“One True Thing”
by Laura Warfield

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Laura Warfield

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Synopsis:
4 young people rent a studio to work on their latest song. They call themselves One Eyed Jacks honoring John who has lost an eye in Iraq and now has PTSD. John and Sharon are adopted brother and sister. Sharon loves Al and is pregnant with his child. Al, who loves Sharon, is studying to be a therapist. He lost his father to an overdose when he was 5. Shawn, who has HIV, loves with John. The song they all create begins with the line “everybody lives in a lie” and by the time the play ends finishes with “everybody lives for love.” In the course of 40 minutes we find out about the characters, their relationship to each other, their yearnings and expectations.

Note: For a reading the characters do not need to play instruments but they should be able to carry a tune. In the actual production the instruments may vary. The characters may be any ethnicity. The song “Because of You” has already been recorded and will be submitted as an mp3 with this project. “One True Thing” has also been written and the actors can easily learn it.

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Characters:
One Eyed Jacks
Al - Plays guitar.
Sharon - Plays keyboard.
Shawn - Plays bass.
John - Plays percussion.
Setting: December NYC 2015. A rehearsal studio midtown Manhattan. Al is seated down center playing his guitar as he listens to the tracks of their latest song Because of You. (Sharon and John enter with instruments)

Sharon

Hey. What up?

Al

Hey. Honeybee. Listen to our song. CDbaby says we got 10 hits on iTunes in Australia. How cool is that? (She is holding her stomach moaning acting like she’s pregnant) You okay?

Sharon

(Pausing, then puts her hands on her belly) I am with child.

Al

What!?

Sharon

I am the blessed Virgin. (she pulls a conga out from under her jacket and gives it to John) Merry ho ho. That’s so cool! (with an accent) Australia, eh?

Al

You nut!

Shawn

(He enters. Does a hand lock with John) Hey, what’s goin’ on man? (to Sharon and John) Good timing. Good timing. (They set up their
instruments. Sharon, her keyboard up left, John, his congas up center and Shawn with his bass up right. Shawn then straddles down to Al with his iPhone and starts videoing out the front window.) Whoa! Nice view! (quoting Stevie Wonder while filming) “New York City. Just like I pictured it.” (spins around and videos band members who pose)

**John**

(posing cooly) Hey, make my day marmalade!

**Sharon**

(talks to the camera) Whoa! Did you smell it coming in here? It’s like, the whole floor is stoned! Muuuusic, yay!

**Shawn**

(Scanning Sharon, John and Al as they pose for the camera and set up their instruments) Okay guys I’m gonna do a promo for our gig and put it on the net so make ‘em wanna come out and see you. Ready? (speaking like a news reporter.) We are here today with One Eyed Jacks, they’re setting up to rehearse for their upcoming gig at the Hundredth Monkey Cafe on Saturday January 5th at 9pm sharp at the Mill House in Park Slope. Their hit single Because of You is flying off the charts! They are here collaborating on their next hit single. I wonder what it will be. Don’t you?” (Turning off camera) How was that, guys?

**Sharon**

Well, yeah but you weren’t in it Shawn. That’s one forth of the band missing.

**Shawn**
I’ll just insert a photo of me in various stages of amazement and astonishment and overlay it! (He poses for a few selfies. He makes a muscle for John)

Sharon

Okay, whatever! (getting Al’s attention) Hey, Al. I hung out at Sam Ash while John went to group. They had that Eric Clapton Stratocaster on sale, $1300! (to video camera in a sales pitch voice) “You can pay it off in 18 months with no interest if you use your Sam Ash credit card. “ Too bad we couldn’t rehearse at the apartment. This lady upstairs was like “ Oh my God. I can’t take it anymore.” Well Whadya’ expect? Park Slope! All those babies, right? This is better! We can make nooooise! (John beats on the congas) Al?

Al

Whaz up?

Sharon

Can you pull the curtains open and let those light waves in so we can turn off some of those fluorescents?

(Al opens the curtains. Plays a few guitar riffs. Lighting changes as the curtains open to full light. During the next speech Sharon rolls a joint.)

I think they need an upgrade here. Fluorescent? Really? This is cool though. Location, location. Did you know we’re right next to the Brill Building. Paul Simon had his studio here. He and mom went to Forest Hills High School. Not at the same time, but still. (sings and plays keyboard) “Me and Julio down by the school yard. (takes a hit of joint, starts to take a second hit but decides not to) “King of
Corona….” (holding the smoke in she taps John on the shoulder to pass him the joint.) John. Hey, John! (He jumps back.)

John

Shit Sharon. What?

Sharon

Sooorry. Here. Relax. (he takes the joint) I had some weed the other day before I met up with Maggie when we found this really sweet hand painted crib on the street…. for her new baby, you know. Little cherubs climbing up the posts. Lilac and emerald green, ay, so sweet! So I went to get my car to take it home for her….I couldn’t find her. I kept driving around and around the block. (Guffawing) I get sooo lost when I’m stoned! It’s like, whoa, where am I? It’s great for writing…but not for drivin’. One time mom was stoned…. and she was trying to get on the Westside highway on 96th street…I was like 14…. we sat there for a full 10 minutes. Cars honking behind us, going around, glaring at her and she, like, smiles and does her deep breathing. Scary! Were you in the car John? You must’ve been, like, 12.

John

I don’t remember. Stop talking!

Sharon

Whatda I say!? You are sooo stru-essed. (to Shawn and Al) There’s this new girl in the group……..

John

Yes she is! Why’s she there? She's not a vet! “Make lemonade out of lemons, John” Gee, thanks, Naomi. What’s her problem? Her blue hair don't match her green nails? Bullshit! (passes joint to Shawn)
Shawn

Lemons, huh, sounds like a sourpuss, bro.

Al

Chill, dude. Don’t take it personally. She's probably just projecting.

John

(laughing,) She’s got these tattoos! One right here. (indicating the space between the thumb and the index finger and then using it as a puppet he entertains Shawn) “Hellooo, I’m Ms. Peaceniky and this is my trusty serpent, Raul.” And he’s wrapped around her arm and her throat (choking himself “eheh”) and down the other arm.

Shawn

She's all wrapped up in herself, man! (Pulls up his sleeve flexes his muscle to reveal his own serpent tattoo.) Raul meet Cado. (he growls)

John

Oh, yeah, shite! (stoned laughing, bonding with Shawn) And out of the serpent’s mouth (hissing) … flaming tongues (using the fingers of his left hand) that say “make love (He make a fist and ominously stretching his fingers) “not war.” ( the finger puppets fight with each other. He growls)

Sharon

Maybe she is a vet.

John
Oh, and the lip ringy thing ya’ know. (holds a make believe rifle across his lips, imitating her). “Yo, how do I hold a rifle with my lip ringy thing? Oweee!” (pretends to hurt his mouth). They wouldn’t let her in the army with no lip ring.

Sharon

She probably wasn’t wearing it when she enlisted, Johnny.

Shawn

(teasing) I think you have a thing for her John.

John

Oh, yeah, yeah? I don’t think so. (takes a hit of his joint then sings longingly to Shawn) “Only for you, baby”..haha

Al

(looking out front window) A nation of liars! (Strums and begins to write a song) ‘Everybody lives in a lie. Yeah, everybody lives in a lie, it’s true. ”

Shawn

(Shawn hits record on his iphone). We’re recording bros.

Sharon

(she adds the next line) “That’s the one true thing I know” (She plays an arpeggio. As the scene continues they all improvise on their instruments trying to find the right sound for the song.)

John
(Hums and plays the rhythm to Al’s song on congas)

Shawn

(sings with bass) “Everybody lives in a lie
It’s like the normal way to go”

John

“on the way to nowhere” (They don’t like it, “Nay, nay”) .....Forget it.

Al

“Maybe when I hung with MaryJane
I began to see the truth.”

Shawn

“She awakened in me what I never see“

John

“She was my sweet little Baby Ruth” Bingo!

Sharon

Baby Ruth? What happened to MaryJane? Don’t be so obvious, John. Try some near rhymes.

John

(a bit of PTSD) So...so you got your big deal teacher’s license and you hate kids. Who’s dumb... or dumber?

Sharon
What are you talkin’ about? I didn’t say you were dumb…

    John

(mimicking her) “Don’t be so obvious, John”

    Sharon

I just teach nutrition for crying out shit. I didn’t say you were dumb.

    Shawn

Ok, ok, let’s reeeeel it back in hook, line and sinker…. do it again.

    John

Hook, line and. (pointing his finger like gun and making a shooting sound) Pow! …Stinker.
(looks all around. Like “uhoh, John’s goin’ off” what’s up? He’s losin’ it”)

    Shawn
    (changing gears. Counts off in a performance pitch)

One, two, three, four! (They play their instruments and sing))
(am) “Everybody lives in a lie
Everybody lives in a lie, (em) it’s true
That’s the one true thing I know
Everybody lives in a lie. It’s like the normal way to go
Maybe when I lived with MaryJane”

    Al

(singing to Sharon) “She kept the wiiiind right at my back
She awakened in me what I never see
“And now (pointing to John...picking up his lost line) I can never go back”

Sharon

You can’t do that, Al.

Al

Can’t do what, Sharon?

Sharon

“wind right at my back”? “never go back’? back, back. Double rhyme!

Al

Oh....yeah...sure. Thanks.

Shawn

Let’s see what google has to say about that. Rhymes with track,,,

John

(smirking) How about “crack” Shawn?

Al

You didn’t do that shit in Iraq did you John?

John

No, no man, no....just weed. Lots of weeeed. (lost in memories)
Al

Hey, (snapping his fingers to get John’s attention back) where ya’ goin, John?

John

IRAQ! (pretends a tragic screams then smiles) He, he, he. It rhymes with back!

Shawn

(googling) Snap! Here we go. Track. “She put me on the right track” What do ya’ think guys?

John

(gives Shawn a military salute) Kicks ass man. Good work, Shawnee.

Sharon

(stoned) Maybe we can go “Yolo” in the chorus. (singing laughing) “Yoh-lo. Yoh-lo” (They all look at her like “what?”) That would be like right where my students are at.

Shawn

(annoyed) What does that mean?

Sharon


Al
Wdazit got to do with the song, Cher?

Sharon

(purposely to Al) You only live once,…so don’t bother lying…tell the truth cause it always comes back to bite you! (silence) Never mind, to the point, my students are the ones who download the songs, da.

John

(laughing) Oh! oh! What about “Oponopono?

Sharon

(laughing stoned) Oh, yeah. That was cool. … on the radio this morning….

John

(to Sharon) I know, weird, right? It’s Hawaiian. (enthusiastically) This guy, a doctor, a shrink like you Al,

Al

Not yet man. I’m just a life coach.

John

Yeah, well, whatever….this guy repeats this Oponopono for an hour everyday for 3 months. He’s like prayin’ for these insane dudes in the psyche ward next door to him….he never even sees them….. and in 3 months …. ….they’re all, like, cured! (hits congas) Like “abracadabra.” Oponopono.

Sharon
It means (she sings and plays) “I’m sorry. forgive me, thank you, I love you”

(They all improvise repeating that phrase with variations. It grows to a cathartic pitch. On the screen flashes of war that are going around in John’s head. He bangs the congas repeatedly, cries out. They gather round comforting him)

Al

You okay John? What’s goin’ on?

John

(he dives to the floor and starts doing push ups) I’m okay. I’m okay. I just need to do twenty.

Al

We’re with you man (Al and Shawn get down on the floor and do pushups. Sharon programs beat music). It’s a lie, right? What do you think, John? You good? (He collapses on the floor) Man you are strong!

Shawn

(comparing muscles while doing push-ups) Hey! Raul and Cado are in a marathon!

John

(Finishes. He and rolls over on to his back out of breath) That’s it. You win. Raul takes the lead. Cado surrenders! I’m good, Al. I’m good. Let’s finish our song! It’s A Lie! Come on we’re paying nickels for this joint!

Sharon
OK. (Like an announcer holding her hands like a horn) Let’s put this turkey in the oven! Shawn. Lead the way to the golden road of do da day…..(They play their instruments)

Shawn

From the second verse. John, give us a count off.

John

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR!

Al

(Al sings, )
(F) Maybe I should live with MaryJane (am)
(F) She keeps the wind right at my back (G)
(F) She awakens in me what I (em) never (G) see
She put me on the right track

Shawn

“She is the star of my zodiac.”

Sharon

(singing) “Oh yeah. She is the star of my Zodiac.” I like that Shawn!

John

(he crows) I’m a rooster

Sharon

Huh? Oh, right, the Chinese zodiac.
John

It’s still a zodiac!

Sharon

Yeah, yeah, I’m just sayin’ It’s the Chinese zodiac, that’s all I’m sayin’.

Shawn

Stop bullying him, Sharon.

Sharon

I’m not bullying. What the shit?

John

(He jumps on Shawn’s back. Shawn twirls him around. Teasing Sharon) Stop it Sharon! I’m freaking out!

Sharon

What a dildo! (upset) Stop fucking with my head!

Al

(wrapping his arms around Sharon, calming her down, kissing her neck, diverting her attention) I like that line, Shawn. That’s very cool. Very cool!

Shawn

(Stoned with John on his back) What line, man?
Al

(continues to rock Sharon) “She is the star in my zodiac.”

Shawn

Oh yeah, yeah. Inspirational right? Visual. The eye beholds. (he sings to John) “….. the star in my zodiac.” “Yeah.”

John

“Yeah…”

Al

So I wish to take out “she put me on the right track” and go with “she is the star in my zodiac.” You all down with that?

Sharon

(having calmed down she rolls out of Al’s arms and poses grandly) Oh, yes she is, oh yeah! (has a lyric idea. rushes back to the keyboard and picks up pen and pencil) Snap. I got it. I got it!

(John and Shawn continue with some horseplay improvising while Sharon and Al dialogue)

Al

(returning to his guitar. To Sharon who is back at the keyboard busy writing) You read my email about last Saturday, right?

Sharon

(plays a note on the keyboard) Right. And you read mine right?
Al

Right? (pause) Which one?

Sharon

Wait. Wait. (noodling on the keyboard.) I got it! (Then to Al) Never mind. I don’t think you read it. We need to talk. I got the bridge, guys. Listen up. (she plays it on the keyboard) “Cause the truth has a pull greater than even tryin’ And it lives inside and the truth always knows when you’re lyin’ (They write it down. John counts off “1,2,3” and they repeat the whole phrase with instruments)

Al

(Al gets out his wallet) Uh. Can you guys go get us some coffee? I want to discuss this bridge with Cher. (To Sharon) It’s good. It’s really good, Cher.

Shawn

Okay Al. You’re the boss. I hear Dunkin’ callin’ John. What about you? Let the pow wow begin.

John

I’m ready for my mid morning multigrain bagel with light cream. cheese. Let the pow wow begin. Don’t back down big sister. (They leave)

Al

So what’s livin’ inside Cher. And who’s lyin’ about what?
Sharon

So, why was she the wind at his back, Al? Was she blowin’ him away? Or blowing him toward his truth?

Al

You said we had to talk. So let’s.

Sharon

Well, I reread your email about last Saturday night and well, if you’re implying that I had sex with Maggie, you’re wrong. Maybe I wanted you to think so because I was ….hurt. Maggie’s just a good friend. I just stayed over her apartment because my mom is driving me crazy and you lied to me about staying home when you said you were working on your thesis.

AL

I didn’t lie. I omitted the truth. I didn’t want to hurt your feelings. It wasn’t important. Sarah was in from LA and it was a last minute thing. She was here with her **new husband**. Yeah, she just got married. That’s why she moved out there…she was just visiting New York and invited a few friends to go out to dinner while she was in town. Jesus, Cher. You’ve got to trust me! Do I have to report for duty to you? And stop asking so many damn questions. You pushed all my mother buttons. Did your mom ask your dad a lot of questions?

Sharon

That’s not why they split up…

Al

Did she? Ask a lot of questions?
Sharon

Well, yeah. She asked us all a lot of questions. She was…. being a mother!

Al

It’s just that we model our parents.

Sharon

(she laughs) Look, I’m sorry for not trusting you. Just be straight with me even if it hurts my feelings. I can get over it. I’m a big girl. You and Sarah were together for a long time and I thought, wow, she’s back and….

Al

Stop!

Sharon

But why didn’t you…

Al

Stop! You’re pouting. (pause) You told me to tell you hen you’re pouting.

Sharon

Do you even like me Al?
What? Silly woman…..I love you (he is still dancing with her, whirls her toward him, she breaks away)

**Sharon**

But do you like me? ’Cause if we can’t be friends we don’t have a chance in hell at having a marriage that will last.

**Al**

I do like you. You just take everything so personally.

**Sharon**

Well, I’m a person. I’m not a robot. I have feelings!

**AL**

Well sometimes you have to listen. Your ears are glued to yourself. It’s not always just about you.

**Sharon**

Oh here we go again. Look it’s not my job to be a therapist. I take people at their word. Their word is their deed! This is going nowhere.

**Al**

(grabs her arm) Stop. You’re acting like a child now!

**Sharon**

Well, we’re both acting like children and children shouldn’t get married. So in answer to your question. No. I don’t want to just play house.
Al

Me neither. I said “let’s listen to each other” and I meant it. (pause) Maybe when we get mad instead of shutting each other out we can just…not run away? just… be quiet… and…I don’t know, wait… 5 seconds. Put your bag down. (she does. Silence. Sharon is breathing, sighing and then…)

Sharon

(tearing up) I’m pregnant

Al

What?

Sharon

I’m pregnant.

Al

You’re what?

Sharon

Pregnant.

Al

Holy shit! (pause)Is it…mine?

Sharon

What? Why are you asking me that?

Al
(flustered) I don’t know. I’m surprised I guess. We didn’t talk about that. We didn’t plan it….I mean….How…long… I mean how many…

Sharon

I’m a month late and I took a pregnancy test again yesterday and I’m pregnant. Do you think I should have an abortion?

Al

What? Well…wait…wait. Why?… I’m crazy about you, Cher. Just give me a minute here. (he takes five breaths breathes then gets behind her and puts his hand on her tummy) I asked you to marry me. I just didn’t think we’d have a family so soon.

Sharon

You mean you want to have a family….. so soon?

Al

Do you?

Sharon

Well….I mean….We didn’t plan it and I was stoned when we were….making love and I wasn’t thinking…

Al

That doesn’t matter, Cher. We love each other. Don’t beat yourself up about that. Is that why you’re talking about an abortion?

Sharon
Well That’s probably how I got here…An unwanted child…A mistake„„given up for adoption…

Al

(He holds her) And what a lucky mistake

(Scene switches to John and Shawn leaving Dunkin’ Donuts with coffee in hand. Shawn carries a take out bag.)

Shawn

Let’s sit outside here for a minute. They probably need more time. And so do I. (pause) So what do you think they’re talkin’ about?

John

She’s probably tellin’ him she’s pregnant.

Shawn

Truth?

John

Yeah! Not a lie. She like tested herself 3 times this week. You know him pretty well. What do you think he’ll say?

Shawn

(thinking) Gee, that’s big. I don’t know. (pause) What would you say…. if I told you…. I wanted you to move in with me? I’m serious! What would you say? (silence) What if I were pregnant? Would you move in with me?
John

What if I freak out every day, Shawn? What if I have an episode? What if….

Shawn

(taking his hand) What if I have HIV?

John

I know. I keep forgetting. I’m sorry. I’m an asshole. That doesn’t matter.

Shawn

PTSD HIV. that’s not who we are. We’re more than just labels. (pause) What if I love you?

John

Sounds like a song (singing) “What if I love you….”

Shawn

(singing) “What if I wanna help you through.”

John

“What if I wanna be the one to say “I do” (they laugh) Wow. This is big! And it’s legal. (thinking and singing) “I can say I love you now and I don’t have to hide.”

Shawn
(singing) “I can be the man for you...if you will be my bride?”

**John**

No, no, no, no I will be your husband.
I think I just said “yes”

**Shawn**

No, no, no, no
..... and I will be yours.

**Shawn**

Oh, lordy, lordy. I am one lucky dude. Let’s pick a date and go back and tell Al and Sharon. (looking at his iphone) Saturday June 27th. (Thinking. Smiling) At the Nest on Fire Island. We’ll doc it.

**John**

What if I can’t sleep? What if I get up in the middle of the night screaming..... ‘cause I do you know. I can’t...

**Shawn**

I’ll hold you. We’ll do push ups together. Whatever! And what if I need you? (pause) If my documentary doesn’t get picked up.....

**John**

Your doc on the Kichwa Indians in Ecuador? That interview with the shaman was so awesome. Was he on ayahuasca?

**Shawn**

No. That’s just how he is!

**John**
He really liked you, man. You could see that. You are a magnet. You are the best! You are the fucking best.

Shawn

I really do love you. Let’s go tell Al and Sharon. Maybe we’ll have a double wedding. I know Al a long time. He’s been through a lot. His father overdosed when he was 5 you know.

John

No! I didn’t know. And I thought being adopted sucked.

Shawn

He’s gonna be the dad he never had. Let’s go. (they get up to leave lights down left and up down right at the studio)

(handing out the coffee) (To Sharon) No sugar, light. (to Al )Three sugars, dark and a cinnamon bun. When John and I get married we will have it catered by Dunkin Donuts.

Sharon

Married? Really?

John

(Holding Shawn’s hand) We’re timing the knot on Saturday June 27 that the Nest in Fire Island. Al, you’re gonna be our best man. That is if you and Cher are still together!

Al
(hugging Shawn and John (Congratulations! Not only will we be there. But we will bring our baby.

Shawn

You’re shitting me.

John

Oh I’m going to be an uncle. (squeezes Shawn’s hand) That makes you an uncle too, Shawnee. Or an Aunt?

Sharon

Labels! What a lie! (She sings) “Everybody lives in a lie. Everybody lives in a lie, it’s true..

John

“That’s the one true thing I know

Shawn

Everybody lives in a lie
It’s like the natural way to go

Al

(sings to Sharon)
Maybe I should marry MaryJane
She keeps the wind right at my back
She awakens in me what I never see
She is the star in my zodiac.

Sharon
But the truth has a pull greater than even tryin’
And it lives inside and the truth always knows when you’re lyin’

Shawn

(To John)
So maybe we should only live for love
It’s the one true thing you know

Sharon

(to Al)
Everybody wants to live for love
It’s like the natural way to go” Bingo!

Al

Hey, you can’t do that Sharon.

Sharon

Do what?

Al

Double rhyme. Love. Love. (We hear a noise at the door. Al looks at his watch.) Uh oh. Our times up. We’ll resolve this later

Sharon

I think we should just leave it alone, Al. Right Shawn? John? Love…love. We got a double love here. It’s like the natural way to go. Grab your conga John. (she holds Al’s hand) We’re gonna have a baby!

Shawn
(starts videoing them as they leave and in an announcers voice) Yes, the birth of another song by One Eyed Jacks has come down the pike and all because of you. (As leave pack up to leave we hear the song Because of You playing over the loud speaker)

The End