

The Women Have Something to Say

SCRIPT

[revised for New York, May 2023 performances]

Prologue [spoken lines scored in music]

Mary-Angela: I am only one voice.

Sydney: No, I am not only one voice.

Cindy: I am only one voice.

Mary-Angela: No. I am not only one voice.

Newsha/Jessica: No!

Gwen/Nicole: I am not only one voice!

Gwen/Lisa/Jessica/Nicole/Isabelle: No!

Lisa: I am the only voice that's only me.

Cindy: the only voice that's only me.

Gwen/M-A: The only voice.

Sydney: Only me.

Isabelle: The only voice.

Lisa/M-A: Only me.

Gwen/Cindy/Newsha/Nicole/Isabelle: Only me.

All: (sung) And I have something to say.

] (together)

JESSICA - MY THIRTY-SOMETHING VOICE

[SONG - RULES OF THE BIZ]

Careful! Be very careful!
You mustn't say that! You don't want to offend!
You want to work, don't you?
Listen up, darling.
If you want to get ahead...

Lesson number one: YOU are replaceable.
There are HUNDREDS of other singers waiting to take your job.

Lesson number two: do as you're told.
Do not complain or disagree...
Do what the conductor wants.
Do what the director wants.
Do exactly as they say, but
Remember to have your "own voice."

Lesson number three: be perfect.
Have perfect technique.
Have rich molten low notes.
Have soaring angelic high notes.
Be pretty, be stylish, be thin, be young...
Meet all our criteria
But do be original...

You are a mezzo, I see...
Be sexy. Be a thirteen year old boy.
Be an old crone. Be a soprano's maid.
Be grateful you have any work at all...

Don't piss anyone off,
And don't crack under the pressure...

Careful! Be very careful...
You mustn't say that! You don't want to offend!
[laughs] That's all.

JESSICA: I tried. I tried so hard to be what I thought they wanted. I drank the Kool Aid. I wore the knee-length, jewel-toned, ladies-who-lunch dresses with closed-toe pumps. I rolled up the control top pantyhose and put on demure jewelry that wouldn't distract from my performance when I am anything, but demure. I made the stylistically-appropriate musical choices that my voice teachers and coaches encouraged when my instincts told me to do something different, something exciting, something...ME. I was an expert at

control and I played the part of professional colleague: dependable, solid, very good, but nothing special.

I was doing well for a singer who didn't have the voice that bigger opera houses were looking for. I was landing lead roles in small companies, but I was unhappy with the work. It seemed like every time I took a gig, I took a pay cut. It was unreliable, unsustainable, and ungratifying work all in exchange for a single line on my resume. The stodgy traditions of the classical music world had caged my fire and I yearned to fan the flames with something of my own creation. Let me sing, let me dance, let me be me!

So I finally stopped asking permission and I made something so beautiful, so perfect, so exactly what I wanted it to be—a show that combined French and Spanish art song, flamenco dance, Spanish guitar, and 19th century paintings all on the theme of Orientalism. It was the synthesis of everything I cared about with an amazing cast of performers to realize my vision. I was finally in control of my artistic destiny.

Opening night was March 13th, 2020. I was already in hair and makeup, ready to go to the theater and make my debut as performer/producer/artistic director. And then I received a phone call. It was not to be. I was angry, disappointed, bewildered, WINDED. Unable to talk about it with anyone, I fled to nature, took mushrooms, and sobbed. I listened to flamenco as I rocked back and forth, allowing myself to feel the pain of my loss.

*Pena
Tengo una grande pena
que a Jesús de los milagros
que ya no puedo con ella*

I became unmoored, untethered, unsure of how to be the artist that I knew I was. New ideas turned to ash in my mouth, a reminder of the first child I lost. In my healing, I force myself to remember that I am bold: someone with something to say. After being smothered, first by the industry, then by the pandemic, I am slowly returning to where I began, a child dancing freely as my father and brother jam on piano and electric guitar—me, just a part of the jam. Listening to the music, listening to my instincts, with no one telling me how to do it any better. I am not yet healed, but my wounds help to fan the flames. I yearn to unleash my fire on the world and show the best parts of myself. To unabashedly accept my own brilliance and throw off the yoke of modesty. To courageously toot my own horn, unafraid of how others may label my confidence. That is power, that is art, that is me. When I listen to myself, I am unstoppable and this artist, she will be heard.

CINDY - SETTING THE SCENE

[A group of 4-5 bodies standing around casually- like you would backstage. They are oriented in a way so that they look like they are frozen in time except for Cindy. Everyone can have natural motion until Cindy begins talking, then they will freeze.]

CINDY: Picture it: Me. 20 years younger, early in my opera career. Several performers and I are hanging out near the dressing room stairs in the middle of a show. We're playing repressed, small town southern folks in prairie dresses and unflattering overalls. I am portraying the mother role, so my wig and dress may be the frumpiest of all. I'm not feeling gorgeous, but hey, I'm an actor as well as a singer, and I'm portraying the role I have, not the role I wish I had.

So as we're chatting, we become aware that the General Director, the head honcho, the guy who decides who will get the good parts in future seasons, is approaching our little gathering, standing out in his tuxedo. Imperceptibly, our backs straighten, and our voices modulate to a more professional tone.

[The group becomes "unfrozen" and looks over their shoulder in the direction of the imaginary General Director. They turn back to the group, this time standing up straight with their hands down by their side, looking straight ahead. They freeze again as Cindy continues.]

CINDY: I have been hoping to catch his ear and see if he might have me in mind for any juicy roles coming up. As we make small talk, I gather my courage; this is the moment I have been waiting for. Casually I put it right out there: "You know, I heard you're planning a Pagliacci in a few seasons. I want you to know that I sing the shit out of Nedda, if I do say so myself. I'd love to be considered for it, if you haven't cast it yet."

Without missing a beat, he looked me dead in the eye [*all sharply turn heads to Cindy*] and said: "I can't hire you for Nedda. **Your boobs aren't big enough.**"

[SONG - WHAT I WISH I'D SAID]

Did I hear him right???
Is my mouth hanging open?
Are my eyes bugging out?
What the HELL do I say now?
My thoughts are all scattered.
What could I possibly say to make him feel flattered?

Looking back, what I wish I'd said...

To get this far costs thousands of dollars,
And unimaginable devotion,
Plus constant management of my health, my energy, my rage!

I built my fortress of resilience in the face of rejection
To be belittled by a man who couldn't make it on the stage.
Why did you try to take me down with this verbal aggression?
Did you think it made you come off as the hottest or the smartest?

What do my breasts have to do with the character in question?
What does my figure have to do with my value as an artist?

How is this remotely okay to say to me,
To any woman? To any human being?

Looking back, what I really said..
Making me look sexy is the costumer's job;
It's exactly what they do.
No I should probably get going..
Wouldn't want to miss my cue.

MARY-ANGELA - READY TO WALK

Growing up, there was never a moment of ease in the house. My dad would always be awake, always around, and when he got mad (which was often) it meant a lot of bad things could happen.

I was 20 years old when a moment would change everything for me. It was winter in Chicago - snowy grounds, freezing wind gusts, wearing layers to protect against the cold, and I was going to community college while working at a chocolate candy shop. What I really wanted to be doing though, was dancing. Dancing professionally and making choices for myself, just experiencing life. But my dad was overbearing and didn't support any of my dreams. He even convinced me I was worthless. So, I was stuck in suburbia, trying to figure out a way to leave this hellish place I had to call home - which was like a military Boot Camp under constant, often violent surveillance. My earliest memories as a kid were seeing my dad throw things at my Mom, constant yelling, and beatings that were a normal form of punishment. It would make me so angry and want to fight back; I'd develop this need to be a protector for my mom, little sister and me.

This one night in particular, he was lecturing me, about something I had done wrong, in the bedroom that I shared with my sister. Annoyed, she yelled out "Oh my God can't you lecture her somewhere else?! I'm trying to sleep, I have class in the morning!" This pissed him off. He immediately pinned her down, facedown, on the bed by the back of the neck and told her to be quiet or get hurt and I watched her just go limp. Now I was used to this kind of reprimanding from him but to see that done to my sister, his favorite, in our adulthood, made me realize things might actually get worse. Still, I went to my go-to defense -I called out to our Mom and threatened to call the police. Both she and my sister told me to stop. Their fear and lack of fight was really hard to accept, so much so that at school the next day I went to the counselor's office to speak to someone and ended up finding a pamphlet. This paper gave me confidence in labeling the truth about what I was experiencing at home. I decided I would wait for the right time to give it to my mom to talk to her about it.

A couple days later I was getting ready for work, an opening shift. It had snowed the night before so there was ice on the windows and the car would need to be warmed up. I did it but my dad didn't like my way of doing it, especially since it was his, so he made me sit in the car for 20 minutes until he was satisfied, intentionally making me late to work. My boss was really understanding when I got to the shop, she even told me "It's OK you're here, you're safe, don't worry about it. It's gonna be ok." When I got home, I beelined to the bathroom hoping to avoid my dad. But, we had a no-door locked policy in our house, so he burst in (as I'm mid-pee) to ask how work went, obviously hoping I had gone through some embarrassment. Proudly, I told him I didn't get

in trouble. My boss knew that it was ridiculous and it was fine, I was fine. This set him off and we got into another argument. It got to a point where I said something about what a home should feel like and he said "if you don't like how I run my house, you can get out". This statement had been said before, many times, but today I said "OK". I got up, flushed the toilet, and immediately started packing. He ran to get his camcorder and began videotaping me all the while laughing and making fucking commentary belittling me.

When my mom got home from work she became frantic trying to figure out what was going on. With the yelling, arguing, threatening, all of it - I just couldn't wait to get out. I was about to walk out the door but needed to see my Mom. She was in their bedroom now - silent, staring down, slumped and defeated. I pulled out the pamphlet, handed it to her and said, " What Daddy is doing to us is not right. Please look at this." (She took it) "I love you." My dad laughed incredulously, my mom's eyes never left the floor. And with that, I walked out of that house.

[SONG - Mary-Angela dances]

ISABELLE - DON'T WRITE TO ME

[Isabelle seated at table across from an empty chair. A New York Times paper, coffee cup, and cell phone are on the table.]

Isabelle:

OK, I have to admit it: I'm old. I may not look very old from where you're sitting, but if you stand about 6 inches from my face, you'll know. One benefit of being old is that I got my covid vaccinations before everyone else. Now since I don't look that old from 12 feet away, I could lie about it. But if I tell you details about my life - like when I sang folk music as the opening act for Bob Dylan, Simon and Garfunkel, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Odetta and the Smothers Brothers - you'd stare off into space and start calculating.

[Pointing to audience member]

See?

[Picking up newspaper and opening it]

Each morning, after I read the front page and the op-eds of the NY Times, I turn to the obits - and I see that - Omygod! - all the people dying are younger than I am!

My husband Abbie died 9 years ago. He was a polymath, was fluent in seven languages and knew a lot about many varied fields. For example, he could recite the names of the kings of Poland in the 19th century, could identify all the Shostakovitch symphonies, and since he read the atlas while sitting on the pot, he could also name all the islands in the Philippines. His favorite saying was: "Young people talk about sex, middle-aged people talk about food, old people talk about their ailments, and the very old talk about their bowel movements. We won't go there. So here I am in the third category, suffering from arthritic thumbs and aching knees. Abbie always said that he'd be a tough act to follow - and he was so right.

[Four "men" enter upstage, forming a line.]

For the past 6 years I've attempted to find another relationship, but the results have ranged from sad to hilarious. I'm on Match.com *[Date 1 waves]*, OurTime *[Date 2 waves]*, OKCupid *[Date 3 waves]* and JewishPeopleMeet *[Date 4 waves]*, but because I was born and raised on an island off the coast of Europe - called Manhattan - I find myself a wee bit different from the available men in this area of the country.

[Date 1 "Jewish Bore" sits in chair across from her.]

Most of the characters they send me are Christian conservatives. JewishPeopleMeet sends me Jewish conservatives. I'd hate to tally up the hours I've spent having lunch with guys who drone on about their hobbies, their kids and their grandkids - while I try to inconspicuously look at my watch under the table.

Jewish Bore: [huff sound]

[Date 1 "Jewish Bore" stomps off, offended at Isabelle's boredom. Date 2 "Texas Judge" takes his place in the chair.]

One of those lunch dates was with a Texas judge, recently retired from the bench. He was a sweet, bear-like giant of a guy who liked to protect women - from what I don't know. At least he wasn't boring when he talked about some of the cases he'd presided over. But as we parted he said:

Date 2, "Texas Judge": See ya soon, liddle lady!

Isabelle: ...and that was it for me.

[Date 2 "Texas Judge" slinks off as Date 3 "New York" takes his place in the chair.]

There was one guy I liked a lot. He was from New York and - Omygosh - we studied with the same piano teacher on 98th street! After 5 dates he said..

Date 3 "New York": I've decided that you're too old for me.

[Date 3 "New York" stands and crosses away to leave.]

Isabelle: He's 4 years younger, an age at which most men are already decrepit, so I wasn't really very wounded by his pronouncement. "Plenty of Fish" is the name of one of those sites, so back online I went. [Picks up her phone to search.]

[Date 3 "New York" stops, rethinking, takes out cell phone and dials.]

Date 3 "New York": [into phone] Hi, Isabelle. I've got two tickets to the opera this Saturday. Would you like to go with me?

Isabelle: [into phone] But you said I was too old for you, and, y'know, now I'm two weeks older!

[Date 3 "New York" exits in a huff. Date 4 "British Scientist" crosses down to where Date 3 was, taking out phone as if on FaceTime.]

Then there was the eloquent and jolly British scientist. He lives in Florida, but we met often on FaceTime. After a few weeks we decided that he'd come for a visit and we pinned down the date and time I'd pick him up at the airport. [*Date 4 hangs up on FaceTime.*] Then...silence. "Are you coming?" I texted.

Date 4 "British Scientist": [*texting*] No.

Isabelle: [*texting*] Uh....want to explain?

Date 4 "British Scientist": [*texting*] Aha! I see that you're a very angry person!"

[*Date 4 "British Scientist" exits with a flounce.*]

Isabelle: Omygod - it's a passive-aggressive nutcase.

[*Isabelle stands, referencing projection.*]

Here are a few of the gorgeous specimens on those sites.

[*Projections of very ugly, very old guys appear.*]

And now I'll show you the ones I sleep with:...

[*Projection of her in bed with her two cats.*]

Mendel and Madeleine. Although they're soft, cuddly and loving, I find that discussing books and music with them is very one-sided.

So I'm back on the sites, but now I've set some rules.

[*Isabelle crosses to piano.*]

[SONG - DON'T WRITE TO ME]

Don't write to me if you are married or over eighty.
Don't write to me if you equate sophistication with the City,
Or learning with degrees, success with acquisitions.
Don't write to me if you sneak outside to smoke [*coughing*]
Can't stand cat hair on your pants... [*purr*]
Or think you need a young trophy chick to party with...
If you think your Harvard law degree makes you top shit,
Don't write to me...

And don't write to me
If you spend your weekends killing animals for sport
Or think Tai Chi is for sissies...
If sagging skin and arthritic knees SCARE you,

DON'T write to me.

But if you ache for a real, whole, sharp, challenging woman
Who's been around the block,
Then please, WRITE to me.

SHANNON - THE COST OF BEING SEEN

SHANNON: Thanksgiving in Indiana... My mom comes from a big family, oldest of 5. So, with every holiday, we gather together at grandma and grandpa's. For meals, the grownups sit in the dining room, while the rest of us are at the kids table in the kitchen. At the end of the meal, we all convene in the living room for pie!

[2 aunts and grandmother enter with slices of pie, holding out their slice as their name is called]

Each aunt brings her favorite recipe - Aunt Karon with pumpkin, Aunt Marcia with chocolate almond, and my grandmother's pecan pie always made an appearance.

[3 women place their slices of pie on the table. 1 woman becomes her mom and sits with grandmother at table, grandmother smoking. 3rd woman exits.]

One year when I was maybe 11 or 12, I remember sitting in the living room with my mom and her mom. Most of us had already picked out a slice, but my mom had waited patiently for everyone to choose before leaning in to see what was left. My grandmother glanced over, with her ever-present cigarette dangling between bony fingers, and asked:

GRANDMOTHER: Do you really need that?

[Mom pulls back her hand from taking the pie.]

It was not the first time my mom had received that kind of comment. Years of scrutiny over her choices of what to eat and what to wear. Possibly knowing no other way, or maybe just out of habit, her struggle became my struggle and the cycle continued.

[Grandmother exits. Mom takes grandmother's chair.]

She tried in every thoughtful, loving way to ask me the same question.

MOM: You know what, when you reach that goal, I'll take you shopping!

[Shannon reaches for pie.]

MOM: Do you really need that?

SHANNON: Back and forth, year and years, until I was on my own and had only my voice ringing out with disappointment and shame.

[Shannon stands, addressing audience. Mom exits.]

It was all too much. I chose to focus on anything other than myself. My weight rose and fell, but I barely noticed. I didn't want to look, so I saw nothing.

There was a time during the height of naive, youthful fun - oh, to be in my 20s again! I was seen, but not in the way I had anticipated. Seen as an object, as something to enjoy, to touch, to grope. Not someone with ideas, hopes, ambitions. Overt stares at the airport as I adjusted my boots. Standing in line at the Vatican, crowds pushing, realizing the man behind me is rubbing, rubbing up against me. An older colleague saying we should have sex with our extra time when a rehearsal ended early. I said nothing. I had no idea what to do.

The cost of being seen was more than I anticipated. The voices of my inner struggles grew louder. I scrutinized every morsel and every mile. I asked myself if I deserved anything and pushed my body harder to drown out the sound. I appeared stronger and stronger, but inside I was dying.

So, again, I decided to hide. Hide behind my responsibilities. Hide in my work. I called it the selflessness of motherhood or being a good colleague. No one wanted to look at me. I didn't want to look at me. So, I tried to become invisible.

But, I don't want to hide any longer. I want to know the power of being heard. I choose to take control of my own ideas, hopes, ambitions. How can I tell you that I love and believe in you, if I can't say it to myself? I choose me.

[INSTRUMENTAL - MOTHER TONGUE]

INGRID - PERFECT

[Ingrid surrounded by 3 Women on their phones scrolling through her IG]

INGRID: I'm perfect.

On Facebook. And Instagram.

I've mastered the art of photoshop and strategically sharing just the good things that I experience. I've successfully created a perfect and enviable social media version of myself.

WOMAN 1: Do you know Ingrid? - the violinist!

WOMAN 2: The jazz singer!

WOMAN 3: The hot blonde with the nice ass!

INGRID: But that's not really me. That's just what you see.

People often call me a "Barbie." I know they mean well. They mean it as a compliment. But does anyone wonder if Barbie has opinions? Have you ever considered if Barbie has any dreams or ambitions? Most likely you've only wondered which shoes will match her outfit, and which Ken doll she's going to marry. That's ok because Barbie is just a plastic doll.

But I'm not a doll. I don't appreciate your private messages about how you liked my hair longer, or that I look prettier with straight hair, or that you prefer the dress I wore last week. I don't want your input on whether I've put on some pounds or I've suddenly lost weight. Or the constant admonition:

4 WOMEN: Don't be sad, you're so much prettier when you're smiling.

INGRID: People actually feel so much liberty to express their opinions on how I should look and dress and BE. I'M NOT YOUR BARBIE DOLL. And I know that my life's purpose is greater than "to look cute."

WOMAN 1: I admire you so much. I follow you on Instagram.

WOMAN 2: Your life is so amazing!

WOMAN 3: You're so perfect!

INGRID: They think they know me and that it's easy to live my life. But... secretly, they kind of hate me. Not like the real mean kind of hate. The other kind. The dismissive kind of hate that just assumes.

WOMAN 1: If she's attractive, she's probably kind of dumb.

WOMAN 2: I bet she's a gold digger.

WOMAN 3: She probably slept her way to the top.

INGRID: Almost every day, I hear a variation of that. Unfortunately, that, I don't think they mean as a compliment.

[INSTRUMENTAL - PRETTY]

Recorded text:

Pretty. That pretty, pretty.
I just don't trust anyone who's that pretty.
Pretty, PRETTY, pretty..
How could you possibly be sad when you're so beautiful?
You look so much better with your makeup on.
Beautiful!
...and your hair fixed.
That pretty. That pretty.
How could you possibly be so, so, so, so Beautiful
So, so beautiful?
So beautiful.
Have your makeup on
Have your makeup on, and your hair fixed.
Your looks, your looks, your LOOKS..
Are you SURE you know how to do that?
Are you SURE you know how to do...that?
At least you have your LOOKS.
Sit there and look pretty,
Sit there and look pretty, pretty, pretty.
Is something wrong?
Is something wrong?
Your job is just to sit there and look pretty.
Honey?
Honey? I just don't feel comfortable with you working with her.
I just don't trust. I just don't trust, trust.
Your looks..
Don't trust, don't trust (echo)
Just don't, just don't feel comfortable, comfortable

[pink noise grows, ending in a final bang]

TALI AND LISA - TWO VOICES OF MOTHERHOOD

[Light up on Tali]

TALI: The call from the adoption agency came around 10 in the morning and gave me just the basics:

AGENT: *[on phone, with urgency]* We have a 5-week-old girl, Hispanic, normal birth, no reported health issues. Two other siblings were removed from the birth mother a while ago. Would you like to accept this placement? If you do, CPS could bring her over later this afternoon."

TALI: I had been thinking about adoption for years. Finding my beautiful inside-and-out other half wasn't exactly going well, and without it pregnancy had very little meaning for me. Vomiting for three months, bursting out of my clothes and not being able to hold my pee just didn't seem that appealing if the love of my life wasn't next to me. I wanted to care for a child and see her or him grow. I didn't have to make one to accomplish that. The thought of a child not having someone to tuck them into bed and sing a lullaby to them every night broke my heart. This someone could be me. It had to be me. It just made sense.

[Light out on Tali, light up on Lisa]

LISA: Here's the thing... I loved being pregnant. I felt like I was good at it. I loved the attention, the advice, the feeling of connection to other women. My job became taking care of myself in order to take care of the baby. As an opera singer and a yoga teacher, I became even more physically conscious than I usually was.

Let me tell you about my first pregnancy. I began feeling her move around eighteen weeks. I was absolutely in love with this baby, and felt more beautiful and special than I ever had before.

I originally did not want to find out what the gender was, but I began to have dreams about having a girl. It's all I could picture, and I knew that I needed to know either way. I ordered special gender reveal cupcakes from the bakery that made our wedding cake, and the moment we cut into them and saw bright pink frosting, my life changed.

[Light out on Lisa, light up on Tali]

TALI: When the call came in, I didn't even know what else to ask, so I asked the first thing that came to mind "May I possibly see a picture?"

AGENT: [on phone, monotone] CPS doesn't provide pictures for emergency placements like this.

TALI: My first thought was "All five-week-old babies look pretty much the same anyway, a picture won't help me get mentally ready or make a decision.

The conversation with the agency only lasted a few minutes but the five hours that followed it seemed to last forever. I made a quick call overseas to my mom to inform her that her first granddaughter will be coming home that afternoon. Then I made a very frantic shopping trip to Walmart: now I knew what size diapers and what type of formula to buy. My head was exploding: "baby section is so enormous: a hundred types of formula for every possible health issue, baby toys with a million different sounds and colors, PJs with elephants for boys, butterflies for girls, pacifiers, nose fridas: what do I need?" I decided to stick to the bare minimum and head home before I had a real panic attack.

When I returned home I was suddenly overcome by a feeling that I dreamed my morning phone conversation up: It should not be possible for someone to live a perfectly happy single life in the morning and be responsible for a newborn that same evening. Was that call real? When are they going to bring the baby?

[Light out on Tali, light up on Lisa]

LISA: Every time I went to a doctor's appointment, she was an hour late and answered a question I had by telling me to Google it. After the first ultrasound, Austin and I waited over ninety minutes in the room before the doctor finally came in. No explanation. No apology. No acknowledgement. Finally, she bustled in and abruptly told us:

DOCTOR 1: [impatient, rushing in, almost out the door already] You have a complete placenta previa and you will have to schedule a C section and go on pelvic rest immediately. You will have to stop all of your activity, including yoga, and you could start bleeding at any time. The baby is in DANGER...Danger...danger... [voice trails off as she exits]

LISA: And then she left. I was devastated. Two hours ago, we had been looking at a beautiful, perfect baby, and now there was something terribly wrong. I had done everything right. I had followed the rules. I did prenatal yoga and took my vitamins, for God's sake! I felt like a failure. I felt ashamed. Most of all, I felt terrified.

[Light out on Lisa, light up on Tali]

ASSISTANT: *[on phone, annoyingly nasal]* We don't schedule check-ups on Saturdays. We only accept sick patients.

TALI: *[on phone, with urgency]* This is for a foster child that was just placed with me and Dr. Evans instructed me to bring her to the clinic within 48 hours...

ASSISTANT: I am sorry, but we don't do check-ups on Saturday.

TALI: *[more urgently]* Ma'am, the 5 weeks old infant I currently hold in my arms came straight from a family that couldn't take care of her. I have to have a doctor look at her tomorrow morning. This is very important.

I was running out of explanations, but wasn't going to give up. If the clinic is open on Saturdays the newborn beauty that landed in my home just a few hours prior was going to be seen. It was almost 6pm on a Friday night, the clinic was about to close and that's probably why the lady surrendered and scheduled our first check-up.

[Both hang up phones]

[Light out on Tali, light up on Lisa]

LISA: Following that disastrous visit, I began to see a prenatal chiropractor who was one of my yoga students. During our initial consult, I told her all about my experience with my doctor. She asked me how I wanted to feel during my pregnancy and delivery. And in that moment, a quiet voice inside me said "empowered."

So on the morning of my 25 week appointment with my OB, I made the decision to break up with her. I called, canceled my appointment, requested my records, and burst into tears when I hung up the phone. Did I make the right decision? Was I being reckless? Had I failed?

And then...we met our new doctor. We walked into a dimly lit, calm room. Essential oils were diffusing and Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto was playing. *[sound effect - start Rachmaninoff]*

DOCTOR 2: *[calmly]* I assure you that there is absolutely nothing wrong. Your baby girl is healthy, safe, and thriving.

LISA: I was a success again- I hadn't failed.

But then I developed gestational hypertension at 37 weeks, and two weeks later I begrudgingly checked into the hospital for an induction. We waited twelve hours to see if I would dilate. Guess what. Nothing. I was so frustrated.

DOCTOR 2: Perhaps we need to try to induce again.

LISA: But I said no. I told her I didn't feel like I was being given a choice, and I told her I wanted to wait.

DOCTOR 2: Ok.

LISA: Shortly after the doctor left, I went into labor on my own.

[Light out on Lisa, light up on Tali]

TALI: I remember so clearly that day they brought her to me. I remember the knock on my door waking me from my state of confusion. *[knock sound]* I remember sleeping Marianna handed to me in her infant car seat covered by a striped blanket.

[CPS Worker hands baby in car seat to actor portraying Tali as real Tali watches.]

Head full of thick black hair, perfectly defined features on a round face. The young cheerful CPS worker that brought the miracle into my home had me sign a few papers...

CPS WORKER: Best of luck! *[CPS worker exits]*

TALI: ...and was gone within less than 15 minutes. *[Tali looks into car seat]*. I kept staring at the sleeping face torn between the curiosity to see the baby's eyes open and the fear of needing to answer to her first cry. *[lights fade on actor Tali]*

Around 7pm Marianna opened her big gorgeous eyes and I knew that there is no other five-week-old baby on earth that can be as special as this.

[Marianna has joined Tali on stage seated on the piano bench beside her mother, listening as Tali plays]

[TALI INSTRUMENTAL - RUSSIAN LULLABY]

[end of Tali's piece transitions seamlessly to Lisa's song]

LISA: *[spoken over intro of song]* The next day, I delivered a beautiful 6 lb. 15 oz. baby girl - Charlotte Jane, on July 30 at 3:51pm. At that moment, I stopped doubting myself. That girl became my everything.

To be empowered means that you become stronger and more confident, especially in finding your voice. And when I look into the eyes of my two daughters now, I know they will learn to be empowered too.

[LISA SONG - EMPOWERED]

[Lisa singing, Tali playing and Marianna listening.]

May you be kind.
May you be brave.
May you be at ease wherever you may go.
When you fall down,
May you rise up.
May you venture far, yet always feel at home.

My darling girl, you are my greatest triumph,
My joy, my heart, my pride, my treasured one.
You are my light, you are my love, my baby bird,
And being your mom is the best thing I've ever done.

May you be peaceful.
May you be strong.
May you see the good in everyone you meet.
May you trust yourself.
And just as I have learned,
May you learn to be empowered too.

INTERMISSION

INTERLUDE - INGRID AND DANCERS

SYDNEY - TO MOTHER

Sydney: It was August 1, 2019. My mom sat across from me in Dublin, Ireland. In a pub. And she said something to me that **changed my life**.

It was my 29th birthday, and if you know me you know how important birthdays are to me. I'm a Leo, what can I say? I remember how special my mom made them for us as kids, letting us choose our favorite meal, making us our favorite dessert. When we were really little, she would make these elaborately decorated cakes, and I looked forward to making fancy birthday cakes for my children someday, too... hypothetically.

[Sydney's mom enters.]

I was so excited to greet you that day. After you and Dad had just arrived fresh off the plane on your first trip overseas.

[Sydney runs to hug her mom. They sit at the table.]

It was like the best birthday gift I could receive to be able to bring you on this once-in-a-lifetime family trip. So there we were joyfully drinking our pints of Guinness, just catching up about friends and family members, when and at one point you casually said:

Mom: Can you imagine being 26 years old and not knowing whether or not you want to have children?

[Sydney's mom freezes]

Sydney: I think I swallowed my whole tongue before saying, incredulously, "I mean...I'm 29 years old and I don't know if I want to have children."

[Sydney's mom unfreezes to react with shock on face]

I still remember the shock on your face, and the shakiness in your voice during the tense conversation that followed. I don't remember the specifics of it, because the question itself was still rattling around in my head. I know you said something like

[Mom unfreezes]

Mom: But you love children!

[Sydney freeze Mom]

Sydney: What I do know is that I have spent the years since that moment trying to figure out why that uncertainty never bothered me until after that comment.

[*Sydney stands*]

It was like a switch.

All of the sudden my life was filled with anxiety around knowing the answer to that question.

Mom: *Can you imagine not knowing if you want to have children?*

Sydney: From that moment on, the question in my heart changed from. "I wonder if I'll ever have kids?" To "Will I ever have kids?"

Because I think I just assumed I would.

But now it's a question that I consider in every major decision I face.

Mom: *Can you imagine not knowing?*

[*Sydney freeze mom and cross above table*]

Sydney: Now my awareness of how important motherhood is to you, as evidenced by your visceral reaction to my response that day, makes me question whether or not **any other pursuits** are quite as noble. It made me think back on my childhood and realize how you gave everything of yourself to make sure we all had the best chance at a good life. I became obsessed with that recognition of sacrifice, and then overwhelmed with fear that if I *don't* become a mother I will be somehow devaluing the choice that you made, and that all of the mothers who came before me. I began to believe that you might never be proud of me for other achievements after you dedicated your entire adult life to motherhood.

[*Sydney looks at her mom, kneeling beside her*]

You were the best mom. [*Mom unfreezes*]

Home-cooked meals;
Our hands in soil;
tickling my back every night before bed.
Helping me prepare for every performance, from making costumes and doing my hair to reading lines...

Sydney and Mom: (*together*) Power-cleaning to "Graceland by Paul Simon."

[Sydney stands]

Sydney: If I *really* think back on my childhood, all of my memories of you involve gentle love and genuine care.

Lately, I have felt an intense call toward motherhood. I *want* to be able to share that legacy. But I truly don't know if I would be as good at it. I had quite the model.

I have a temper.

I am **too** ambitious.

I get annoyed easily.

And I know I could lean on you for help.

But I also want to travel the world.

And nurture students.

And inspire creative humans of **all ages**.

(Affirmed) I **do** share the maternal instinct. I want so badly to create something new, that has all of my heart and soul and spirit in it. That will live on without me and have a whole life of its own.

What I'm realizing is that there are infinite ways I could do that. Maybe I'll found a thriving interdisciplinary arts collective. Maybe I'll teach children's choirs and give dozens of kids the joy of music each year. Maybe I'll sing all over the world, inspiring empathy in the hearts of audiences.

[Sydney crosses back up to the table and sits]

[to Mom] Maybe I'll have kids of my own.

And maybe I won't.

I know that uncertainty is what scares YOU, but it's what EXCITES me. It's what propels me toward creative exploration and discovery. The road ahead can look a million ways and I get to see how they all play out and intertwine.

I *do* want to mother.

I'm learning to be ok with still not knowing what that means for me.

—

[SONG - To Mother]

There's always been a little spark
a-burning in my brain,
It wants to grow and flicker out,
To light the world aflame.

Hmmmmm

When I let the spark grow up,
And see it's heart aglow,
I feel a form that love can take
That's like no form I know.

Hmmmmm

I long to create something new,
To let the spark burn free,
With parts of those who came before,
And will live on after me.

I can teach and inspire,
Nurture, aspire -
To grow and release
Little parts of me.

So here I am a-nurturing
The flame of my own spark,
Human form she may never take,
But she's a work of art...

Lu lu lu...

GWEN - LEADING, COLOR FIRST

GWEN: By the age of 18 years old, I was determined to live off the beaten path. Not only was I at the top of my graduating class, but I was the artsy girl...the choir nerd and proud of it! My choir teacher loved this about me because she always knew that I was fearless when it came to singing anything.

[Small "ensemble" of Women and actor/dancer dressed as Mrs. C appear. All freeze as Mrs. C takes conducting pose. Gwen joins them]

My teacher, Mrs. C had been employed in my hometown for many years and had branded herself as an educator who upheld the African American culture. Her choirs were known for their interpretations of Negro spirituals...and this is what I loved most about being a part of choir.

When the time came for us to compete in the yearly classical music competitions, Mrs. C knew that I would want to dive into the audition music as soon as possible.

[Gwen separates from the ensemble, pouring over choir folder.]

During class and after school I would separate from the group, listen to the practice CDs, and learn all of the music by ear. When the day of the first round of auditions came, I ranked in the top 5 of all competitors.

[Ensemble crowds around Gwen, celebrating. Mrs. C stands back observing with cautious pride.]

Dancers: You did it! / Top 5! / Congratulations!

Before long, it was the week of the final round, and I was the last person standing amongst everyone in my class [*"ensemble" exits slowly, leaving Gwen and Mrs. C*], but my teacher's positive attitude began to shift from excitement to indifference. [*Mrs. C turns away from Gwen.*] I saw her become extremely detached and when I asked her for assistance, she always made excuses as to why she didn't have the time or desire.

It was a couple days before the audition when she finally asked me to come into her office to practice the music for the audition.

MRS C: Gwen, could you come in here for a minute? [*Mrs. C. opens office door, showing Gwen in.*] You know what, Gwen...I really hate this competition. People of our skin tone have never made this choir. To be truly honest, no one has ever earned a position in the choir

from this area in over 25 years. All I have to say is just don't get your hopes up.

[Mrs. C freezes. Gwen to audience]

For years, she had been using her Blackness as a security blanket. She had witnessed discrimination from many angles, and she was fearful of doing things differently because she was afraid of being judged negatively. When it came to her students' interests in genres outside of "black music," she did not really know how to confidently guide them.

I left our practice session very discouraged. I began to question if I should even go through with the audition. My mom gave me some advice:

[Gwen's mom enters]

MOM: Gwen, you can't limit yourself by other people's opinions or experiences. This is your senior year and your very last opportunity to even participate in this competition. Don't give up now!

GWEN: So I decided to go for it!

When the day of the competition came, I walked into the cafeteria where all competitors were asked to sit until our audition time. *[Gwen crosses into "cafeteria" and sits in a chair with her choir folder.]* I sat there alone, no classmates, no friends, no teacher, and not many people that even looked like me. When they called my audition number *[she stands and readies herself]*, I gave it everything I had.

[Gwen sings a part of her audition song]

Later when the results were announced, I felt sick to my stomach. *[Gwen sits again.]* My teacher came and sat next to me very quietly and avoided eye contact. *[Mrs. C enters with chair and sits.]* Did she know the results already? Did I not make it? I felt guilty for even putting her through this process.

They announced names one by one starting with the sopranos. I waited patiently as it came time for the Altos to be called. 12th chair, 11th, 10th...I still didn't hear my name. *[Mrs. C takes Gwen's hand.]* Then...there it was! I made 8th chair! My teacher looked at me, smiled and nodded, and gave me the biggest hug! I think she was in shock.

I was soooo excited. I was representing not only my school district and city, but also any person of color who thought she did not have a voice that could make a difference in this world...even if that person was Mrs. C herself. *[Mrs. C moves her chair to the side and sits to listen to Gwen sing.]*

[SONG - ROAD LESS TRAVELED]

You can take the road less traveled,
Be met with resistance and still succeed,
Let perseverance push you to higher heights,
Break barriers and build a legacy.

You may question if you still belong,
If you can lead with your colors blazing,
But know who you are and what you are capable of.
Tell them, "You'd be wise not to underestimate me."

NEWSHA - Three Newshas

NEWSHA: I was rubbing my eyes. They still felt heavy with sleep. I could hear my dad listening to the morning news on the radio and my mom was kneeling in front of me. She was helping me put on my uniform. She buttoned me up, and she finished by pulling a small green veil on my head. I liked how the new fabric smelled a little like glue, but I didn't like how it wrapped around my face. It felt like it was choking me. I pulled it off my chin and said: "I don't like this. When can I take it off?"

MOM: You can't. You also can't say you don't like this out loud. You keep it on all day, okay? Promise.. If you take it off, it will be bad for us. I promise you can take it off when I pick you up in the afternoon."

NEWSHA: "Okay I won't." I had accepted defeat, but I had already triggered something in my mom. A worry. She kneeled down in front of me again, and took both my hands in her hands and said:

MOM: Let's go over it again. What are the things you're not supposed to talk about?

NEWSHA: I groaned. We had already been over this several times in the last few weeks. "What dad says when he reads the newspaper."

MOM: ...and?

NEWSHA: I won't say he doesn't like the ayatollah.

MOM: Good. What else?

NEWSHA: I won't say that you play party music when you cook in the kitchen and sometimes we dance.

MOM: And..

NEWSHA: I won't say that we watch foreign movies.

MOM: Perfect! And if they ask you anything you don't know how to answer just say you don't know, got it?

[Mom watches Newsha cross as if going to school, then exits]

NEWSHA: And just like that, I was off to my first day in a school in Tehran. Growing up in Iran, we all knew that we had dual lives. One was who we were amongst ourselves, and one was for when dad went to the office, or when mom went out for grocery shopping. We didn't follow the islamic republic rules behind closed doors, and we had to

hide that. First day of school for me meant that like everyone else I knew, I officially was going to become two people. One for family, and one for out there with strangers in Tehran. I had to learn to pretend.

I made friends with a few girls in my class. One blatantly told us that she loved Disney movies. They were my favorite too, but she was the rebel, I was the one who sat there mute and motionless so nobody would suspect we had those films too. She even had the audacity to say her favorite part was when the prince and the princess kissed each other on the lips. I was torn between wanting to join her rebellion and the fear of getting caught. So, I did what any parent-pleasing kid would do - I avoided her like she had the plague.

[2 women enter and sit in circle with Neusha.]

Years later, one day in fourth grade during recess, looking around the school yard to find teammates for a game of tag, I saw a group of my classmates huddled together in a corner. This was odd. We all cherished the 15 minute break in the yard as our only chance to release all of our cooped up energy for the whole day. I walked over and poked my head in their circle. They looked up worried, and when they saw that it was me, they opened a spot and gestured to me to sit.

[Newsha joins the circle.]

One of the girls was talking to them in whispers.

GIRL 1: *[whispering]* ... and afterwards the woman bleeds. And they have to save the bloody sheets to show it to the guy's family so they know that she was a virgin.

NEWSHA: I did not understand the context or what the word virgin mean, but there was an air of seriousness about the girls, this wasn't a joke. This was danger. One girl asked:

GIRL 2: Does it hurt for the girl?

GIRL 1: Oh yes, so much that she screams the whole time.

NEWSHA: Now I was not just curious but I was worried. But Before I got a chance to raise my many questions, the bell rang, *[sound effect?]* and we had to head back to class. I spent the whole class thinking about what I had heard, trying to link it to something.

[Girls exit. Mom enters.]

NEWSHA: When I went home, after pulling together all of my courage, I asked my mom in the most casual tone I could put together: "Mom what's a virgin?"

My mom's color turned, and I immediately knew I had made a mistake. I had spoken a forbidden thing.

MOM: Where did you hear that? [*snapping at Newsha*]

NEWSHA: Uh...just...just some girls talking in our school.

MOM: Which girls?

NEWSHA: She wasn't gonna let this go easily.
"I didn't know them. I just heard them in the line for lunch. Maybe I heard them wrong."

MOM: I'm gonna come talk to your principal about this. Go to your room and work on your homework.

NEWSHA: I left quickly, terrified. what secret I had spilled, But as I went into my room and closed the door behind me, I realized I had to hide different kinds of things from my family so I could feed my curiosity, so I could protect my friends and so I could go unpunished. The word virgin was the first forbidden word I put on my list of forbidden things to share with my family- a list that would eventually grow to cover half of my life. My own mother was a different, home-made, version of the government and I feared her more than any government spies. Now there was one Newsha for the family. One Newsha for strangers of Tehran. And one Newsha for her friends.

[*As Newsha lists her three selves, three dancers enter, crouching and hiding their faces.*]

As I grew into teenagehood and then adulthood, my three personalities grew in definition with me.

[*Dancer 1 stands, showing obedience*]

The family Newsha was obedient, quiet, showed wisdom, and prioritized school above all else.

[*Dancer 2 stands, showing politeness*]

The Newsha for strangers was polite, soft spoken, conservative, and careful.

[*Dancer 3 stands, showing rebelliousness*]

And the Newsha that was available to her friends was loud, rebellious, interested in boys, a troublemaker, and a rule breaker.

And these three Newsha's existed happily alongside each other. It took a lot of energy to keep those worlds apart, but I managed. I was good at it. Between them I had learned how to assess every situation, and every person I interacted with to decide which Newsha was the most suitable to present. My life was a game of understanding who people were so I knew who I should pretend to be with them. I had gotten very very good at pretending. It's no wonder I've become an actor.

And honestly, it was great. They say you can't make everyone happy, but I was. And I was proud of it.

It wasn't until we moved to the US, and years later, when I moved out of my parents house when problems began. Because now there was really no need for the family Newsha, or the Newsha that was made for strangers of Tehran.

[2 dancers crouch back down hiding their faces, leaving 1 standing looking useless.]

2/3 of my identity was completely useless. Sitting in my new empty apartment, I was met with the harrowing fact that my mind felt completely empty. There was no voice. There was no direction, no demands, no wishes. Just a large and quickly expanding anxiety repeatedly asking the question "What now? What do you want? You're free from them now, but what do you want?" And I had no idea. All those meticulous skills and structures I had built and perfected for years in order to understand who people were, and which side of my personality they should be exposed to, now seemed so useless.

Abandoned.

NEWSHA SONG - Newsha's animation plays over song.

GRACIE - CROOKED TREE

[Three dancers are positioned behind Gracie.]

Gracie: On paper it appears that I grew up in America. The truth is that when I set foot inside my childhood home, I was not in the USA, I was transported back to Nigeria. While the kids I went to school with were watching TV and hanging out with other kids their age, I was reading encyclopedias, doing extra homework, and cleaning our house in the hopes that I would become a married genius doctor with clean floors. My parents had a dream to better the lives of their children.

[The three dancers - Dancer 1 "Discipline," Dancer 2 "Hard Work," and Dancer 3 "Perseverance" - step forward one at a time, creating a semi-circle around Gracie. On repeated "discipline" line, they all close in on Gracie even more.]

They used tried-and-true methods of discipline, hard work, perseverance, and DISCIPLINE...did I say that already?

My dad always recites a particular parable when asked about the rearing of children, especially when we made a grave error like getting a B:

[The dancers take each of Gracie's arms and shoulders and crouch/lunge/brace themselves in a grounded pose.]

"A child is like a tree. If you don't take the time to tie the tree down on either side, the tree will not grow straight. It will bend every which way. *[Dancers pull at Gracie as if she is bending in the wind, freezing with Gracie in a bent position.]* Once the tree has grown to a certain point, there is no way to unbend it, it can't be straightened."

[Dancers release Gracie from their grasp and form a "crooked tree" shape beside her.]

That story comes to mind when I pass a particularly crooked, bending tree. *[looking at the dancer tree]* But rather than thinking "what a poor, undisciplined tree" I think, what an interesting life that tree has had. *[circling the dancer tree, examining]* What caused that bend in the trunk? How can that branch reach so high while the other stoops so low that it grazes the grass beneath? That tree still releases oxygen and provides shade and makes an intriguing sighing noise when the wind passes through it, it's a beautiful tree.

The traditional behaviors my family would call culture have been passed down from generation to generation almost accidentally. The limits and expectations tied to gender have simply been accepted:

[The dancers release their tree formation and go back to grasping Gracie's arms. They tug on her arms/legs, manipulating her physical stance with each line. Each line corresponds to a dancer's interference.]

Dancer 1: "Girls don't do sports and sweat like that"

Dancer 2: "If you don't wear a dress, people will think you're gay."

Dancer 3: "You are the youngest girl in the house, it's your responsibility to clean up the dishes."

Dancer 1: "You can't play that instrument; it's not for girls."

Dancer 2: "You shouldn't spend so much time on your education, men will be afraid of you."

[The dancers end with five of their hands grabbing a different part of Gracie (shoulder, knee, etc.). With each of the following statements, Gracie throws one of the hands off of her.]

Gracie: Well in fact I did play sports, I don't wear dresses most of the time, I do clean up after myself and others, I play the double bass, and I have three degrees in music.

[The dancers back away upstage to be ready for the dance.]

Each of those actions is a line on a branch or a scar healed with time. I'm proud of my branches and scars. Why would I want to look like any other tree?

[Gracie picks up bass as dancers get in position for dance. Two additional dancers join the others to hold a long stretchy mesh fabric that the original three dancers will stretch and bend during the dance.]

[INSTRUMENTAL - CROOKED TREE]

NICOLE - PROPHET MAN

[Dancer at table dealing tarot cards.]

Nicole: I've always been emotional. In 3rd grade, my teacher Mrs. Brown sent home a note with my report card saying,

Dancer: "I'm concerned about Nikki. She cries a lot."

Nicole: I wasn't crying a lot because I was sad. I'd say I had a very happy childhood. I was crying, because it was the way feelings and passion on the inside got to the outside. And wow, did I have a lot of feelings and passion in 3rd grade!

But this world labels tears and a quivering voice as weakness, as "being a girl." When a woman shows emotion - whether it be anger, excitement, fear, distress - she has historically been labeled "hysterical." That word hysteria comes from the Greek word for...uterus. The ancient Greeks believed that the womb could wander around a woman's body affecting all sorts of things from breathing to disease to emotion. Plato even suggested a woman could return her uterus to its ordered place by sneezing. There's an idea, next time I start feeling hormonal, I'll just stop taking my Zyrtec.

So in response to societal ideas about what a women should sound like or BE, we learn from a very early age to alter our voices. We make them smaller, quieter, less strident, more acceptable. And when we do that long enough, our voices can...break.

It happened to me right out of grad school. I had just graduated from the Eastman School of Music, and I was headed to Germany to audition for agents. I had read the preparation guide for American singers on "how to audition in Germany" cover to cover - it was called Keim Angst, Baby!

So I arrived in Frankfurt, where I had four auditions set up. Each morning I would get up and practice my rep for the audition. With my old-fashioned wheel pitch pipe, I'd give myself a note [dancer blows a note on the pipe], start the aria [sings "Klänge der Heimat"], and by eight measures in, I'd check the pipe, and I was already a half step flat. I'd do it again, same result. I was singing the same exercises, the same arias I had sung just months before, and it was like my body couldn't remember how to do it.

So after three months of struggling and feeling like my very identity was broken, I canceled my last two auditions, got back on the plane and returned home to Texas. I kept trying to sing, but it kept getting worse. Intonation was suffering, both outside and in.

I began to realize over time that the dysfunction of my outer singing voice was the manifestation of a lifetime of silencing my inner voice. So many years of being taught to say, or not say things as I was expected to; to package things in concise and authoritative - but not too authoritative - ways so that men would give my words credence and hear me; and finally, I just stopped saying anything at all. There's a phrase that we seemingly teach to little girls way more than little boys, "If you can't say something nice..."

Dancer: *[leading audience to finish it]* "...then don't say anything at all."

And when you say only what society deems "nice" and don't speak your truth for a prolonged period of time, your voice will...break.

So how did it all turn out, you ask? Because by this point, you know I'm about to sing a song, and you're wondering if it's going to suck. You know you are.

Well, it would take many years of painstaking work, on my outer singing voice, but most importantly on my inner voice. I had to do the work, and the work is by no means complete yet. But it all started with this mystical experience I had when I got back from Germany...this really happened...

[Nicole to position with ensemble. Dancer takes stage.]

[SONG - PROPHET MAN]

One day I met a prophet man
Under the spell of lilacs wafting on a cool breeze
And he asked me if I'd like to see a vision...a vision.

And I said, with my voice, I said, "yes,"
With my voice, I said "yes," I said, "yes," I said "yes"..
With my voice.

And he said, "I see a vision of you with a sword in your throat!"
A vision of you with a sword in your throat.

And I began to cry, I began to cry, I began, I began, I began
To cry.

And he said, "But that isn't all..."
I said, sobbing, "What else do you see?"
"I see the sword will be removed from your throat."

"Your voice will be free, be free."
Be free...

EPILOGUE

WOMEN: [*segue from Prophet Man, aleatorically singing as they enter*] Be free...

We're not only voices.

We're the only voices that are only us.

Only us, only me.

And we have something to say!