Ana's Shadow

by Tara Goldstein

Set of *Harriet's House*.
Set by design by Esther Kim
Photo by Jake Goldstein

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This play is dedicated to the late Rosalind Zinman and the late Sharon Rosenberg.

Introduction

Over the past twelve years, I have been working with the research approach of “performed ethnography” to support and enrich the professional development work I do with teachers working in diverse classrooms across Canada and internationally. My performed ethnographies have been used in classrooms and conferences in Australia, Brazil, Singapore, and the United States, as well as Canada. For the past three years, I have been conducting a research study that has resulted in a pair of performed ethnographies about transnational adoption in a same-sex family: *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow*. I became interested in the topic because of its potential to provoke rich discussions about a wide variety of issues facing diverse Canadian families: social acceptance, race and racism, language use, linguistic and cultural identity, sexual orientation and homophobia. The scripts are based on written narratives and filmed documentaries created by and about adoptive same-sex families, as well as interviews I have undertaken with families in Toronto. *Harriet’s House* was performed for the general public at Hart House Theatre during the 2010 Toronto Pride Festival (see www.gaileyroad.com for more information). The script has been published in my book *Staging Harriet’s House: Writing and Producing Research-Informed Theatre* (2012). In August 2011, Director Jocelyn Wickett and I created a five-day workshop for *Ana’s Shadow*, which culminated in a rehearsed reading for the general public at the 519 Church Street Community Centre in Toronto. Sixty-five people attended the staged reading. The script is currently in its sixth draft, and I continue to explore the feelings and tensions that Marty and Harriet bring to Scene Three, on the impact that cancer has on their intimate and sexual life.

L to r: Tara Goldstein (playwright); Gillian Lewis (stage manager); and Jorie Morrow (Anita) at the 519 Church Community Centre.

Photo by Margot Huycke

Characters

HARRIET, mother of three daughters, the first two adopted from Colombia.

LUISA, Harriet’s eldest daughter, adopted from Colombia at the age of 10.

ANA, Harriet’s middle daughter, adopted from Colombia at the age of 7.

CLARE, Harriet’s youngest daughter, not adopted.

MARTY, Harriet’s wife.

ANITA, family friend and founder of Global Family, an international adoption agency.

Time and Place

The present. Harriet’s kitchen, Toronto, Canada.

PRELUDE

(HARRIET's kitchen. ANA is composing a new song.)

Scene One (April)

(HARRIET's kitchen. There are two closed cardboard boxes containing children's books in clear view on stage. The family is celebrating Passover with a Seder.)

CLARE: *(Reading from the Haggadah ANA put together.)* And now our telling of the Passover story is over. Next year, may we celebrate Passover in a world at peace. May Israel and her neighbours take courageous new steps to bring new cooperation and peace to the Middle East. And next year, may we celebrate Passover with Harriet in good health and fully recovered.

(ANA grabs HARRIET's hand. HARRIET gives it a squeeze and then takes CLARE's hand.)

HARRIET: Thank you.

CLARE: *L'shana haba-a biy'rushalayim!* Next year in Jerusalem!

LUISA: Very nice.

HARRIET: A lovely Seder. Really lovely.

ANA: Seder lite. I hope it was okay. I wasn't sure how tired you'd be.

HARRIET: It was perfect. I'm actually feeling pretty good tonight.

MARTY: Thanks so much for putting it all together.

ANA: Everyone helped.

MARTY: Yeah, but you did most of the cooking.

ANA: I don't mind. I love Passover.

HARRIET: Me too. I'm celebrating Passover just like I did last year, and just like I will be next year.

ANA: Should I bring out the soup?

HARRIET: In a minute. *(To LUISA.)* What happened to Jorge?

LUISA: I changed my mind.

HARRIET: Why? I wanted to meet him.

CLARE: I met him!

HARRIET: I wanted to meet him too.

LUISA: You'll meet him. Marty, Ana, and I decided tonight should be just for us.

CLARE: He's very cute. And he wants to go to med school just like Luisa so he can join Doctors without Borders. *(To LUISA.)* *Verdad* [Right]?

LUISA: *Es verdad* [Right].

MARTY: Very impressive.

CLARE: And guess where he's from? Bogotá!

HARRIET: *(Smiles.)* And what's he doing this summer?

CLARE: Coming with us to help build the clinic and go see his *familia*.

HARRIET: What? How come I haven't heard about this before?

LUISA: It's no big deal. He's going to visit family. And while he's there, he'll help out once in a while.

HARRIET: But you and Clare are going to stay at the orphanage with the Sisters like you planned?

LUISA: Yes, of course.

HARRIET: And Jorge is going to stay where?

LUISA: With his family.

HARRIET: I want to meet him before you go, okay?

ANA: He's like four years older than Luisa.

HARRIET: What?

CLARE: Not four, three. Just three.

ANA: Okay, three. That's still old.

LUISA: No, it's not.

ANA: Yes, it is.

CLARE: *(Changes subject.)* I wish you and Marty were going with us.

HARRIET: Me too.

MARTY: Next summer. We'll go next summer.

LUISA: *(To ANA.)* It's not too late for you to change your mind about coming.

ANA: Not interested.

LUISA: So what are you going to do all summer?

MARTY: *(To LUISA.)* You promised.

ANA: What I'm doing now. Going to chemo with Harriet. Cooking for Harriet.

LUISA: You need to be doing something besides helping Harriet.

HARRIET: She's writing songs.

LUISA: Besides writing songs. She needs to get out.

ANA: I get out.

LUISA: (*Lightly.*) Going to Loblaws and the health food store isn't getting out. When's the last time you saw any of your friends? Like Helen?

ANA: Since when are you so interested in my friends?

LUISA: When's the last time you saw Helen?

ANA: She's busy. With school.

LUISA: (*Lightly.*) Like you should be.

MARTY: Okay, that's —

ANA: She's practicing.

LUISA: Practicing for what?

CLARE: *Canadian Idol*.

LUISA: (*Rolls her eyes.*) *Canadian Idol*. She's wasting her time. The only people who actually vote on that show are 11-year-old girls and their mothers. And they always vote for the boys. (*Beat.*) Come to Bogotá with me and Clare.

ANA: How many times do I have to tell you? I don't want to go to Bogotá this summer. I'm staying here and helping Harriet.

LUISA: But Marty will be off.

ANA: So?

LUISA: How long are you going to keep this up?

MARTY: Luisa, please.

HARRIET: The chemo will be over by the end of summer, and she'll go back to university in the fall, just like she promised. Right?

ANA: (*Unenthusiastic.*) Yeah.

LUISA: Don't you want a chance to find out more about your heritage?

ANA: Who do you think planned this whole Seder?

LUISA: Not this heritage. Your Colombian heritage. Your genetic heritage. You need to go back to where you came from to really know who you are. Who you want to be. (*Beat.*) I found a cheap ticket for you.

ANA: (*Upset.*) What?

LUISA: But we have to pay for it by the middle of the week.

ANA: (*More upset.*) I told you. I'm not going anywhere until Harriet's okay. Why would you buy me a ticket?

MARTY: (*To LUISA.*) Really (as in: why would you buy her a ticket knowing how she feels about going back to Bogotá?).

LUISA: I didn't buy it. I reserved it.

ANA: Well I don't want it. No matter how many times you keep asking me, I'm not going with you.

LUISA: But it's such a good opportunity to —

ANA: (*Very upset.*) Stop pushing me. Just leave me alone! Why can't you just let it go! If I ever want to go to Bogotá, you'll be the first to know.

MARTY: (*Stands up.*) Okay. That's clear. (*To LUISA.*) Help me clear the table so Ana can bring out the soup. It's Passover.

LUISA: (*Stands up, picks up some plates.*) You're missing out on a great opportunity.

ANA: (*Stands up, picks up some plates.*) No, I'm not.

MARTY: (*Begs.*) Luisa.

LUISA: I'm sorry. But she's stuck. And maybe if —

ANA: (*Angry.*) I am not stuck.

LUISA: You dropped out of school.

ANA: I didn't drop out. I'm going back. I hate you when you're like this. Stop it. Just stop it.

(*ANA leaves the kitchen.*)

HARRIET: (*Stands up, puts her hand on LUISA's arm.*) That's enough.

LUISA: (*Takes a second, then.*) Okay. I'm sorry. (*To MARTY.*) I'll clear. You sit.

Scene Two (April)

(*HARRIET's kitchen. CLARE is wiping off, dusting, and packing away the Passover haggadot into a plastic container for storage.*)

CLARE: Why does Luisa think that Ana needs to find out about her genetic heritage?

HARRIET: So she knows what she might have inherited from her biological mother and father.

CLARE: Maybe she looks like her birth mother.

HARRIET: Maybe.

CLARE: Maybe she gets her voice from her.

HARRIET: Maybe. *(Beat.)* Has Luisa told you she wants to find out more about her birth family when you're in Bogotá this summer?

CLARE: *(Uncomfortable.)* Maybe.

HARRIET: It's okay to tell me. It's good for your sisters to find out as much as they can about their birth family.

CLARE: You think?

HARRIET: Yes.

CLARE: But don't you think they've inherited things from our family too?

HARRIET: *(Gives Clare a hug.)* Of course. Living with us has given them lots of things. We've loved them. Supported them to do the things they cared about.

CLARE: Like fundraising for the clinic.

HARRIET: Yeah. *(Points to one of the haggadot.)* The cover on that one is torn. You need to tape it before you put it away.

CLARE: *(Puts it aside.)* Okay. Do you think that she'll find anyone from her birth family?

HARRIET: She might. But it could take a while.

CLARE: We're going to be there for two months.

HARRIET: Two months isn't a very long time. But maybe the Sisters at the orphanage have records that will help.

CLARE: I hope so.

HARRIET: Me too.

CLARE: Mum ...

HARRIET: What?

CLARE: It's okay, right?

HARRIET: Is what okay?

CLARE: That I'm going to Bogotá with Luisa?

HARRIET: Of course it's okay.

CLARE: *(Anxious.)* You don't want me to stay home and help you?

HARRIET: No. Marty will be finished teaching by the time you leave.

CLARE: *(Reluctant.)* If Ana changes her mind and wants to go with Luisa, I could stay home.

HARRIET: That's very generous of you. But I don't think Ana will change her mind. And even if she did. All three of you can go. I'll be fine.

CLARE: *(Relieved.)* Are you sure?

HARRIET: I'm sure. You and Luisa have been fundraising for the clinic and planning this trip for three years. I want you to go. It's important. Just because I'm having a lousy summer doesn't mean you have to. But I want to meet Jorge before you go. Okay?

CLARE: Okay.

Scene Three (April)

(HARRIET'S kitchen. MARTY is unpacking supplies from the pharmacy and the health food store.)

MARTY: *(Very pleased.)* Look what I found.

HARRIET: What?

MARTY: The skin oil you like so much. We ran out and I've been having trouble finding it. But today ...

(Holds up a small bottle of oil.)

HARRIET: *(Muted.)* That's great. Thanks.

MARTY: You've been com--/saying that your skin's really flaky again. I thought I could rub in some oil. *(Beat.)* Maybe put on some jazz. Light a candle. The girls are all out.

HARRIET: I think I need a nap this afternoon.

MARTY: Sure. Okay. Maybe after the nap.

HARRIET: We'll see.

MARTY: Sure. If you're not up for it, we could just put on a movie. Have some popcorn. *(Rummages through one of her bags.)* Thelma and Louise. On sale.

HARRIET: *(Manages a smile.)* Maybe. We'll see.

MARTY: It's been a while since we've had any alone time.

HARRIET: I know. I'm just so damn tired today.

MARTY: Okay. Let's get you to bed.

HARRIET: It's okay. I can get there myself.

(She gets up off the chair slowly, with effort.)

MARTY: You sure?

HARRIET: I'm sure.

(Fatigued, she walks very slowly, step by step, in a shuffle.)

MARTY: *(Doesn't follow.)* Okay. *(Beat.)* What if I lie down with you?

HARRIET: *(Continues walking, unenthusiastic.)* If you want to. *(Beat.)* I feel like I weigh a ton.

MARTY: *(Speaking to her back.)* I know.

HARRIET: *(Irritated.)* No, you don't.

MARTY: *(Careful.)* Can I bring you something? Water?

HARRIET: *(Still irritated.)* Uh-uh.

MARTY: You're sure?

HARRIET: *(Still irritated.)* Uh-huh.

MARTY: *(Apologetic.)* I'm mothering too much.

HARRIET: *(Still irritated.)* Uh-huh.

MARTY: *(Frustrated.)* I'm sorry. It's just ... Sometimes ... It's just that I want so badly to help you and nothing I do seems right.

HARRIET: *(Stops walking, turns to face her.)* I know.

MARTY: *(Angry.)* No, you don't.

(The room is tense.)

HARRIET: Come here.

(MARTY walks over. HARRIET takes her hand and breaks the tension. As HARRIET takes MARTY's hand, MARTY's relief is visible.)

HARRIET: I've been thinking. I've decided that who you vomit with is more important than who you have sex with.

MARTY: *(Laughs.)* Then I must be very important.

HARRIET: Very.

(HARRIET begins walking/shuffling again, still holding MARTY's hand. MARTY walks with her)

HARRIET: I've decided something else.

MARTY: What?

HARRIET: I want to buy a really good stereo system. Something very expensive that Ana can use to record her songs.

Scene Four (April)

(HARRIET's kitchen. ANA is consulting a vegan cookbook and making a list of the food she and MARTY need to shop for.)

ANA: Okay. That's everything, I think.

MARTY: *(Reading the newspaper, half listening)* Yeah?

ANA: A lot of people are becoming vegan, you know. Most of them just think a vegan lifestyle is a better way to live. But some of them are dealing with cancer. Just like us.

MARTY: *(Stops reading.)* Yeah?

ANA: They think eating vegan may prevent their cancer from coming back.

MARTY: It's a hard diet to follow.

ANA: Yeah, but I'm moving slowly. Integrating it into our diets a little bit at a time.

MARTY: Just make sure that we're eating enough protein.

ANA: Don't worry. I've got it under control. You ready to go?

MARTY: Yeah. *(Beat.)* There's just one thing. Before we go.

ANA: What?

MARTY: School.

ANA: *(Tenses.)* What about it?

MARTY: What happened?

ANA: Didn't Harriet tell you?

MARTY: She told me. But I don't get it. I didn't see it coming.

(ANA doesn't respond.)

You didn't just wake up one day and say "I'm not going to school anymore."

ANA: No.

MARTY: So when did it start?

ANA: What?

MARTY: Feeling like you wanted to leave.

ANA: I don't know. The first week back. It was hard. Everyone else was excited to be back. And I wasn't. I wasn't into it at all. I wanted to be home with Harriet. My first class was at ten. But sometimes Harriet didn't get up 'til ten. And I wanted to spend some time with her before I left for school. Especially during the first week after chemo, when she felt so awful. But I couldn't. So I'd sit there, wondering how she was doing, how her morning was going instead of listening to what was going on in class. When it came time to write the first quiz, I was too far behind. So I dropped the ten o'clock class. And then Harriet and I got into a morning routine. And I loved being home with Harriet in the morning. So I dropped the one

o'clock class. Then Harriet agreed to try going vegan. It takes time to shop for the right food. To learn how to eat vegan. So I decided to drop the rest of the courses and defer for a year. I talked to someone. I did it properly. I can go back. I promised Harriet I'd go back.

MARTY: Maybe you could transfer into another program. Like nutrition.

ANA: You need to have a lot of science courses to get into a program like that.

MARTY: You could upgrade.

ANA: If I were into it.

MARTY: You're not into it.

ANA: I'm only going vegan to help us deal with the cancer. Let's go.

MARTY: So it's about the cancer.

ANA: Everything's about the cancer.

MARTY: Yeah.

ANA: Let's go.

MARTY: In a minute. What does it feel like to you?

ANA: What?

MARTY: Dealing with the cancer.

ANA: I don't know. Like I'm living under a big shadow.

MARTY: Right.

ANA: What does it feel like to you?

MARTY: The same. But I'm trying to see it differently. Like I'm living beside the shadow. Not under it.

ANA: What's the difference?

MARTY: When I'm beside the shadow, I can still see it. I know it's there. I can keep my eye on it, but it doesn't always stay the same size. Sometimes it's taller, sometimes it's shorter. And when it's smaller, I can be a little less anxious, a little less scared about what's going to happen. When I live beside the cancer, I don't carry it on my shoulders. Or around my neck. It's still there, beside me. But it's not strangling me.

ANA: It's strangling me.

MARTY: *(Picks the car keys off the table.)* Yeah. But not always. Not when you're singing.

ANA: No. Not when I'm singing.

MARTY: Harriet loves to listen to you sing. It's how she lives beside the shadow.

(HARRIET brings out a cardboard box and three children's books. She puts the box on top of the other boxes and puts in the books.)

Scene Five (May)

(HARRIET's kitchen. There are now three boxes of children's books on stage. HARRIET, MARTY, ANA, CLARE, and LUISA are going through a pile of ANA's and LUISA's clothes, trying to pick out the outfits she should wear to compete on Canadian Idol.)

MARTY: Okay. Jeans. You definitely need jeans. Two pairs? Three?

ANA: Two.

LUISA: What about a skirt? *(Holds up a skirt she bought in Colombia.)* I can lend you a skirt.

ANA: No. No skirts. Just jeans. And maybe one other pair of pants.

MARTY: And sneakers. Two? Three?

ANA: It depends on what tops I take.

LUISA: *(Holds up some tops she bought in Colombia.)* Here. These are from Bogotá. Try them on.

ANA: They won't fit.

LUISA: How do you know? Try them on.

ANA: I'm not going for that kind of look.

CLARE: I can't believe you're auditioning for *Canadian Idol*. How did it happen?

ANA: Not now. I'm trying to pack.

CLARE: You said you'd tell me while you packed. All my friends are waiting.

ANA: It's too late now.

CLARE: But I need to know. I promised I'd tell them as soon as I found out.

ANA: *(To MARTY.)* Can you tell her? I need to look for more tops.

MARTY: Yeah, okay.

LUISA: Do you want some help?

ANA: No.

(Ana exits.)

CLARE: So tell me.

MARTY: Okay. Ana is standing in line with Helen while she waits for her turn to audition. And there's a girl standing behind them. What's her name again?

LUISA: Don't ask me. I wasn't there.

MARTY: Lidia. Her name was Lidia. And Lidia tells Ana that she's going to sing a song by Shakira.

CLARE: Then what happened?

MARTY: They talk about Shakira until it's their turn to enter the holding room. Helen goes off to a corner to practice, and it's really boring waiting around, so Ana decides to come home. But then Lidia asks her to practice with her. She's really, really nervous. So Ana stays.

CLARE: *(Begins to text her friends.)* What song?

MARTY: I forget. An old one. *(ANA re-enters.)* What song did Lidia sing?

ANA: "Gypsy."

CLARE: *(Continues to text.)* "Gitana"! You used to love "Gitana."

ANA: *(Holds up two tops.)* I can't decide.

LUISA: *(Holds up one the tops from Colombia.)* Take this one. It goes well with jeans.

ANA: *(Takes a look.)* No.

LUISA: But it's really cute. And it will make you stand out from all the other girls.

ANA: I don't want to stand out. I just want to do it my way.

LUISA: Suit yourself. But don't forget – it's being Colombian that got you noticed in the first place.

ANA: No, it's not.

LUISA: Yes, it is.

ANA: I got noticed because of my singing.

CLARE: But how? How did you get noticed?

ANA: We were practicing the song. First in English, then in Spanish.

LUISA: She'll sing in Spanish, but won't speak Spanish.

MARTY: And then one of the producers hears them and asks Ana if she wants to audition.

LUISA: Adopted teenager from Bogotá competes to become the next Canadian Idol. Gold. Pure Gold. Wait! Adopted teenager from Bogotá living with two mums! Even better!

CLARE: And you said yes?

ANA: No, I said no.

MARTY: So she asked Ana if she would sing a duet with Lidia.

CLARE: And you said yes?

ANA: No, I said no.

MARTY: But then Lidia begged her to say yes.

CLARE: So you said yes.

ANA: Yeah.

(Clare texts furiously.)

CLARE: And you auditioned.

ANA: Yeah.

(Clare texts furiously.)

CLARE: And they moved you onto the next round. This round.

ANA: Yeah.

(Clare texts furiously.)

HARRIET: How many people are competing again?

ANA: Two hundred.

HARRIET: And how many get to go on TV?

ANA: Twenty.

CLARE: And the top twenty compete to be in the top ten. Then the top ten compete to become *(pause for dramatic effect)* the Canadian Idol!

(LUISA's phone vibrates in her pocket.)

LUISA: *(She pulls it out and looks at it.)* Anita's dropping by.

MARTY: What? Now? Why?

LUISA: She has a good luck present for Ana.

MARTY: *(To ANA.)* It's really getting late. You need to finish packing.

HARRIET: How about socks? Do you have enough socks?

ANA: *(Gets edgy.)* I don't know.

HARRIET: Clare, go upstairs and see how many pairs of clean socks she has in her drawer.

(CLARE exits.)

(*HARRIET calls after her.*) Without holes! (*To ANA.*) If you don't have enough, I'll do a wash or buy you some and drop them off.

MARTY: Okay, back to tops.

LUISA: And then accessories.

ANA: Accessories!

LUISA: Earrings, bracelets, belts.

ANA: Accessories!

HARRIET: We should have started packing way earlier.

MARTY: Okay. No need to panic. Tops, sneakers, accessories.

(*ANITA enters.*)

ANITA: Hello, hello, hello.

HARRIET/LUISA: Hi/*Hola* Anita.

(*HARRIET waves, LUISA goes over to kiss Anita on both cheeks.*)

ANITA: Isn't this exciting?

ANA: I feel sick.

ANITA: I'm sure it's a few butterflies. That's all. I can't stay long. I just wanted to wish you luck and give you this.

(*She hands ANA a large rhinestone brooch.*)

For a little flash.

MARTY: I'll say.

ANA: Thank you.

(*CLARE enters with the socks and a box of makeup.*)

CLARE: Seven.

HARRIET: Without holes?

CLARE: Without holes. (*Holds up the box.*) What about makeup?

ANA: (*Edgier.*) Makeup?! I forgot about makeup. Can't I go without any?

MARTY: Sure. Why not?

LUISA: You can't perform without any makeup.

ANITA: She's right. You need makeup.

ANA: This is getting too intense.

HARRIET: (*Quick.*) Clare, pick out some makeup for Ana to take with her and find something to put it in.

LUISA: I have a cloth bag from Bogotá. (*Beat.*) If it's not too ethnic.

HARRIET: Perfect.

MARTY: Back to tops.

ANA: I can't do this.

HARRIET: Sure, you can.

ANA: No, really. I can't. I can't do this.

(*ANA exits.*)

MARTY: (*Looks at her watch.*) They want her checked in by 8 o'clock. We need to leave in twenty minutes.

ANITA: I can drive her.

MARTY: (*Abrupt.*) No. I mean, I'm going to drive her.

HARRIET: (*Gets up.*) I'll go talk to her.

(*ANA re-enters.*)

ANA: (*To HARRIET.*) I don't know what to do. I want to go and I don't want to go.

HARRIET: I know. But it will be fun! You'll have a good time.

ANA: I don't want to leave you.

HARRIET: I'm going to be fine. Anita will drive me to chemo. And I promise I'll eat vegan.

ANA: Yeah. But I still don't want to leave.

HARRIET: Tell you what. You'll call me when you get to the hotel. And then you'll call me again from your room once you've settled in. You'll hear my voice, and you'll know I'm okay. You can try it for one night, and see how it goes. You can call me as many times as you want. If you want to come home tomorrow, you'll come home.

MARTY: (*Gets up.*) We've got fifteen minutes. Go choose your tops and sneakers. I'll pack them up and Luisa will add some earrings and bracelets.

HARRIET: Then Marty will drive you down, and you'll call me when you get there. I'll be here. Waiting.

Scene Six (May)

(*HARRIET's kitchen. ANITA, LUISA, and HARRIET are having coffee.*)

ANITA: (*Indignant.*) So, now you're saying I'm an unethical person.

LUISA: I didn't say that.

ANITA: Yes, you did.

LUISA: No, I didn't. I said that transnational adoption is a way of supplying wannabe parents in rich countries with children from poor countries. And –

ANITA: I'm unethical because I find homes for orphaned children.

LUISA: When poor parents have to send their children to an orphanage because they can't take care of them, and then parents from rich countries go to those countries to adopt those children because they can afford to take care of them, then that's –

ANITA: Every child deserves a home.

LUISA: Every mother deserves to bring up her own children.

ANITA: It's better for children to live in an orphanage than live with a family?

LUISA: No. But –

ANITA: Yes or no? Living in a family is better than living in an orphanage.

LUISA: It's not only about –

ANITA: Yes or no? Your life here with Harriet is better than it would have been if you had stayed in the orphanage?

LUISA: Yes.

ANITA: Yes or no? Adoption saves children from homelessness.

LUISA: Some children, yes, but –

ANITA: Yes or no? Adoption saves children from disability, from dying?

LUISA: Yes. But why do children from poor families need to be adopted to get medical care?

ANITA: I can't answer that question. Life's unfair. And I refuse to be blamed for all the injustices of the world.

LUISA: I'm not blaming you.

ANITA: I think overseas adoption is a fine way to make a family.

LUISA: But it comes with problems.

ANITA: All families have problems.

LUISA: Particular kinds of problems. Being separated from your biological family. Being sent somewhere far from home. Growing up in a family that's white when you're not.

ANITA: You seem to be doing just fine.

LUISA: (*To HARRIET, with affection.*) I've been lucky.

ANITA: So, maybe I'm not so unethical, after all. I matched you up with Harriet.

LUISA: (*To HARRIET.*) Help me!

ANITA: You don't agree with her?!

HARRIET: I understand her argument.

ANITA: What argument? That you're unethical because you adopted her and Ana? Because you took them away from their "cultural roots"?

HARRIET: No. That sometimes adoption prevents social reform in poor countries.

ANITA: So you regret adopting them?

HARRIET: No! Of course, not. I can believe what Luisa says is true and not regret adopting them.

ANITA: And how does that work?

HARRIET: When I look at things up close, right in front of me, I have my own personal joy of living with Luisa and Ana. But when I move back, I can see the injustice of parents having to give up their children to keep them alive and healthy. The joy and the injustice live side-by-side.

ANITA: The injustice is that there are still too many children waiting for families. And that's something I can do something about.

LUISA: And that there are still too many mothers dying of illnesses that they don't need to die from. That's something I can do something about.

HARRIET: And I'm very proud of your work.

LUISA: It's not only my work. It's Clare's work too! And your work and Marty's work. (*With regret.*) Everybody's except Ana's.

HARRIET: Maybe one day ...

(*LUISA's phone vibrates in her pocket.*)

LUISA: (*She pulls it out and looks at it.*) It's Jorge.

(*LUISA leaves the kitchen.*)

HARRIET: So.

ANITA: So. What's the routine around chemo?

HARRIET: Ana drives me to the hospital and lets me out at the front door. I go in, she parks and meets me upstairs. But you can just drop me off and pick me up when I'm done.

ANITA: I want to stay and keep you company.

HARRIET: I'm really not very good company. And by the end of the day, I'm wasted. Really, really tired. It would be better if you just came to pick up me and poured me into the car.

ANITA: I wouldn't expect you to entertain me. I'd just sit there. With a book. But I'd be there to help you if you needed it. Ana says that you have to drag your IV with you to go to the bathroom. I could help.

HARRIET: That's okay. I'm used to dragging the IV.

ANITA: But I want to be there.

HARRIET: How about you come to visit on day five? The day after chemo I feel I could throw up at any minute and spend most of the day on the couch. But by day three, I start walking around, and by day five, I usually feel pretty close to normal again. Or if you wait until six, we can go for walk somewhere.

ANITA: Are you sure you don't want me to stay with you in the hospital?

HARRIET: I'm sure.

ANITA: (*Disappointed.*) Well, if you're sure.

HARRIET: I know this may not make sense to you, but it's easier for me to go through it alone.

ANITA: But Ana always stays with you.

HARRIET: Ana feels calmer if she stays with me. I know you'll be okay with dropping me off and picking me up.

ANITA: I just want to be a good friend.

HARRIET: (*Takes ANITA's hand.*) Dropping me off and picking me up is being a good friend. It's what I want.

(*HARRIET brings out a cardboard box and two children's books. She puts the box on top of the other boxes and puts in the books.*)

Scene Seven (June)

(*HARRIET's kitchen. There are now four boxes of children's books on stage. ANA is singing the last verse of "Absent Impact" for CLARE.*)

CLARE: Well, I like it. I really like it. What's it called again?

ANA: "Absent Impact."

CLARE: "Absent Impact." Awesome. You should be proud of yourself.

ANA: Everyone keeps on telling me that.

CLARE: You made it to the top forty.

The cast of *Ana's Shadow* during public reading at the 519 Church Community Centre (l to r): Gillian Lewis (stage manager); Jorie Morrow (Anita); Joanne Latimer (Harriet); Julie Burris (Marty); Rebecca Applebaum (Ana); Supinder Wraich (Luisa); Estée Feldman (Clare).
Photo by Margot Huycke

ANA: But I didn't make it to the top twenty.

CLARE: Neither did 180 other people.

ANA: Maybe I shouldn't have sung my own song.

CLARE: It's a great song. It tells a story. And it has a lot of feeling, a lot of emotion. It's deep.

ANA: You think?

CLARE: Oh, yeah. The only thing is –

(*LUISA enters.*)

LUISA: Play it from the beginning. I didn't hear the words.

ANA: You won't like it.

LUISA: How do you know?

ANA: I know.

LUISA: I want to hear it.

ANA: I'm telling you, you won't like it.

LUISA: (*To CLARE.*) I'll like it, right?

CLARE: *Yo no sé* [I don't know]. *Quizas no te guste* [Maybe not].

LUISA: Why not?! (*To ANA.*) Try me.

(*ANA pauses for a moment, then begins to sing. CLARE becomes anxious.*)

Rusty yellow taxi
Took her far away.
I kept on looking back,

Watched my mother's face
 Until she couldn't see it anymore.
 Blossom on the pavement,
 Kept on looking back,
 Heavy heart within on
 Broken absent impact.
 It was the last time I saw her face that day,
 It was the last time whoa oh uh oh
 And all the laughter, it drained from the house that day.
 It was the last time whoa uh oh
 Annie, are you there?
 I'm always looking out
 For you, sister.
 Blessed are the memories,
 Blessed were the days,
 Childish was the score,
 The universe was ours.
 Dreams were made in cars,
 Our lovers cut from magazines,
 Faded teenage idol,
 Forefront of the fall.
 I cannot hear for silence,
 I wilt as you withdraw.
 It was the last time I saw her face that day,
 It was the last time whoa, uh oh
 And all the laughter, it drained from the house that day.
 It was the last time whoa, uh oh
 Annie, are you there?
 I'm always looking out
 For you, sister.
 Think I hear you rushing through the back door,
 Treading muddy boots on the kitchen floor,
 Grooving on over to the radio,
 Dancing to the countdown on the Sunday Chart Show.
 It was the last time I saw her face that day,
 It was the last time whoa, uh oh
 And all the laughter, it drained from the house that day.
 It was the last time whoa, uh oh
 Annie, are you there?
 I'm always looking out
 For you, sister.
 You keep on running, running,
 You keep on running, running,
 You keep on running away.
 You keep on running, running,
 You keep on running, running,
 You keep on running away.
 You keep on running, running,
 You keep on running, running,
 You keep on running away.

LUISA: (*Silent for a moment, then.*) It's about me.

ANA: Not just about you, about me too.

LUISA: You have no right to write about me without asking first.

ANA: It wasn't just —

LUISA: Do you want the whole world to know our business?

ANA: The —

LUISA: And going back to Bogotá to build a clinic is not running away.

ANA: Well, that's what it feels like.

LUISA: Harriet was fine while you were competing. (*To CLARE.*) Wasn't she?

CLARE: Yeah.

LUISA: She managed fine. And she'll manage fine while we're in Bogotá.

ANA: That was at the beginning of the regime. It gets harder as you go along. Especially near the end.

LUISA: I know.

ANA: No, you don't. You weren't here last time. (*To CLARE.*) You remember what it was like the last time.

(*CLARE nods.*)

It was horrible. Tell her.

Clare: It was very bad.

ANA: Tell her! Tell her how green Harriet's face was. How she didn't even look like herself. What she looked like without eyebrows. Tell her!

LUISA: It's only eight weeks.

ANA: Eight weeks is a long time.

LUISA: Harriet wants us to go. (*To CLARE.*) *Verdad* [Right]?

(*CLARE nods.*)

Dile [Tell her]. (*To ANA.*) Clare asked her if she wanted her to stay home and she said no. She said just because she was having a lousy summer, it didn't mean everyone else had to have one too. Anyway, there's nothing we can do for her while she goes through chemo.

ANA: You can be here. So she has support on the really bad days.

LUISA: (*Angry.*) Marty will be here.

ANA: (*Also angry.*) Marty isn't her daughter.

LUISA: Marty is her wife! What's wrong with you?

ANA: What's wrong with you? Running away to Bogotá? Just when it's going to get really bad.

LUISA: (*Furious.*) I'm not running away.

ANA: (*Also furious.*) Did you ever think about me?

LUISA: (*Surprised.*) What?

ANA: That I might need you here? So I don't have to go through this alone? So I don't feel abandoned?

LUISA: No one's abandoning you. You won't be alone. Marty is here. Anita is here.

ANA: I want you to stay. Both of you.

LUISA: It's been three years since I've been back. There are things I need to do. I'm going to look up our *Mamá's* family. The records the Sisters have are already twelve years old. The longer I wait, the harder it will be find them.

ANA: Please.

LUISA: I promised the Sisters we'd start building the clinic this summer. They're expecting me. They're expecting Clare. Everything's been arranged. I can't disappoint them.

ANA: They can start building without you. Someone else can do it. Someone who lives there.

LUISA: It's our project. We've fundraised for three years. I want to be there.

ANA: You can go next summer.

LUISA: There's no reason to wait for next summer. Harriet told us she's fine with us going this summer.

CLARE: I asked her. She said she wanted us to go. She said it was important for us to go.

ANA: What do you expect her to say? That it isn't important? Of course, it's important. But just because she said it was okay to go doesn't mean it's okay to go. What if ... Have you ever thought ... I mean, she might ... Who knows if we'll have another summer with her?

CLARE: (*Upset.*) Shut up. Don't say that.

ANA: It's the second time. How many people survive the second time?

CLARE: Lots of people. Lots of people survive.

LUISA: (*To CLARE.*) Maybe you should stay.

CLARE: No. I want to go.

ANA: You both should stay. How are you going to feel if something happens and you're not here?

CLARE: What?

(*CLARE starts to tear up.*)

ANA: I'm not saying it will. But if it does. How are you going to feel?

LUISA: (*Angry and upset.*) Terrible. We're going to feel terrible. How do you think we're going to feel? But we can't stop living just because Harriet has cancer. She adopted us for a reason. To give us a better life. To give us chance to make a difference back home. And that's what I need to do. Go back home and make a difference.

ANA: Just wait. Until the end of the summer. Until she's done chemo.

LUISA: (*Upset, but firm.*) I can't. I've waited three years. I can't wait anymore.

ANA: Please.

CLARE: (*Upset, resentful.*) Okay. Fine. I'll stay.

ANA: You'll stay?

CLARE: Yes.

ANA: (*To LUISA.*) And you?

LUISA: I'm sorry. I have to go.

ANA: (*Raises her voice.*) You don't have to go.

LUISA: (*Raises her voice.*) I'm going.

(*MARTY enters.*)

MARTY: What's going on?

CLARE: (*Very upset.*) Ana thinks Harriet might die and we shouldn't go to Bogotá. I'm going to stay, but Luisa's going.

LUISA: (*To MARTY.*) No one's going to change my mind.

(*LUISA exits.*)

ANA: (*Calls after LUISA.*) That's because the only person you care about is yourself!

MARTY: How did all this get started?

CLARE: (*Very upset.*) Ana's song.

ANA: She's the most selfish person in the world. I can't believe she's my sister.

(*ANA exits.*)

CLARE: (*Explodes with disappointment.*) I wanted to go so much!

MARTY: (*Comforts her.*) I know.

CLARE: (*Crying.*) It's not fair. It's not fair I can't go.

MARTY: No, it's not fair.

CLARE: It's not fair that Harriet could die.

MARTY: (*Crying, too.*) No. It's not fair.

(*HARRIET brings out a cardboard box and three children's books. She puts the box on top of the other boxes and puts in the books.*)

Scene Eight (June)

(*HARRIET's kitchen. MARTY enters carrying her books from school. HARRIET has lit some candles, and there are containers of take-out food on the island counter.*)

MARTY: (*Puts her stuff down.*) What's all this?

HARRIET: Date night!

MARTY: Date night?!

HARRIET: BBQ ribs and ice-cream. I asked Anita to pick them up for me.

MARTY: We haven't had BBQ ribs since –

HARRIET: I know!

MARTY: (*Looks around.*) Where's Ana?

HARRIET: Out.

MARTY: Out where?

HARRIET: At a movie with Clare. I told them we needed some quiet time to ourselves tonight.

MARTY: Wow. Ribs and ice-cream.

HARRIET: (*Gives her an envelope.*) And a surprise. New York after chemo.

MARTY: (*Opens the envelope.*) New York!

HARRIET: We've never been together.

MARTY: New York!

HARRIET: Central Park. Museums. Broadway. If we can't make it to Bogotá, we can make it to New York.

MARTY: You've had good day.

HARRIET: A really good day.

MARTY: New York. After chemo. (*Beat.*) It's not too expensive?

HARRIET: It is expensive. But to hell with it.

MARTY: But we just bought all that audio equipment for Ana. There isn't much left in the savings account.

HARRIET: I know. I cashed a bond.

MARTY: You cashed a bond? From your RRSP?

HARRIET: New York. After chemo.

MARTY: It seems extravagant.

HARRIET: It is extravagant. But if not now, when?

Scene Nine (June)

(*HARRIET's kitchen. LUISA's suitcases are by the door, ready to go. HARRIET and LUISA are saying good-bye.*)

HARRIET: Are you sure you packed enough medical supplies?

LUISA: Yes.

HARRIET: Do you have enough aspirin?

LUISA: Yes.

HARRIET: Advil? Gravol?

LUISA: Yes.

HARRIET: Imodium?

LUISA: Yes.

HARRIET: Antibiotics! (*Anxious.*) Did you go to the doctor and get a prescription for antibiotics?

LUISA: Yes, don't worry.

HARRIET: (*Anxious.*) And you filled the prescription, right?

LUISA: Yes, I filled the prescription.

HARRIET: (*Anxious.*) I didn't have a chance to check your medicine bag. I always check your medicine bag. A good mother would have checked your medicine bag.

LUISA: (*Takes HARRIET's hand.*) I checked it myself. And then Ana checked it. We never go anywhere without checking the medicine bag. You are a good mother.

HARRIET: Really?

LUISA: (*Squeezes HARRIET's hand.*) Of course.

HARRIET: Because sometimes I worry that I haven't been good enough. I mean, your life, Ana's life, Clare's life ... They've been so complicated. I've made mistakes. Maybe I shouldn't have ... maybe it would have been better ...

LUISA: Not to adopt us?

HARRIET: I mean, I can't imagine my life without you. But maybe it would have been better for you.

LUISA: Maybe. Maybe not. But I can't imagine my life without you either.

HARRIET: *(Moved.)* You know, I'm very proud of you. You've grown up to be a real kick-ass woman.

LUISA: Like you. Who knows what would have happened if you hadn't adopted us.

HARRIET: You still would have been a kick-ass woman.

LUISA: But not the one I am now. *(Beat.)* Thank you.

HARRIET: *(Moved.)* So you'll call once a week. Just like last time.

LUISA: Yes. Every Sunday.

HARRIET: And you'll let me know if you need any money.

LUISA: I won't need any money.

HARRIET: But if you do.

LUISA: I'll let you know.

HARRIET: I'll be thinking of you. Every day.

LUISA: And I'll be thinking of you. Every day. I'm just sorry ...

HARRIET: Don't be sorry. You're doing exactly what you need to be doing. It's what I want you to do.

LUISA: I just wish that I wasn't leaving when ...

HARRIET: Me too. But whenever you feel sad or bad about being away from home, I want you to remember that you're where you need to be, and that there's nothing more I want in the world than for you to be where you need to be.

LUISA: Thank you.

HARRIET: So you're going to send us pictures, right?

LUISA: Yeah, of course.

HARRIET: I want to see it all. The hole in the ground. The cement being mixed up. The floor being laid, the walls going up. All of it.

LUISA: Right.

HARRIET: You won't forget.

LUISA: I won't forget.

HARRIET: Okay. Well, Marty's waiting.

LUISA: Yeah.

HARRIET: *(Moves to hug her.)* I love you.

LUISA: I love you, too.

HARRIET: And I'll miss you.

LUISA: Me too.

Scene Ten (July)

(HARRIET's kitchen. There are now five boxes of children's books on stage. MARTY and ANA are unpacking food Anita has brought.)

MARTY: Thanks for all this.

ANITA: No problem. *(To ANA.)* All the fruit and vegetables are organic.

MARTY: Thanks.

ANITA: *(To ANA.)* Have you heard from Luisa?

ANA: Clare has.

ANITA: And?

ANA: They've finished the foundation of the clinic.

ANITA: That's exciting!

(ANA shrugs.)

Has she started looking for your family?

(ANA shrugs.)

ANITA: You don't know?

ANA: No.

ANITA: You don't want to know?

ANA: No.

ANITA: I see.

ANA: Do you think that makes me weird?

MARTY: *(Definite.)* No. That doesn't make you weird.

ANA: Everybody thinks I should be interested in going back to Colombia to find my birth family. Or that I should be interested in building the clinic. Like Luisa. But I'm not. It's her thing. Not mine.

MARTY: And that's fine. There are other ways you can support the clinic. You don't have to go there and build it.

ANA: And they think that when you go back to your birth country, you automatically fall in love with it because it's the place where you really belong.

(MARTY is quiet.)

ANITA: *(Also quiet, then.)* But that doesn't always happen.

ANA: No! When we went back to bring Luisa home, I didn't fall in love with Bogotá. I didn't even like it. It was hot. It was noisy. It was poor. I didn't feel like I belonged there. I didn't feel like it was my real home. And when we went to visit the orphanage, I started imagining what would have happened to us if Harriet hadn't adopted us. It was terrifying. You know?

ANITA: Yes.

ANA: That happened to you?

ANITA: It happened to Joe. I wanted both the boys to go back. To experience life in Colombia. Compare different ways of life. They were both babies when we adopted them. David never wanted to go back. And I didn't push him. But I did push Joe to go. And he had a good time. He liked the food, the music, the sightseeing. But when we went to visit the orphanage, it was upsetting. He wanted to come home right away. He started having nightmares, and I cut the trip short. We came home.

ANA: I have nightmares too. Like last night. I was who I am now. The same age, the same person. But I didn't live here anymore. I lived in an orphanage. And it's like the orphanage Luisa and I lived in, but it's not. It's darker. It smells. It's musty. Damp. I'm washing dishes. There's a piano in the kitchen. But the cover is locked. I can't open it and I can't play it. I stop washing the dishes and try to pick open the lock. I can't. Then Harriet looks in at the door of the kitchen. I'm so happy to see her because now I can stop washing dishes and go home with her. But instead of coming in, she's backing away from the door and getting ready to leave. Leaving me there. All by myself. Washing dishes. I scream at her. Come back. You forgot me! You're leaving without me! But she doesn't hear me. I'm alone in that damp, musty kitchen. Then I wake up. And I remind myself that I don't live in an orphanage. That I live here. And Harriet is asleep in the bedroom down the hall. And I feel better. Until I remember that Harriet's in the middle of chemo.

(MARTY goes over and gives ANA a hug. ANA hugs her back.)

MARTY: *(Breaks the hug.)* We'll all feel better once the chemo is over.

ANA: You think?

MARTY: Yeah.

ANA: But what if the chemo is the only thing that's keeping the cancer away?

MARTY: One step at a time. When the chemo's over, Harriet will have more energy. We'll be on the other side. We can go places, do things. It won't be so intense. Speaking of intense. Helen called again. For the third time. How come you don't call her back?

ANA: Because.

MARTY: Because why?

ANA: Because I know what she wants.

MARTY: Which is what?

ANA: She wants me to sing with her. At Free Times.

MARTY: *(Excited.)* Really?

ANITA: What's Free Times?

ANA: It's a small café in Kensington Market. Helen's got a regular gig there for the rest of the summer.

MARTY: Do you want to do it?

ANA: *(Anxious.)* I don't know. Maybe. But it means less time with Harriet. Who knows how much time we have with her?

ANITA: Don't say that. The doctors are very optimistic.

ANA: Doctors are always optimistic. They told us the chemo would work the first time.

MARTY: If you asked Harriet about this, what do you think she'd say?

ANA: Try it once or twice and see how it feels. If you don't like it, you don't have to do it anymore.

MARTY: Right.

ANA: And then she'd say, "Go perform and I'll come hear you sing."

(HARRIET brings out a cardboard box and one children's book. She puts the box on top of the other boxes and puts in the book.)

Scene Eleven (July)

(HARRIET's kitchen. There are now six boxes of children's books on stage. HARRIET and ANITA are looking through the fifth box of children's books HARRIET's been collecting.)

ANITA: Where did you find all of these?

HARRIET: Book sales. And those discount bookstores. They're almost all in English, but Clare said she'd translate them.

ANITA: And you're going to ship all these boxes over to the orphanage?

HARRIET: We were planning to take them with us.

ANITA: It's cheaper to ship them.

HARRIET: (*A little edgy.*) Yeah, but I want to bring them myself.

ANITA: If you ship them before you leave, then they'll be waiting for you when you get there.

HARRIET: It's risky. They might not make it.

ANITA: I've shipped lots of things. They always make it.

HARRIET: (*Getting angry.*) Yeah, but this time, they might not.

ANITA: I use a very good shipping company.

HARRIET: I'm sure it's a great shipping company. But I want to take the boxes myself.

ANITA: (*Backs off.*) Okay. Fine. You'll take them yourself.

(*HARRIET starts to rummage through the boxes.*)

What are you looking for?

HARRIET: (*Edgy.*) I bought a new book the other day, and I can't remember which box I put it in.

ANITA: I'll help you. What's it called?

HARRIET: (*Thinks.*) Shit. I can't remember. (*Agitated.*) I hate this.

(*While HARRIET rummages through the boxes, ANITA begins another conversation, but HARRIET isn't listening.*)

ANITA: So, I have another family who's interested in adopting from Colombia and wants to talk to someone who's done it.

HARRIET: Yeah?

ANITA: So, of course, I thought of you.

HARRIET: Uh-huh.

ANITA: Can I set up a coffee date?

HARRIET: Yeah.

ANITA: Good. When's a good time?

HARRIET: A good time?

ANITA: When's a good time?

HARRIET: A good time for what?

ANITA: For a coffee date.

HARRIET: Coffee date?

ANITA: With the people – What's wrong?

(*HARRIET doesn't answer.*)

Something's wrong. Tell me.

HARRIET: What's wrong is that I can't find that damn book.

ANITA: That's not what's wrong. What's wrong?

HARRIET: (*Takes a breath.*) My oncologist called this morning.

ANITA: (*Anxious.*) And?

HARRIET: She wants to change the regime.

ANITA: What? Why?

HARRIET: She thinks a new regime would work better.

ANITA: The chemo isn't working?

HARRIET: No. You know how it is. Sometimes it's hit and miss. It takes a while to get it right. She thinks the new regime will work better.

ANITA: I don't believe this.

HARRIET: I know. It feels surreal. But she says changing the regime will make a difference.

ANITA: You need a second opinion. (*Takes out her phone.*) I know someone who's married to an excellent oncologist. I'm going to call her.

HARRIET: No. I don't need a second opinion.

ANITA: (*Looks for the phone number on her phone.*) But there are so many kinds of treatments out there, and you need to know the benefits and risks of –

HARRIET: I know all about the benefits and risks of this one. I'm good to go.

ANITA: (*Keeps looking.*) It can't hurt to get a second opinion.

HARRIET: (*Takes the phone away.*) No. Just stop it. Listen. It takes time to get a second opinion. I don't want to start second-guessing my oncologist. I just want to get this over with.

ANITA: But what if there's something else out there that would actually work better?

HARRIET: I've made my decision. And it's the right decision for me. Okay?

ANITA: Okay. Of course.

HARRIET: Okay.

(They are quiet for a moment.)

ANITA: What does Marty say?

HARRIET: I haven't told her yet. I need some time for it to sink in.

ANITA: What about the girls? You have to tell them, too.

HARRIET: Yeah. But there's no rush, right? There's nothing they can do for me right now.

ANITA: It doesn't matter. They need to know. Luisa will want to come home.

HARRIET: It's too early for Luisa to come home. And I don't want Ana to change her mind about singing with Helen.

ANITA: I can be there you when you tell them. I can help Ana through this. I can help all three of them.

HARRIET: Hey, hey, hey. When I'm ready, Marty and I will tell them. And we'll take it on together. Like we did the first time. I know you want to help, but Marty's their second mother.

ANITA: *(Chastised.)* Of course. I'm sorry.

HARRIET: It's okay. I appreciate your concern. I appreciate everything you've done to help out. Taking me to chemo, bringing over food.

ANITA: It's nothing, really.

HARRIET: It's not nothing. And I'm really glad that you talked to Ana about what happened to Joe in Colombia.

ANITA: You know about that?

HARRIET: Marty told me.

ANITA: She did?

HARRIET: Yeah. She said it helped.

ANITA: Good. I'm glad.

HARRIET: It makes me feel better knowing that the girls have you to talk to, too. That it's not all on Marty.

ANITA: *(Touched.)* I'm happy it helps.

HARRIET: There's one more thing.

ANITA: What?

HARRIET: I'm going to need to get stuff organized. And I can't even remember the name of the book I'm looking for. Will you help me? Get my affairs in order?

ANITA: *(Upset.)* Yes, of course. But it's too early to worry about that now.

HARRIET: No. It's not. *(Beat.)* Sometimes, I wonder what I did wrong. If I'm being punished.

ANITA: Punished? No! How can you think that? If you're being punished, so are all those other women sitting beside you during chemo, poison dripping into their arms. So are all of the other thousands and thousands of women sitting in hospitals all over the country, all over the world. You're not being punished. It's an epidemic for Christ's sake.

HARRIET: Yesterday, I was listening to Ana rehearse. The song she was playing was so pretty, so moving, and I thought to myself, "It's going to be so exciting to see where she goes with this." And then I thought, "I'm probably not going to get see where she goes with this."

Scene Twelve (July)

(HARRIET's kitchen. There are still six boxes of children's books on stage. ANA is finishing making up a salad. All of a sudden, she becomes anxious. She puts down the knife and starts deep breathing to calm herself down. After several breaths, she feels calmer and picks up the salad bowl to put it into the fridge. As she moves the salad from the table to the fridge, her hands begin to shake and she drops the salad bowl. Salad spills all over the floor.)

ANA: Shit. Shit, shit, shit, shit. Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

(She picks up one of the salad servers that is on the counter and throws it across the stage.)

I can't believe it. I can't fuckin' believe it.

(She screams in frustration and anger. Hearing the scream, MARTY enters.)

MARTY: What's wrong?

ANA: I just want it to stop. It just doesn't stop. It just keeps growing, and growing and growing.

(MARTY begins picking up the salad up off the floor and putting it into the bowl.)

No matter what I do, no matter how many salads I make, that fucking tumour just keeps growing. It won't stop. It won't go away. It's never going to go away. What's the use of even trying anymore? When everything you do is useless? Fucking useless!

MARTY: Not everything is useless.

ANA: Yes, it is. Everything is useless. The chemo is useless. Fucking useless.

MARTY: Just the first kind they tried. Just the first kind. We

don't know about this new kind. This one might work.

ANA: Might. Might. What good is might?

MARTY: *(Stands up, puts the bowl on the counter.)* Might is all we got.

ANA: I'd do anything to make it stop growing. Anything.

MARTY: I know. Me too.

ANA: Even stop singing. I'd stop singing, go back to school, and never sing again if that would make it stop growing.

MARTY: Well, fortunately that won't help.

ANA: I just want her to be well. I just want her to be around. To watch me grow up. I'm still just a kid. I need her here. She can't die, she just can't die. It's not fair. How many mothers does one kid have to lose? It's someone else's turn. Not mine. It's someone else's turn.

MARTY: I know.

(MARTY walks over to give ANA a hug. ANA pulls away.)

Scene Thirteen (July)

(HARRIET's kitchen. There are still six boxes of children's books on stage. CLARE is closing the laptop, which she has just used to Skype LUISA. HARRIET enters, hoping to speak to LUISA.)

HARRIET: Are you going to Skype Luisa?

CLARE: I just finished.

HARRIET: I missed it?

CLARE: Yeah.

HARRIET: Why didn't you wake me up?

CLARE: I knocked on your door. But you didn't answer. And I opened the door and tried to wake you up, but you were really sleeping deeply.

HARRIET: Shit. How is she?

CLARE: Good. The walls are up.

HARRIET: The walls are up! Is Jorge still there?

CLARE: Oh, yeah.

HARRIET: So that's working out.

CLARE: Oh, yeah.

HARRIET: I'm sorry you didn't get to go, too.

CLARE: I'll go next summer. Luisa's going to start a girl's first

aid group. She wants me to get trained and run it. My Spanish is getting better and better. *Todo el mundo me lo dice* [Everybody says so].

HARRIET: *(With mixed emotion.)* That sounds great.

CLARE: *Y Jorge trabajará con los chicos* [And Jorge's going to run the boy's group].

HARRIET: Jorge's going back too?

CLARE: Oh, yeah. And you and Marty will come too!

HARRIET: I'd love that.

CLARE: You need anything?

HARRIET: No. *(Beat.)* Actually, yes.

CLARE: What?

HARRIET: I need to find a way to get Luisa and Ana to start talking to each other again.

CLARE: Good luck! It's been six weeks.

HARRIET: I know. But did you know that Ana's decided to donate the money she makes at Free Times to the clinic?

CLARE: No.

HARRIET: It's a start, right?

CLARE: Yeah.

HARRIET: And she's written a song about the orphanage.

CLARE: Really?

HARRIET: It's called "Chanting." Ask her to play it for you. And ask her if you can send it Luisa.

Scene Fourteen (July)

(HARRIET's kitchen. There are still six boxes of children's books on stage. ANA is playing "Chanting" for CLARE.)

"Chanting"

Visit the classroom
Where I spent my first grade
Sit at my desk
In the row by the door.
I hear the Sister call out my name
Like a voice on a wave,
Rolling home to the shore
And I'm chanting the Lord's Prayer
I'm chanting, chanting
The feelings I felt there
Still dancing, dancing

I'm chanting the Lord's Prayer
 I'm chanting, chanting,
 Chanting.
 Opened my desk
 See what I've left behind
 Cracks in the wood
 Etched out names, petty crimes
 Touched like a splinter
 Collision of time
 I've so much to learn
 Now I'm rewriting my own lines
 And I'm chanting the Lord's Prayer
 I'm chanting, chanting
 The feelings I felt there
 Still dancing, dancing
 I'm chanting the Lord's Prayer
 I'm chanting, chanting,
 Chanting.
 May the chanting oh oh
 Be everlasting oh oh (repeat)
 And I'm chanting the Lord's Prayer
 I'm chanting, chanting
 The feelings I felt there
 Still dancing, dancing
 I'm chanting the Lord's Prayer
 I'm chanting, chanting
 The feelings I felt there
 Still dancing, dancing
 I'm chanting. I'm chanting.

CLARE: Awesome! I love it! Especially the line "Now I'm rewriting my own lines." That's a great line.

ANA: Yeah. I like that line too.

CLARE: And the chorus is so catchy. (*Sings.*) "And I'm chanting the Lord's Prayer/ I'm chanting, chanting." The kids at the orphanage will love it. I bet no one's written a song about their orphanage before! (*Careful.*) Can I send it to Luisa?

ANA: If you want to.

CLARE: (*Careful.*) She says the Sisters all asked about you.

ANA: (*A little edgy.*) Yeah? What did she say?

CLARE: That you were here taking care of Harriet. And that you were writing songs and singing.

ANA: And what did they say?

CLARE: They thought it was awesome that you were taking care of Harriet and they told me to tell you that they're praying for her.

(*ANA nods.*)

Every little bit helps. Right?

ANA: I guess.

CLARE: Waiting is horrendous.

ANA: I know.

CLARE: You should write a song called "Waiting."

ANA: Really.

(*They are quiet for a moment.*)

CLARE: (*Very careful.*) So if I had some news about Luisa finding someone from your birth family, would you want to know about it?

ANA: She found someone?

(*CLARE nods.*)

Who?

CLARE: Your mother's sister. Your aunt.

ANA: Really?

CLARE: Yeah.

ANA: Well, I'm happy for her. For Luisa, I mean, because it means something to her. But it doesn't mean anything to me.

CLARE: Okay. But I'm glad you know. It felt too weird not telling you. Can you sing "Chanting" again? I want to learn the words.

Scene Fifteen (July)

(*HARRIET'S kitchen. MARTY walks in to find ANITA taping up and addressing one of the boxes of children's books on stage.*)

MARTY: Hey. What's up?

ANITA: I'm getting these boxes ready to ship over to the orphanage.

MARTY: (*Anxious, agitated.*) What? No!

ANITA: No?

MARTY: (*Agitated.*) No!

ANITA: Why not?

MARTY: Because we're going to take them ourselves.

ANITA: When?

MARTY: Next summer.

ANITA: Next summer is a year away. The children could be using the books now.

MARTY: (*Angry.*) I don't care.

ANITA: What?

MARTY: I mean, we want to bring them ourselves. Next summer.

ANITA: But it doesn't make sense to keep them –

MARTY: It makes sense to me. It makes sense to us.

ANITA: Harriet said I should ship them.

MARTY: And I'm telling you not to.

(*Goes over to the box that ANITA has just taped and rips it open.*)

We're going to take every one of those books with us. And we're going to buy more of them. Every month we're going to fill up one more box, and then next summer we're going to bring every single one of those bloody boxes with us when we go back and visit the orphanage and the clinic that Luisa built. (*Beat*) These boxes just can't just disappear. Things can't just stop. Things can't just end.

Scene Sixteen (July)

(*HARRIET's Kitchen. There are still six boxes of children's books on stage. Ana is working on/singing a new song called "Heaven." LUISA arrives from Colombia and approaches ANA hesitantly. ANA looks up, sees LUISA and stands up to embrace her. MARTY and CLARE enter. HARRIET is not on stage. It's uncertain if she's just resting or sleeping upstairs, or if she has died. But the last image on stage is of HARRIET's family all together in HARRIET's kitchen.*)

"Heaven"

Heaven see the beauty in you
Heaven see the beauty in me
Heaven how I feel it everywhere, everywhere

Heaven shone and gave us choice
Heaven smiled and gave us voice
Straight into the heart, heaven everywhere

And it's gonna be a long beautiful life
It's gonna be a long beautiful life

Heaven is the dust that lays
Heavy on this open page
Constantly the heart
Heaven everywhere

Heaven is a lingering stare
Shooting arrows in the air
Now I must declare
Heavens everywhere

And it's gonna be a long beautiful life
Heavens in your bones chapters in your eyes
It's gonna be a long beautiful life
It's gonna be a long beautiful life

All is with you
All is in you
Always with you

And it's gonna be a long beautiful life
Heavens in your bones chapters in your eyes
It's gonna be a long beautiful life
It's gonna be a long beautiful life

End of play

Hannah Dean (l) and Chantelle Pike (r) with Tara Goldstein.
Photo courtesy of Tara Goldstein

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