

ALICE IN WAR

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ALICE IN WAR

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

THE ANGEL-*ageless, androgynous, speaks her own language, requires strong physicality-she's fierce. Avoid stereotypical angel. She is not from Greek, Medieval or Renaissance periods.*

BIANCA-*Alice's sister, is a rebellious, cynical seventeen-year old with a strong sense of justice. She lost her father to war at the age of seven, still grieves his loss.*

RABBIT-*Bianca's nineteen year old stoner boyfriend, laid back, lost and philosophical about his ennui.*

ALICE- *a courageous and loquacious ten-year old with disarming charm and persistence. She often speaks fast than she thinks.*

FLOWER SOLDIER-*flower is growing in his mouth*

GAS MASK SOLDIER-*wears a gas mask*

RABBIT HEAD SOLDIER-*has a rabbit head.*

HENRI-*ageless French philosopher. worn and bleached by the sun, time and desert sands. In the marrow of his bleached body is a deep compassion for humanity.*

MOTHER-*Alice and Bianca's mother who appears in a dream.*

FATHER SOLDIER-*gentle, charming and ruthless. Never tips his hand to Alice.*

THREE SWURPS- *warring bird-like creatures. They are the scavengers and mercenaries of war.*

SWURP FOUR-*Leader.*

GENERAL WARREN ALBERT RUFUS THE 1ST, *ageless tyrannical, blustery and overblown.*

WHITE QUEEN-*compassionate, spacey, nurturing. An emotional mess.*

*MOTHER and WHITE QUEEN *should be played by the same actor*

Other Roles can be doubled as follows:

RABBIT, HENRI, SWURP

MOTHER, WHITE QUEEN, SWURP

GENERAL WARREN, FATHER SOLDIER, GAS MASK SOLDIER, SWURP

FLOWER SOLDIER, RABBIT HEAD SOLDIER, SWURP FOUR

SETTINGS: *Bianca's middle class suburban basement turned into her teenage room.*
The Desert

SCENES

PROLOGUE

1. A HOLE IN THE WALL
2. POOL OF TEARS
3. ALICE'S DREAM
4. ADVICE FROM A PHILOSOPHER
5. THE SWURPS
6. THE ANGEL AND THE SOLDIER
7. THE SOUNDS OF WAR
8. THE WHITE QUEEN
9. THE MESSAGE
10. FINDING HOME

PROLOGUE

(The Angel stares out over the world with intense focus. She's flying. Suddenly her body convulses. She trembles trying to stay in the air. Her wings slowly collapse. Lights fade on her.)

1.

(Immediately, Bianca's basement is revealed. The wall has a poster that reads; ART IS DEAD, LET'S KILL." Rabbit sits on a chair staring off. Bianca on the floor, draped over a guitar leafing through a newspaper.)

BIANCA

What do you want to do?

(Rabbit holds up a joint.)

BIANCA

This is all we ever do.

(She strums the guitar, puts it down. Turns the page.)

Shit, Rabbit. The military shot an angel out of the sky. Oh my God. A missile tore through her mid-section.

RABBIT

Whoa.

BIANCA

I know.

RABBIT

I believed in angels. Then my parents divorced and my mother married a drunk. He took me hunting when I was thirteen. I winged a robin. It writhed and flopped...then it stopped. I must have stared at the robin for hours. My first kill.

(Bianca looks at Rabbit.

Lights fade. Beat. Back in. Rabbit is resting his head in Bianca's lap. She tenderly runs her hand through his hair.)

RABBIT

Ennui.

BIANCA

Hmmm.

RABBIT

French for boredom.

BIANCA

She's not dead. They have her...We should do something.

RABBIT

What?

BIANCA

I don't know.

RABBIT

What about this?

(Holds up joint.)

BIANCA

Not helping.

(He puts the joint behind his ear.)

She's probably the only angel left in the world.

Lights fade. Beat. Back in. Bianca stares at the article Rabbit stands away from her staring out. Al ice stands on the stairs listening and eating from a pint of strawberries.)

I killed some small animals. Skinned them and kept the pelts. After the first kill, it's easier. The loneliness goes away. Why was I so proud of the pelts?

BIANCA

We should save it before they do more terrible things to it.

RABBIT

You think they'll torture it?

BIANCA

What do you think?

RABBIT

Okay, where is it?

BIANCA

The desert.

RABBIT

Which one?

(Alice run in.)

ALICE

Hi.

RABBIT

T'sup, Ali?

ALICE

My name is Alice, not Ali. There's a girl at school named Ali. She's a creepo.

RABBIT

A creepo.

(monster roar)

Ahhhhh.

(He tickles her; she screams, he grabs the pint from her.)

ALICE

Those are mine. Don't eat them.

RABBIT

Who's the creepo now?

(He pops one his mouth and hands the pint back to her.)

ALICE
(feigning apathy)

You can have them.

(Alice sits. Rabbit takes the joint from behind his ear and hold it out to her.)

BIANCA

What the hell are you doing?

RABBIT

She's gonna smoke up eventually, anyway.

BIANCA

She's ten.

(Bianca grabs the joint from him.)

ALICE

No thank you. I want to keep my brain cells.

BIANCA

What are you doing down here? I told you to knock.

ALICE

I know.

BIANCA

Ugh.

(Alice picks up the guitar, strums it aggressively.)

ALICE

My sister is a loser, yeah, yeah
Her boyfriend is a tweaker, yeah yeah
I'm gonna have a good time, Ah, huh
I'm gonna be a rock star, up yours

(Rabbit high fives her.)

RABBIT

Awesome.

BIANCA

Alice, Mom's calling you.

ALICE

Mom's at work. But she'd rather be a rock star.

(Strums aggressively)

My mother is a rock star, yeah, yeah
She went and got some implants, oh, oh
Now she's in the bathtub, Ah, huh

BIANCA

Alice!

(Alice stops, smiles at Bianca)

ALICE

(almost apologetic)

Floating like a duckie, ooh, ooh

(Bianca laughs)

BIANCA

You think you're funny,

ALICE

I am.

(She kisses Alice on the head.)

BIANCA

Come on, Rabbit. We don't have much time.

ALICE

Where are we going?

BIANCA

You're not going anywhere.

RABBIT

We're saving an angel.

ALICE

Whoa! Awesome! An angel. Where? What happened to the angel?

RABBIT

The military

(He pretends to hold up an missile launcher, aims fires.)

Boom.

ALICE

I want to come.

BIANCA

It's too dangerous.

ALICE

I'm not afraid.

(Bianca heads out.)

RABBIT

Sorry, kid...I like the song, it's um, psychedelic.

(She hands him the strawberries.)

Not a creep. Ms. Coolio.

(He leaves. Alice watches them go, makes a frustrated strum on the guitar, plops in a chair. Alice sees the joint. She pretends to smoke it, plays being high and mocking Rabbit.)

Dude, I'm so wasted my brain is leaking out of my ears...oh, man...it won't stop. Dude...what a mess...I'm seein' angels and things. I gotta stop smokin' this stuff.

(laughing)

Dude...

(She collapses on the floor, abruptly let's go of the game. She sees the newspaper, goes to it.)

Wow!

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

(*beat*)

Wow!

(*beat*)

WOW!

(Suddenly, a rumbling sound which grows louder and louder until a large CRASH.)

Alice screams, runs behind the chair as a soldier crashes through the wall.. The soldier is covered in earth and plaster. A large rose grows in his mouth.

He stands, terrified, afraid to move, struggling with his breath. Blood drips from a gash in his leg. Cautious, he takes in the environment.

Alice peeks out from behind the chair. She crawls toward the stairs. The Soldier sees her and jumps. Alice screams, runs up the stairs.

The soldier remains still, a deer caught in headlights.)

Don't come up here. I have a gun. I know how to use it...Hello!

(A muffled sigh from the soldier. He limps to the chair, sits, notices his wounded leg.)

Hello...You have to go away. I know how to dial 911...Hello?

(The Soldier sobs.)

Hey, I know that trick. I'm a kid. You can't fool me. I've used that trick before.

(Soldier sobbing)

I'm coming down. You better not trying anything. A cornered ten-year old is dangerous.

(Alice appears on the stairs, she has a toy gun painted in fluorescent colors. She steps into the room, holding the gun on the soldier.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

This may look like a toy, but don't test it, Mister.

(The Soldier's attempts to speak are barely intelligible.)

FLOWER SOLDIER

I'm suffocating.

ALICE

What?

FLOWER SOLDIER

I'm dying.

ALICE

What? Is that a flower in your mouth?

(He touches his mouth, feels the flower, reacts with terror, tries to take it out, but it's too painful. He struggles with his breathing, passes out.)

Hey, Mister Soldier. Are you okay?

(She puts the gun down, kneels next to him, listens to his chest. She sees his leg wound.)

Ow! That's bad. I saw a frog squished in the road once and it looked like your leg. Wait. My Mom keeps a first aid kit in our bathroom.

(She runs upstairs. Light from a flashlight appears from behind the hole in the wall. A soldier wearing a gas mask sticks his head into the room. He sees the Flower Soldier and cautiously enters, looks around, kneels down, checks Soldier's vital signs.)

(Alice runs down stairs with first aid kit. Gas Mask Soldier turns his gun on her.)

ALICE

I found the first aid--Oh!

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Drop it.

(He gestures with his gun. Alice drops the kit.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

His leg's bleeding.

GAS MASK SOLDIER

You're just a kid. What do you know?

ALICE

I know that guns aren't toys, that only honey bees make honey, except the nectar from honeysuckle, that some man-eating plants like the venus fly trap attract greedy little flies with its juicy sweet stuff. I know that my Dad died when I was in my mother's stomach, that Bianca is still sad, and Bianca and Rabbit save angels. AND I KNOW THAT I'M GOING TO GET THE BLAME FOR THIS MESS.

GAS MASK SOLDIER

That's not very much.

(He gestures for her to move away.)

ALICE

You're not going to shoot a ten-year old girl.

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Don't try me. If you were a suicide bomber, I'd have to take you out.

(She inspects the flower in the Flower Soldier's mouth.)

Stop. Move away.

ALICE

That flower has roots.

(She tries to pull it out.)

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Don't touch him.

(She pulls harder. Flower Soldier jumps up screaming, startling Alice and the soldier. Flower Soldier finally calms down.)

GAS MASK SOLDIER(*Cont'd*)

What did I tell you?

(*to soldier*)

How's your leg?

(*Flower Soldier looks at his wound, nods. Alice runs to the first aid kit and brings it to him.*)

Hey.

(*Flower Soldier wraps his wound.*)

ALICE

I know what war is. My Dad died in a war. He was a hero. I have his medals.

(*She runs upstairs.*)

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Can you walk out of here?

(*Soldier looks at him; deer caught in headlights..*)

Hey, don't worry about it. I would've done the same. Orders are orders. Okay? Good. I have to take you back.

(*Alice runs on with a small wooden box.*)

ALICE

I got 'em.

(*She opens the box and pulls out dog tags, puts it around her neck.*)

These are my Dad's. And these. See.

(*She shows a handful of medals.*)

GAS MASK SOLDIER

I don't care. They're a dime a dozen in any neighborhood garage sale.

ALICE

These are real, not from a garage sale. They're my Dad's.

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Whatever you say, kid.

(A flash and distant explosion from the other side of the hole.)

Come on. We gotta get back.

ALICE

Get back where?

GAS MASK SOLDIER

To the war.

ALICE

But you destroyed the infrastructure of my sister's room.

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Let's go.

(Soldier shakes his head.)

You don't have a choice.

(Points gun at him.)

ALICE

Hey, you're on the same team.

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Listen little girl--

ALICE

Alice.

GAS MASK SOLDIER

Listen Alice, you weren't suppose to see this.

ALICE

But how do I explain—

GAS MASK SOLDIER

This isn't real. You're not real. Go back to sleep.

(He pulls Flower Soldier through the hole in the wall.)

ALICE

But—

GAS MASK SOLDIER
(abrupt)

Shhh!

(Alice watches through the hole.)

I'M REAL...AND THIS MESS IS REAL.

(Looks at the room.)

What am I going to do?

(She picks up the guitar.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

My Daddy was a soldier, yeah, yeah
I never got to meet him, ooh, ooh
Now he's just fertilizer, uh, huh
For all the pretty flowers, ooh, ooh
(she looks around)
I'm in big trouble, oh, yeah

(Stops, gets an idea, puts down guitar, picks up gun, first aid kit and disappears through the hole.)

2.

(The sound of war in the distance. A barren desert landscape. Smoke dissipating.

Bianca struggle in pulling a cart with the wounded, half-conscious Angel, bleeding from her mid-section, broken wing.

Bianca stops, tries to catch her breath.

BIANCA
(calling)

Rabbit...Where are you?...Rabbit.

(Kneels next to Angel)

I'm sorry.

(Angel moans.)

It's okay. Don't try to say anything.

(Calling)

Rabbit. I need you.

(She cries)

I can't do this alone.

(Sits on the ground defeated. Alice appears trying to make her way.)

ALICE

Bianca?

(calls)

Bianca, I found you.

(Runs to her.)

BIANCA

Alice?

(Alice hugs her.)

What are you doing here?

ALICE
(hyper)

An explosion. A flower. In his mouth. The soldier fainted. There's a hole in your wall. I didn't do it. Another soldier with an elephant trunk, big bug eyes like a fly. It was buggy. I followed them through the hole and here I am.

(sees Angel)

Whoa is that the Angel?

BIANCA

Alice, slow down.

ALICE

Okay, slowing.

(Bianca feels faint and bends over.)

What's wrong?

BIANCA

(collecting herself)

Nothing...Where's the hole?

ALICE

Over there somewhere.

(Alice kneels near the Angel as Bianca looks around.)

She's bleeding.

BIANCA

Stay here a minute.

ALICE

Where are you going?

BIANCA

To look for the hole.

(Bianca runs off.)

ALICE

(to Angel)

I watched a soldier wrap his wound. It was bad, like squished frog bad...I can wrap your wound. I'm a quick study. My Mom says that. She also says I'm too smart for my own good. How can being smart be no good for me.

(wraps Angel's wound.)

Please don't die. You're the first and only real angel I've ever seen. Maybe you're the last angel in the whole world. I bet that's true. You know, you can make a lot of money as an angel.

(Bianca returns.)

BIANCA

I couldn't find any hole.

ALICE

There was one. That's how I got here.

BIANCA

Well, it's not there now. I need to rest a minute.

(Bianca trying to gather her strength.)

ALICE

Are we going to die like Dad?

BIANCA

What? No.

ALICE

Is the angel going to die?

BIANCA

I don't know. If she can bleed, she can probably die.

ALICE

I bet flowers will grow where her blood touches the ground.

(Bianca sees the angel's wrapped wound.)

BIANCA

Did you do this?

ALICE

Who else?

BIANCA

Okay, we have to get out of here.

(notices dog tags)

What are you doing with Dad's dog tags?

ALICE

I put them on to show the soldier.

BIANCA

You better not lose them.

(Bianca looks at bandage around the Angel.)

BIANCA

(calling)

Rabbit.

ALICE

Where's Rabbit?

BIANCA

We got separated. Don't move from this spot. I'm going to look for a way out of this place.

ALICE

Someone should stay with the Angel.

BIANCA

Yes, stay with the Angel.

ALICE

Why do they want to kill her?

BIANCA

Because they're idiots.

ALICE

Dad wouldn't kill an angel.

BIANCA

You didn't know Dad.

ALICE

I did too. We had lots of conversations. Like one about how to grow up as a fatherless child. And one about sea turtle babies—

BIANCA

Okay, just stay here with the angel.

(Bianca leaves.)

ALICE

Mom's going to kill us.

(to Angel)

My Mom hates it when we're late. It's Bianca who's always late. I help Mom cook dinner. I'm a good cook. I learned to cook snow peas, snap dragons, sliced melon and peaches. I can make chocolate chip pancakes and corn-on-the-cob, too.

(The Rabbit Head Soldier appears behind her. He stares over the landscape, remaining still.)

I'm also going to be a rock star. My sister plays the guitar but she stinks at it. I'm the one with the rock talent in the family.

(She picks up the toy gun, holds it as a guitar, strums and an amazing rock chord plays.)

Whoa!

(She looks at the gun.)

How did I do that?

(strums again, another amazing chord.)

Awesome.

(She plays a lead rock riff, gets into it, falls to the ground, plays a la Jimmy Hendrix. As she plays, the Rabbit Soldier approaches her. He pulls the gun out of her hand.)

RABBIT HEAD SOLDIER

Guns are for killing.

ALICE

Hey.

(Take in image)

Oh.

(He points it at the Angel.)

ALICE

No!

(Alice jumps on the back of the soldier, covers his eyes.)

Don't shoot the angel. Stop. Help, Bianca. They're trying to kill the angel. Help!

(The Soldier throws Alice off, points the gun at the Angel.)

(Alice throws herself between the Angel and the soldier. The Soldier pulls the trigger. Alice flinches. Nothing. Soldier checks the gun, takes aim again.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

No!

(He pulls the trigger, nothing.)

It's a guitar not a gun.

(He checks gun, pulls trigger. Nothing. Points gun at his head, pulls trigger. Rock guitar riff. Soldier drops the gun grabs his head, writhes, pulls at head. The Rabbit head pops off revealing a headless soldier. Guitar riff stops. The Soldier gropes and disappears off.)

(Alice checks on the Angel who is conscious but still immobile.)

That was weird.

(The Angel groans. Alice runs to her. The Angel holds up a piece of paper. Alice takes it, tries to read it.)

I can't read this. I only know English.

(Angel struggles to say something.)

ANGEL

Ya...ya ta...tak. Shm sof sof ta ta sumppre. Paro soo shhim see. Sim say shum sa sodo slow sspron na ta ta tak. Liss sinther sem soo sha mod. Sa sa sa sa sempaaaa.

(She collapses.)

ALICE

Those are the most beautiful sounds I've ever heard. I wish I understood.

(She strokes the Angels head.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

Please don't die.

(She checks the Angel's wound, then quietly studies the Angel's message.)

ALICE

I bet you were on your way to deliver this to someone.

(Her stomach growls.)

(Silence)

I don't mind not eating. I can go for a long time without food. What do Angels eat? Not animals or anything. Unless you eat human brains. Like Zombies. Zombies eat human brains to relieve their suffering souls. I don't know what a suffering soul is. Sometimes my mind won't shut-up. Bianca says I have diarrhea of the mouth...My mother has low blood sugar. She need's to eat when she's hungry or she get's cranky. I'm going to be quiet now.

(Alice looks around. Her eyes fall on the rabbit head. She picks it up, tries it on.)

Cool. Everything's green. My hands are green. You're green...the desert is green.

(She attempts to take the head off.)

Umph!

(again)

Umph!

(again)

UUMMMPHHHH!

(Catches her breath, tries one more time, collapsing to the ground, groaning, and grunting. She gives up.)

I'M NOT HAVING FUN RIGHT NOW.

3.

(Alice's dream.)

ALICE'S MOM

Alice, time for dinner.

(Alice tries to get to the dinner table, but her feet are stuck.)

Bianca, where's your sister?

BIANCA

I'm not her keeper.

ALICE

I'm right here. I'm not late. I can't move my feet. Something's happened to my legs.

ALICE'S MOM

(to Bianca)

I wish you wouldn't talk to me that way.

BIANCA

She's your kid.

ALICE'S MOM

I need your help. It's not easy raising two kids alone.

BIANCA

I'm tired of watching her all the time. I have my own things to do.

ALICE'S MOM

She looks up to you.

BIANCA

She's a big pain.

ALICE'S MOM

I know, Sweetheart. Be we'll just have to endure.

BIANCA

Why'd you bring her into this world. I was happy being the only child.

ALICE'S MOM

It's something your father wanted.

(Father Soldier enters.)

That worked out, didn't it?

ALICE

I'm not a pain. I'm very helpful. Dad wanted you to have me as a sister. AND HERE I AM.

(She struggles to move.)

BIANCA

You're a pain, Alice. You don't even know how to take care of an Angel.

ALICE'S MOM

I'm afraid Bianca's right. Most people, by the time they're your age, know how to care for Angels.

ALICE

I'm in a war zone, Mom. This isn't easy for me. There are explosions, and rabbit heads, soldiers with flower mouths, and--

ALICE'S MOM

Alice, please. This imagination of yours is going to get us in trouble.

ALICE

How can my imagination get you in trouble. Maybe it can get me in trouble, but that's because it's my imagination.

BIANCA

Don't talk back to Mom.

ALICE

I wish Dad were here. He'd understand what's going on for me.

ALICE'S MOM

Your father's not coming home.

(Alice Mom cries)

BIANCA

Look what you did. Mom doesn't need to be reminded about Dad.

ALICE

I didn't do anything. I just want to help Mom feel better.

(The Soldier takes Mom by the hand, tenderly lifts her, carries her off.)

BIANCA

Great. Another meal ruined by my bratty, insensitive sister.

ALICE

No. I didn't do anything.

BIANCA

Then why did she leave the table crying? Mom and I grieved Dad's death ten years ago. We don't need to experience it again.

ALICE

Mom, I'm sorry. I didn't mean what I said. I'm a good girl.

BIANCA

Right. You're not even real.

ALICE

Yes, I am.

BIANCA

Not to Dad.

ALICE

Yes, I talked to Dad from Mom's stomach.

BIANCA

No you didn't. Dad never knew you. And take off that stupid rabbit head.

(Bianca leaves. End dream.)

ALICE

Bianca, come back. I didn't mean it. Mom. Bianca. Come back. I have a message from an Angel.

(Her feet release. She feels her head.)

I think my head's evaporating.

(Bianca enters out of breath and weaker than before.)

BIANCA

Come on, I found a way.

(she weakens)

We have to hurry.

(She sees Alice with the Rabbit head.)

ALICE

I was trying it on. Now it won't come off.

BIANCA

Alice?

ALICE

A Rabbit Soldier tried to kill the Angel but his head popped off. And here I am.

BIANCA

We don't have time for these stupid games. Help me with the Angel.

ALICE

(Holding message)

Look.

BIANCA

What did I say?

ALICE

But--

BIANCA

We have to get out of here.

(Alice puts the message in her kit. Bianca struggles, pulls cart off.)

Come on.

(Alice picks up her soaker.)

ALICE

I've got our backs, Bianca. No one's gonna sneak up on us.

(She backs away following the cart off. Explosions in the distance.)

4.

(Flower petals fall as Henri enters on a tricycle. He wheels into place among the petals. He listens to the war with his entire body, then lifts an ear horn to his ear.

Alice struggles on pulling the cart. Bianca and the Angel are collapsed on it. She sees Henri, stops, carefully approaches him.)

ALICE

Hello...hello...Can you help me, please. I'm lost. My sister is sick and I think an angel is dying. We need water...Hello...

HENRI

Can't you see I am ruminating on the war?

ALICE

Uhm—

HENRI

There's nothing I can do for you.

ALICE

I need water.

HENRI

This is desert.

ALICE

I know that.

HENRI

Do you hear that? That is the sound of war. There's a pattern to war. To all war. To all human endeavor. Wrong word. War is not an endeavor, is it?

ALICE

I don't know. I'm still developing my vocabulary.

(Bombs explode in the distance. He ignores her and listens.)

HENRI

There's something...it's on the tip of my tongue, the very edge of my brain. An epiphany about to run amuck.

(Alice takes the message from her kit, taps Henri on the shoulder.)

ALICE

An Angel gave me this. It's a message. She was carrying it over the war zone when the military shot her. Maybe it's about your pattern.

HENRI

Which side?

ALICE

Uhm...

(double checking)

Her left side.

HENRI

No, no, no. Who shot the angel, which side of the war?

ALICE

Why does it matter?

HENRI

Why does it matter? WHY DOES IT MATTER! Are you a rabbit or a little girl? Or are you both?

ALICE

Both?

HENRI

You have a rabbit face.

ALICE

That's a problem for me.

HENRI

I've seen stranger things. Like child armies, or the kamikaze bombers of forgotten wars...

(he is caught by these images)

terrible.

(comes out of it)

Which military shot the angel?

ALICE

I don't know.

HENRI

Then I cannot take the chance. You could be on the wrong side.

ALICE

But I'm trying to save the angel.

HENRI

That is not obvious to me. What's your name?

ALICE

Alice.

HENRI

I am Henri, the philosopher. Now listen, I am a historian and—

ALICE

You said, philosopher. But I thought you were a gardner from all the flower petals.

HENRI

Mon Dieu, you can be both. Gardeners are historians. Historians are Philosophers.

ALICE

Does that mean gardeners are philosophers?

HENRI

Not necessarily.

(Alice looks confused)

Look at these petals. Each one is a different war in history.

ALICE

That's impossible. A flower petal can't be a history.

HENRI

A know-it-all, eh?

(She looks at Bianca.)

ALICE

I don't have time for history.

HENRI

No time for history. Now that's a pattern.

(He picks up a petal.)

This petal holds the history of the universe after humans have destroyed the world. I wrote it in the veins of this petal. I used a very tiny pencil.

(Alice studies the petal.)

ALICE

History cannot be about the future.

HENRI

Incredible. I will read you a chapter. I used to have a beautiful speaking voice before it dried out in this desert

ALICE

I'll listen if you tell me where to find water.

HENRI

There is no water in the desert. If you don't want me to read, you may go.

ALICE

Okay.

HENRI

Okay?...Okay.

(clears throat. Takes out a magnifying glass, holds it over the petal.)

“Only one remained. Passed sadness, beyond grief. All the others turned to ash. She stood on a high plateau under an eerie twilight gazing out over a disintegrating planet. As she looked up, the sky opened. Angels fell toward the earths exposed core. Her only thought was of her sister.”

(He looks at Alice.)

ALICE

I don't like that story.

HENRI

But I told it well.

ALICE

Sure.

(Bianca groans)

Is that your sister or your Angel?

ALICE

That's my sister, Bianca.

HENRI

Time is stopping inside her body and she is unable to move in any direction. It's a desert sickness. The only way to help her is to find water.

ALICE

But--

HENRI

She will go blind and turn into a desert flower. Her petals will fall off and collect at my feet, She will become a history--another casualty of war.

ALICE

(yells)

Where can I find water?

(Startles them both.)

Sorry.

HENRI

Hmmph.

ALICE

How come you haven't stopped?

HENRI

I'm acclimated. I have slowed down but I haven't stopped.

ALICE

Maybe Bianca can be acclimated.

HENRI

If she eats sand until her ears are full, then meditates on the memory of her father. That's what I did?

(points to dog tags)

Are you a soldier?

ALICE

My father was a soldier, yeah, yeah.

HENRI

Bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo.

ALICE

I only speak English.

HENRI

Unfortunate. I said, Bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo, a warrior girl who dares to fight against men.

ALICE

I'm not a warrior, and filling my sister with sand is a bad idea.

HENRI

The desert is in the eye of the beholder. If you stop beholding it, you might find your way.

ALICE

How do I do that?

HENRI

Questions, questions, questions. You wouldn't ask if you didn't know the answer.

ALICE

But I don't know the answer.

HENRI

Then why did you ask the question?

ALICE

Because--

HENRI

This is an exhausting conversation. Why don't you start with your head?

(He listens to the war.)

HENRI

Why don't you start with your head?

ALICE

(taps him on the shoulder)

What do you mean?

(He ignores her.)

Hey, listen to me. Henri.

(Bianca groans.)

ALICE

Start with my head!

(pulls at her head.)

Umph! Errr! Ahhhhhh!

HENRI

What's all the racket?

ALICE

Starting with my head.

HENRI

Are you sure you have another head under your rabbit face?

ALICE

I have to. I can't go on like this.

HENRI

You could, but why would you?

(She pulls at her head.)

ALICE

Ahhhhhhh!

HENRI

All right. Stop. STOP.

(Alice stops, pants.)

Come here.

(Alice moves to him. He takes her head.)

This can't be difficult.

(He pulls.)

ALICE

Ow!

HENRI

Hold still.

ALICE

Notl so hard.

HENRI

Do you want it off or not?

ALICE

Yes, but I'd like to keep at least one of my heads.

HENRI

Shush.

(He pulls.)

ALICE/HENRI

Ahhhhhhh.

(He stops. Thinks.)

HENRI

Sit here..watch the petals.

(She steps carefully. Sits on tricycle.)

HENRI(*Cont'd*)

Hold on and lean towards me.

(She does. He grabs her head.)

Ready.

ALICE

Okay.

(He pulls.)

ALICE/HENRI

(The rabbit head pops off sending Henri into a backward somersault where the rabbit head ends up on his head.)

ALICE

We did it!

(She checks her head.)

Phew. Thank you.

(Henri stands. She looks at him.)

Oh!

HENRI

Easy as jumping to conclusions.

(looking around)

Where is it?

ALICE

What?

HENRI

The rabbit head.

ALICE

It must have rolled away.

HENRI

Yes, well you're better off now. How's your head? Everything working all right?

ALICE

Yes, thank you.

HENRI

Good. Now we can say good bye? Good bye.

(She steps off the tricycle.)

Watch--

(She steps around the petals. He sits, listens to the war.)

You're still here.

ALICE

Good bye.

HENRI

Yes, yes. Of course.

(She pulls the cart off. Explosions. Smoke.)

5.

(Smoke dissipates. Three Swurps push on a large cage covered with camouflage. They survey the area. One Swurp carries a pint of strawberries. They settle in to play a dangerous game with grenades.)

SWURP ONE

Slant file. First in charge. Throw away.

(It throws a grenade at Swurp Two's feet. They brace for it to explode. Nothing. They laugh.)

SWURP TWO

I barge you. File phate.

(It throws a shell at Swurp Three's feet. They brace for explosion. Nothing.)

SWURP THREE

That's mine and Cali for me. IS, IS a win with escape hand.

SWURP ONE

You threw ingrate to follow make impressionable young. You're a cali-cheat.

(Swurp Two laughs.)

SWURP THREE

I'm a what?

SWURP ONE

You're an ummah pillflipper cali-cheat.

SWURP TWO

That's not in the rules.

SWURP ONE

Swurp's agreed. No rules. Every indoct for himself.

SWURP THREE

No rule. No cheats.

SWURP TWO

No phate.

ALL THREE

PHATE!

(They throw sand in the air and explode into a frenzy of war cries then stop abruptly to eat strawberries. They ad lib whispers of "strawberries.")

Alice pulls the cart on with Bianca and the Angel still weak.)

ALICE

Excuse me.

(They don't here at first as they continue to eat strawberries.)

HEY, I SAID, HELLOOOOOO.

(They look at her.)

Are those strawberries?

(They grab guns.)

SWURP ONE

Who's who identifiable your face who?

ALICE

What?

ALL THREE SWURPS

WHAT.

ALICE

I'm Alice. I'm looking for water.

SWURP ONE

Crock. Find sulphur made rip hole.

SWURP TWO

Luck. Not in your future.

SWURP THREE

Place weapon away, certain death imposed for sure.

ALL THREE SWURPS

Alice.

ALICE

What?

ALL THREE SWURPS

Weapon.

ALICE

Oh. This isn't a gun. It's a guitar.

(She plays. Rock chords sound, surprising the Swurps, who jump and squawk, then listen fascinated.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)
(singing)

I'm gonna be a rock star, oh, yeah
But first I need some water, ooh, ooh
I'd love to get an answer, oh, oh
Before I lose my sister, uh huh

(They lower their guns and inspect Alice's soaker. Swurp Two takes it.)

Hey.

SWURP ONE

Give it. Give it.

SWURP THREE

No. Give to me.

SWURP TWO

I'm strummin' the yooko.

(Sound of guitar banging around as they physically struggle after the gun.)

ALICE

You can have it for some water.

SWURP ONE

No water here.

(No sounds come out as Swurp Two tries to strum it.)

Give it.

(He grabs it. Strums. Nothing. He looks down the barrel.)

ALICE

Ooooh, don't do that.

(She tries to tries to take it.)

SWURP ONE

Hands off, Crock.

(It looks down the barrel again. Swurp Two pulls the trigger. Screaming rock riff plays. Swurp One drops it, grabs its head in agony, writhes about the stage as the other two Swurps laugh. Finally Swurp One's head pops off. It holds it.)

ALICE

Uh, oh.

(The other Swurps stand in shock. Alice picks up the gun.)

Tried to warn you.

SWURP TWO

Wear your head right.

(Swurp Two pushes Swurp One's head back on.)

SWURP THREE

We want this ill riff.

ALICE

It's yours for water...and some strawberries.

ALL THREE SWURPS

(looking at each other)

Strawberries?

(They turn to Alice.)

SWURP ONE

No strawberries. Only water.

ALICE

Deal.

SWURP TWO

Uhma, uhm, uhma. Not so corrupt. Loose head game again.

ALICE

I'm not losing my head, again.

SWURP THREE

You deploy with us.

ALICE

Huh?

SWURP THREE

A game. Deploy a game.

SWURP ONE

Deploy no rules with rip shell on cali-feet with sand.

SWURP TWO

And these.

(Holds up grenades.)

SWURP ONE

You win, we give water, you give git. No shots fried or question phate.

ALICE

Never heard of this game. Looks dangerous.

SWURP TWO

Simple simple.

ALICE

What if I lose?

SWURP ONE

Loose. Loose. We get git. Leave us to fester.

ALICE

Either way you get the git.

SWURP THREE

You loose. No water. All dead.

ALL THREE

Mmmm hmmm.

ALICE

Bring it on, Mofos.

(The Swurps move to starting positions, picking up shells and grenades. Swurf Three hands shells and grenades to Alice.)

ALL THREE SWURPS

Vanillllaaaaa.

ALICE

Chocolehhhhhht.

ALL THREE SWURPS

Huh?

ALICE

Let's go.

(Swurf One throws sand in the air then tosses a grenade at Alice's feet, Alice screams. The Swurps brace for an explosion. Nothing. Swurps laugh.)

ALICE

Uhm, can't I just give you the git and you give me water?

SWURP TWO

Flanger frier. Pull the pin.

(It tosses grenade at Alice's feet. Brace for explosion. Nothing.)

SWURP ONE

Liar. Liar.

SWURP THREE

No, no. I trump you. No custard. Only vanilla.

(All Three Swurps throw sand in the air. Swurp Three tosses grenade at Alice's feet. They brace. Nothing.)

SWURP ONE

Round ichiban stop, stop. Over.

ALICE

What?

SWURP TWO

Duo duo round repeat. Al'awwal.

(They shout war cries and switch positions.)

ALICE

Now what?.

SWURP THREE

No rule on rules sheep bend.

(Tosses a grenade at Alice's feet. Brace for explosion. Nothing.)

SWURP ONE

No, no find the fat. Blast.

ALICE

Fat the friar. Tuck tuck drive away.

(She throws grenades at each of their feet. They brace. Nothing. They stare at Alice, surprised. She throws sand in the air, lets out a war cry. Stops, nods to them and smiles big.)

Was that right?

(Suspicious, the Swurps circle Alice, change positions and ready to play again. She glares at them.)

Game on.

SWURP TWO

Mercenary, merci-berry, east, east, letter opener cali cali find flight and running feet.

(Tosses grenade at Alice's feet.)

ALICE

Canary berries running gag, feats of fancy fly fly.

SWURP THREE

Mucky truck sinner's luck.

ALICE

No wheels spare tire and flatulent reward.

SWURP ONE

Change change gage and rotate.

(War cries as they change positions and glare at her. She spins with her own WAR CRY.)

ALICE

Rubber duck duckie stuck in muck. Change the game. No rules for fools.

(She throws bullet shells at their feet.)

SWURP ONE

Foothill--

ALICE

(interrupting)

Foothill flangers, defuse the muse, flow in fingers write. Duo round over, Alice winks.

SWURP ONE

That's--

ALICE

A win. No rules on rules. I win. Where's my water.

(She tosses the last grenade behind her. It explodes. All drop to the ground.)

Oh.

SWURP TWO

Blew the no rule rule.

SWURP THREE

Impossible rule.

(Hands Alice a canteen of water.)

Alice at wins.

ALICE

I never want to play that game again.

(Alice hurries to Bianca and makes her drink.)

You can have my git now.

(As Alice tends to Bianca, the Swurps grab the soaker and take turns shooting their heads off and putting them back on. Alice steals the strawberries and pulls the cart off.

Alice is gone. Swurp Four enters, more official.)

SWURP FOUR

HALLLLLLLT the insignificance.

(They stop and obey.)

The phate is now. Prisoner exposed.

(They look at the cage.)

Sound it.

(They play strange instruments as the camouflage is pulled off the cage to reveal Rabbit, hands tied and gagged.

They open the cage and lead him out. Swurp Four signals them to stop playing.)

SWURP FOUR(*Cont'd*)

Here's a festering phate.

(opens scroll, reads aloud.)

Here before us the despised criminal, Rabbit, for murderous acts and maiming. Decry that we, the Elected Body of Tortured Creatures Small and Large, feathered, furred and scaled, not excluding and recently including road slaughter such as peepers, turtles and slugs who also need to cross the road, have found him guilty for the cruel murder of Raymond Red Robin, cherished father, husband and friend, where by Rabbit did willingly and unflinchingly shoot, maim and kill our dear friend, Ray. And despite remorse and having pulled the trigger in his unsuspecting victim, ignored the warnings of the heart and continued many more murderous acts on the innocent.

(Rabbit tries to speak through the gag.)

What's the squealing?

SWURP ONE

What's the squealing?

SWURP FOUR

De-gag the crock.

(Swurp Three takes the gag off Rabbit.)

Spill.

RABBIT

I didn't know. I was afraid. I was only a boy.

SWURP FOUR

IGNORANCE IS THE EXCUSE.

ALL THREE SWURPS

IGNORANCE.

SWURP ONE

Ignite his pants.

SWURP TWO

With fire ants.

SWURP THREE

Put him in an igloo. Cold and hollow.

SWURP ONE

Make him dance and prance and dig for water.

SWURP TWO

Until he drops and flops and writhes like the animals he slaughtered.

SWURP THREE

Or flees to France to join the circus.

SWURP ONE

No arms, no legs, but berries under his eyeballs.

SWURP TWO

The way Ray looked when his family found him.

SWURP THREE

And the skinned carcasses of his other victims.

SWURP TWO

Blue and black and red and yellow.

SWURP ONE

The way the earth appeases sorrow.

SWURP THREE

The way our bruises appear as swallows.

RABBIT

I don't understand.

SWURP FOUR

The decree demands that the desert sands dry you and evaporate you and destroy all memory of your life and body.

RABBIT

I only wanted my father to love me.

(They throw him in the cage.)

SWURP FOUR

Sound it.

(They play the instruments and march off with the cage.)

RABBIT

(overlapping)

I'm a different person. I wouldn't kill now. Not even a mosquito.

(calling)

Bianca...Bianca...Bianca...

(Lights fade as they disappear. End Act I)

ACT II

6.

(Alice, Bianca and the Angel. Bianca is up and feeling better. She inspects the Angel's wound.)

BIANCA

You did a good job.

ALICE

She doesn't look better.

BIANCA

Maybe Angels healer slower...Alice.

(Alice looks at her.)

Thanks for saving my life.

ALICE

I had to give my gun to those crazy birds. It played like a real guitar.

BIANCA

I heard.

ALICE

You did?

BIANCA

Yup. I wasn't unconscious. I just couldn't move. You were awesome.

*(Bianca strokes Alice's hair. Another explosion.
They look at each other.)*

BIANCA(*Cont'd*)

Don't worry.

ALICE

I wish I could read the Angel's message. No speaka da angel.

BIANCA

It says, "Dear Alice, don't give your sister a hard time because she's older and knows better.

ALICE

Not way. It's a message from a father who is fighting in the war. And it says, "Dear little girl, your father is okay. He's coming home soon."

BIANCA

That's not the message Mom and I got. The military came to the house and said, "We're sorry to inform you that..."

ALICE

I know. I remember that day.

BIANCA

No you don't. You weren't born.

ALICE

I felt Mom crying. I remember it like yesterday.

BIANCA

Do you remember me crying?

ALICE

No.

BIANCA

No.

(Flash of light from a distant explosion.)

ALICE

Tell me what Dad was like again.

BIANCA

He was handsome and funny and smart...and he loved us.

ALICE

Me too?

BIANCA

Yes.

ALICE

Even though I wasn't born?

BIANCA

He was really excited about you. We all were...I thought you talked to Dad.

ALICE

I did...but...I don't remember his voice. I only hear my own voice in my head. I wish I knew what it was like.

BIANCA

It was deep and warm and comforting.

(Bianca moves off, gazes at the horizon.)

ALICE

Bianca? Promise you won't leave me alone again.

(silence)

Bianca...

BIANCA

I have to find Rabbit. I can't leave him out there.

ALICE

No. I don't want—.

BIANCA

He's my boyfriend.

ALICE

Maybe he left you out here.

BIANCA

You don't know anything. He put himself in danger, created a distraction while I snuck the Angel away. You know how he did it? He went into the camp singing like he was just taking a walk down the street.

ALICE

What did he sing?

BIANCA

He sang, Alice is a rock start, ooh, ooh.

ALICE

No he didn't. I bet he's getting high somewhere and doesn't want to do anything but lie around.

BIANCA

You can insult him of you like, but I'm going to find him.

ALICE

We can look together.

BIANCA

You have to stay with the Angel.

ALICE

Why?

BIANCA

Don't give me a hard time.

ALICE

Every time you go, something strange happens.

BIANCA

I won't go far. You can take care of yourself.

ALICE

I don't want to take care of myself. I want you to take care of me, and me take care of you, and Mom take care of us.

BIANCA

I know. But we decided to save this Angel and now we have to deal with it.

ALICE

I want to go home.

BIANCA

Me too.

ALICE

I hope this Angel realizes what we're doing for her.

BIANCA

It doesn't matter if she does. I'll be back.

(She runs off. Alice is cold.)

ALICE

(to Angel

Are you cold?

(She huddles next to the Angel for warmth. Falls asleep. Distant gun fire.)

7.

(Night. Alice sleeping. The Angel is standing and watching something in the distance. A loud explosion wakes Alice with a start. She sees the Angel who remains fixed on the landscape.)

ALICE

Oh!

(She moves toward the Angel who gestures for her to stay. Alice freezes.)
You're beautiful.

(silence)

I guess you don't need us anymore. Bianca said I should wait here, but I don't want to lose my head again. I mean, I didn't lose my head, I gained a second head. I had two heads in one, but two heads are not necessarily better than one.

(Alice reaches into her kit and gives the Angel the message.)

You can deliver this now. I kept it for you.

(The Angel remains fixed on the landscape.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

It's better that you deliver it because I can't read it. No speaks da Angel...I was gonna be a rock star, but it's not working out.

(An explosion. The Flower Soldier appears, wilted, disassociated from reality, struggle to breath.)

That's him. The soldier who crashed through Bianca's wall.

(The Soldier falls, crawls toward Angel who goes to him. The Flower almost obscures his face. He looks into the Angels eyes and weeps.)

He sure cries a lot. He must be hun—

ANGEL

Shhhhhh.

ALICE

gry. Oh sorr—

(Alice covers her mouth. The Angel places her hand under his chin lifts his head. He looks at her.)

ANGEL

Shhh sim sei sim sup saaaa.

(He stops crying. She strokes his cheek. He trembles. She touches the flower.)

ALICE

Uh, oh.

ANGEL

(To Alice)

Shon nee somp ta tak.

ALICE

Shon nee somp ta tak?

(The Angel nods. Gently she takes the flower. Alice cringes with the soldier. She pulls it out smoothly. The soldier gasps for breath. Alice and the Soldier breathe with him. Explosions and Gunfire.)

SOLDIER

I-I saw...A-Angel...fire..m-missile... rip...Angel...falling...f-forever f-falling...dream...m-mouth on fire...thirsty...tongue roof of mouth...s-something dead. M-me. I am f-fertilizer. Body is f-fertilizer...f-flower in m-mouth. V-vines are in-n-n-testines...heart is bulb...tulip...l-liver is...spores green v-veins and n-n-nerves are b-buds and thorns. Ears are d-dandelion f-fluff...Keep art and c-culture l-love and b-b-barbecues soft b-b-all soccer and Sunday pic-n-n-ics church weddings and f-f-il-ling taxes golf and air-conditioning safe...b-b-boom. I-I shot an Angel.

(He collapses. The Angel cradles him—Pieta.)

ALICE

Oh, man. If this were a dream, I'd never believe it.

(The Angel lifts the Soldier and carries him off.)

ALICE

Wait, you forgot your message.

ANGEL

Ahd sam sa.

SOLDIER

I have.

ANGEL

Ahd sam sa, Alice.

SOLDIER

The message is for you.

(The Angel and soldier leave.)

ANGEL

But, who's it from? What does it say?

(Explosions and gun fire. Almost deafening.)

8.

(Alice hides from the explosions. General Warren rolls a sound machine with strange speakers made of bull horns and sound bells on stage. The sound system and the General are dusty and bleached from the desert; The sound of war explodes out of the machine.

He wears noise canceling headphones. He pushes the machine to a spot. Turns the speakers to face a certain direction, takes a chair from the wagon and sits. He relaxes and smokes a pipe.

Alice gains courage and comes out from hiding. The General is too absorbed in his pipe to notice Alice.

She holds her ears, walks to the system. She sees a control panel and a volume knob and turns the volume way down.

The General notices Alice and jumps up.)

GENERAL

What? You get away from there.

(Alice stares at him.)

Did you hear me?

(He listens, panics, pulls off headphones.)

What did you do?

ALICE

Too loud. It was hurting my ears.

GENERAL

Go home before you get hurt.

(Alice steps aside as the General turns up the volume.)

GENERAL(*Cont'd*)

War is no place for a child.

(He puts the headphones on. Alice holds her ears.)

Do what I tell you. Go home.

ALICE

What?

GENERAL

What?

ALICE

I can't hear you.

GENERAL

Oh, for the cost of arms and legs.

(He turns down the volume. Alice takes her hands away from her ears.)

Can't you hear there's a war going on?

(Alice studies the machine.)

Go home.

ALICE

I'm lost.

GENERAL

What? Speak up.

ALICE

I'M LOST..

GENERAL

Use your vocal cords child. Project, project.

(Alice gestures to the headphones. He realizes, annoyed, takes them off.)

GENERAL

Don't get smart. Now skedaddle.

ALICE

No.

GENERAL

I'm in the upper echelon of the military. That means I'm important and you should listen to me.

ALICE

I don't listen to strangers.

GENERAL

Who taught you that?

ALICE

No one. I taught myself.

GENERAL

If I tell you my name, we're no longer strangers and you can listen to me.

(Alice stares at him.)

I am General Warren Albert Rufus the First of the World Council for Prolonged Proliferation of Warring Nations, and other hostile parties.

ALICE

I am Alice, warrior girl who dares to fight against men.

GENERAL

You're a little brat. That's what you are.

ALICE

The war comes out of there.

GENERAL

That's a military secret.

ALICE

You mean the war isn't real. You play the sounds of war.

GENERAL

The war is real. People die. Now go away.

ALICE

You're making it sound like war, so people think they are at war.

GENERAL

You're a little too smart for your own good.

ALICE

No I'm not.

GENERAL

You shouldn't know these things. This is high security top secret military intelligence.

ALICE

You're making up the war. The war's not real. People are dying and the war's not real. That's bad. You're a bad man.

GENERAL

I am not a bad man. You're an obnoxious child.

ALICE

I'm telling Henri the philosopher, historian, gardener. He's listening for the patterns of war. He's been keeping a history, and he going to FIGURE YOU OUT!

GENERAL

Tell anyone you want. It won't matter. People believe what they are told. History means nothing.

ALICE

My father was a soldier and he didn't make up lies and let people die for something that isn't real.

GENERAL

War is complex and a little girl like you has no business questioning the motives of those who know better than she.

*(He turns up the volume and sits, ignoring Alice.
She turns off the sound machine.)*

ALICE

The war is over.

GENERAL

Turn that back on.

ALICE

No.

GENERAL

Ha.

(turns on the machine.)

If you touch this war machine again, I'll have you thrown in prison for the rest of your life and you'll never see your family again.

ALICE

I'm not afraid of you. I saved an Angel and she delivered a message to me. The military shot her because they believed in the war because of your stupid machine.

GENERAL

Ha. You know what's not real? YOU. You're not real.

ALICE

I'm real. I'm a real girl and I'm dangerous.

GENERAL

You're not real and neither is your angel. Nothing is real but me and my war.

ALICE

That's a lie.

GENERAL

What? I thought I heard something. It must have been the wind. Or maybe it was a shadow in my dream. It certainly wasn't a brat named Alice. And if it was, I must have dreamt it.

(He throws his chair onto the wagon, turns the volume even higher, pushes the machine off. Explosions everywhere, the desert fills with smoke.)

ALICE

(tantrum)

I'm real. I'm real. I'm real. I'm not the wind. And I'm not some shadow is some stupid General's dream. I'm a real person.

(She pounds the ground as smoke dissipates. A White Queen stands on a pedestal.)

9.

(For the first time in the play the war is silent. The White Queen is all white, all exposed skin is white. Alice doesn't notice the Queen and remains on the ground, defeated.)

WHITE QUEEN

Pinch me.

ALICE

Now what?

(Alice sees the Queen.)

Did you say something?

WQ

You might listen more carefully.

ALICE

What did you say?

WQ

I said, pinch me.

ALICE

Why should I do that?

WQ

I asked you to.

ALICE

I don't want to.

WQ

If you do not pinch me, you might not find out if you are real.

ALICE

I'm real.

(pinches herself)

Ow! See, that hurt.

WQ

I did not feel a thing.

ALICE

I didn't pinch you. I pinched myself.

WQ

Why did you do that?

ALICE

To prove I'm real.

WQ

You are not sure?

ALICE

I was proving it to you.

WQ

You will have to pinch me or you will never know whether you are a real girl or just a silly shadow.

ALICE

This is exasperating.

WQ

Yes, you are an exasperating little girl.

ALICE

And you're an exasperating White Queen.

WQ

I am not white.

ALICE

I only see white.

WQ

White is all color mixed together.

ALICE

I knew that.

WQ

Eyes are deceiving. So are words.

ALICE

Maybe you're not real and you're in my dream.

WQ

Maybe you're in mine.

ALICE

Maybe you are.

WQ

Maybe you are.

ALICE

Maybe you are.

WQ

And maybe you are!

(silence. Alice plops down frustrated. Suddenly WQ sits on the pedestal and cries.)

It's true. I'm not real.

(Alice looks at her.)

ALICE

But I see you.

WQ

Eyes are deceiving. So are words.

ALICE

No, don't cry. I hate when people cry. It makes me want to cry.

(Alice moves to WQ, pinches her. She hardly reacts.)

Thank you. Do it again. Harder.

ALICE

Harder?

WQ

Please.

(Alice pinches her. No reaction.)

Nothing.

(Alice pinched herself.)

ALICE

Ow. But how can it be that I'm real and you're not?

(The Queen shrugs.)

WQ

I was in love once. I felt real then, but the King became interested in someone else and I stopped existing.

ALICE

You were in love with a King.

WQ

Oh, do not get so excited, they all think they're Kings. Anyway, he was not a King when we fell in love. He was a frog.

ALICE

(incredulous)

No he wasn't.

WQ

A slimy frog with a charming croak. It was the croak that did it to me.

ALICE

You have to be careful cause they can give you warts.

WQ

(looking out)

Oh, don't I know it.

ALICE

You shouldn't let some yucky man do that to you, King or not.

WQ

You are very sweet.

ALICE

You remind me of my mother.

WQ

Is that a good thing?

ALICE

Sure.

WQ

You do not remind me of anyone.

ALICE

That's okay.

WQ

If I ever have a daughter, I think she would be very much like you.

(silence)

ALICE

I know. Maybe if you pinch me and it hurts, it means you're real too.

WQ

You think so?

ALICE

We can try.

WQ

All right.

ALICE

All right. Not to hard.

(Alice offers her cheek. WQ reaches for her cheek then stops.)

WQ

I cannot.

ALICE

Why?

WQ

I could be arrested for child abuse.

ALICE

Oh.

(beat)

I won't tell.

WQ

That doesn't make it okay.

ALICE

Oh.

(silence)

What if you kiss me on the cheek?

WQ

Would that work?

ALICE

If I feel your kiss then we'd know you were real.

WQ

What if you do not feel my kiss?

ALICE

Then you're no worse off than before.

WQ

It would hurt not to have my kiss felt. I do not kiss many people and my kisses are very special.

ALICE

(kneeling)

I would be honored to feel your highness's kiss.

WQ

You know, I'm already feeling a little better. I think I will kiss your cheek.

(Alice offers her cheek.)

Would you stand on this pedestal so I do not have to bend down?

ALICE

Okay.

(Alice stands on the pedestal. WQ kisses her.)

WQ

Did you feel that?

ALICE

Yes.

WQ

You did? You felt my kiss?

ALICE

Yes.

(Alice is sad. The Queen rejoices, dancing and singing, "I'm real. I'm a real Queen." She notices Alice and stops.)

WQ

What is wrong? Are you not happy for me?

ALICE

Yes, but I'm also sad.

WQ

Why?

ALICE

I don't know.

WQ

Is this not the strangest thing? I kiss you, I am happy, but you are sad.

ALICE

Being real is complicated.

WQ

I guess it is. Do you think it has something to do with missing your mother?

ALICE

(fighting back tears)

Maybe.

WQ

Oh, no, no, no. No tears. Let's play a game.

ALICE

I haven't liked games much in this place.

WQ

But you will like this one. Come. Give it a chance...Sure.

ALICE

Sure.

WQ

How exciting. Now you see that white line?

(A white line appears.)

That white line is the top of a great wall, the ground of which is hundreds of feet below.

(she holds up an egg.)

You see this egg? Humpty Dumpty had a broken heart, so he sat on top of a great wall.

ALICE

I know about Humpty Dumpty.

WQ

The game is called, Taking Care of Humpty Dumpty's Broken Heart. I will go first.

(She places a spoon in her mouth, places the egg on the spoon and walks the white line. She almost loses her balance but succeeds walking the line.)

Your turn.

ALICE

What kind of game is that?

WQ

A real game. The rules are simple. You walk the wall without dropping Humpty Dumpty or losing your balance. It is not so easy.

ALICE

What if I drop him?

WQ

You know how the story goes.

ALICE

That's a lot of responsibility.

WQ

One thing I have learned about being real is that you have to take the risk to care about something.

ALICE

You've only known you were real for a few minutes.

WQ

Not even. The effect of living backwards. It makes me dizzy with delight. I suddenly remember things I never knew.

ALICE

How's that possible?

WQ

You know, sometimes talk is cheap. Oh, I never knew that.

Here.

(Alice takes the spoon and the egg, moves to the line. She put the spoon in her mouth and the egg on the spoon.)

Just a moment.

(She rips a strip from her dress.)

You will need a blindfold.

ALICE

A blindfold?

WQ

Oh, yes. The heart is not always so easy to see. Oh my, that was good. I think I might have to write a book.

(WQ ties the blindfold on Alice.)

ALICE

This game is impossible.

WQ

I did it.

ALICE

You weren't blindfolded.

WQ

True. We'll do it together.

ALICE

I'm frightened.

WQ

I know. So am I.

(WQ places the spoon in Alice's mouth and the egg on the spoon.)

Okay. Count slowly to ten. Ready. Go.

(As Alice counts, WQ leaves. The lights fade to black. SOUND OF EGG SMASHING TO THE GROUND.)

ALICE'S VOICE

Oh, no. no. I'm sorry...I'm sorry. I'm not delicate like her majesty.

(The sound of the war returns.)

10.

(Alice sits alone crying and picking up the broken pieces of egg. The Father Soldier walks on wearing a pack and carrying the carcass of a Swurp over his shoulders. Dog tags hang from his neck.)

SOLDIER

Hi...What are you doing?

ALICE

Trying to fix this egg.

(He puts the Swurp down.)

SOLDIER

Looks difficult.

ALICE

I'm going to collect all the pieces and glue them back together.

SOLDIER

What about the inside, the yoke and stuff?

ALICE

The sand sucked it up. Like spilled blood.

SOLDIER

I've spilled blood.

ALICE

Good for you.

SOLDIER

I'm a soldier. I have no choice. In war, it's spill or be spilled.

ALICE

You mean kill or be killed.

SOLDIER

Yeah, I was trying to be funny.

ALICE

I don't feel like laughing.

SOLDIER

I see.

ALICE

I see.

SOLDIER

May I help you?

ALICE

Suit yourself.

(He helps her collect the pieces.)

Do you have any glue?

SOLDIER

No, sorry.

ALICE

I guess I can fix it when I get home.

(He takes out a handkerchief.)

SOLDIER

Here, we can wrap them in this.

(They put the pieces in the handkerchief. He folds it carefully and hands it to her.)

ALICE

Thanks.

SOLDIER

No problem...Are you a soldier?

ALICE

No. I'm only ten.

SOLDIER

You have dog tags.

ALICE

My father's. He was a soldier, but he died when I was still in my mother's stomach. I talked to him a lot. I have prenatal memories. That's very unusual.

SOLDIER

It sure is.

ALICE

Yeah.

SOLDIER

You know, you have to be careful out here. You could get hurt.

ALICE

I'm not afraid of war.

SOLDIER

No? What are you afraid of?

ALICE

Being alone.

SOLDIER

You have a soldier's heart.

(Alice sees the Swurp carcass.)

ALICE

Is that dead?

SOLDIER

Yeah.

ALICE

You killed it?

SOLDIER

These creatures can't be trusted.

ALICE

But they helped me. They gave me water.

SOLDIER

You're Alice, aren't you?

ALICE

How do you know my name?

SOLDIER

I heard about you.

ALICE

How?

SOLDIER

When someone special is in the desert, the sand whispers their name.

ALICE

What are you going to do with it?

SOLDIER

Eat it.

(She stares at the Swurp.)

ALICE

Yuck.

SOLDIER

Eat or be eaten...that's another joke...Not funny?

ALICE

Not so much.

SOLDIER

What are you doing all alone?

ALICE

That's a long story. But I have a message from an Angel. I can't read it. No speaka da angel.

SOLDIER

Where's the Angel now?

ALICE

I don't know.

(she jumps up, backs away from him.)

You're trying to kill the Angel.

SOLDIER

Me? No. I wouldn't do that. I speak Angel.

ALICE

No way.

SOLDIER

Show the message?

(Alice gives him the message. He reads it silently.)

ALICE

What does it say?

SOLDIER

It says, "Dear Alice, No matter what happens I will always love you, and if you ever want to talk to me, I promise we'll have wonderful conversations together. I may not have all the answers, but I will hear you, and tell you how proud I am that you are my daughter...The world is a sad place and life is difficult, but if you open your heart...wonderful things will happen to you.

ALICE

Wow. Wow! WOW!! It really says that?

SOLDIER

Sure does.

ALICE

Wow.

(Alice lies on the ground and looks up. He turns away and signs the bottom of the message.)

My Dad sent me a message by Angel. That's so awesome.

(The Soldier folds the message, hands it to Alice. He then pulls an explosive vest from his pack, places it on the ground.)

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

What's that?

SOLDIER

It's something I'd like you to have.

ALICE

Is it a jacket?

SOLDIER

It's a special kind of jacket. Only the bravest soldiers are allowed to wear it. The one who wears it holds the responsibility of all life in her hands.

ALICE

It's a bomb.

SOLDIER

You're very smart.

ALICE

I don't want a bomb. I don't want to bomb anyone.

SOLDIER

You don't have to wear it if you don't want.

ALICE

I don't.

SOLDIER

Okay. If you change your mind, you could help win the war...See, if you wear it, you just push this button...here, and it will explode.

ALICE

But I'll die too.

SOLDIER

It's a great honor to die for your country.

ALICE

The war is a lie.

SOLDIER

Don't you want to please your father?

ALICE

He's dead. I think I should go.

(She gets up to leave.)

SOLDIER

Alice... Your father sent you a message.

(She stops.)

He's watching over you.

(He moves to her.)

I have to tell you something. I knew your father.

ALICE

No way.

SOLDIER

He sacrificed his life for his country. He wore one of these vests.

ALICE

He exploded himself?

SOLDIER

He did it for you, for your Mom, your sister, and the whole country. And he did for God.

ALICE

Oh.

(He nods. Alice stares at the vest in awe.)

SOLDIER

You know, not every one has messages delivered by an Angel. God chose your father.

ALICE

Is this the kind he wore?

SOLDIER

Yes... You should be very proud.

ALICE

I don't know what to do. I don't even know what the enemy looks like.

SOLDIER

Barbarians who behave like animals. Sneaky, violent and dirty. They eat children and kill their parents. Their eyes are empty and white and filled with a terrible rage. They will never stop until we're all dead...Your father killed hundreds of the enemy.

(He places the vest near her.)

I have to go.

(he gets up. Stops.)

You look a lot like your Dad.

(She's fixed on the vest.)

I better get back to the war.

(He picks up the Swurp..)

ALICE

Wait.

SOLDIER

I really have to go.

ALICE

What do I do?

SOLDIER

You'll know when the time comes.

(She pushes the vest way.)

ALICE

Will you read the message again?

(He drops the Slurp, sits next to her.)

I wish Bianca were here. I really like your voice and the way you read it.

(She hands him the message. He looks at her. She smiles.)

Read it please.

(He opens the message. Lights fade.)

11.

(Henri's tricycle upside down. The White Queens, pedestal half buried. Rabbit's cage with dead inside. Bianca crying, struggling to open the cage door.)

BIANCA

Rabbit...Rabbit...

(She pulls the door open.)

No. What did they do to you? Rabbit, say something. Please, please, Rabbit...No, no...no...

(She gives up.)

I can't do this anymore.

(Alice walks on with the vest, sees Bianca, drops vest and runs to her.)

ALICE

Bianca, I found you.

(Bianca sees Alice.)

BIANCA

Rabbit's dead. They killed them.

(Alice sees Rabbit.)

ALICE

Rabbit...

(louder)

Rabbit.

(shouting)

RABBIT!

(She cries)

BIANCA

Come here, Alice.

ALICE

Why'd they kill Rabbit?

BIANCA

I don't know. Maybe because he tried to do something good.

ALICE

Save the Angel?

BIANCA

Yeah.

ALICE

Rabbit was brave like Dad was brave.

BIANCA

Sure.

ALICE

Sure.

BIANCA

I told you to wait for me.

ALICE

I got scared. I thought you weren't coming back.

BIANCA

Where's the Angel?

ALICE

She's gone.

BIANCA

She died, too.

ALICE

No, she got better. She helped a sick soldier. The one that shot her. The one with the flower in his mouth.

BIANCA

You never stop, do you?

ALICE

No.

(beat)

Bianca?

BIANCA

What is it?

ALICE

I saw Dad.

BIANCA

Not now, Alice.

ALICE

But it's true. I talked to him.

BIANCA

I know, your prenatal memories. It doesn't help me to hear them all the time.

ALICE

It wasn't a memory. You were right. His voice is deep and warm and comforting. I was cold and his voice was like a blanket. We sat together for a long time and I told him about you and Rabbit and the Angel. He knows about the Angel because the message was from him.

(Bianca studies the landscape. She looks at Rabbit.)

BIANCA

Help me with this.

(They take the cage cover.)

Take this corner.

(They cover the cage. Alice takes the flower from her kit and places it on the ground next to the cage.)

That's a beautiful flower. Where'd you get it?

ALICE

From the soldier...

(silence. She sings softly.)

Rabbit was a hero, yeah, yeah
He helped us save an angel, ooh, ooh
My sister kind of loved him, I don't know
War is really awful, huh, huh

ALICE(*Cont'd*)

It takes away our loved ones, yes, yes
sometimes weird things happen
when fathers visit daughters
and give them special messages.

(*Bianca puts her arm around Alice.*)

It was to both of us.

(*She gives the message to Bianca.*)

Dad can read Angel. It said, Dear Bianca and Alice, I will always love you. And, um, we will have wonderful conversations together...I am very proud that you are my daughters. And, wonderful things will happen to you...I don't remember it exactly right.

(*Bianca hands the message back to her.*)

See. Dad's signature.

BIANCA

Alice, it's just scribble.

ALICE

But he signed it...Oh!

(*She pulls the handkerchief out, hands it Bianca.*)

Look. I was playing a game called, "Taking Care of Humpty Dumpty's Broken Heart" with a White Queen who looked like Mom. I dropped my egg and Dad came and helped me pick up the pieces. He gave me his handkerchief to keep them in.

BIANCA

Here.

(*Alice takes the handkerchief.*)

ALICE

It was so cool. I saw Dad.

BIANCA

(*welling up*)

I wish I could see him.

ALICE

And you know what else?

(She looks toward the vest, then changes her mind.)

Nothing.

(beat)

Bianca?

BIANCA

What?

ALICE

Will you help me glue the pieces when we get home?

BIANCA

Sure.

ALICE

Sure.

(Alice puts the handkerchief away. A soldier appears on the landscape. Bianca sees him.)

BIANCA

(frightened whisper)

Don't move.

(They freeze.)

He'll go away in a minute.

ALICE

Who is it?

BIANCA

The military. They're probably looking for the Angel.

(Suddenly Alice jumps up.)

ALICE

You're too late. We saved the Angel.

BIANCA
(overlapping)

Alice!

ALICE

Leave us alone.

(The Soldier faces Alice.)

BIANCA

Now you've done it.

ALICE

Oh. That's him. That's Dad.

BIANCA

Dad's dead.

ALICE

No, look.

(Bianca looks carefully, then cautiously approaches the Soldier. Bianca embraces him. Alice watches as Bianca and the Soldier stand together talking.)

(Alice picks up the vest and looks at it. The Soldier walks off.)

(calling)

Dad.

(She runs to Bianca with the vest.)

BIANCA

He's gone.

ALICE

No.

(Alice runs after him but Bianca holds her back.)

Let me go. Dad! Come back. Bianca!

BIANCA

That's not him.

ALICE

Yes he is. Dad. I don't want this. What do I do with it?

(She holds it up. Gunfire.)

Come back. Bianca, let go. Dad. Wait. You need it, not me.

(Alice breaks free and runs off stage with the vest.)

BIANCA

Alice! No!

(Huge explosion and flash. Bianca freezes in terror. Angel appears.)

ANGEL

(fiercely)

Ya...ya ta...tak. I...Ya ta tak...I...schleh son sa shu I swifound sheento slin. Sky. Sky shm missile I sof sof shoot ta ta ra-tat-tat-rat-tat sumppre paro soo. Down down. I I I. Shoot down the paro soo too too tombs. Shoot down too too tombs. See soo. Tombs of men. Ra-tat-tat. Restricted. Simsay die air space die for nothing. Ra-tat-tat. Men men ra tat and their causes. Do do do...the thing. Ya...the right cause. Hum sa sodo fushhh. Keep soft...soft babies safe. That a job. Keep lofty...safe. That's a job. Keep fees. Keep culture, keep barbecues, som softball too slow, soccer too fast, Sunday sabbath spoon hapiness rat-tat-tat...rat-tat-tat ta ta tak. Shuk kliss sintther sem soo sha made. Toon tow slip shinnnnee tooo. Sa...take aim...BOOM!

(Silence. Alice returns with the vest.)

BIANCA

(embracing Alice)

Oh my God. Oh my God.

(Alice pulls away.)

ALICE

He's gone. There was an explosion and he was gone.

(beat)

They killed, Dad.

(Alice sobs. Bianca embraces her.)

BIANCA

I know. It's okay. It's okay, Alice.

ALICE

They killed him.

BIANCA

I know, it's okay...shhhh...Dad's been dead all your life.

(Alice pulls away again.)

ALICE

No. They killed him. They killed him, Bianca. And they killed Rabbit.

(Alice puts on the vest.)

BIANCA

What are you doing?

ALICE

I'm going to war.

BIANCA

What?

ALICE

I'm going to kill the enemy.

BIANCA

What are you talking about?

ALICE

Dad gave me this to kill the enemy.

BIANCA

Is that a bomb? Alice, that wasn't Dad.

ALICE

I talked to him. You talked to him. He sacrificed his life for us.

BIANCA

I wouldn't lie. I know he looked like Dad. He was a soldier like Dad, but he wasn't him...Please take that thing off.

ALICE

No.

BIANCA

You're not a suicide bomber.

(Alice struggles.)

I wish he was still alive more than anything in the world. I wanted to believe he was Dad.

ALICE

What about the Angel's message?

BIANCA

I don't know...It was a nice message, wasn't it?

ALICE

Yeah.

BIANCA

Yeah...I want you around for a while. Mom and I need you. Not the war.

ALICE

I don't believe you. That was my father. You just don't want me to be a soldier like him.

BIANCA

No. I don't want you to die.

ALICE

I'm not afraid.

BIANCA

Listen to me...What's that around your neck?

ALICE

Dad's dog tags.

BIANCA

Didn't that soldier have dog tags of his own?

ALICE

Yeah.

BIANCA

Whose dog tags are these?

(silence)

That wasn't our father?

(beat)

Please take it off...

(Alice takes the vest off.)

Okay...

ALICE

Okay.

(Bianca embraces Alice, then sits exhausted, well-up.)

His voice was nice.

BIANCA

I know.

ALICE

Why'd you hug him?

BIANCA

I wanted to believe it was him.

(silence)

ALICE

You know what he told me?

BIANCA

No.

ALICE

He said, I want you to be born so that you and Bianca can be sisters.” I just remembered that.

BIANCA

He said that?

ALICE

And he said, I want you to tell Bianca whenever she is sad that I love her.

BIANCA

Thank you, Alice.

(silence)

ALICE

Bell tricks...no, um...Bell tricks audio germs.

BIANCA

What?

ALICE

I can't remember what Henri said.

BIANCA

Who's Henri?

ALICE

Someone I met. He said that I was a girl warrior who dares to fight against men.

BIANCA

Wow.

ALICE

Uh huh. Bell tricks audio germs concord vermin. That's how you say it in another language.

BIANCA

What language is that?

ALICE

Philosophy. Henri is a philosopher and he speaks philosophy.

BIANCA

I see.

ALICE

And he's a gardner.

(French accent)

You can be both, you know?

(Gunfire. An explosion lights the sky behind them.)

ALICE

When will the war be over?

BIANCA

I don't know.

ALICE

I miss Mom.

BIANCA

Me too.

ALICE

We don't know which way to go, do we?

BIANCA

No.

(silence)

ALICE

(looking around.)

I know. What if we stand on that white line and stop beholding the desert?

BIANCA

What do you mean?

ALICE

Henri said the desert is in the eye of the beholder and if we stop beholding it, we might find our way.

BIANCA

How do we do that?

ALICE

I don't know...

(defeated)

Questions, questions, questions.

(silence)

BIANCA

Why don't we try anyway.

ALICE

But how?

BIANCA

By closing our eyes.

ALICE

That's all?

BIANCA

I guess.

ALICE

Oh, we could picture not this place.

BIANCA

Yeah, we could try that.

ALICE

Okay.

BIANCA

Okay.

(They stand on the line.)

ALICE

Do you think Mom will be mad that we went to the war?

BIANCA

Maybe. But she'll be happy to see us.

ALICE

She'll be happy to see us.

BIANCA

Yeah.

ALICE

Yeah.

BIANCA

Ready.

(She takes Alice's hand.)

On the count of three close your eyes.

ALICE

And un-behold the desert.

BIANCA

And un-behold the desert

ALICE/BIANCA

One...two...three...

(Flower petals fall from the sky. The Angel appears.)

ANGEL

(whispering)

Ya...ya ta...tak. Shm sof sof ta ta sumpre. Slow sspron na ta ta tak. Kliss sintther sem soo sha mod. Sa sa sa sa sempraaaa.

(Lights fade on Angel, Alice, Bianca and lingers for a moment on the suicide jacket.)

END PLAY