President Theodore Roosevelt’s government, I declare that family life is the highest and finest product of civilization.

(Let that proclamation sit for a second, as though it were more profound than it is. The CHORUS (BUREAUCRATS, etc.) mumble-mumble their approval.)

JEN

Excuse me—

WHITE RABBIT

Don’t trouble the queen.

(PHILANTHROPIST climbs back up on the table.)

PHILANTHROPIST (to crowd)

Ok. So here’s what you need to know—

(looks around, confused, nervous)

What do they need to know?

SOCIAL WORKER (nervous about the QUEEN)

Children of

QUEEN (prompting her)

Of unknown history and family traits

SOCIAL WORKER (taking over)

Of unknown history and family traits who are possibly feeble-minded, psychopathic, or tainted with inherited disease, are being foisted upon ignorant, but in many cases, well-meaning foster parents.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with their—

SOCIAL WORKER

No, no, Madam, Queen Madam. I've made a study.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Why aren't *you* making a family?

SOCIAL WORKER

Um, I, um, I believe that, um—

CHESHIRE CAT (steps forward with a big smile)

Are you infertile? Do you hate men?

SOCIAL WORKER

I, um, No, I

CHESHIRE CAT

I'm a professor. It's a professional interest.

PHILANTHROPIST

What she means to say is that we need to form a government agency—we can start in Minnesota—who establishes guidelines, really think about what is in the best interests of the child, and who can make sure that no one will ever adopt damaged goods.

SOCIAL WORKER

Children.

PHILANTHROPIST

Damaged children. That's what I meant. I'm a Philanthropist, and my intentions are good.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

So be it.

BUREAUCRATS

We can BUREAUCRATize it!

BUREAUCRAT 1

There are first class, second class, and third class homes.

BUREAUCRAT 2

First class, second class

BUREAUCRAT 3

And third class

SOCIAL WORKER

Bright attractive children deserve a chance at the golden spoon while dull stupid children will be happier in uncultivated homes.

(In the background, BUREAUCRATS sing from the musical *Annie*. "The sun will come out tomorrow," then continue humming the tune until the end of SOCIAL WORKER's line, then chime in on "Hear, hear!")

Because Uncle Sam knows what's in the best interests of the child!

PHILANTHROPIST and BUREAUCRATS

Hear, hear!

JEN

No one talks like that.

WHITE RABBIT

Time is funny. They did talk exactly like that.

ALICE

This game makes me nauseous.

JEN

What if I wanted to see my birth records.

(BUREAUCRAT 1 screams, throws paper in the air, hides under the table.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

What is wrong with that Knave?

BUREAUCRAT 1

We didn't keep any records.

BUREAUCRAT 2

Records?

BUREAUCRAT 3

Records?

PHILANTHROPIST

We were supposed to keep records? Records of what would we keep records of?

SOCIAL WORKER

Science!

(Pause. Everyone looks at her.)

It's time for science.

CHESHIRE CAT (to QUEEN, big smile)

May I?

(CAT climbs up on desk to talk with the crowd.)

Psychology teaches us that couples who can't conceive naturally have mental issues that need to be addressed before they can be allowed to take any children home.

(BUREAUCRAT paints "1930s".)

Is he manly enough? Does he enjoy the company of women but not too much? Is she a man-hating Amazon or does she truly enjoy womanly things?

(PHILANTHROPIST climbs up on desk, CAT climbs down, but tries to keep his smiling head in the picture.)

PHILANTHROPIST

We're thinking of the best interests of the child when we say that all prospective parents will have to undergo rigorous psychological testing and education.

SOCIAL WORKER

While the children will be kept under supervision for at least a year to make sure that they can be civilized.

JEN
These are stupid rules.

PHILANTHROPIST
My intentions are absolutely good!

JEN
Who do you think you are?

QUEEN OF HEARTS
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

(JEN and ALICE are kind of scared and silenced)

(Enter 50s COUPLE.)

50s WOMAN
We agree, Young Lady. Those rules are utterly ridiculous.

JEN
That's what I said.

BUREAUCRAT paints "1950s"

50s MAN
Listen, Social Worker Lady. This is the 50s.

50s WOMAN
You have children who need homes, and we just built a lot of new homes in our new suburbs and we need children to play in our new yards and ride their bicycles on our new streets.

50s MAN
Everything about America is new and growing. We have power.

50s WOMAN
Give us the children before they grow an inch, take them right from the hospital, and we'll raise them as though they were our own, and no one will ever know the difference. Isn't that in their best interests?

50s MAN
In their best interests.

PHILANTHROPIST

That's perfect. Parents get babies. Babies get parents. And the poor fallen women who delivered them can pretend that they never had children. Records will be sealed. No one will know; no one will remember. And everyone can start a new replacement family.

SOCIAL WORKER

I don't know.

50s WOMAN

We'll even take the Indians.

SOCIAL WORKER

You mean you'll rescue them from all that filth and neglect on the reservation?

JEN

You're confusing poverty with neglect.

PHILANTHROPIST

Will you take the black ones too?

50s WOMAN

Of course we'll take them. This is America; this isn't Nazi Germany. We're not creating a master race. Except, we're more comfortable with the mixed ones.

50s MAN

As long as they're not too dark.

50s WOMAN

Preferably they can pass for white.

50s MAN

And, we need to make sure that our grandchildren won't revert.

CHESHIRE CAT

Dight Institute of Human Genetics, University of Minnesota. Allow me to make your acquaintance.

ALICE

Why does he keep smiling like that?

JEN

Because none of his mistakes affect him personally. We're just experiments to him.

CESHIRE CAT

I can help.

ALICE

How?

CESHIRE CAT

I can tell you just by looking at them whether or not their kids, your grandkids, will pass for white or revert. Science!

ALICE

Off with his head.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

All he is is one big head and a crooked smile.

BUREAUCRATS paint: "1960s".

SOCIAL WORKER 2 (African-American)

If you're going to adopt children from our community, you need to help them learn about their heritage.

SOCIAL WORKER 1

Excuse me. Who are you? I'm a social worker.

SOCIAL WORKER 2

And I'm a social worker who has been working in these communities for years. In case you missed it. Which you clearly did.

PHILANTHROPIST

Well, I'm not sure you understand what's in the best interests of these children. I don't think we want to racialize everyone. I think we want to live in a color-blind society. Like Martin Luther King says. . .

SOCIAL WORKER 2

Considering the history of this country, you can't just put black children in white homes without knowing about the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, continued institutional racism —

SOCIAL WORKER

Trust me when I tell you that we have the child's best interest at heart.

SOCIAL WORKER 2

Really? Actually, how about you don't adopt any black babies at all? What you're doing is perpetuating the idea that black bodies are chattel.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with her head.

SOCIAL WORKER 2 (as she is dragged off)

There is no way that your white families can teach our black children the coping mechanisms they will need to face the racism they will encounter every day of their lives. Get your hands off of me. I said ... etc.

BUREAUCRAT paints "1970s".

PHILANTHROPIST

Everyone is so radical now.

Are you telling me that because of the sexual revolution, women aren't being shamed into surrendering their children?

SOCIAL WORKER

Plus, birth control is reducing the number of American children available for adoption.

PHILANTHROPIST

Less children on the streets. Problem solved.

SOCIAL WORKER

But we still have families who want children. Less supply. More demand.

50s WOMAN (dressed all 70s now)

Did you see that commercial about Romanian orphans?

50s MAN

I heard China has lots of children who need homes. And still, there's Korea.

PHILANTHROPIST

And there are civil wars in Latin America. These children need the help of the greatest country on earth, don't they?

BUREAUCRAT paints: "1980s".

SOCIAL WORKER

What if adoption were to become like a business where poor families sell their children for money?

PHILANTHROPIST

Of course we'll make sure that doesn't happen. I mean we'll try to make sure. . . We will try. We'll try our best.

SOCIAL WORKER (to Philanthropist)

Now American birth parents want to choose the adoptive family instead of the agency or the adoptive family choosing the baby.

PHILANTHROPIST

Won't that be hard on the adoptive family? They'll get their hopes up, and then the birth parents could choose someone else. Is this really in the best interests. . .

SOCIAL WORKER

Of who?

PHILANTHROPIST

The children of course! My intentions are excellent and I'm just trying to figure out – What is in the best interests of the child?!?

(Finally, the franticness stops. SOCIAL WORKER, PHILANTHROPIST, BUREAUCRATS, PRIEST, 50s COUPLE, all look at each other then say the following overlapping, sincerely,—)

EVERYONE

My intentions are good. My intentions are good. My intentions are good. My intentions are good.

(Pause again. BUREAUCRAT paints: “Modern Day”)

ALICE

Who gets to decide?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Such a smart smart girl.

EVERYONE (in response to ALICE)

My intentions are good. My intentions are good. My intentions are good.

JEN (over them)

I want to see my original birth records!

(Silence. Then.)

BUREAUCRAT 1

(passing the buck—and a whole file of papers)

I'm sorry I don't think I can tell you.

BUREAUCRAT 2

I'm sorry I don't think I can tell you.

BUREAUCRAT 3

I don't think I can tell you.

JEN

What do you mean you can't tell me? I'm an adult. I have the right to know who I am.

SOCIAL WORKER (stepping forward, taking file)

When were you adopted?

PHILANTHROPIST (stepping forward)

Where were you adopted?

JEN

Does it matter?

PHILANTHROPIST

Well, the rules are different depending on the state, and the time. . .

BUREAUCRAT 2

At least we have rules, even if we don't understand them.

JEN

Do you have the records?

SOCIAL WORKER

We might.

JEN

I want them.

PHILANTHROPIST

You see there's a lot of different people's feelings and expectations involved.

JEN

I thought it was about my best interests?

JO and SUE enter, and stand with SOCIAL
WORKER and PHILANTHROPIST.

SOCIAL WORKER

Well, we have different theories about what is in your best interests depending on. . .

PHILANTHROPIST

The state and the time.

SUE

It's very complicated actually.

SOCIAL WORKER

We try to keep children with their birth families but sometimes we can't, sometimes their birth families can't take care of them, and what if we find them a home that is better for them than with their birth families, should they stay in that home, I mean what is in the best interests of the child —

JO

The adults say they mean well, but they want what they want so much, they —

JEN

I'm just asking whether you are looking at my records?

SOCIAL WORKER (obviously holding file)

I might be.

JEN

So you know who my birth parents are?

SOCIAL WORKER

I might.

JEN

Well don't you think it's just wrong for you to know more about me than I do?

SOCIAL WORKER

We didn't know who you'd turn out to be when we made the rules. But believe me, when I tell you, sincerely, we've always tried to figure out your best interests.

PHILANTHROPIST

The best interests of the child.

(Everyone else agrees and repeats "Best interests of the child.")

JEN

I'm standing right in front you.

PHILANTHROPIST

But we're not looking at you.

SUE

We can't have rules that work for everyone if we make an exception for each individual child. That's not how law-making works.

JEN

You can change the rules again. You have to stop treating me like an infant. You changed the rules before.

EVERYONE (different lines)

I don't know how that happens. It just happens. Can we? Can we? They just change. You'll have to ask the Queen. You'll have to ask the Queen.

EVERYONE

What is in the best interests of the child? The best interests? The child? The birth mother? The parents?

SOCIAL WORKER 1, SOCIAL WORKER 2, AND JO all join the band in singing, while EVERYONE ELSE dances ...

SOCIAL WORKERS

*This notion of adoption
Is beautiful at first
The answer to a question
The quenching of a thirst*

*This notion of adoption
Begins the same each time
Immaculate intentions
A reason to the rhyme*

*What seems so easy-peasy
Like a wondrous win-win-win
Is actually an onion
And every layer that's revealed gets under the skin*

*Red tape, bureaucracy
Ignorance, hypocrisy
Expectations unfulfilled in spades*

*Foreign courts and consulates
Manufactured documents
Grey areas in every different kind of shade*

*People see what they wanna see
With rose-colored Lasik surgery
All that's gold is glittery and gay*

*How do I suggest to you
A more prismatic point of view?
How do we peel the onion today?*

ALL

*Red tape, bureaucracy
Ignorance, hypocrisy
Expectations unfulfilled in spades*

SOCIAL WORKERS

*An onion is not
A ribbon or prize*

*It stinks a lot
It makes you cry*

SOCIAL WORKERS

*An onion is not
A band-aid or salve
It's not have-not
And not have-have*

An onion is what an onion is

WHITE RABBIT (spoken)

A complicated flavor
When you add it to the mix
A deeper dish to savor

SOCIAL WORKERS

*This notion of adoption
While beautiful at first
Would be a whole lot better
If the roles were reversed*

*If law-maker could social worker see
Adoptive parent could birth-parent be
If man on the street could foster care try
An onion is meant to get in your eyes.*

*The notion of adoption
Is beautiful, it's true
But also more successful when*

ALL

It is about more than you

(But then they all return to bickering. Even SOCIAL WORKER 2 returns.)

ALL

My intentions are good. Listen to me! My intentions are good. I know what I'm doing. Listen to me! I'm looking out for the best interests of—

(ALICE screams. Everyone stops.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

O dear, my child, have you lost your head?

(The PHILANTHROPISTS, SOCIAL WORKER, and OTHERS scatter.)

Scene 2, Act 2

ALICE

I don't want to think about all of this. I never thought about this before.

JEN

I talk to you about it all the time.

ALICE

Yes but I always thought of it as your problem, Jen, not mine.

JEN

Awesome.

ALICE

I didn't mean that the way it sounded. You have problems, Jen. I don't have problems. That doesn't sound right either. I'm the good adoptee, you're the ba—I don't know what's wrong with me. It's the engagement. I admire that you have problems. Everyone accommodates you. I just don't need what you need. I accommodate everyone else. I don't know what I need. I can't have a baby. I'm not good enough for a family.

WHITE RABBIT

O dear. Someone told you that adoption was a one time event in your past when its really an ongoing part of your life.

ALICE

No, it isn't.

JEN

Yes, it is.

ALICE

No, it isn't!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

O goody. Let's have a trial about it.

(The CHORUS claps, stomps their feet, and says, "A trial. A trial. O goody.")

Call in the jury!

ALICE

I don't want to have a trial.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

I don't remember asking you, Young Lady.

JEN

I'd like a trial.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Someone stole your hearts, my dears, and we're going to punish them.

ALICE

You don't even know if anyone committed a crime yet.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

What does that have to do with it? Bring in the guilty!

ALICE

You mean bring in the accused.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Why would I mean that?

ALICE

You can't have a trial if you already know the verdict.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Look who knows so much.

JEN

She's always acted superior. Like her adoption made her special.

ALICE

Jen, I think we should get out of here.

JEN

I like it here. People are finally acting the way I feel.

ALICE

You don't mean that.

JEN

What do you know about how I feel? We're not even related and we only know each other by accident.

QUEEN OF HEARTS (referring to ALICE)

Off with her head!

WHITE RABBIT

She's not on trial, your majesty. She's the victim.

ALICE

I am not a victim. You don't even know how to have a trial. Where's the jury?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Same place as the guilty. And the accused. And the witnesses.

ALICE

That doesn't make any sense.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Who's talking about money?

ALICE

Not cents! Rational! It's not rational

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Who's talking about being rational? We're talking about hearts. Read the accusation.

WHITE RABBIT

Our Queen, so smart, she made some hearts, all on a summer's day.
In fits and starts, they stole the hearts, and sold them all away.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Who! Is! They?

The CHORUS stamps their feet: left, right, pause, left, right; in a rhythm like a heartbeat and a gavel bang. REBECCA and DAVID step out of the crowd.

REBECCA

I'm their mother.

DAVID

Father. . . Adoptive parents.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Let's hear your testimony.

REBECCA

We wanted to make a family, to share our love.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with their—

JEN

I want to hear this.

REBECCA

We did 7 rounds of in-vitro fertilization. Thousands and thousands of dollars. Eight years of fertility treatments, painful crazy-making hormones, and all the while I'm bringing baby shower gifts to the girls at work. They have no idea what I'm going through. Just spreading my legs for these callous doctors, who destroy my womb, and assure us that everything will work out for the best.

DAVID

Why were we being punished when all we wanted to do was build a loving family, to make a loving home?

VOICE 15

We chose adoption because we thought it wasn't ethical to bring more children into an overpopulated planet when there were so many children who already needed homes.

VOICE 16

Our belief in God called us to care for children who needed us. We know that some religious belief has led down the wrong paths, but our Faith called us to humble sacrifice.

CHORUS stamps.

We adopted from Ethiopia. My daughter screamed and cried the entire 24 hour trip home. The flight attendants actually gave up on getting a seat belt on her. They almost turned the plane around to get us off it was so bad. She is so difficult, you think, "I am the most vile person in the world. Did I kidnap this child? How could I even bring this creature into our home?"

VOICE 17

Our son was in foster care. They didn't want to give him up, and the money they received for him. We ended up ... literally kidnapped him out of the backyard. He remembers it vividly - me coming after him in the backyard, as kindly, gently as I could. He was 19 months old at the time. I'm sure that affected him.

DAVID

We have a photo of Jen in a beautiful pink frilly dress, just two days after we brought her home from Korea. Taken by one of those professional photographers in the mall. There's this silly sky blue backdrop behind her, big puffy white beautiful clouds. And she's got this look on her face like—"What the hell is happening to me?"

VOICE 16

My son couldn't sleep in a bed for a whole year. He slept on the floor of a closet because of whatever happened to him where he was from.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with their heads!

CHORUS stamps.

VOICE 18

When we adopted, all they told us was "Love is enough. Just take them home and make them your own." You can't make them "your own". They're already individuals.

VOICE 15

They warn you that there won't be a bond immediately but you don't believe them until you experience it. You think "I'm a good person. I'll be a good parent. Whatever goes wrong, I'll make up for with love. It'll be fine."

JEN

Off with his head, and her head! Off with their heads!

CHORUS stamps.

ALICE

Jen!

JEN

They shouldn't have adopted these children, Alice. They stole us from poor people.

VOICE 16

The children needed homes.

JEN

You don't know for sure. When I went back to Korea to find out more about who I am, they acted like I was an unreasonable customer. No refunds. We're busy. We don't know anything. Just like the cable company. They don't care about what children feel.

VOICE 18

It didn't start that way. We were simply trying to make things right after the Korean War. Forty thousand children of American GIs and unmarried Korean women who were abandoned and ostracized.

VOICE 19

You create a problem that only an army can create and your solution is to colonize the children?

VOICE 16

Colonize the children? I was just trying to help.

VOICE 20

We're a gay couple. Back then, we had to go outside the United States if we wanted to raise a child.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with their –

EDDIE

No, no. If the laws deny people their human dignity, force them into doing things outside the mainstream in order to fulfill their destiny, then—

QUEEN OF HEARTS

I'll decide whose dignity the laws protect!

CHORUS stamps.

VOICE 21

This country has been stealing Indian children and brown bodies for hundreds of years. That cannot be ignored.

VOICE 20

Look, race and skin color are not the issue. My kid is from Honduras but he texts me because he's freaked out about going to the dentist. Race is not the issue.

VOICE 16

Listen, I'm a bleeding heart. Intellectually I understand what you're talking about, but our child had no place to live, and we fell in love with her and she fell in love with us. Were we supposed to leave her in poverty? Her parents abused her. They neglected her. Were we supposed to leave her there?

JEN

You just wanted to be a mother no matter what.

REBECCA

I did want to be a mother, desperately, and you wanted a mother, Jen. Do you remember your first school play, Jen? You were maybe five years old, and you saw all the faces looking at you onstage. And you started to cry and you said, "I want my Mommie." That was me. I was the one who comforted you. I was the one who made you feel loved.

JEN

I remember that you kept me at a distance.

REBECCA

I didn't. You pushed me away. I tried to give you everything you needed. You don't remember because you were so small, but I remember every moment of your life. You may have more than one mother, but you're my only daughters.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Someone is guilty!

CHORUS stamps.

VOICE 15

One day, I was helping my daughter fill out paperwork for college, and I picked up the phone. "Hi," she said, and somehow I recognized that little girl's voice immediately. "This is Lisa. Your daughter's mom." I just froze. Papers fell to the ground. Why now did she call? Where was she when my daughter lost her first tooth, learned to ride a bicycle, had her first period? I didn't—I couldn't tell my daughter about the phone call. We had made a beautiful life. Why did she want to ruin that now?

MARY

I would never have interfered with my son's life with his adoptive parents.

VOICE 22

I just wanted to know my child was alive and what she looked like and that she was happy.

VOICE 23

We adopted from Eastern Europe so we wouldn't have to worry about the birth parents. Baby Jessica was really taken from her adoptive parents.

MARY

That's not a typical story.

VOICE 23

It's a true story, and an awful story. We thought it was best for everyone if there was no confusion.

STEPHANIE

What about the fathers?

VOICE 24

I didn't know.

VOICE 25

It wasn't my business.

VOICE 24

We never saw each other again.

LEWIS

Everyone thinks birth fathers don't feel a loss just because we can't carry the baby. But I would think of my child every day of my life.

ALICE

I just want everyone to know that I'm grateful.

CHORUS stamps.

DAVID

We want you to be happy, Alice.

VOICE 17

We want our son to be happy.

VOICE 16

I want my daughter to be happy.

VOICE 26

Bullshit. My Mom lied to me all my life. Everyone in the neighborhood knew I was adopted, but I didn't find out until I was a teenager and she said, "We never should have adopted you. You've always been trouble. We picked the wrong baby." They got to choose but I didn't get to choose.

VOICE 17

My son started to use his adoption against us when he became a teenager. "You're not my real parents. I don't have to listen to you," he'd say.

FRANK

No parents get perfect children.

VOICE 18

But at least you know where they come from, and what's happened to them. We told the agency we couldn't handle a child with disabilities. But then, fetal alcohol syndrome - we didn't even know what that was. We were trying to fix problems in the dark, and no one knew how to help us.

VOICE 27

Our son came home one afternoon from school, and umm, and said that, he felt abandoned. After living with us over the last 16 and a half years. We'd always been very open with him. We asked him why he felt that. He said, "The counselor at school said adoptive kids have abandonment issues, that I should have those feelings." Our son has been homeless and an addict for the last 14 years. I could have killed that counselor.

CHORUS stamps.

JO

You don't understand the parents we see everyday. They haven't processed the grief from not being able to conceive, and they come to us looking for replacement children.

VOICE 22

Many of these social workers don't have children. They don't understand what they don't they understand about being parents.

VOICE 28 (*also signing in ASL*)

Our girl has very special needs, but in court all they talked about was race. They never looked at the needs of the child, they only looked at the race of the child.

JO

You don't see the big picture we see. We know what needs to change, but everything we do is like a teaspoon in the ocean. It was after I dropped a child off at his 13th foster home, I put in my resignation because the adults in the system refuse —

VOICE 15 and 16

Blame the parents.

VOICE 16

We're the biggest target because we're always there. Blame us.

VOICES 20, 27, 28

Because we can't resign. We have the responsibility.

VOICE 16

I understand why we're part of the challenge too,

VOICE 18 and 28

but I'll tell you it sometimes feels unfair that we get the blame

VOICES 15, 16, 18, 20, 27, 28

when all we're trying to do is love them.

JEN

Because all of you had a choice, but adoptees don't.

CHORUS stamps.

MARY

So many birth parents don't either. I was 14. I tried to run away, I thought I wanted to keep the baby, but they found me every time.

STEPHANIE

You didn't give me any choice either, Mom. You could have told me. You should have told me. It helps me to understand so much about our family. It's affected me too.

MARY

If only I had it to do over again.

MANY VOICES

If only . . . If only . . . We don't get do-overs. . . If only we had do-overs. . .

CHORUS quiets.

REBECCA

We don't get do-overs.

DAVID

I wouldn't change anything. I love my family.

QUEEN OF HEARTS starts to laugh.

JEN

What am I supposed to do with that?

ELEPHANT enters, dances with VOICE 15

VOICE 15

My beautiful boy is now 25 and serving a sentence in jail. He'll be out soon. As long as he's alive, I have hope, I have so much hope, because he is a beautiful boy—and I know, I know *I know* I wasn't good enough. For my son, adoption equaled difference, it's something I'm sure he felt, and that I was in no way prepared to support him. I didn't know, and I can't forgive myself. We don't get do-overs.

BETH

I'm sorry. I didn't know. Can I get a do-over? I'm Lewis's Mom and I'm so happy to meet your family.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

OFF WITH THEIR—

ALICE

Shut up! You can't judge these people.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

I don't need to judge these people. They're jury, accused, witnesses, convicted, and judge all in one.

CHORUS stamps.

ALICE (to EVERYONE ELSE)

I don't believe it. You are not thieves. You are not selfish. Or cowards. And we're not ungrateful or victims.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Then who are you, Alice?

ALICE

Shut up. Shut up shut up shut up.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

How dare you be rude to me, Young Lady. You're not suggesting that all of these people did the right thing?

CHORUS stamps.

ALICE

You're not listening. This isn't about right and wrong. I don't know how I got here, and I want to go home.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Where is that?

ALICE

Where's Lewis?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

O. Him? We forgot about him. Birth fathers are so easily forgotten.

ALICE

He's not a birth father.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

He isn't?

ALICE

Now you want me to feel guilty.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Well, unless you judge things, Alice, you can't stay in the court.

CHORUS stamps.

ALICE

Good.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

The rules say anyone who refuses to judge must leave.

CHORUS stamps.

ALICE

You just made up that rule too.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Let's hear the final testimony.

CHORUS stamps, and keeps stamping.

Scene 3, Act 2

MOTHER stands, reluctantly, stone-faced. CHORUS stamping gets quieter, like a heartbeat. MOTHER slowly makes her way to the stage. QUEEN OF HEARTS pushes ALICE forward.

ALICE

Who's that?

WHITE RABBIT

She's your witness, Alice.

(Pause. ALICE looks at MOTHER. Pause. They look at each other and see familiarity in the way they stand and move.)

ALICE

Is she. . . Are you. . .

MOTHER (vicious)

How dare you do this.

ALICE

I'm pregnant. I just thought I could ask you about my medical—

MOTHER

You're going to ruin my life. Don't you ever tell anyone, or do anything.

ALICE

I'd just like to ask for some information about myself.

MOTHER

I did not create this situation. I was raped, and I have no desire to ever know anything about you.

The heartbeat stops. Silence. She turns away.
Then. . .

ALICE (slowly)

I'm a human being, that's all. . . I'm meant to be here, and I'm not going to hide anymore. . . I am not going to be ashamed of who I am. And I'm sorry if that offends you. And I am sorry about what happened to you. I am. . . But I exist. I exist. Nothing is going to make me disappear from this world, and be who I am in it. I exist.

(REBECCA steps forward.)

REBECCA

I just need to thank you so much for making the sacrifice, for having the baby, for creating this beautiful woman who I—we—We--

(DAVID, EDDIE, LEWIS, JEN all step forward too.)

We love her so much. We understand how difficult this is for you, must be for you, we just wanted to say—

(MOTHER exits.)

“Thank you.”

(Long pause.)

ALICE

Maybe one day, I'll go driving through farm fields in Western Minnesota, maybe just to see where their family farm is, and maybe I'll see one of my Uncles working the farm. And we'll stop the car, and he'll say “Can I help you?” I'll be shaking like a leaf, “Umm, I'm the daughter of one of your sisters. She gave me up for adoption. She'd be pretty pissed if she knew I was here, but I just saw you, and I couldn't let this opportunity go by.”

UNCLE (stepping from chorus)

And I'll grab her hand, and I'll put it to my chest, and I'll say, “Welcome to the family. What took you so long?” And then I'll start calling on the phone, “Which sister is it?” they'll ask because we're a big family.

(People start stepping forward as part of the family, welcoming her. A large crowd eager to meet her.)

UNCLE (continues)

Seven sisters and 4 brothers. Two sets of twins. 33 grandchildren and counting.

ALICE

And I'll feel better. Like they're saying, “You aren't a blank slate. You didn't just drop from the sky.” I won't bother her. I won't rock the boat.

But I'm not going to be ashamed of who I am. I deserve to know.

And I think, knowing who I am and where I come from, facing that mystery, makes it easier for me to imagine the happier endings.

(Voices arise from the chorus.)

VOICE 30

My birth mother came to my wedding, and I played this Cat Stevens song – I’ve always loved it so intensely, and she told me she sang that to me when she was pregnant.

VOICE 31

We took off our socks and looked at our toes. And fingers. And penmanship. The colors in our homes. Music. It was just instant. The way we talk – with our hands a lot – and we cry really easy, and laugh at the same things.

VOICE 32

When I went back to Guam to meet my birth family, they all met us at the airport. 125 people waiting behind that glass wall, and they would step forward one family at a time. “This is your aunt, and her husband, and her children.” “This is your third aunt, and her family.” It was overwhelming.

VOICE 31

In the search, I discovered that I had siblings, half-siblings, also adopted, and then I discovered that one of them lived in my neighborhood, and then I discovered it was my best friend Julie. We were already friends. We were soccer moms together. Our children went to school together. Thank God, they never dated!

VOICE 33

The first time I went looking, I was still really young. They told me to write a letter, and I thought that was a way of telling me to just go away. Years later, the world had changed. They were a lot more helpful. When my son called me, we arranged to meet that same night. I wondered what he would think of me if I drove the Honda and what he would think of me if I drove the Audi.

VOICE 30

I got the call from my birth mom 3 months after my mother died. We took a long walk on a September afternoon with my baby in a stroller, past the playground. It hit me then. This wasn’t just a moment. A meet, share stories, thank you ma’am. It was going to be a relationship. Over time. With expectations. Disappointments. Feelings.

VOICE 33

My oldest was freaked out to not be the oldest anymore. My other children were most worried about how their mother, my wife, felt about it. It was difficult for her because there’s my past, and I’m happy about it. But she understood, and now we’re, it’s like, we’re just all family.

WHITE RABBIT (to MARY)

I can help you search.

STEPHANIE

Please do it, Mom. Please. It must be better for everyone to know.

REBECCA (to JEN)

Did you find her, Jen? Your mother?

JEN

I don't want to tell you—No. I didn't.

(Long pause.)

REBECCA

I'm sorry.

(Shorter pause.)

JEN

What are you sorry about?

REBECCA

What happened to you. As a child. Your loss.

JEN

I thought you believed it was meant to be.

(Pause.)

REBECCA

I'm just, right now, also. . . Sorry.

JEN (Touched and surprised to be touched)

Oh. Thank you.

(The ELEPHANT skates by again, and WONDERLAND fade into the crowd.)

JEN	<i>There are things you take for granted.</i>
REBECCA	<i>There are things I can't understand.</i>
JEN	<i>Always feeling a little homeless.</i>
REBECCA	<i>Searching for a safe place to stand.</i>
JEN	<i>My heart is always a little broken</i>
REBECCA and JEN	<i>But will you, will you still take my hand?</i>

ALICE	<i>If I knew who I was</i>
	<i>Would I feel less alone?</i>
LEWIS	<i>If you let me love you</i>
ALICE	<i>Will I feel more at home?</i>

MARY, REBECCA
STEPHANIE, JEN
REBECCA, LEWIS
ALICE, JEN

*I wish you could forgive me. I wish you could ...
Though you did nothing wrong.
I only want you to be happy ...
It's my journey and it's long.*

Scene 4, Act 2

From out of the chorus, we hear the tune for “Happy Birthday” quietly at first but getting louder and the words are:

MANY VOICES

*Happy Adoption Day to you
Happy Gotcha Day to you
Happy Adoption Day/Chosen Day/Arrival Day, Dear
Jen/Alice/Cindy/Mindy/Sue. . . more names.*

VOICE 35

I do feel grateful. I am grateful to my adoptive parents for being my parents. That's just my temperament. Maybe it's genetic. Wouldn't that be, like, ironic?

VOICE 36

I placed my child in adoption because I knew my mother had placed me, so I knew it could be a good choice.

VOICE 37

It was an open adoption, and my mother and father made my birth mother part of the family. I bet it was hard for them, but now I have this wonderful gigantic family, eight grandparents—huge amounts of aunts and uncles and cousins—so many people who are so different all in one bigger family.

VOICE 39

I came home from graduate school and told my mother, it was time. I wanted to know my birth parents. I had no idea how much support I was going to need, how many ups and downs, but she was right in it with me. Gung-ho even. I thought she'd be threatened but, if she was, she didn't say anything. She just was everything I needed her to be.

VOICE 38 (a funny story in retrospect)

My black friends were against my adopting an African-American girl, on principle, but once the adoption went through, they said “We’re going to back you up on this.” They did everything they could to help us. I used to cry when I brushed her hair because I thought if I were black, I wouldn’t hurt her so much. But they told me, “It’s nappy hair. It’s hard to brush.” I had so much guilt, and I put it all into her hair.

DAVID (very happy to share this)

Jen would call me on Skype from Korea. We’d Skype. It was the middle of the night in Minnesota. I’d be exhausted, and she’d ask me to help her plan her next step. She would complain about the bureaucracy, and I would listen to her frustration and—

JEN

How is that a happy time?

DAVID

Because I was spending time with you.

VOICE 40

Our son was 19 when we met him. He’d aged out of the system. He just never got adopted. He was homeless, couch surfing, dealing with some mental health issues. He was staying in our neighbor’s basement. He wasn’t making it. Somebody had to step up for him and say I will be your parent. When we asked him if he’d like us to adopt him, he literally spit the Coca Cola from his mouth. He said, “I don’t understand why this couldn’t happen before. I’ve been waiting for someone to say that for 15 years.” Today is the anniversary of him saying yes.

CATERPILLAR

One day, I was invited to a pow wow to bring adoptees and foster children back to the circle.

The sound of the pow wow, the adoptee healing song, and the drumming, in the distance, while CATERPILLAR talks.

CATERPILLAR

We danced and we cried and a sacred pipe was passed. Every person there touched me and said, “Welcome home.” I’ll never forget, being in that circle, with a buffalo skull, a small blanket, tiny moccasins in the middle, and the men singing so loud with all the pain of losing all our children and ways, and all the courage of surviving anyway, and the people’s dancing feet, and the drumming, the drumming, was like an earthquake and a heartbeat.

The music swells. CATERPILLAR dances. JEN watches. Music recedes, but continues

CATERPILLAR (to Jen)

You should come with me to the next pow wow.

JEN

But I'm not Native.

CATERPILLAR

It's OK. They've taken enough of ours. I think it's OK for us to take a few of theirs.

JEN

In Korea, there was this performance we went to, on a tour. Drumming. Like nothing I've ever heard before, but familiar. It was like something breathing life into me. I guess I was invited there, but even so, I still didn't feel like I belonged.

Two drummers step onto the stage.

CATERPILLAR

Just because you haven't known your ancestors, doesn't mean they aren't speaking to you.

The drummers begin to play traditional Samulnori style.

CATERPILLAR

At the pow wow, an elder told me: You need to push past the fear in your bones, that you're not entitled, that you don't belong, and you need to step into the circle.

As the drums begin to build, CATERPILLAR and JEN dance together, first Native style, JEN copying CATERPILLAR, then loosely, freestyle, with great liberated joy.

Scene 5, Act 2

ALICE and LEWIS make their way through the chorus/maze one more time and find themselves, alone together, in that spot where they began the play, as out of play and time as that first impression felt—though they're starting to come back to reality. The music continues softly, more distant, and the dancers freeze.

Hi. LEWIS

Hi. ALICE

Strange party. LEWIS

A little. ALICE

I want to marry you. I don't want to break up with you quietly after the party. I don't want to do that. LEWIS

I don't either. But I'm scared. ALICE

Look. You don't have to promise me forever. I get it. I believe enough for both of us, you don't have to. But you do have to make me a promise— LEWIS

It's hard. ALICE

I understand—Actually, I don't understand. LEWIS

I'm sorry. ALICE

Because I'm not you. I can't know how it feels for you, but that's fine. I believe you. I listen to you. I know you. And I love you. LEWIS

I love you too. ALICE

LEWIS

But I need a promise.

ALICE

I don't believe in unconditional love. I can't.

LEWIS

Who said anything about unconditional love? You just have to promise me that you'll try to make the promise last. Just try.

ALICE

If I don't believe that we can love each other unconditionally—

LEWIS

You got to give me something, Alice! You can try.

ALICE

Is that enough?

LEWIS

I don't know. I think so. If you just promise me you'll try for forever, I can work with that. I'm not a kid, I know what we're getting into.

(Pause. Then. . .)

ALICE

I can promise you Try.

LEWIS

For forever.

ALICE

I'll try for forever. . . but I can't promise forever.

LEWIS

I got it. You don't have to repeat it. I love you.

ALICE

I'm terrified, but I love you too.

LEWIS

It's got to be OK if it's hard. . . And I happen to know that you have alien super powers.

(They kiss.)

ALICE

I don't know if we're ready for a baby though.

LEWIS

Can we keep talking about it?

ALICE

We can keep talking about it.

They kiss again. The music finishes up and the dancers disperse.
JEN and REBECCA and DAVID emerge from the crowd.

JEN (to REBECCA)

I'm still angry at you. . . . Look. You have to stop thinking you can fix it.

REBECCA

I didn't even understand there was something to fix.

JEN

I'm going back to Korea. . .

REBECCA

OK. Of course. I know you have to –

JEN

Maybe you'd like to come with me?

REBECCA bursts into tears of happiness, nods her head like she
thought JEN would never ask.

JEN

OK. OK. You are never going to stop embarrassing me, are you?

REBECCA (hugging her)

No.

Scene 6, Act 2

EDDIE clicks his glass to get everyone's attention for a toast, and the lights rise up again full on the party.

As at the beginning, ALICE smiles but looks like she wants to run or melt. LEWIS holds her tightly near him.

EDDIE

I'd like to make a toast to my family, and my soon to be larger family.—I'm Uncle Eddie, by the way, and if you think Jen and Alice can be a little difficult, it's because I've been trying to teach them to assert themselves since I met them. And I told their parents, David and Rebecca, my sister Rebecca, that I was going to make the first toast, come hell or high water. This is my toast.

Simply that—I know that everyone is here because of love. Think of all the things that had to go right for Lewis to find Alice and Alice to find Lewis. And all the things that seemed like they maybe were going wrong. Alice and Jen's biological parents not being able to raise their children themselves, Rebecca and David not being able to conceive. Let's be honest about it. I'm the honest Uncle Eddie. Maybe it all seemed awful at the time, and maybe it was—it was that too—but it all happened and it brought this beautiful, inspiring, compassionate person—people—into existence.

And we all get to sit around a table, with Jen – Jen is here, it's SO good you're here Jen – we all get to be here together and tell Alice how awesome she is. . . Lewis, you're OK too.

And maybe things that happen after this moment won't be so great. And maybe what happens will be hard. But this moment. This is perfect. This moment is love. This moment is proof for me that family, is who you love. And that love is the source of all healing.

And I am grateful. To all of you.

And, To Alice and Lewis.

(Everyone raises their glass, toasts. JEN takes the microphone from EDDIE.)

JEN

. . .Don't worry, Lewis, I'll try not to screw this up . . . Sometimes we get the family we want. Sometimes we don't know the family we want. But the hard parts, they make us stronger, kinder, more aware. Like my sister Alice is—

(ALICE rises to take the microphone from JEN.)

Alice, this is my toast. You can't be in control all the time.

ALICE (taking the microphone)

I just wanted to say that I know we all have to keep searching always, but you, Jen, are also—in addition to everything you find—my sister always, my good-hearted sister. I don't care if it was an accident or it was meant to be. No matter where you are, or how far you go, I will always say, "You are in my heart. Welcome home."

(LEWIS takes the microphone.)

LEWIS (to JEN)

You are in my heart. Welcome home.

JEN hugs LEWIS and ALICE. REBECCA hugs BETH.

DAVID and FRANK shake hands. MARY and STEPHANIE hug.

The guests all applaud and much hugging ensues.

The WHITE RABBIT rushes on stage, and everyone freezes in a bug happy hugging tableau.

WHITE RABBIT

Oh my goodness, look at the time. Back from the rabbit hole, the clocks now chime. Before you return to hearth and home, please know you are not alone.

Empty arms and broken hearts, unknown ancestors and secret parts.
We're all on this journey, doing our best. We're all confused and sometimes a mess.

We are those we love, near and far. It is the loving that makes us who we are.
We are those who love us, old and new. We are roots and stems and tendrils too.

Connected by mystery, accident and fate.
The clock is ticking. Please don't wait.

You are in my heart. Welcome home.

END OF PLAY