

Melodramatic Children: A Play

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## ABSTRACT

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This play is the product of a five-year creative process in which I was determined to knit together a story from the wildly-contradictory narratives of my mother and father about their brief but stormy and compelling relationship. I began with many questions about the ethics of writing about living people but was also cognizant that I had been shamed out of speaking honestly about my own perspective and experiences due to my parents' fears. I wondered where the line can or should be drawn between one's own clan narrative and that of one's parents. While seeking the truth was key to my research, I recognize that the notion of truth is always complicated by the nature of memory, by ulterior motives and wishful thinking, and by the unconscious denial of trauma. This play became fiction as the characters developed, and as they evolved, I named them to reflect that they exist only to fulfill a story I need to tell, which is about a family broken apart by deceit and desperate to reconnect but held in stasis by denial. Creation can be sorcery, a magic ritual that has a good laugh at our attempts to separate life from art. In queer witchcraft, there must be an undoing before a doing. To reclaim our power, we have to be willing to step on some toes, and sometimes bite the hand that feeds us.

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## Melodramatic Children

by

Cherie Pyne

Author's note: This play is fiction but began in my telling of the unlikely story of my parents' brief but stormy and compelling relationship. The script developed over five years with much exploration and auto-ethnographic research, including interviews generously offered by my mother and father. Since they haven't spoken to each other in thirty years, and their relationship ended even longer ago, I was uniquely positioned between them as a fulcrum, trying to disentangle years of longstanding family narratives in search of the elusive truth.

The truth, of course, is relative.

My parents have wildly different and contradictory takes on many scenarios. While finding out what happened between them mattered very much to me personally during the research process, I came to realize that what I was really doing was rewriting my own narrative. As the characters came into their own, I named them to reflect that this was no longer about my parents but about the ways that different people contend with hiding things, and the emotional impact that has on those around them. So this is a queering of my family narrative, containing much of my truth, but making no promises to anyone else's.

## CHARACTERS:

LAURENCE: 50-ish, seasonal construction worker, serious drug addiction in the past, now a functioning, low-key alcoholic and still a bit rough around the edges. Lifelong member of a sketchy large-scale Californian cult that scooped him up in his 20s via a narcotics addiction support group. Small town guy from a troubled family, with a long life behind him of fucking up and running from the consequences. He believes in serendipity and has a romantic sensibility.

IRIS: 50-ish, retired schoolteacher, grew up in abuse and poverty but hides it. Married a well-off man late in life, after raising a daughter while working to put herself through school. Iris is very proud and burns with a tense electric current of compressed anger. She is secretive about the past because she fears losing her long-fought-for dignity. It is important to her to be seen as nobody's fool. Like a lot of Newfoundland women, there is a current of humour in her anger, which is not to say she's not serious. Despite her forceful personality, she has been quite powerless at many points in her life.

BOSWELL (BOZ): Iris's husband. Has lived a life of comfortable wealth but has also worked since he could walk. Likes to provoke people to see what they're made of, sharp-minded but traditional/conservative in his beliefs. Appreciates his wife's fiery personality, not afraid of her but chooses when to engage.

MARROW: Daughter of Iris and Laurence. In her mid-20s. A queer musician in an art-punk band. Marrow can be blunt and sardonic but is sensitive and hurting underneath. Like her dad she is rebellious and a dreamer, sometimes getting lost in space. Like

her mom, she is intelligent, forceful and sharp-tongued, but sometimes her mouth is like a wild horse escaping capture.

COOPER: Live-in non-binary partner of Marrow, they play in a band together. Doesn't speak much but is very observant.

BRIDGET: Seven years older than Marrow. A solid and grounded person, raised by a loving and stable family in a nearby town.

SET: Just outside of St. John's, Newfoundland.

At stage right is IRIS and BOZ's kitchen. Conservative, decor on the feminine side, immaculately clean.

Upstage left, MARROW's kitchen/living room interior – an old salt box house, handed down from IRIS's parents to IRIS, then to MARROW. Simple old wooden furniture, well worn, a day-bed with a crocheted afghan, a very warmly messy feel. A door to outside from the kitchen.

Climbing from downstage left, a rickety, zigzagging, wooden outdoor staircase with paint peeling off, that hugs a bluff of pale purple-grey half-buried boulders, maroon red wild dogwood branches, overgrown wheat-coloured grasses. At the top of the stairs, MARROW's salt-box house exterior with her kitchen door exterior. At the foot of the stairs, LAURENCE's car, a rusty old blue hatchback.

Notes on dialect: Characters use turns of phrase/grammar specific to dialects of Newfoundland. Generally older generations have stronger accents than younger generations. I prefer that actors do not aim for Newfoundland accents but rather speak the words as they are on the page and trust that they will fall as they should. Words in all caps suggest the way that NL families tend to gruffly shout at each other, even in lighthearted arguments.

In Newfoundland usage, if a spoken phrase begins with “Well” or “So” there is generally no pause after the word, and therefore no comma. “Well.” stands as an expression by itself, which has a similar feel to “Well now!” or “So there!” If it’s a question, it’s a sassy one. The expression “Now!” is used by older generations like a fierce punctuation at the end of getting mad. It doesn’t mean “Do it now!”, it’s more like “Now you’ve been told off! So don’t open your fucken mouth again or I’ll skin ya!”

The word “spose” means suppose and is pronounced in one syllable with a z sound on the second s. The word “b’ys” means boys or guys, it rhymes with wise, also ending in a z sound.

A forward slash in the script, or several forward slashes in a line of dialogue (/, //, ///, ////) indicate that the next character to speak interjects to talk over the first character’s line at the matching slashes.

– Scene 1 –

*As the audience enters they see and hear a 1970’s film reel projector, projecting a long road trip from a dashboard camera perspective. We see a sky where a flock of starlings is flocking and breaking, flocking and breaking.*

*As the lights dim, the film reel sound ends, we hear the crunch of car tires on gravel, engine turning off, and opening of driver’s door. Lighting evocative of ‘70s film reels spills onto the stage, revealing LAURENCE, downstage left, getting out of his car. It is early morning. He has a lot on his mind.*

*LAURENCE looks up at the house. He runs his hands through his hair. He looks at the house for a long time, chewing his lips nervously. Finally, tentatively, he starts up a couple stairs, but*



*abandons the action. He stands and stares again. After another false start, he turns and gets a six-pack of beer out of the trunk, opens one, and downs it. He looks at the house, walks to the base of the stairs, then turns and gets back in the car. He gets out of the car again and brings the six-pack into the front seat. He opens another beer, chugs it all. He lays his head on the steering wheel.*

*Blackout.*

– Scene 2 –

*LAURENCE's dream/memory. 1977, then exterior of IRIS's parents' house (now MARROW's house). LAURENCE walks up the stairs and bangs on the door. IRIS opens it.*

*IRIS and LAURENCE stare each other down in a long, loaded silence.*

IRIS: Well Laurence. What do you want.

LAURENCE: I want the wedding ring.

*(Pause.)*

IRIS: Fine.

*IRIS tries to take the ring off. It sticks, which is awkward, and she gets very rough with it. She finally, awkwardly, turns away to wet her finger with spit and succeeds in getting it off. She holds it out, coldly.*

*LAURENCE hesitates.*

IRIS: TAKE it! What, you don't WANT it now?

LAURENCE: It was my grandmother's. And then my mother's.

IRIS: WELL? Now you can give it back to her. You can tell *her* you bought it too.

*LAURENCE angrily takes the ring. He stomps down the stairs very childishly. IRIS watches him go. LAURENCE gets into the car and crosses his arms. Once this show is over, IRIS heads inside, very aware that he can see her, and shuts the door. LAURENCE gets out of the car and kicks the tire. He runs up the stairs and bangs on the door again. IRIS opens the door again, quickly this time.*

IRIS: (*Shout-whispering*) WILL you KNOCK IT OFF! The BABY is ASLEEP!

*They silently stare at each other.*

LAURENCE: I want the blender.

IRIS: (*Icily*) Fine.

*IRIS goes inside and comes out with the blender. She wraps the cord around it strangely/ fiercely before handing it to him.*

IRIS: Any other GIFTS you WANT BACK?

LAURENCE: That was from *my* side of the family.

IRIS: What are *you* gonna do with it? Return it for BEER MONEY?

LAURENCE: Why do you have to *be* like this?

IRIS: (*Checking behind her, then whisper-shouting*) Because I am a GROWN WOMAN and I do NOT want to live with my PARENTS anymore.

LAURENCE: Iris, those places were too much money!

IRIS: WELL? We're not going to find a *free* apartment, Laurence.

*LAURENCE extends his hands to show their surroundings.*

IRIS: (*It dawns on her.*) You never wanted to move out of here, did you? You turned up your nose at four places. "Not the right feel." "Too far." "Not sure."

LAURENCE: Iris, this is a GOOD SITUATION! It's GOOD for the baby to have her grandparents with her while she's small. There's room. /There's help. There's a backyard!

IRIS: / "While she's small!" So, what, were you going to just keep going and looking at apartments with me and not saying anything?

LAURENCE: You think you're too good to accept help. You know what your problem is? You're too fucking proud. Too high up! What's wrong with it? / That's just FAMILY, Iris!

IRIS: /It was SUPPOSED to be TEMPORARY. You don't know my parents. What does family even MEAN to you! You have a wife and child but who'd ever guess?

LAURENCE: WHAT is the big fucking DEAL! This can't just be about money. I JUST GAVE your dad two hundred dollars.

IRIS: And you know what Laurence? I have never been so fucking mortified in my ... *(whisper-shouting)* at Sunday DINNER in FRONT of EVERYBODY! WHY wouldn't you TELL me before you did that? You had to make a big fucking SHOW of your gratitude, I wanted the unholy chasm of hell to open and swallow me through the floor. Making a big announcement and handing MONEY to MY FATHER across the SUPPER TABLE. Never mind that my father has never handled a COPPER – do you know he hands his cheque over to Mom the minute he comes in the door? He doesn't touch it, because first MOM makes sure there's FOOD on the table and the BILLS are paid and there's OIL in the furnace and THEN, she gives a bit back to Dad!

LAURENCE: What, an ALLOWANCE?! For a grown man!

IRIS: It has been EIGHT MONTHS, LAURENCE. We have not paid RENT. We have not bought FOOD. My mother has even bought DIAPERS for OUR BABY, while YOU have a JOB! /And I'm supposed to just be going to school, but I still have to work part time too, because your cheque just disappears into thin air every week! //And now I don't know what the hell I'm going to do but what I'll tell you one thing, what I'm NOT going to do is stay HERE.

LAURENCE: /I didn't ASK her to do that! //What's the point of...of LIVING, Iris, if you can't have a few drinks with your friends after ALL DAY working your hole off! What's the point of ANYTHING THEN?!

IRIS: What's the POINT?! The POINT is that it's not all about you, that's the fucking POINT!

LAURENCE: /I don't WANT to LEAVE! It's not like you're giving me a choice!

IRIS: You want a choice? How about this: either YOU leave and I stay here with the baby and my parents until I figure out what the hell to do, or I go and you stay with the baby and my parents and figure out what the hell to do! See how they feel about THAT!

LAURENCE: I should take her.

IRIS: Take the baby? YES now, take the baby, Laurence! What do you think you're going to DO with her? Set her on the WHARF while you're hauling in BOATS? Prop her up on the BAR while you're DRINKING?

LAURENCE: I'm serious! If you want to go to school so bad, I'll take her!

IRIS: You don't know how to take CARE of her!

LAURENCE: I'll get help from Mom!

IRIS: Laurence I'm not giving you the BABY so you can give her away to your MOTHER.

LAURENCE: I said I'd get HELP, from my FAMILY, not GIVE HER AWAY! YOU'RE the one who gives babies away!

*This lands with impact. She points at him fiercely. He shrinks back, knowing he's gone way too far.*

IRIS: YOU left me. YOU left me. YOU left me with no choice, so YOU shut up! So YOU SHUT UP! YOU SHUT YOUR MOUTH ABOUT THAT! YOU WANT THE BLENDER? HERE'S THE FUCKING ... BLENDER!

*IRIS throws it at him roughly and he catches it. IRIS runs around him with the blender cord, pulling it tight. She laughs ferociously at his confusion. The cord grows longer as she runs around him twice more. The lighting shifts and he panics at this nightmare turn. Screaming and laughing, she kicks him so that he falls out of sight down the hill/stairs. She runs to the door, turning back to scream maniacally,*

IRIS: YOU WANT THE BABY? I'LL GET YOU THE BABY!

LAURENCE: Iris!

*She runs inside. LAURENCE becomes visible in his car below, making sounds of panic, wrapped in a complicated tangle of blender cords and struggling to escape. IRIS runs back outside with the baby in her arms.*

LAURENCE: IRIS!

IRIS: HERE YOU GO, DADDY!!!

*IRIS throws the baby at the car. With the thwack as it lands, lighting shifts to daylight and LAURENCE wakes up in the car panicking and shouting and still wrapped in the nightmare blender cords.*

LAURENCE: JESUS! JESUS FUCKING – oh my god! FUCK. JESUS!

*Empty beer cans fall out of the car as he jumps out of it and shakes off the nightmare and the restraining cords, which suck back into the car and disappear. LAURENCE gradually comes to his senses, panting for breath.*

HOLY fuck. *(Beat.)* OH my god. *(Beat.)* What the fuck. *(Beat.)* Jesus Christ.

*He looks up at the house.*

JE-sus.

– Scene 3 –

*A bit of time has passed. LAURENCE paces and breathes like someone preparing to jump in cold water, then runs all the way up the stairs. He knocks hesitantly on the door. He bounces anxiously on his feet when no one answers. He knocks again, meekly.*

*MARROW answers half asleep, messy. For a moment, in the doorway, she looks like IRIS from the previous scene.*

*They look at each other for a moment before recognizing each other.*

MARROW: *(Incredulously)* Dad?

LAURENCE: GOD you look like your mother. That is just amazing. For a minute, I ...  
*(Pause.)* Sorry, I ...

*LAURENCE looks back at the car, and again at MARROW.*

Jesus ... look at you, Marrow. I can't believe it! Wow. Wow. This is just ... I'm so happy to see you. *(Pause.)* I uh, I just drove all the way across the island! This morning, crack of dawn! God. I guess it's been a while, huh!

*LAURENCE expects to be invited in but isn't.*

Is uh, is your mom here?

MARROW: *(Long pause.)* My mother doesn't live here, Dad. She hasn't lived here for ten years.

LAURENCE: Oh! But you're ... She's ... She's okay though ... Is she?

*MARROW hesitates, sizing him up.*

I just drove for three days straight ... Came over on the ferry. I slept in the car ... I thought I'd come and find you ... I ... It's ... It's so good to SEE you Marrow.

*They stare at each other.*

Do you want to get some breakfast or something? Sorry, it's uh ... It must still be early. I was just ... I was so excited to come and find you two. I was excited to be here! I haven't been back to the Rock in ... I don't know how long!

MARROW: Fifteen years.

LAURENCE: Fifteen! No. Really? Wow. Has it been fifteen years?

MARROW: Yeah. I was eleven.

LAURENCE: *(Pause.)* Well I slept in the car ... I tell ya, it's surreal being back. It's ... It's so good to see you, Marrow. It's early I guess. I just ... I just couldn't wait to see ya.

*MARROW takes this last comment in and scoffs. She looks down the stairs at LAURENCE'S car, then back at him.*

*She tries to appear callous while asking the next question.*

MARROW: Where have you been?

LAURENCE: Toronto, same as always. Got my own business now, got a business card actually! President of my own company! Still in uh ... construction, freelancing, you know.

*He fishes out his wallet and takes out a business card.*

That's me there. Here, you can have one! Has my uh, my number on it, my cell there, and my home number there, you can call anytime. Collect, whenever you want!

*He extends the card to her. She hesitantly takes it and looks at it.*

Still have your photo in my wallet too. Right there. Always. Knew that someday ... I like to tell people, you know, “That’s my daughter in Newfoundland right there! And someday...”

*He beams at her.*

Do you uh, do you want to go get a coffee somewhere? Or uh, (*he gestures towards going inside*) maybe a beer? I’ve just been driving ... I passed that truckstop up there ... We could get some breakfast! Do you think your Mom would uh ...?

MARROW: Why are you here? Like ... *now* ... why are you here *now*?

*(Pause.)*

LAURENCE: My dad, uh, he just, uh, he just died. A few days ago. Your grandfather, I guess.

MARROW: My grandfather you “guess”?

LAURENCE: Your grandfather. Your grandfather. Sorry, yeah. Uh. He passed. *(Pause.)* Yeah, just a few days ago. I’m uh, back to help out, you know, with the funeral, help out the family and you know ... help out.

MARROW: The funeral ... *where*?

LAURENCE: Oh. I guess ... It’s uh, you know, a five-hour drive. Bay St. George’s. That’s uh ... That’s where I grew up, that’s where uh ... you know, Dad, and Mom, and everybody ... uh ... lives. Your mom never mentioned?

*MARROW, astounded, shakes her head no.*

LAURENCE: Huh. Ok, well, I thought maybe ... I could get all of us ... maybe you would ... wanna come with me and your mom, and uh ... go to the, uh, the funeral. Together, like.

MARROW: I never MET my grandfather and he’s dead. Five HOURS from here?

*(Pause.)*



LAURENCE: Well, uh ... I don't know ... how much your mom has told you? But uh, well, I thought it was, uh, time to uh, time to talk about a few things.

But uh – you know, I'd really, I'd really like to talk to her too ... There's something, uh, important ... I just, I thought it should be, it's the kind of thing that should really be face-to-face. So, I thought I'd just ... we could just sit down and have a proper conversation.

*(Pause.)*

MARROW: Mom got married, Dad. She's been married for ten years.

LAURENCE: What? *(Beat.)* She got MARRIED? *(Beat.)* Fuck! Married! Nobody told me.

MARROW: How was anybody supposed to tell you?

LAURENCE: *(Hesitantly)* Well I mean ... That's, uh ... I mean ... Your mom... *(Decides against saying.)* Look. I think me and you, and your mom ... Let's just have something to eat, and just ... straighten this out. We can go to the funeral, we can talk ... It's a long drive ...

MARROW: So you thought you'd just swing by and GRAB me?

*(Pause.)*

LAURENCE: Look, Marrow, we're ... we're long overdue for a talk.

MARROW: "We're long overdue for a talk?!"

LAURENCE: Yeah! We are! Me and your mother! Me and you.

MARROW: This is *my* house now, Dad. Mom moved on. I moved on.

LAURENCE: Look, Marrow, I don't know what ... I think there's ... maybe a lot that you don't know.

MARROW: I think maybe there's a lot that YOU don't know.

LAURENCE: Ok. Yeah. *(Pause.)* Listen ... I didn't know what it would feel like to lose my dad, until ... There's just ... there's a lot more to it, things that I don't think ... should be ... Maybe we could just, you know, just go out, you and me, two adults, right? Have a beer! Have a few beers with your old man, and just talk? There's just some things ... that have to be done ... in person, like.

MARROW: Did you think I was gonna just run out the door with my arms flung open?

*LAURENCE starts to speak but she stops him.*

No seriously. I get that you're on some kind of Jack Kerouac philosopher nostalgic-about-the-past road trip finding yourself, and I bet that your heart was warmed by the thought of your wife and kid, right at oh, right at about the same moment that you realized you're the big family patriarch now and it made your butt freeze to think about getting old and dying alone. But you can't just breeze in and shower me with candy and toys anymore and act like you haven't been totally AWOL. Because the one thing I do know about you is that you might act like you give a shit about me while you're here, but you're in and you're out and then there might be NOTHING until the next exalted day you grace our fucken doorstep by surprise expecting a hero's welcome. But this time you missed that fucken boat by about 15 years, Dad.

*Enter COOPER from inside, half-asleep, leaning into the doorway.*

COOPER: What's uh ... What's going on?

*COOPER looks from MARROW to LAURENCE and back.*

You ok? Who is this?

MARROW: It's okay. Cooper, this is my dad.

COOPER: Whoa. Okay. Uh ... Should I ... Do I ... make ... a ... pot of coffee? Or ... no. Or yeah. Yes?

LAURENCE: This your roommate?

MARROW: *(Sassily)* Nope.

*All exchange looks until it clicks for LAURENCE, who is surprised and put off but then overcorrects himself into a little too much enthusiasm.*

LAURENCE: Ohhkay, okay! Alright! Okay! Coffee'd be great! Uh ...

*LAURENCE extends his hand to COOPER, who accepts the handshake with some tension.*

COOPER: Cooper.

LAURENCE: Cooper? Laurence. Would love a cup of coffee. Been driving a long time, had a, uh ... *(looks back at the car and his dream/vision)* a weird morning, so ...

*Marrow is still blocking the door and has made no move to invite him in.*

If, uh ... If ...

*MARROW doesn't budge. LAURENCE weighs the stakes and decides to take the risk of revealing something that he knows won't endear him to IRIS.*

Marrow. Uh, listen. Your mom ... Your mom knew where I was. She uh, she has known where I was ... She could have gotten in touch with me anytime. If she wanted to.

*MARROW is shocked. Warily, she looks to COOPER whose expression says to at least let LAURENCE in and give him a chance to explain. MARROW rubs her face, then opens the door and starts inside. When she turns to close the door, she indicates that LAURENCE should follow them in.*

MARROW: Be my guest.

*ALL exit into MARROW's house.*

## – Scene 4 –

*MARROW's bathroom, where MARROW is splashing cold water on her face and panicking. Physical pain overtakes her, and her body is wracked with familiar, excruciating spasms. She does not like to be seen while in pain.*

MARROW: Not nowwww... Owwwwwww.

*MARROW slides down the wall to the floor. She grabs the sink and pulls herself up again. She splashes her face with water again and looks at her "reflection" in the mirror, which is then revealed to be the face of THE WITCH (IRIS).*

THE WITCH (IRIS): Hen-looooo!

*The WITCH's head turns completely around in the mirror as she yells in unison with MARROW. The WITCH's yell ends in phlegmy laughter, then a smoker's cough with some horking.*

MARROW and THE WITCH (IRIS): AhhHHH! / AHHHHH ha ha hargh ahrgh keh korf kla. Killa. Killa.

MARROW: *(Angrily at THE WITCH)* What the fuck! What the actual fuck! What the hell. I FULLY... I FULLY thought I was awake. *(Pause.)* This is a dream.

THE WITCH: Awake. Asleep. Awake. Asleep. Awake-asleep-awake-asleep-awake! *(Sung as a bass note)* Asleeeep.

MARROW: *(Warily)* Why are YOU here?

THE WITCH: Here, disappear, here-disappear-here-disappear! *(She smiles uncannily at MARROW.)* Quant-um, ANALOGGGG. Quant-um, ANALOGGGG! *(Sings a mock pop song, pronouncing analog as anal log:)* Quantum, anal log, anal anal anal log! Quantum, anal / log, anal anal anal -

MARROW: /What do you WANT! // Whyyy are you HERE?!

THE WITCH: //What do YOU WANT! WHY are YOU here?

MARROW: This is MY house! I LIVE here!

THE WITCH: My house, your house! My-house-your-house- /my-house-your-house

MARROW: /No! MY house. MY house ONLY. MY house!

THE WITCH: Houses inside houses!

MARROW: No! I'm going to wake up.

THE WITCH: *(Suddenly intensely serious)* Are you? *(In the mocking voice of a wicked witch:)* Are you waking shuddering through your lips? Are you breathing your breath through every hurt place inside? Ohhh ... so tight, so relentless, this holding on! Shifting and cracking that holds you in its pinchy-pinches? Looking into the eyes of ghosts? What are you so afraid of?

MARROW: They're not my ghosts, they're my mother's ghosts.

*The WITCH nods.*

THE WITCH: Ghosts inside ghosts. *(Haughtily, in IRIS's voice:)* I don't BELIEVE in ghosts! *(As a wicked witch:)* Is the ghost in the air? Whose air is under there?

MARROW: I'm going to wake up.

THE WITCH: *(Foolishly)* Who's underwear is under there? How's the air?

MARROW: *(Angrily, to the WITCH)* WHAT. DO. YOU. MEAN.

THE WITCH: *(Intensely and carefully speaking, as if this is something crucially important for MARROW to understand)* The DEVIL ... wears a WHITE SHIRT!

MARROW: *(Filled with dread)* What do you mean? WHO do you mean?

*Lighting shifts so that THE WITCH looks extremely creepy.*

THE WITCH: *(Whisper-shout)* SAY it!

*MARROW is paralyzed with fear and pain, unable to breathe. She makes pain noises.*

THE WITCH: The DEVIL WEARS a WHITE SHIRT! *(Pause.)* SAY it!

*MARROW is terrified. She draws up all her courage, and steels herself, looking straight into THE WITCH's eyes.*

MARROW: The DEVIL wears a WHITE SHIRT!

*Lighting and THE WITCH's facial expression soften. THE WITCH's eyes fill with love and pride, as if MARROW were her brave child. She beams at MARROW. She disappears.*

MARROW: *(Shouts with surprise at the disappearance)* Ah! What is happening?! What is happening!? WHAT is happening?!

*She realizes that whatever it was, it's over now. She splashes water on her face again and looks in the mirror, breathing to calm down. She leans against the door for a moment, to collect herself.*

JE-sus.

– Scene 5 –

*Some time has passed. LAURENCE, MARROW and COOPER are sitting on the couch and chair, coffee cups empty and set aside.*

LAURENCE: *(in mid-sentence, to COOPER)* – you know, the Church thinks of people as energetic beings, you know, no gender, male female or any of that ... so I guess it doesn't matter, you know, who you're with in this life. We're all energy, just energy.

*MARROW and COOPER exchange a look.*

MARROW: You know... Mom never mentioned ... the Church. How long have you been ... *with* them?

LAURENCE: Pretty much, I mean, since I got off, you know, drugs. So ... what has that been ... I mean, I got cleaned up before you were born.

MARROW: But Mom has never, ever mentioned the Church. Not once.

LAURENCE: Huh! Well your mom, uh ... Well at one point, well, they had me doing some outreach in uh, in Vancouver, like, a street team? They sent me out there, paid for my plane ticket, at one point I was even President out there! Of that chapter, you know, of the Church's outreach. So, we ran a support group in the uh, the men's prison out there. A group for, you know, recovering drug addicts. And your mom and I, you know, we were both volunteering with running it. And in that group, there was (*LAURENCE looks at COOPER*) a trans woman, (*to MARROW*) she really took to your mom, she just ... became obsessed, almost ... with your mom ... just everything, copying her mannerisms, the way she walked and talked, she was just really sweet on your mom.

*MARROW shoots COOPER an apologetic look.*

I guess they didn't get access to a lot of women, you know, in the prison.

*An awkward silence.*

Anyway, she was a really ... a really charming ... kind of person. You know, really likeable.

MARROW: So ... Mom was ... Mom was *in* the Church with you?

LAURENCE: Yeah, I mean we went to the prison every week for a while.

MARROW: The prison.

LAURENCE: Yeah!

MARROW: Mom told me that when she was living in Vancouver there was this trans woman who worked at the hardware store by her house./ She said she worked at the cash.

LAURENCE: /Oh, no, this person was definitely in prison.

MARROW: Mom said this woman...at the hardware store... took a shine to her, like, copied her voice and her mannerisms, the way she spoke and moved, and they would talk every time she was there...at the hardware store. The neighbourhood hardware store.

LAURENCE: Well maybe that was just another trans woman at the hardware store.

MARROW: Mom doesn't exactly tell me stories about trans women on a regular basis, Dad. Subtract ... prison ... Subtract drug addiction support group ... Subtract being in a cult... Subtract you altogether, I guess./ Subtract everything to do with you. //

LAURENCE: /It's not a cult. // You know ... the media ... there's people out there who've got something against the Church, you know, but they might be excommunicated people, criminals, anything! If you want to know what it's all about, you've got to get your information from the source, I mean, from the Church itself. Get it from the source. Because people can go around saying bad things, *bad* people, you know? They give us alerts ... There are people who want to hurt the Church, but they're bad people.

*MARROW eyes LAURENCE uncomfortably. MARROW and COOPER share a subtle glance. Pause. MARROW nods, then changes the subject.*

MARROW: Dad ... when you said Mom knew where you were ... how do you know that? She hasn't spoken to you in years. How could you know that she knew where you were?

LAURENCE: Look. Marrow, your mother and I, uh, I mean, it never bothered me, but maybe she didn't want you to know when you were younger, you know, for getting teased at school or something, I don't know, maybe she didn't ... I guess she didn't want to tell you. But at this point ... I can't see how ... Your mom and I ... are actually ... we're first cousins. You know, we have the same ... extended family. So ...



MARROW: What...

LAURENCE: My mother, so, your grandmother, my mom, and your mom's dad, your grandfather ... they're sister and brother. Your grandmother and grandfather. On two sides, like. One on each. I guess it's like, your grandfather is ... also ... your great uncle ...too.

*MARROW, incredulous, looks at COOPER, who is agape, then back at LAURENCE.*

I mean (*laughs*) you're probably ... You're probably even your own cousin, the way it works out.

*MARROW is speechless, taking in both the new information and the fact that no one has ever told her this before.*

(*Drawing it in the air for her.*) See, your great-grandfather, your mother's ... father's ... father ... when his first wife died, he got married again, and the second wife, that was my mother's mother. So, your nan, over here, had me, and your pop, over here, had your mom. And those two, they're sister and brother.

MARROW: I'm INBRED?!

*COOPER is wide-eyed, grinning, hand over mouth.*

(*To COOPER:*) Oh thanks. I am inbred. Oh, that's just great. (*To LAURENCE*) Way to fucken go, guys.

LAURENCE: It doesn't matter, Marrow! It's a stupid ... I mean, what are you gonna do, everybody on the island has got to be related *somehow*. Your mother and I grew up in different towns. I mean, it's not like...

MARROW: I'm inbred.

LAURENCE: Whatever. The point is, if your mother actually wanted to, she could just have asked for my number, from anyone, really, anyone in our family.

*MARROW takes this in, and the weight of it settles onto her.*

If she wanted to. But ... things didn't end so well between us. There are things she might not be comfortable talking about ... you know, things that weren't ... talked about ...

MARROW: I know.

LAURENCE: What do you know?

MARROW: I know you weren't married when she got pregnant.

LAURENCE: *(It is difficult for him to ask this question.)* The first time, or the second time?

*MARROW takes this in and waits for LAURENCE to explain.*

*LAURENCE pauses, uncomfortable, knowing that the truth about him might push her further away.*

Do you have a, uh, a cigarette?

*MARROW hesitates, looks at COOPER, and then shrugs.*

MARROW: Yeah. Yes. Mom doesn't know I smoke.

*MARROW gets her cigarettes out of her jacket pocket.*

LAURENCE: *(Pleased that she has confided something to him.)* Oh yeah? Why's that?

MARROW: I don't know, I guess I ... I don't want to deal with her reaction to ... There's enough already for her to react to, with ... *(she gestures to herself and COOPER)* ... and with *(she points to herself, self-deprecatingly.)*

LAURENCE: Well you know what I say? If you want to smoke...JUST SMOKE. *(He laughs.)* Just SMOKE if you want to! Going back and forth, on and off – screw all that! Just DO it! SMOKE! Smoke all you want!

MARROW: *(Laughing)* Well that's some questionable last-minute parenting, Dad.

*MARROW tosses LAURENCE the pack. She opens a window and then, seeing that he doesn't have a lighter, walks over and lights his cigarette. This for her is a strangely intimate moment with her father. He smiles at her.*

LAURENCE: And maybe we weren't married, but that doesn't mean you were an accident, either Marrow. I mean ... not really? Not really! *(Pause.)* You look just like her. Your mother I mean. How she looked back then. Feels so weird, it's like you're both looking back at me right now. Her back then. But seven years before you came along ... there was another, uh ... There was another time your mother got pregnant. And that time was ... an accident.

MARROW: Wait – what? I thought you and Mom were only together for like, two years?

LAURENCE: *(It is difficult for him to continue.)* This was ... you were born in '76, right, so this was, uh, in ... '68 or '69. Your mom got a job teaching at my, uh, my high school. Catholic school. Over where I'm from. She got a, uh ... got a job there teaching. It was deep Catholicism, those years. The schools were all run by the churches, there wasn't a job you could get teaching where you didn't have to be, you know, vouched for by a priest.

MARROW: Mom was ... teaching at *your* high school/ – like, you were still ... a student...?

LAURENCE: /I mean we were only two years apart, we were both teenagers, you know, I don't know, seventeen and nineteen... it wasn't like, CREEPY or anything. I mean she wasn't *MY* teacher, just a teacher in my ...

*MARROW and COOPER exchange another look, incredulous.*

MARROW: You are fucking KIDDING me.

LAURENCE: It was hot and heavy, you know, like, a Catholic...// hot for teacher thing.

*//MARROW gives him the stop hand.*

MARROW: No.

*She looks at COOPER, who is again wide-eyed, hand over mouth, both shocked and delighted.*

Mom was a teacher in your Catholic high school. And you were a student. And you ...

LAURENCE: I mean, it was powerful. The connection we had. But no one could know about it. She definitely would have lost her job, for starters.

MARROW: And you were cousins. And you got pregnant?

*LAURENCE shrugs.*

MARROW: MY MOTHER, who makes herself out to be clean as the driven snow. Who doesn't approve of ... of anything ... sexual ... ever.

LAURENCE: Really?

*(Pause.)*

MARROW: Last month there was a wedding, a family wedding. My cousin. So I wanted to bring Cooper, we've been living together for a year, so ... but I mention it to Mom and she starts yelling that it's extremely rude and a huge imposition to bring a date and I should know better. So after a while of this, I say, "Mom, is this about me being gay?" And she goes, *(as IRIS, whisper-shouting)* "I don't know why you have such a CHIP on your SHOULDER about that!" Like, she's mad that I think she's homophobic. But she keeps bringing it up, how taking a date to this wedding is so rude and how dare I be so disrespectful. So I ask my aunt. And she says, "Oh yes, bring a date!" So, I bring Cooper to the wedding. And then Mom is introducing us, *(as IRIS)* "And this is Cooper, Marrow's ... friend." And I go *(quietly)*, "Mom, are you uncomfortable with people knowing I'm queer?" And she rears up and shouts *(as IRIS)*, "Do you want me to ANNOUNCE to the ROOM that she's your SEXUAL PARTNER!?"

LAURENCE: Huh.

MARROW: I don't know how to describe it, she's always just been so ... so FREAKED OUT. By ANYTHING! By NOTHING! Like I sewed a patch on the crotch of my jeans when I was fifteen, to cover where it was wearing through, you know. I picked out this fabric with a big yellow sunflower. To me, it was like, *(laughing, to COOPER)* "My vulva is a sunflower!" It was the '90s okay? I was feeling proud of my body, I was feeling ... powerful. I was finally starting to love myself and feel halfways-okay. *(Self-mockingly)* I had just come into my feminist consciousness. *(To LAURENCE)* So, I'm about to leave for school and Mom stops me in the hall, and the way she looks at me, is just so ... COMPLETELY ... DISGUSTED! She looks at me like I'm ... disgusting ... and she goes *(as IRIS, with fierce disdain)*, "THAT shouldn't be where you want people to LOOK."

Like, I am FIFTEEN. I'm not out to her yet. I'm cutting myself. I'm fucked up. I'm having problems at school. I've been sexually assaulted. I'm being bullied pretty bad. I'm just trying to survive. All I want is to be who I am and to love myself. And my mother seems hell-bent on convincing me there is something WRONG and DIRTY about me. I'm only as interested in sex as any normal teenager. I'm just a regular kid! A good kid! And she's got this thing like, she's ONTO me...like she's got my number. She's so suspicious. She won't let me stay the night anywhere. And you know why? Because when SHE was my age, she was a Catholic school teacher BANGING a FUCKING STUDENT who was her COUSIN!

*(Pause.)*

I don't care about you being cousins. Or even the teacher thing. SHE cared what people thought. People around town judging you, saying things about you – she talked about that all the time. People looking through their curtains. But she put it all on ME. I had to be perfect. 98% wasn't good enough. The way I dressed, the way I talked – I had to be this model daughter, I had to demonstrate something about HER to the world. So I just served as a fucking buffer between her and people's judgement. But I couldn't do that without ... completely being someone else. Who I AM made her feel ashamed.

*MARROW suddenly realizes who she's talking to.*

She's like a blame deflector shield, Dad. "Hindsight is 20- 20." She was "naïve." She "couldn't have known." She "did her best." She "worked so hard." She "sacrificed everything," and here I am, so ungrateful, bringing shame on her, after everything she's done. It's my "fault." It's your "fault."

LAURENCE: Well mostly it *was* my fault. At least, definitely the first time it was my fault.

MARROW: The first time.

LAURENCE: Yeah. Look, it's not just you who's in the dark about us being together back then, okay, I mean, no one knew, and I mean *nobody*. No friends, no family. No one knew. She would have been fired. She never would have gotten a job on the island again. At least not teaching. Her parents too ... I mean, they were strict. They would have thrown her out. Maybe disowned her.

MARROW: So ... what happened ... the first time?

LAURENCE: Do you guys – uh, listen, have you got uh, anything stronger than coffee...?

*COOPER nods and heads to the kitchen to fetch something.*

COOPER: *(To LAURENCE)* You do mean booze, right? It's okay ... for you to drink?

LAURENCE: Oh yeah, I never quit drinking. I mean, you gotta have something to lean on.

*COOPER comes back with Irish whiskey and a glass, pours LAURENCE a double and hands it to him gently.*

Thank you. Thanks very much, uh, Cooper.

*COOPER nods. Then tips the bottle at MARROW as a question. MARROW shrugs, COOPER shrugs, and pours two more glasses.*

Well cheers.

*ALL take a grim, hearty swig.*

Naw, it was just drugs that were a problem for me. (*Beat.*) So ... I was ... I was just a ... a stupid ... seventeen-year-old ... bum. When your mom found out she was pregnant ... the first time ... when she told me ... I did not know how to handle it. I panicked. I didn't do the right thing. I uh, I just ... I just ... I ran. I ran. I didn't finish high school, I got on a bus to Toronto, and I found a job doing construction, and a place to crash. My mom, she was real mad, but I just ... I was dumb, you know? I was so ... dumb. I was irresponsible. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. *Now* I know I was running from my feelings. But I left her to deal with all of that alone. And that ... That stayed with me. Like a ... a weight in my chest. I was a bad guy. So that's when I really got into drugs and addiction. Every time I stopped moving, there it was, you know? You can't run from it. But I didn't want to feel like that. Needles, pills, booze, coke, I'd do whatever was in front of me. I was a party guy, you know? Then I started selling, and then, uh, that's when it really started getting out of control. The addiction. You know, voices talking in the walls, that kind of shit. I got in over my head, in a ... a situation ... over a, uh, a drug money thing. The guy who ... I was left for ... I was beat up really, really bad. I had to get my jaw wired back together. That put me on my tail for a while, I was drinking through a straw. And, uh, that was when the Church picked me up. They ran a narcotics addiction recovery group, the street team. I started going to meetings. And uh, I started reading about our minds, the mental pictures we have in our heads. The pills and pharmaceuticals we put in our bodies. I started to see how I was reacting. To mental pictures, to things that had nothing to do with the present moment, things from the past that are in the room with you ... And you know, whenever I talked to my mom, whenever I called, she was hassling me about it. She would never let it go, you know, "You need to come back here now and marry that girl and raise your child!"

MARROW: You said nobody knew.

LAURENCE: Well, my mom knew. I mean, I didn't tell her, nobody told her. She just knew. She wasn't stupid. She walked in on us a couple times, hanging out. But she didn't say anything to me about it. Not until I left town. But uh ... your mom, your mom was left in a very bad situation. I did that. I left her to deal with that alone. So ... then she met

a guy, an army guy, at the army base in Stephenville. And he said he'd marry her and they could keep the baby. Even though it wasn't his, you know? So that was a way out. That was a way to ... But uh ... he turned out to be a bad guy. *Another* bad guy, I guess. He was a drinker, and something happened, you know, he lost his job from drinking. They lost the house, and she couldn't ... See, it wasn't uh, it wasn't his baby, when it came down to it. By then they were married, you know, so, she didn't have any kind of legal ... You know, it was 1969, in Newfoundland – that was a different time. The Catholic church, I mean they had their claws in everything back then.

So ... I left her in a real hard spot. After he lost his job and the house, he didn't want to do it anymore. He told her she had to give the baby up. He said he wasn't going to take care of it.

MARROW: (*Horried*) What did she do?

LAURENCE: Well ... she gave it up.

MARROW: But couldn't she have left him?

LAURENCE: I ... I don't know. She wouldn't have had a way to survive. I mean to support the baby on her own – that situation, her parents would have thrown her out – Society... You know, it was different by the time you came along, things had changed, we were older, it was a different ... circumstance. So ... I don't know what she could have done. She did what she had to do. She survived. After five or six years married to the army guy, she left him. He turned out to be real bad news. She ended up in Vancouver around the time the Church sent me out there, for the narcotics uh, support group. So, it just happened we were there at the same time. And she was going up to a music festival, and she ran into my sister. She asked about me. So when my sister told me she was there, I couldn't believe it. I just jumped in the car and drove straight to where she was staying. I just had a ... a feeling. And somehow, on the way up to that festival, headed up north there, she said SHE got a feeling. Same time, 4 pm. She got a strange feeling that she should turn back. So she did. She turned around and drove back to the house where she was staying. And when she pulled in, I was there in the driveway, asleep in the car. Just like ... magic.



*(Pause.)*

When my dad died, I realized I had never told him about it. Mom never told him. And it hit me. I said, it's time to man up and take care of what I should have in the first place. It was just a few days ago. I said, I'm going to *do* something. I uh... I looked up the number for the adoption agency, I just found the number and I called. I talked to the lady there, and I just told her the whole situation. You know, she asked me a few questions to make sure ... and then it was ... It was ... It was unreal. Just like that – she looked it up, she asked a few more questions, she looks through the file or whatever and then she goes, “Okay, well sir,” she goes, “it looks like your biological daughter has been looking for you for nine years.” I was just ... You can't know the feeling. She said, “Do you have a pen?” And I said, “Hell yeah!” And she read out a name and phone number and said, “Well, this is where she can be reached!” Just like that! Unreal. And then I just ... I just got in the car and started driving.

*LAURENCE takes a folded piece of paper out of his pocket.*

That's your sister. Your full-blood sister. Her name is Bridget. She's been looking for us for nine years and she lives just a few hours away, and I talked to her this morning.

*They stare at it and each other. MARROW suddenly stands up, furious and bristling.*

MARROW: What is WRONG with you?!

LAURENCE: *(Startled)* What do you mean?

MARROW: How do you make such a huge fucking mistake in your life TWICE?!

*LAURENCE is speechless.*

You run out on one baby, and oh that hurts so much you have to drug yourself into oblivion! Then seven years later, what! You didn't stick around for me either! You do the EXACT SAME FUCKING THING, AGAIN!

LAURENCE: That was different! Your Mom TOLD me to leave! She didn't want me there!

MARROW: She didn't tell you to COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR out of my life. You could have written. You could have called.

LAURENCE: I did!

MARROW: Maybe you *both* would rather blame each other than look in the mirror.

*(Pause.)*

Do you remember sending me that giant heart-shaped box of chocolates on Valentine's Day when I was six?

LAURENCE: Huh. No. No, I don't remember that.

MARROW: Well *I* do. I remember the mailman at the door, and the strange look on Mom's face when she read the card. She just handed it to me and said, "It's for you." She looked ... I can't describe it ... just ... bleak ... disappointment, maybe? *I* was over the moon, I was elated, it was from you, it was for me. Mom had to have thought it was for her at first.

LAURENCE: *(Softly, to himself)* I don't remember.

MARROW: It was red velvet with lace edges, and glittery, metallic foil, and white, soft, pop-out letters that said, "I Love You, Valentine." I remember it was in cursive because I had just learned how to read it. And it was huge. It was like a limo showing up at the door with a dozen red roses, and she gets them in her arms and then reads the card, and oh, actually, they're not for her, they're for her child. Not even a note to her. I mean did you even ... it's almost like you were *trying* to hurt her.

LAURENCE: I wasn't.

MARROW: Oh yeah? Well *I* got the picture. Because at first, of course, I talked about it until I was blue in the face. But she just ... her face ... I ended up hiding it under my bed! I'd wait until she was busy with something, which, you know, was basically always, and

then I would, you know, squeak my bedroom door shut, and glide the box out from under the bed, and wiggle it open bit by bit without rustling the paper. And I rationed them. I would pick out one – only one, per day – and I would lay it on my tongue, six years old, and try not to give in to the desire to chew, just let it melt instead so it would last as long as possible while I traced the words “I Love You Valentine” with my fingers until I wore the fucking fuzz off the letters. How pathetic is that? Stretching it out as long as possible. And you don’t even remember giving it to me.

You know, Mom put *work* into being a mom. We might have been broke, but we went camping, we went swimming, we hiked in the woods, we picked berries, you know, she braided my hair, she read to me, you know, she made homemade bread, I never went hungry. I always had a winter coat – other kids I knew didn’t have that. She bought *them* winter coats. She scrounged up the few bucks it took to do the things a kid should get to do, even if it meant she worked her hole off, and she tried and she kept trying and she never sat on her tail, ever. And you were supposed to send child support, every month, but you never, ever did.

LAURENCE: I mean, I didn’t have it.

MARROW: *SHE* didn’t have it! She had to work for it!

LAURENCE: I sent a cheque whenever I could!

MARROW: Your cheques always bounced.

LAURENCE: They did? She never told me that!

MARROW: How could you not know that your cheques bounced? It’s your bank account.

LAURENCE: *I* don’t know! I mean, if she had just *told* me, I would have sent another one!

MARROW: Or, if you write a cheque for your kid, maybe you don’t spend the money in your bank account before it’s cashed!

LAURENCE: Well she still could have just told me though.

*(Pause.)*

MARROW: You sent me your old record player in a box. I spent hours lying on the floor with your big old headphones on my little head, drumming, playing guitar, singing in a band, singing to all your old records, you know, the Beatles, Cream, Led Zeppelin ...

*LAURENCE doesn't remember.*

You called and asked me what I wanted for my birthday. I said Michael Jackson *Thriller*. You always listened to what I asked for. Even if you had to line up or beat your way through the crowds, you got me the Cabbage Patch doll named Darlene with brown hair, the Barbie Trans-Am, the Boss Hawg punching bag – whatever it was, you made it happen.

Mom refused to buy me a Barbie and I wasn't allowed to watch the Dukes of Hazzard. But with you there were no rules. Then she'd be like, hey, want to go see Raffi for your birthday? And I'd be like, "... YEAH!" Even though, no, I really did not! But I didn't want to see the look on her face when she realized that you had outdone her again. You had money to burn. You didn't have to care if something was good for me. You didn't buy winter coats. You didn't put oil in the furnace. You weren't tired. You breezed in and got the payoff, and then you breezed right back out.

I think she was afraid of being fun like you. Of letting go for a minute. Of letting go of worrying for one minute. Like, if she indulged me at all, she'd be losing control and losing control meant being like you. Like, as if ... any indulgence was a slippery slope towards ... you.

LAURENCE: Well. It kind of was, for her.

MARROW: After Valentine's Day I didn't hear from you for a really long time. Towards the end of the box I was spacing out the chocolates even longer, three days, a week. I started getting obsessive about the negative space left behind, like, the inverse, empty hole shaped like a chocolate but not containing one. The tray that smelled so good, with

nothing left in it, just thin and empty. I felt like I had to hold my breath when I opened it, to keep the smell of chocolate in the box.

I started to have a thing about holes ... I started to have nightmares about ... like, these black holes opening up in the floors, I would try to cross a room but I would fall in. They would just appear anywhere I was, like, in the street, at the mall, and I would fall through the floor, and Mom would be looking down at me sadly, and she just ... her face would be ... she'd be going up an escalator, looking down through the mall floor at me with that ... that sad, worried face ... and I could never find the way back up, every escalator I could find just went further down, and more and more holes would appear and I would just fall further away from her and never be able to get back up.

I kept that fucking empty Valentines box under my bed until one day, Mom found it and the way she looked ... I felt so ... embarrassed ... and like a ... a traitor ... to hang on so tightly to ... literal garbage, just because it was from you. The look on her face, I thought I had done something horribly wrong. To her, you know? Like I betrayed her.

LAURENCE: You were just a kid.

MARROW: Dad, I was never only me. I was always a reminder of sadness and shittiness. I was the negative space left behind by you, you and this other baby from before. I didn't even know it. I just always thought ... there was something WRONG with me. I was a disappointment. I wasn't enough.

I don't think she was ever going to tell me any of this. She might never have told me.

*MARROW realizes she is grateful to LAURENCE.*

Thank you, for telling me. Dad. For coming here. I might never have known.

LAURENCE: Look – we can talk to your mother together. We can sit down together, and talk.

MARROW: I can't see that going well.

LAURENCE: Let me call her.

*(Pause.)*

MARROW: No.

LAURENCE: Marrow.

MARROW: No. No, Dad. No. You don't know her. It has to be me. I'll tell her.

– Scene 6 –

*Lights up on IRIS and BOZ's kitchen, stage right. IRIS is scrubbing the stove. BOZ enters the kitchen from elsewhere in the house. IRIS scrubs harder without acknowledging his presence, she is pissed at him and demonstrating it. She switches to the counter, then looks hard at the stove again and returns to scrubbing it. BOZ is accustomed to this and watches her with a mix of dry humour and annoyance.*

BOZ: You just cleaned the kitchen, Iris.

IRIS: Well.

BOZ: A germ wouldn't set foot in this house. Unless it was tired of living.

IRIS: Well. I spose there's something wrong with wanting a clean house. It's not like I could wait for someone else to do it, could I? Who else around here is gonna do it, Boswell?

BOZ: I can't take off my socks without wondering where they went! It's like magic, things disappearing into thin air!

IRIS: Socks go in the HAMPER, Boz. NOT on the floor, NOT on the back of the chair, NOT in the MIDDLE of the porch where somebody could come in and SLIP and break their leg ... NOT God knows where hanging off the chandelier over the dining room table.

BOZ: I can't lay down my friggin book without for you got it took/ on me!

IRIS: /Well.

BOZ: If I get up for the KETTLE I'm afraid to put my book down for you'll WHISK it away! Iris I got a permanent ... a permanent friggin crick in my neck holding everything up, afraid you'll take it on me/ if I set it down!

IRIS: /Are you going to keep running your mouth about it? Because you could just pick your things up yourself and then you wouldn't have a problem, you see.

BOZ: Oh now, see, I don't think *I* have a problem.

IRIS: Well, you're alone there.

*They look at each other, silent and deadpan.*

BOZ: Speaking of problems, did you call your daughter?

IRIS: Aren't you playing cards this afternoon?

BOZ: 2 o'clock.

IRIS: And I spose you want a ride, and then for me to come again and get you after.

BOZ: Oh I dunno I spose I could walk the twenty miles, Iris.

IRIS: Because I've got a few things to do myself, you know! Imagine, I have my own day planned! And there's at least three loads of laundry and if I have to go get you I'll barely have time to get supper on the stove before supertime!

BOZ: Well honey I'll take the car.

IRIS: Yes and kill someone coming back liquored up half out of your tree. You're tempting fate with that Boz.

BOZ: Well I don't want to be five minutes to five and you outside honking blue murder like a fucking... air raid./ All the b'ys think I'm whadyecallit. Pussy-whipped.

IRIS: /Fine, Boz. So I'll just leave supper to burn on the stove and you take as long as you want, and I'll just sit in the car. And knit.

BOZ: That's a good girl.

IRIS: Are you done?

BOZ: Nearly, but I'm half 'fraid to cross the floor, fear I leave a sock mark on it.

*(Pause.)*

Are you going to call your daughter?

IRIS: I don't see how that's any of your business.

BOZ: Well ... I'd say you ought to call her, is all.

IRIS: Now! Did I ask you for your opinion?

BOZ: Well. *(Beat.)* You lit into her a bit much Iris.

IRIS: SHE hung UP on me!

*They look at each other.*

Do you want me to call her? Here, I'll call her. I'll just stop everything I'm doing and call her RIGHT NOW so you can go PLAY CARDS because GOD FORBID you have to wait, and never mind the WHOLE HOUSE in an UNHOLY UPHEAVAL!

*IRIS goes to the phone and dials, pointedly. BOZ sighs.*

*MARROW's phone rings in her house stage left. MARROW eyes the phone, then LAURENCE. Moving away from LAURENCE, she answers the call.*

MARROW: Hello?

IRIS: I just wanted to say that I'm sorry that you went your whole life thinking that your mother was plotting against you.



*(Pause.)*

MARROW:

Hi Mom. *(Pause.)* That's not what I said.

IRIS: Oh, well tell me what you said then.

MARROW: *(Sighs.)* I don't remember.

IRIS: *(To BOZ, spitefully:)* She doesn't remember what she said.

MARROW: *(Prickling)* Oh wait, it's come back to me. I said, "You never tell me the truth."

IRIS: *(Looking at BOZ, but talking to MARROW.)* You said I was lying, and I said I certainly was NOT lying.

MARROW: Um, no, actually, you said, "I have nothing to hide," and I said, "*That's* a weird thing to say," and then you told me not to be a SAUCY CHILD.

IRIS: Well you WERE being a saucy child.

MARROW: Really? I was just asking a few questions and you totally lost it. And started SHOUTING AT ME./ Even though, apparently, you weren't angry//

IRIS: /I did NOT "lose it." I was not "shouting." I was only responding to the TONE that YOU were taking. //I was NOT "angry"!

MARROW: Are you angry now?

IRIS: What are you talking about! I'll answer *any* question you want to ask!/ I don't have a problem answering questions!

MARROW: /I guess the alarm bells go off when I ask you something and you have to remember, hmm, what did I tell her last time?

IRIS: What are you TALKING about, Marrow.

MARROW: You know, what you're going to say,/// and what you're NOT going to say...

LAURENCE: /// Marrow...

IRIS: Now! (*To BOZ:*) See? (*To MARROW:*) This is exactly the kind of TONE I'm talking about.

BOZ: Iris.

MARROW: I have a few questions about my father.

IRIS: Your father! Your father! Marrow, I have nothing NEW to say about your father. I mean, what do you want me to say, I haven't laid eyes on the man in, God ... what has it been/

MARROW: /Mom, do you remember on my sixteenth birthday, you took me out for pizza and I asked you to tell me more about my father? And you got so ... MAD at me ... that I broke down and cried in the restaurant – ON MY BIRTHDAY. And everybody was LOOKING at us. And then YOU said I was making a scene and being melodramatic and ridiculous.

IRIS: WHERE is all this coming from? //All of a sudden?

MARROW: //Just asking if you remember.

LAURENCE: Marrow ...

IRIS: I'm very sorry, child, but I have no idea on God's green earth what you're talking about.

MARROW: Say I wanted to get in touch with my father. Would you know how to find him?

IRIS: Your father! Marrow, what has your father got to do with anything?

MARROW: THAT is a good question.

IRIS: Honestly I don't know what the HELL you want me to say. I can't speak for your father and his choices, all I can say is that *I* loved you, *I* didn't abandon you. I don't get much thanks for it and *I* never got to buy so much as a lipstick for myself but *you* always had what *you* needed.

MARROW: What if I just wanted to talk to him?

IRIS: (*Annoyed at this.*) Well. I have no idea, he could be anywhere.

MARROW: You don't know how to reach him. You don't know ANYONE I could ask.

IRIS: I just don't know what you would hope to ... (*Sighs*) Honey. There's no point sitting around like a, like a MOPE, CRYING oh poor me and OBSESSING over ... over something that happened in the far distant PAST. /I don't know what you want me to SAY to you about him. You had one parent who loved you, at least. There's no point in pitying yourself!

BOZ: /Iris.

IRIS: (*To BOZ in a savage whisper-shout:*) WHAT!

BOZ: You're fucking it up.

IRIS: (*To BOZ*) Oh yes I'm fucking it up Boz, I'm fucking it up! (*To MARROW:*) I don't know what you WANT from me!

BOZ: Iris.

MARROW: Just a straight answer. / One straight answer. ONE straight answer.

LAURENCE: /Marrow ...

IRIS: Jesus Christ! I've got BOZ talking in one ear and YOU in the other, everybody's talking at me from ALL SIDES and I'VE got THAT many things to do today, but nobody seems to CARE what *I* might have going on in MY life! Here I've got to give HIM a ride to town and practically turn right around and go back and get him again! I'm worn down to a STUMP by the time all this packing around answering this and getting that ready for

everybody else EVERY, FUCKING, DAY of my GODFORSAKEN, FUCKING, LIFE!  
NOW!

MARROW: Mom.

IRIS: Marrow, I was just phoning to apologize. I did not call to be yelled at, and disrespected, and (*towards BOZ:*) ORDERED around, and whatever anyone feels like on any given day of the fucking week!

MARROW: Mom!

IRIS: (*Savagely*) WHAT!!!

*LAURENCE dives for the phone. He and MARROW silently struggle but MARROW manages to end the call and take the phone from him, hanging up on IRIS. MARROW stares LAURENCE down.*

IRIS: (*To BOZ:*) She hung up on me again!

*BOZ stands looking at IRIS. She busies herself.*

Will you get your coat and boots on, I don't have all bloody day.

BOZ: I'll be in the car. I can drive if you like.

*(Pause.)*

Iris...

IRIS: Oh, now don't you start.

*Exit BOZ. IRIS has a silent emotional moment alone. She leans against something, slides down and sits on the floor, facing the stove. She chokes up as if to cry, but squints her eyes, looks up and holds it back. She reaches up for the sponge and starts to scrub the glass.*

## – Scene 7 –

*There is a knock from inside the stove. IRIS is startled, vocalizes a fear sound, freezes and stares at the oven door. There's a knock again, jolly as if a friend were knocking at the door, from inside the stove. IRIS is frozen. Very, very slowly, she works up the courage to open the stove, arming herself with a spatula, and then exchanging it for a long turkey fork. She picks up a cutting board as a shield and opens the door with her slippered foot, then backs away fast like she's expecting a snake.*

*A red carpet unrolls out of the stove. THE WITCH (MALLOW) front-rolls out of the stove into the kitchen with a flourish, landing in a dramatic pose on her knees. Her outfit is a camp drag queen Wizard of Oz mash-up of the Wicked Witch (mainly, with striped socks), with little flourishes of Dorothy (red-sequined high-heel dancing shoes), the Lion (mane-ish hair), the Tin Man (a jaunty silver oil-funnel hat), and the Scarecrow (hay sticking out here and there).*

THE WITCH (MALLOW): *(Triumphantly)* Ha-HA! *(To IRIS)* I SO BET YOU DID NOT SEE that COMING!

*THE WITCH then gets up on her feet, her knees cracking. She cracks her back. Then sighs like this whole thing is getting harder with age.*

Hang on.

*She pulls out a compact and lifts herself into a stunning high-femme drag face, loving herself in the mirror.*

*THE WITCH cues the music. She tap dances. The dance number is a camp mashup of the girl in the radiator in David Lynch's Eraserhead, The Wizard of Oz and older Hollywood musicals.*

*Old-fashioned prop clouds and stars, sun and moon appear with ropes and pulleys. The number ends with THE WITCH clicking her heels together three times, pointedly, repeatedly, at IRIS. Then, trying to cue IRIS to get the message, she clicks her heels three times again, giving hints out of the corner of her mouth, almost but not fully saying “There’s no place like home” as if she’s trying to help IRIS pass a test. IRIS is unresponsive. THE WITCH tries signaling to IRIS by tapping her nose and grabbing her earlobe à la Carol Burnett. Then signals like a pitcher to a catcher. Nothing is working.*

*Finally, she throws in the towel and returns to her groddy old witch posture. In an embittered show biz sour mood, exhausted and hauling herself around, she rolls up the red carpet and, exaggerating the difficulty in a self-pitying way, lifts and stuffs it back into the stove. Flicking the back of her hand she cues the removal of the clouds and stars.*

IRIS: *(As if in a trance)* I don’t WANT to stay here, LAURENCE.

*THE WITCH breathes a huge sigh of relief. She has a moment of really loving IRIS, as if IRIS were her child. Then casually gestures to cue LAURENCE walking in from just out of sight in the kitchen.*

LAURENCE: Well I don’t WANT to pay for an apartment for no reason, Iris.

IRIS: It’s NOT for no reason. It’s NOT for no reason! You don’t ... you don’t know my dad very well, Laurence.

LAURENCE: What? *(Pause.)* What!

IRIS: It doesn’t matter, we have the money now/

LAURENCE: /Well we don’t//

IRIS: //to move out! What do you mean, we don't? *(Pause.)* What do you mean we don't?

LAURENCE: Do not try to tell me what I can and can't do with my own money/ that I earned.

IRIS: /Oh Laurence. Oh, LAURENCE! You did not. You did NOT! We have twelve hundred dollars. We have twelve hundred dollars – as of YESTERDAY AFTERNOON we have twelve hundred dollars.

LAURENCE: I WORK on the DOCKS. //I get PAID, ///and I can spend MY MONEY as I see FIT!

IRIS: //Oh for ... ///Oh for the love of God. For the love of God. JESUS. MARY. AND JOSEPH. LAURENCE! Jesus, FUCKing, Herald, Fucking, Christ, on the Fucking Cross!

*(Pause.)*

How much is left?

*(Pause.)*

Oh my GOD, Laurence, how much is LEFT?

LAURENCE: It's MY paycheque!

IRIS: We are supposed to take that apartment for the first of the month.

*(Pause.)*

There's none left, is there.

LAURENCE: We can stay here.

IRIS: Oh you've made a decision, have you?

LAURENCE: You're too proud. You don't want to admit we can't afford it.

IRIS: I don't want to live with my PARENTS, LAURENCE.

LAURENCE: You're ashamed. You're too stuck up.

IRIS: You don't understand. You don't know them. You don't know my dad!

LAURENCE: Your parents don't care! The only person who is worried about what people think, is you.

IRIS: That's not ...! That is NOT what we SAID we were going to DO.

LAURENCE: Well, it's what we're going to do now.

IRIS: Oh, is it! I'm going to tell you one thing. THIS is not what I signed on for, when we got married. I did not move back to Newfoundland to MOVE IN WITH MY PARENTS so my husband can blow TWELVE HUNDRED DOLLARS on gambling and booze and I'm not sure I even want to know what the hell else, but that's MY money too/ because you have a FAMILY now.

LAURENCE: /Oh, your money! YOUR money!//

IRIS: //Yeah, my money! YEAH: my money! Like MY car that YOU/// crashed

LAURENCE: ///Oh not the car/

IRIS: Yeah, the car! MY car. MY car./

LAURENCE: /Look I SAID I was SORRY. It was the other guy's fault, he turned the corner and rammed into me. I TOLD you.

IRIS: Yeah, you told me, and you also told me you'd fix it up "as soon as I get a job"//

LAURENCE: //Well I would have///

IRIS: ///but who got a job, LAURENCE? Who paid to get it out of the shop? MY CAR. that I LOVED. That I PAID FOR. That you wrecked.

LAURENCE: Well you never gave me a chance to do it.



IRIS: If I had to wait for YOU to pay for it I'd have LOST my car / probably my JOB, too! I'd have grown OLD waiting for you to get off your duff. And it had only been a week since the fire!

LAURENCE: /I would have paid it but you'd ... you'd rather be pissed! – Oh Jesus, now the fire.

IRIS: You have to be watched like a child, LAURENCE! And the other day you let Marrow fall over the stairs in her walker!

LAURENCE: I caught her!

IRIS: That's not the point. You were supposed to be WATCHING her.

LAURENCE: I was! I caught her!

IRIS: Well Laurence I feel like I have TWO children!

*Suddenly they freeze and lock eyes. Iris looks down. She adjusts things on the counter.*

I didn't mean -

LAURENCE: I know.

IRIS: I think about her.

LAURENCE: Me too. For a long time I couldn't think about anything else.

IRIS: Laurence, listen to me, I can't live here, with ... my dad. My parents. I wanted things to be different. This was supposed to be ... just a place to land. For a week or two. To get our bearings. I can't go backwards. I got out of here/ because I HAD to GET OUT of HERE.

LAURENCE: /We're not going backwards! We've got Marrow now.

IRIS: No! I'm right back under this roof. I can't be TRAPPED here. And this time ... there's a baby that we didn't give away. And your JOB ... is to keep us SAFE.

LAURENCE: You ARE safe.

IRIS: No. No we're not. Having our own place, and our own money, THAT is safe. This ... THIS is not what I wanted. At ALL. I was better off on my own, not relying on someone/ who never, ever comes through for me.

LAURENCE: /Oh come on! You've got a roof over your head, don't you? I'm hauling boats ALL DAY. I work HARD for that money and if I want to go for a drink with my friends after work ... just because we have a baby doesn't mean life is OVER, Iris -

IRIS: A DRINK doesn't cost TWELVE HUNDRED DOLLARS, Laurence. You're not helping us. I don't know WHAT you're doing. You're just helping yourself.

LAURENCE: Iris, come on. It's not like ... I'll ... I'll have another paycheque in a couple of weeks.

IRIS: The first time, you ran off. You left me to deal with everything alone.

LAURENCE: I was a teenager! I was scared!

IRIS: *I was a teenager! I was scared! Try running from what's literally INSIDE OF YOU. I've never been so afraid in my life! My father...I couldn't let my parents ... it was bad enough ... I couldn't raise a child in this house.*

LAURENCE: Iris. We'll figure it out. I swear to God.

IRIS: No. We won't.

LAURENCE: Iris, come on! Why do you have to BE like that!

IRIS: You're some kind of leech Laurence, sucking the life out of things! I'm better off figuring it out on my own!

LAURENCE: *(Storming out)* Well the LAST time you figured it out on your own, you GAVE UP THE BABY!

*Snap back to present day, IRIS suddenly is overcome by a wave of deep grief.*

*Collecting herself, she gets a chair and reaches up into the far back of a cupboard, takes a few things out of the way, and then takes down an old hat box. She opens the box in her lap, and looks at two old photos, then an old envelope with a worn letter in it, that she unfolds. She shakes a gold ring out of the envelope and slides it on her finger briefly, then slides it off and holds it in her fist while she looks at the letter.*

– Scene 8 –

*Exterior IRIS and BOZ's house, stage right. IRIS opens the car door where BOZ is in the driver's seat. She conceals that she has been crying. She gets into the car and, ridiculously, tries to be subtle about the big hat box. BOZ looks at the hat box, then at her, then at the road, then at her again.*

BOZ: Thought I was going to cross into the next world, waiting for ya.

IRIS: Well.

BOZ: What's that.

IRIS: A hat box.

BOZ: *Just* a hat box?

IRIS: Yep!

BOZ: Empty?

IRIS: A few old things.

BOZ: Hm. Looks old.

*IRIS looks out the window and doesn't answer.*

Looks like a right old box, like somebody might keep ... old love letters in ... or something.

*IRIS is agitated, and fiddles with the string handle on the box.*

IRIS: Just a few old things I found, I thought I might ... drop off to Marrow. Maybe. If I have time. Which I probably don't! So I'll just ... I'll just do it another day.

BOZ: What's wrong with today?

*IRIS studies him out of the corner of her eye. Then she indicates to him that they're missing their turnoff.*

IRIS: Boz! Boz. Boz BOZ – Look at the Goddamn ROAD! You're – Boswell, Jesus, Herald Christ.

BOZ: What.

IRIS: You missed the turnoff! Idiot.

BOZ: Did I?

IRIS: Boswell I swear to God you are losing your eyesight or you have a BRAIN tumour or something.

BOZ: That's nudding sure! We can loop around. Oh! Why don't we drop by Marrow's on the way then? Since we're going to pass it. And you can take care of that.

*IRIS looks at him. With his eyes he indicates the hat box.*

I don't mind coming with you. See my darling step-daughter. Or step ... neutral ... whatever she calls herself these days. The Other Sex.

IRIS: You're going to miss your card game this afternoon to drop in on Marrow.

BOZ: Seems to me you might need a hand. Looks heavy. I don't mind ... S'good to get rid of stuff anyway. Clear out the ol' cupboard.

*IRIS is startled by the word “cupboard” and looks at BOZ. BOZ is unphased.*

I didn't MEAN to be snoopin'. Up there in the cupboard is where I USED to keep my hash.

*IRIS searches his face. He clamps down on a grin.*

– Scene 9 –

*Interior MARROW's house. Time has passed. LAURENCE, MARROW, and COOPER are very drunk on whiskey, draining the last of the bottle. There's a honk outside. MARROW looks out the window.*

MARROW: Sssshhhhhhhhhhhhit! Ohhh my god. You have to go! Out! The back!

COOPER: Who...? Oh. Oh. Oh shit.

LAURENCE: What?

MARROW: Oh my god. Up!

*MARROW tries to lift LAURENCE out of his seat.*

LAURENCE: Is that IRIS?

MARROW: No.

LAURENCE: It is.

MARROW: No. Dad, this will not go well. Just – go out the back door. PLEASE! I know you want to talk to her, but right now I need you to go. OH MY GOD! GO! OUT!

LAURENCE: Marrow, I just want to TALK, WHAT is the – JE-sus! Why is everybody so AFRAID of TALKING.

MARROW: Dad! Please! ... Please! Please don't fuck this up. I'll help you, but just don't fuck this up. (*Urgently*) DAD. Do this for me, PLEASE, PLEASE! I am BEGGING YOU! I am BEGGING YOU!

*LAURENCE accepts this plea and lets her push him to the back door. BOZ knocks at the front door.*

MARROW: GO!

*MARROW pushes LAURENCE out the back and runs to open the front door to BOZ and IRIS, trying to catch her breath before she opens it, and realizing that she is very drunk.*

MARROW: Oh hey Mom! Hey Boz.

What's up?

*BOZ nods towards IRIS, who is oddly staring at the hat box. An awkward silence.*

Cuppa tea?

BOZ / IRIS: Sure. / (*Automatically*) Sure honey.

MARROW: Okay. Let me just put on the kettle. Sorry it's a bit ... messy ...

*MARROW tidy-hides the whiskey bottle and glasses, as they enter, also noticing at the same time a bong, gay porn wall calendar and several empty packs of cigarettes and throwing them out of sight. This all goes unnoticed by IRIS, who is staring at the hat box, and BOZ, who is focused on IRIS carrying through with her plan.*

Come on in.

*MARROW drunkenly puts together a tea tray.*

What's uh...?

*IRIS is avoiding eye contact with MARROW.*

What's...

*MARROW looks to BOZ for some kind of cue.*

What's... in the box, Mom?

IRIS: I would have given it to you before now, but you were always out with your friends, I barely see you at all.

MARROW: Oh-kay?

BOZ: Now I've forgotten I was supposed to make a call. Let me just step out to the car for a bit, *(to MARROW)* you can save me my tea honey.

MARROW: Okay?

*BOZ exits.*

COOPER: I'll be ... upstairs? I guess? I'll just be ... *(points upstairs)* if you ... I'll just go.

*COOPER exits.*

MARROW: Mom?

IRIS: Your father sent this package. I was saving it for you.

*MARROW takes the hatbox from IRIS, sits down, and takes out a large fat envelope.*

Mom. When is this from?

*IRIS avoids eye contact. MARROW opens the letter, reads it and looks angrily at IRIS. She looks for the ring, drops it out of the envelope into her hand.*

MARROW: You were "saving" it for me?

IRIS: Yes.

MARROW: Until WHEN?

IRIS: I thought I'd save it until you got married. But. Well.

MARROW: Well what.

IRIS: That's not the lifestyle you chose.

MARROW: Oh I see. So it's my fault for being gay.

IRIS: He sent it to ME.

MARROW: For ME. You told me Dad DISAPPEARED.

IRIS: No I did not. I didn't use that word.

MARROW: No?

IRIS: And whatever you do (*gesturing to COOPER upstairs*) is none of my business.

MARROW: It is actually. Because I'm not ashamed of it.

IRIS: That's your business.

MARROW: You know what *is* my business? That my father wanted to stay in touch with me.

*MARROW holds out the ring.*

Do you know how much I NEEDED something like this?

IRIS: You think he's so perfect, Marrow.

MARROW: You watched me SUFFER. Dad leaving broke my heart./ You LIED to me.//

IRIS: /I know. //I never LIED to you!

MARROW: BULLSHIT! ///You lied to me every day of my life! //// Fuck language.



IRIS: ///Language! ///I never lied to you, excuse me young lady, what lie did I tell you exactly?

MARROW: You let me think my father didn't love me.

IRIS: Well NOW you're just being CRAZY. I never said that!

MARROW: You DID.

IRIS: I never said those words.

MARROW: You WANTED me to think that. That served you better.

IRIS: Well. Frankly Marrow, if he does love you he certainly has a weird way of showing it.

MARROW: You were ANGRY with him so you PUNISHED him. With ME. With ME!

IRIS: *(Haughtily)* I never LEFT!

MARROW: YOU KICKED HIM OUT!

IRIS: NO, I DIDN'T, I gave him a choice.

MARROW: Oh, what choice.

IRIS: He had a choice.

MARROW: WHAT choice.

*(Pause.)*

What CHOICE!?

IRIS: Either *he* could stay with the kids or I could, but not both of us.

MARROW

*(Pause.)*

At your parents' house.

*(Pause.)*

At your parents' house.

HE could STAY at YOUR PARENTS' HOUSE with YOUR CHILD while YOU LEFT.  
THAT was the CHOICE!

IRIS: Well NOW you're ANGRY!

MARROW: YEAH, I'm angry!

*Enter BOZ.*

BOZ: Iris ...

IRIS: Oh I suppose you were snooping on THIS TOO!

BOZ: Honey, you don't have to snoop on what you can hear down the street.

IRIS: OH WELL EVERYBODY HAS AN OPINION ON ME NOW!

MARROW: I'm ALLOWED to have an OPINION about NOT KNOWING WHERE  
MY FATHER WAS FOR FIFTEEN YEARS.

IRIS: Well it's not like he didn't know where YOU were.

MARROW: *(To BOZ)* Did Mom ever tell you that she and my dad are cousins?

*IRIS, startled, dismissively shakes her head no, looking from BOZ to MARROW, as if she can make the answer be no by shaking her head.*

And just in case you might think, Oh wow, that sounds like, I don't know, AN ERROR of JUDGEMENT – Here's the part that is just really – just, really something – because they didn't just do it once, SEVEN YEARS LATER they managed to do it AGAIN. Like, after some thought, let's have ANOTHER child. Another wanted child, who could feel secure in the world, knowing that she was loved.

*IRIS continues to shake her head no, attempts to make this revelation disappear by simply physically denying it to BOZ.*

And then she thought to herself, I think I'll just keep her father in a fucking hat box, so that when she's old enough to not need him anymore, THEN I can give him to her. Because that's easier than competing with him! *(To IRIS)* Because it hurt you that I loved him. It hurt you so you made him disappear.

BOZ: Is that true Iris?

*IRIS shakes her head dismissively.*

IRIS: I think she's having an episode.

MARROW: How long are you gonna keep this up, Mom?

IRIS: If it's your father that told you this, he's just pulling the wool over your eyes. Your father is just trying to manipulate you, that's not – maybe it's some other child of his, who knows – but no, that's not her. Can't be her.

MARROW: "Can't be her." Who's "her" Mom.

*(Pause.)*

WHO is HER.

*IRIS realizes that she let the cat out of the bag, but still shakes her head dismissively.*

MARROW: I am gonna CRACK IN TWO if you don't stop shaking your head. I am gonna CRACK IN TWO! I am gonna CRACK IN TWO.

IRIS: Lower your voice. Your father is MANIPULATING you. You just can't see it – you don't know him.

MARROW: I don't know YOU!

IRIS: Lower your voice.

MARROW: *(To BOZ)* Did you know that when Mom and Dad hooked up she was a Catholic school teacher at my dad's high school, where he was STILL A STUDENT?

*IRIS looks at BOZ, then back at MARROW.*

IRIS: Are you off your medication?

MARROW: Yeah, I'm a fucking lunatic, I'm a total mental case. *(Gesturing towards BOZ)* It's not like I, you know, could USE a father figure in my life. Why not destroy that too. *(To BOZ)* I'm clearly off my meds is all. I'm a fucking wackadoo. *(To IRIS)* Not like YOU Mom. You're the picture of sanity.

BOZ: Marrow.

IRIS: *(To MARROW)* You're so melodramatic.

MARROW: You and my father were IN A CULT.

IRIS: *(Pause, attempting to be composed for BOZ.)* I was just trying to be open-minded.

MARROW: Why didn't you ever tell me?

IRIS: I didn't want to paint too negative a picture of your father.

MARROW: *(Incredulous.)* Like that he was an alcoholic and a drug addict and a no-good bum who abandoned us.

IRIS: Don't you go thinking that he was SOME POOR SOUL who got sucked in by that church and was MANIPULATED into his behaviour! He was like that before he ever got tangled up with them.

MARROW: Like what?

IRIS: *(Dismissively)* Oh, I don't know.

MARROW: No, like what, Mom?

IRIS: Well...dishonest. And strange.

MARROW: For example?

IRIS: *(Suddenly vicious, a strange outburst)* HE tried to KIDNAP you!

MARROW: What?

IRIS: But *I* made sure THAT didn't happen.

MARROW: What are you talking about, Mom?

IRIS: Your father tried to take you and speed away in his car. But he never made it, the fool. He ran out of gas.

MARROW: My father ... kidnapped me?

IRIS: I should have seen it coming. We had two cars, and all our stuff was packed in, and he INSISTED that you be in the car with him. He INSISTED. You were still a baby, just starting to talk. And he just – at one point, he just made a run for it. I think he was going to take you back to Toronto! I think he thought that I wouldn't notice!

MARROW: *(Shocked)* Mom. What are you talking about?

IRIS: There were a lot of little signs. There were things I should have realized. The plan was, we were going back to Newfoundland so that I could finish my degree. Or that was what I THOUGHT was the plan. The neighbours we sold the furniture to, across the hall, they used to look at me so strange. I always wondered – did he go back to them and ask them for more money? They just looked at me so STRANGE. I never knew what happened there. You never knew with him.

So here you are, a little baby, we're packed in the two cars, and we're driving from Toronto to St. John's. We're supposed to stop just outside Montreal for the night, you know, Laurence has an aunt in Chateauguay. So he's got you in HIS car, and I'm driving behind, you know, following, and he takes the wrong turnoff and we end up going over a bridge and I'm honking, and he stops and I say, "What in the HELL are you DOING?!" And he says, *(IRIS puts on an idiot voice)* "Meh meh meh mehmeh!" And I say "We're going to have to go ALL the Jesus WAY AROUND AGAIN now!" And then he gets

back in the car, and we drive ALL the way around, and he takes the wrong turnoff, AGAIN! A SECOND time! And now he's going every which way, he's running lights, he's changing lanes at the last second, he's cutting through places – but I stick to him like glue. And he's just gunning it. I'm not even in *my* car – he crashed *my* car – I had a beautiful car, that I OWNED, that HE CRASHED, TOTALED IT – I'm in this shitty brown Dodge I had to buy off my boss or I would have lost my job, because I had to drive for work. I'm in the shittiest car you ever saw, but it doesn't matter, he still can't shake me. Maybe he didn't bargain for that, I don't know! And then, a second time, we go over the bridge and ALL the way around AGAIN, and I cannot believe it, he takes the wrong damn turnoff for the THIRD TIME! And we go over that damn bridge. And he has the pedal to the floor the whole time, but he can't lose me. He's cutting through and turning around every which way, and I'm thinking, what in the CHRIST is he trying to PULL? I mean, maybe twice, but THREE times? No, I'm sorry, something's not right here. So I am not letting him lose me, and the next thing I know we are way the fuck outside Montreal in some farmer's field. And the fool ... that fool, he runs out of GAS. So he pulls over. And I jump out of the car and run up and I'm like, WHAT in the FUCKING HELL are you DOING, LAURENCE? ARE YOU A FUCKING LUNATIC driving like that?!

MARROW: Oh my god Mom. That's awful.

IRIS: Well there we were, you know, in the middle of fucking NOWHERE, with a BABY. And I go, "WHAT were you THINKING!? Now we're stuck out here, the gas stations are closed, we need to eat, what's the baby going to sleep in the CAR now in a FARMER'S FIELD?"

MARROW: And what did he say?

IRIS: Oh, you know, he looked CAUGHT. He looked CAUGHT.

MARROW: What did he say? Did he admit it?

IRIS: Not right then. (*Hesitantly*) Later on.

MARROW: But ... after that you moved in with him. With me.

IRIS: You know, I just cannot remember what happened next for the life of me ... I don't know how we got out of that farmer's field. We must have somehow, because we did eventually get to his aunt's in Chateauguay... and I spose we got to Newfoundland somehow!

MARROW: But then you LIVED with him, with ME. The baby that he tried to KIDNAP in a CAR CHASE. I mean, you didn't call the cops? You didn't ...

*(Pause.)*

How could you move back in with him after he tried to KIDNAP me?

IRIS: Oh, I still wasn't really, totally onto, you know, him and his machinations, and all the weird stuff that he was doing.

That fool didn't expect me to be able to stay right on his tail! And he just ran out of gas! I'm sure he didn't think about, you know, how he was going to TAKE CARE of a BABY. He just had a thought and that was it, that was the plan! He probably just figured I'd go on driving and he'd go back to Toronto with you, and that would be it. Maybe he'd give you to his mother to take care of. *(Pause.)* I think he might have been a ... a sociopath.

MARROW: A sociopath.

IRIS: Yes, I think so.

MARROW: He admitted to you that he tried to kidnap me?

IRIS: *(Hesitantly)* Later, yeah.

MARROW: What did he actually say? What WORDS did he say?

IRIS: Oh, I don't know.

MARROW: How do you not know?

IRIS: Well NOW you're taking tones.

MARROW: Did he ADMIT it or NOT!

IRIS: I don't have to stand here and take this saucy shit from you.

*IRIS gathers her things and leaves. BOZ, looking troubled, looks from her to MARROW, and then silently follows her out.*

*MARROW slowly crumbles to the floor and weeps pathetically.*

*COOPER enters, goes to her, and scoops her up, carrying her to their bedroom.*

– Scene 10 –

*Interior, COOPER and MARROW in bed. MARROW is lying on top of the covers with her head hanging over the side of the bed.*

MARROW: I feel like I'm going crazy.

COOPER: You're no crazier than me.

MARROW: How crazy are you?

COOPER: I'm fucken nuts b'y.

*MARROW laughs.*

MARROW: What do I do Cooper? I want to call and ask Dad about the kidnapping thing. What if Mom's right, what if he had something in his head about, I dunno, raising me in the Church?

COOPER: *(Being a chirpy version of MARROW)* Hi Dad, so Mom said you tried to steal me in a car chase? I was wondering if that was because of the cult you're in or for



another reason.

*MARROW laughs. COOPER amps it up.*

*(As a drugged-out hippie version of LAURENCE, to MARROW)* Man, it's not a cult, it's a legit church. Calling it a cult is like, totally harshing my family reunion road trip vibes.

*(As a strung out, nervous harpie version of IRIS, to MARROW)* I'M NOT LYING, YOU'RE LYING! HE'S LYING! EVERYONE ELSE IS LYING!

*(As hippie LAURENCE)* Truth is just energy, just like we're all energy? Like, the reason I come and go from your life is because I'm aligned with nature's cycles, like the moon.

*(As harpie IRIS)* I'M NOT CRAZY, YOU'RE CRAZY! HE'S CRAZY! EVERYONE ELSE IS CRAZY!

*MARROW laughs so hard she ends up crying.*

COOPER: What do you need, babe?

MARROW: I'm going to call him.

*MARROW picks up her phone. She gets her wallet and takes out her father's business card.*

*Lights up on LAURENCE answering the phone while driving.*

LAURENCE: YALLO.

MARROW: Hi Dad. What are you doing?

LAURENCE: Just uh, just taking care of a few things.

MARROW: Can I ask you something?

LAURENCE: Yeah! Anything!

MARROW: When you and Mom were moving back to Newfoundland, you know, when

you got back together ... was there ever ... any point ... when you ... when you ... did you ever think of taking me back to Toronto, like, WITHOUT her?

LAURENCE: Uh, what do you mean?

MARROW: Like, just calling it a day with her, and taking me back to Toronto. Maybe, you know, to raise me, in the ... you know, in the Church ... tradition ...?

LAURENCE: Well, I mean – we fought about it, we broke up, you know, we had this fight on the stairs outside her parents' house, I was in the car for hours, you know, I just kept going up there and asking for one thing and another. All I really wanted was for her to let me back in. That was the longest drive of my life, back to Toronto, alone.

MARROW: But Dad ... Did you ever ... Did you ever try to just ... TAKE me ... to Toronto?

LAURENCE: Huh?

MARROW: Dad. Did you ever try to kidnap me?

LAURENCE: KIDNAP you?

MARROW: Mom said ... when you were driving to Newfoundland, from Toronto ... you had me in your car, and she was following you in *her* car ...

LAURENCE: OH. Oh. That. That was just ... me being an idiot. I mean – Jesus. Is that what she said? I KIDNAPPED you?

MARROW: Yeah.

LAURENCE: Oh my god. No. I was just ... I was just ... I was just... that was dumb.

*(Pause.)*

She's just trying to make sense out of insanity. How could she make sense of it. You know, I got mad, we were lost, and we argued – and then I just ... I lost my temper. I just wanted to get the hell away from her. I drove off like a crazy asshole. But there was never

anything ... I never intended ...

MARROW: She said you admitted it.

LAURENCE: Admitted kidnapping you? No! No. I can't believe she ... but I used to get so defensive, you know. We just started fighting about the damn directions and my mind ... my mind would just go white, you know. Blank. Not thinking about anything except getting as far away from her as possible. Just, AWAY FROM HER. I was speeding, I ran some red lights. But what was in my head at that moment – that had nothing to do with your mother. She's just trying to make sense of ... I mean, I was reacting to stuff that... This is why we've got to talk face-to-face, Marrow, me and your mom. Talk it out.

MARROW: Dad, I don't think you realize what'd you'd be getting yourself into. You don't know her.

LAURENCE: Well I hope you won't be angry with me.

MARROW: Why would I be angry with you? *(Beat.)* Why would I be angry with you Dad? *(Beat.)* Dad.

LAURENCE: I followed them. Your mother and her, uh, husband. /I followed them when they left your place.

MARROW: /No!

LAURENCE: I just want to talk to her, Marrow! I have to tell her.

MARROW: No no no no no – NO, Dad.

LAURENCE: I'm sorry. I knew it was gonna piss you off. But I need to talk to her, I have to tell her. It has to be face-to-face.

MARROW: Dad!

LAURENCE: I gotta go.

*LAURENCE hangs up and gets out of his car.*

MARROW: FUCK! Cooper get your pants on! We gotta go RIGHT NOW!

*COOPER and MARROW jump up and haul on their clothes.*

– Scene 11 –

*IRIS's kitchen, stage right. IRIS is wearing rubber gloves and a kerchief and has hauled a ton of old overstuffed boxes and lamps out of a closet. She is busily throwing things in garbage bags.*

BOZ: What are you doing now?

IRIS: This is driving me crazy, Boswell, didn't I ask you to get all of your – your – your STUFF in some kind of – I mean, *(She holds something up)* do you NEED this? I mean, the dust in here alone is CHOKING me!

BOZ: Iris.

IRIS: I don't know how I'm going to ... like, what the hell is this? *(She holds something up.)* For example, Boz? This is a bunch of shit you don't need that you're stogging away in here like a fucking hoarder. You just ACCUMULATE! There's no – there's no SENSE to it! You know what this is called? CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION!

BOZ: Iris.

IRIS: You're like a CHILD.

BOZ: Iris, /for fuck's sake.

IRIS: /It's no wonder I can't – it's no wonder I can't THINK in here, with all this old SHIT in every NOOK and //CRANNY. It's no wonder –

*//The phone rings.*

Well?

*BOZ picks up the cell phone from the counter and looks at it. He holds it out to her, still ringing.*

BOZ: That's your daughter.

IRIS: Well I don't have time for more of her DRAMATICS today.

BOZ: Iris.

IRIS: Well? YOU answer it! Me here with rubber gloves on, covered in filth, up to my eyes in YOUR OLD CRAP!

*BOZ answers the phone.*

BOZ: Hello.

*Lights up on MARROW and COOPER in a car, MARROW has her cell to her ear.*

MARROW: Where's Mom.

BOZ: Your mother is cleaning out the storage closet.

MARROW: Has anyone come to the door?

BOZ: The door ...?

MARROW: Just DON'T ANSWER IT. Okay? Listen, just give me a sec—

*There is a knock at IRIS and BOZ's door.*

BOZ: There's someone now ... knocking.

MARROW: SHIT! Boz, just pass me to Mom. JUST PASS ME TO MOM!

BOZ: *(To Marrow)* Who is it?

MARROW: Just DON'T ANSWER IT! Pass me to Mom! BOZ! PASS me to MOM!

IRIS: *(To Boz)* Who's at the door?

*BOZ passes IRIS the phone.*

(To BOZ) I said, who's at the door?

*BOZ goes to the window and looks out.*

MARROW: Mom? Mom? Mom! Is that you? Mom, don't answer the door, ok?

IRIS: Why, who is it? Well ANSWER the DOOR, Boz!

MARROW: No! Mom! Mom, it's Dad. DAD is at the door, Mom. DAD IS AT THE DOOR.

IRIS: Your FATHER! Well what in hell does HE want!

*BOZ goes to the door.*

MARROW: Just – can you just – just – I'm almost there, just wait a minute –

*BOZ opens the door. It is LAURENCE.*

IRIS: (To BOZ) Boz ...

LAURENCE: Hello, uh, is Iris –

*BOZ punches LAURENCE square in the face. LAURENCE is knocked back and BOZ goes after him out the door yelling,*

BOZ: Get out, you son of a bitch!

*Sound of LAURENCE and BOZ brawling outside.*

IRIS: (Dazed) Boz is gone after him!

MARROW: What do you mean, gone after him?

IRIS: He went out the door after him, he punched him in the face!

MARROW: Boz HIT Dad?

*IRIS goes to the window.*

IRIS: Right in the – he really belted him one – they’re fighting outside – he just knocked him down –

*IRIS and MARROW can't help but laugh.*

MARROW: Jesus.

IRIS: Like a couple of orangutans! Or chimpanzees, whatever you call it.

MARROW: Mom, can you make them stop?

IRIS: Well, I ... I don't know ... I don't know!

MARROW: Mom, listen to me. Dad showed up at my house. His dad died. My grandfather./ He wants us to go to the funeral -

IRIS: /WHAT are they DOING – well now they’re just standing there. Oh now there’s somebody else getting out of his car! My god, I hope that’s not his girlfriend, she is at least 30 years younger than he is!

MARROW: Who –

IRIS: Who does he think he is, just showing up and bringing someone that young – he has no shame.

MARROW: Oh my god. Oh my god.

IRIS: What?

MARROW: Mom. Just wait there. Wait right there! I’m almost there!

*Lights up on BOZ and LAURENCE below, who has a bleeding nose and lip. Both are staggering and breathing hard with messed up clothes and hair from fighting. Enter MARROW running with COOPER, and IRIS from the opposite direction.*

LAURENCE: *(Out of breath)* Iris, I’m sorry. I just – I was – I wanted to – to see you – I needed to – to talk to you.

IRIS: Well I'll hazard a guess that THIS little show didn't play out like you were expecting.

MARROW: *(Out of breath.)* Dad, you really should try calling ahead sometime.

IRIS: Well then everybody would say no.

*MARROW and IRIS laugh.*

LAURENCE: Iris. I wish you'd told me about your father. Marrow told me.

MARROW: *(To IRIS)* Sorry. I assumed he knew.

LAURENCE: I wouldn't have ... I just ... I would never have insisted on living with your parents if I knew. Iris, why didn't you just TELL me?

*IRIS looks at the ground.*

BOZ: *(To IRIS)* What's he talking about?

MARRO: *(To Iris)* BOZ doesn't know?

*IRIS won't look anyone in the eye.*

BOZ: *(To IRIS)* He was a hard man, was he Iris?

*IRIS ignores this question.*

Well. So was MY father.

IRIS: *(Looking up at BOZ, surprised)* Was he?

*MARROW is speechless. She holds up her hands like wtf.*

MARROW: How do you not talk about that? How are you MARRIED and don't TALK about that!?

IRIS: Because it's in the DISTANT PAST, Marrow. The PAST. We don't have to DRAG it up and POST about it on the INTERNET and feel SORRY for ourselves until we MAKE ourselves SICK!



MARROW: Is that what I do?

IRIS: I didn't say that.

MARROW: What does that matter, you don't SAY ANYTHING!

IRIS: Oh, stop with the fucking MELODRAMA! And WALLOWING in the PAST!

MARROW: ME?! The past doesn't NEED to be dragged up because you know why? Because you're not in the room, you're so full of the past you can't even SEE who's right in FRONT of you! There are so many elephants in the room there is no fucking room LEFT for the PEOPLE! You want to ignore the past? You're not even here! You think you don't have to deal with the past? Let me step aside! The past is about to kick you right in the fucking duff!

*Enter BRIDGET, led by LAURENCE. LAURENCE positions her in front of IRIS. He is excited for this moment.*

LAURENCE: Iris. This is her. This is her.

IRIS: Who.

LAURENCE: Iris. This is our daughter. I found her. I found her! Her name is Bridget.

IRIS: What?

LAURENCE: I found her! I called her! She came to meet us!

*IRIS shakes her head.*

Iris, just LOOK at her. This is HER.

IRIS: I see her! You think you can pull the wool with your damn SCHEMES? /What are you after NOW?

MARROW: /Jesus, Mom.

IRIS: *(To MARROW)* What, I'm supposed to TRUST HIM?

LAURENCE: She's blood, IRIS. It's on paper. // It's in the file.

IRIS: //She might be YOUR blood but that doesn't mean she's welcome here – HAH, oh yeah, I'd like to SEE THAT file.

MARROW: Mom!

IRIS: What!

MARROW: Mom, I'M his fucking blood.

IRIS: *(Irritated)* Oh I didn't mean YOU.

MARROW: She's MY blood. Even if she's not yours.

*MARROW and BRIDGET exchange a look.*

IRIS: You watch him. He is trying to trick ... You WATCH him! HE does WHATEVER he WANTS, the BIG HERO! He just never sticks around to deal with the CONSEQUENCES!

MARROW: How are YOU dealing with the consequences! HE TOLD me about her! HE went and FOUND her! HE BROUGHT her here! He just wants to TALK to you!

IRIS: No. It isn't her. He's FULL of it Marrow! He is USING ...

MARROW: HOW!

LAURENCE: Iris.

MARROW: How could he possibly – what could he possibly GAIN? Would you EVER have told me, Mom? I'm TWENTY- THREE years old. You were NEVER going to tell me./ And THAT is MY SISTER!//

IRIS: /I TRIED to tell you.// She IS NOT!

MARROW: WHEN did you try to tell me? She IS!

IRIS: MANY times!

MARROW: NAME one!

IRIS: YOU had no time for me!

BOZ: Iris...

IRIS: *(To MARROW)* This isn't ABOUT you. NOT EVERYTHING IS ABOUT YOU!

MARROW: Yeah, because nothing has ever been just about me, Mom. There has always been someone else in the room. Someone I couldn't see. And now, she's literally right in front of you ... and you're still acting like NOTHING IS HAPPENING! But SOMETHING is HAPPENING right now Mom! THIS is HAPPENING!

*IRIS makes a half animal noise, half cry and half laugh. Her legs crumple and she starts to curl into a ball. Her eyes roll back in her head, lighting changes, and her body shifts into something unrecognizable. She begins to convulse.*

*MARROW freezes in terror.*

MARROW: *(Shallow breathing)* Mom?

*The world shifts. MARROW and IRIS are lit while all else is dark.*

Mom?

*Deep black holes appear and expand in the ground between MARROW and IRIS. IRIS, shaking all over, starts to sink into black velvety ground, which folds in around her. She begins to grab at it, trying to keep her face neutral and smiling for her daughter, while she is very clearly afraid.*

IRIS: It's okay, honey!

MARROW: *(Terrified)* ... Mom?

*IRIS is sinking deeper into the hole. As if in quicksand, she is trying to slowly swim out, but only miring herself further. She sinks*

*to her waist, all the while smiling sadly at MARROW, unable to do anything.*

MARROW: *(Panicking about the holes)* I can't – I can't get to you! I can't get to you! I can't GET to you!

*IRIS sinks until only her head is visible. MARROW gasps and starts trying to make her way around the holes, balancing, terrified. IRIS is still trying to smile at MARROW as if nothing is happening.*

MARROW: I'm coming!

*IRIS's head goes under. MARROW gasps. For a moment IRIS disappears completely. In her grief and fear, MARROW makes a half-animal, half-human sound.*

*Then, suddenly, an arm reappears. It is oil-black and inhuman-looking. The other oil-black hand appears, grabbing at the sides of the hole. Then, THE WITCH (IRIS) climbs out of the hole, clad in black, appearing to have giant black goat horns crowning her head. A gold ring of light appears on the ground around THE WITCH. THE WITCH points eerily at the gold ring of light with her left hand, and with her right hand, points slowly at MARROW. Then she draws the two pointing hands together, to point with both hands at the ground right in front of her, inside the gold ring, beckoning.*

*Terrified, MARROW picks her way carefully toward the gold ring of light. About half way, with an abrupt, surprised shout, she falls through the floor in one fell swoop. THE WITCH cackles.*

*A moment of nothingness and still. Then another hand emerges from the hole, dirty, grabbing the side, and another hand. THE WITCH (MARROW), struggling, determined, and dirty, climbs out,*

*until she is standing facing THE WITCH-IRIS like her mirror reflection. Lighting shifts and the two clasp hands/wrists, turning around each other, leaning out and speeding up until they are swinging each other around. An emotional shift happens with this pace and they become frightened, they try but can't let go.*

IRIS/ MARROW: *(Simultaneously)* Let GO of me!

*They repeat this as the swinging and lighting and sound become more violent and frenetic, with each trying to swing the other away. A low moaning sound builds around them into an eerie, layered keening. They begin to panic.*

IRIS/ MARROW

*(Simultaneously)* Don't let go of me!

*They repeat this, still swinging, as the moaning reaches a fierce peak with the sound of a woman's agonized, shattering grief.*

– Scene 12 –

*IRIS is on the floor, rocking and weeping loudly and wretchedly. MARROW is standing but they grip each other by the hand. The others are standing around them. BOZ goes to IRIS and kneels.*

LAURENCE: Iris!

BOZ: *(To LAURENCE)* Get out of here.

LAURENCE: *(Desperately)* Iris!

BOZ: I SAID GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!

*BOZ rises to chase LAURENCE out. LAURENCE backs off.*

MARROW: Boz!

IRIS: Wait! *(Pause.) (To BRIDGET)* Is it true? Is what he says true?

BRIDGET: Yes.

*IRIS stands and pushes everyone away. She walks slowly to BRIDGET. IRIS and BRIDGET look at each other for a moment. Then IRIS opens her arms.*

IRIS: I'm so sorry!

*BRIDGET moves tentatively towards IRIS. IRIS embraces her.*

*MARROW and LAURENCE exchange a bittersweet look.*

*LAURENCE hangs his head, and quietly leaves.*

– Scene 13 –

*Interior IRIS and BOZ's house. Time has passed. COOPER is topping up everyone's tea. IRIS is seated, wrapped in a blanket. She is holding hands with BRIDGET. IRIS is exhausted by crying, but extremely happy. BOZ pats IRIS's knee.*

*MARROW slips outside for a smoke. BRIDGET whispers to IRIS, and follows MARROW outside, where she is leaning against the porch wall, looking out over the landscape. MARROW and BRIDGET exchange a look.*

MARROW: Well. I hope you feel a little better now about being given up for adoption.

*BRIDGET suppresses a laugh.*

BRIDGET: *(Shyly)* Who'd've thought I'd cause so much trouble.

*MARROW laughs.*

MARROW: I never thought about it like that. This is all *your* fault. Get used to it.

*MARROW and BRIDGET eye each other shyly.*

BRIDGET: I have two kids. *(Pause.)* I haven't told her yet. I wasn't sure if I ... if it was too much ... but I have photos of them in my wallet. Do you think ...

MARROW: Yes. Yes!

*MARROW studies BRIDGET for a moment.*

Don't worry about Mom. She's tough as fucking nails. She'll be spitting fire again by next week.

BRIDGET: What about ... him?

MARROW: He'll still be the same fuckin idiot.

*They both laugh.*

I'm sorry we're so fucked up.

BRIDGET: I'm just glad to finally ... know. The not knowing ... was a lot worse.

*MARROW nods.*

MARROW: Well I'd say you dodged a bullet. But now, good luck getting rid of us.

*BRIDGET and MARROW smile shyly at each other.*

*Enter LAURENCE.*

LAURENCE: It's getting time to head to the uh, to the funeral. If we're going to make it there, you know, in time ...

*(Pause.)*

MARROW Dad, I'm going to stay here. With Mom.

*LAURENCE nods sadly.*

LAURENCE: I guess it's just you and me then, Bridget.

BRIDGET: *(Gently)* I need to go home. I need to be with my family.

LAURENCE: We're family.

*BRIDGET nods.*

BRIDGET: I just need to touch down, and let it all...sink in a bit first.

LAURENCE: *(Crushed)* Okay. Okay, well...I guess... *(He looks towards the car, then back at them)* I guess... I will head out.

*LAURENCE awkwardly turns to walk away.*

MARROW: HEY. Dad.

*LAURENCE freezes. MARROW opens her arms to LAURENCE for a hug. BRIDGET slips in as LAURENCE moves to them.*

– Scene 14 –

*LAURENCE is back at the foot of MARROW's stairs. He looks up at the old house. Slowly, heavily, he gets into his car and shuts the door. Sound of ignition, tires on gravel. A reel to reel projector starts up. Projection of starlings as they flock and break.*

– END –