

SOMETIMES THE VOICES

by Dennis Bush

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SOMETIMES THE VOICES

A One Act Drama

by **Dennis Bush**

SYNOPSIS: "You were left in a cardboard box – like an unwanted kitten" was the beginning of an unusual adoption that, more than twenty years later, prompts a DNA test that tears the adoptive family apart as it leads to a biological sister and a heartbreaking glimpse of what life could've been. This searing one act explores emotional baggage, the intersection of past and present, and the stories we tell ourselves that linger in our minds. We're all each other's mirrors, and we're all the voices in each other's heads.

DURATION: 35 minutes.

TIME: The present and the past.

SETTING: In the lives and minds of the characters.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 flexible characters)

All the characters are in their mid- to late 20s

ACTOR 1 (m/f).....	Was abandoned at a gas station as an infant; adopted; discovers birth family through a DNA test. <i>(80 lines)</i>
ACTOR 2 (m/f).....	A voice in both ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 7's heads. <i>(144 lines)</i>
ACTOR 3 (m/f).....	A voice in both ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 7's heads. <i>(27 lines)</i>
ACTOR 4 (m/f).....	A voice in both ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 7's heads. <i>(28 lines)</i>
ACTOR 5 (m/f).....	A friend of ACTOR 1, and a voice in both ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 7's heads. <i>(37lines)</i>
ACTOR 6 (m/f).....	A voice in both ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 7's heads. <i>(25 lines)</i>

ACTOR 7 (m/f)..... ACTOR 1's birth sister; was not aware of ACTOR 1's whereabouts until ACTOR 1 made contact after the DNA test indicated that they were likely siblings. (48 lines)

ACTOR 8 (m/f)..... ACTOR 1's adopted sibling. (48 lines)

CASTING NOTE: Adjust pronouns according to casting.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: *Sometimes the Voices* can be presented with a very simple set. It can also be performed by physically distanced actors or virtually, if need be. Directors are encouraged to be creative with casting and staging. The original production had the audience on two sides of the actors. Actors 1 and 7 were at either end of the playing space with the other actors spaced between Actors 1 and 7. Certainly, not everyone will be able to configure their space that way, but many variations will work, including a traditional proscenium approach. There are many staging options that would work effectively. Directors are encouraged to be creative with their staging.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

SOMETIMES THE VOICES premiered on September 2024 in Phoenix, AZ. The world premiere production was directed by the playwright. The world premiere cast and crew included:

ACTOR 1.....	Kimberly Quezada
ACTOR 2.....	Kiko Ruggiero
ACTOR 3.....	Tommy Allen
ACTOR 4.....	Ethan Hinton
ACTOR 5.....	Spencer Wilson
ACTOR 6.....	Yesenia Salazar
ACTOR 7.....	Roxana Salgueiro
ACTOR 8.....	Amylia McKelvey

At some performances, the actors played the following alternate roles:

ACTOR 1.....	Amylia McKelvey
ACTOR 2.....	Spencer Wilson
ACTOR 3.....	Ethan Hinton
ACTOR 4.....	Tommy Allen
ACTOR 5.....	Kiko Ruggiero
ACTOR 6.....	Roxana Salgueiro
ACTOR 7.....	Kimberly Quezada
ACTOR 8.....	Yesenia Salazar

DEDICATION

The playwright offers special thanks to Karen Brown, Dylan Suehiro, Kyle Varble, Blake Karnes, Marija Petovic, Monica Ramirez, Titus Ritter, Annabella Galvan, and Emily O'Brien for their kind assistance and inspiration, during the creation of *Sometimes the Voices*.

AT START: *Eight actors are scattered around the playing area, lying on cubes or boxes, as if asleep or dormant. As each actor begins to speak, the actor rises into a sitting position and faces the audience. After the first actor begins, then others join, and then others, giving the effect of a spoken version of a canon or round.*

ACTOR 1: When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind of hobble. But the first thing I do when I wake up is look at myself in the mirror.

ACTOR 1 continues to stare straight ahead, as if transfixed by her reflection in the mirror.

ACTOR 2 and ACTOR 3: *(Beginning after ACTOR 1 says "morning" and continuing.)* When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind of hobble. But the first thing I do, when I wake up, is look at myself in the mirror.

ACTOR 2 and ACTOR 3 return to their dormant position.

ACTOR 4 and ACTOR 5: *(After ACTOR 2 and ACTOR 3 say "morning" and continuing.)* When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind of hobble. But the first thing I do, when I wake up, is look at myself in the mirror.

ACTOR 4 and ACTOR 5 return to their dormant position.

ACTOR 6, ACTOR 7 and ACTOR 8: *(After ACTOR 4 and ACTOR 5 say "morning" and continuing.)* When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind of hobble. But the first thing I do, when I wake up, is look at myself in the mirror.

ACTOR 6, ACTOR 7, and ACTOR 8 return to their dormant position.

ACTOR 1: Specifically, at my face. (*Clarifying.*) I look specifically at my face. Because things happen when we sleep. Things can happen to our face *while* we sleep. Acne... signs of aging... the color of my eyes changing. (*A beat.*) It's happened. It seriously, actually happened. (*A quick beat.*) And, sometimes, there are other people in the mirror. (*Clarifying.*) People show up—sometimes unexpectedly and sometimes not. Sometimes, it's just the voices. It's *my* face, but I hear *their* voices. And I have to listen. I do. Because they're in my head. (*Quick pause.*) And I talk to them. (*A simple fact.*) You would, too. *Everyone* would. (*A quick beat.*) Because ignoring them would be rude.

ACTOR 2: (*ACTOR 1's former friend. Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) I stopped talking to you because *you* stopped talking to me. I stopped responding to your messages because *you* stopped responding to *mine*. I stopped calling because *you* never called *me*.

ACTOR 2 returns to his/her dormant position.

ACTOR 1: (*Beginning to respond before ACTOR 2 finishes.*) I didn't stop talking to you! (*Defensive, then, moving to anger.*) I didn't have anything to say. I didn't have any news to share. Nothing to report. Was I supposed to make up stories so I had something to tell you?

ACTOR 3: (*ACTOR 1's former boyfriend. Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) It was nice. That's what you said. It was *nice*.

ACTOR 1: It was nice.

ACTOR 3: (*Cutting her off.*) Like nice was the goal. Like nice was how it was supposed to be. Not exciting. Not passionate or romantic or anything unique or interesting. Just nice. And good. (*A beat.*) But what if that wasn't good enough for me?! (*A beat.*) It *wasn't*. It wasn't good enough.

ACTOR 3 returns to his dormant position.

ACTOR 4: *(Another former boyfriend. Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.)* We sat there watching TV or a movie or something.

ACTOR 1: It was a movie. A sad movie.

ACTOR 4: *(Cutting her off.)* And you didn't say anything. You didn't talk at all.

ACTOR 1: Because we were watching a movie.

ACTOR 4: *(Cutting her off even more sharply.)* No comments. No observations. And it was so quiet—except for the sound of what we were watching—the dialogue and all that, and it started to feel so awkward that I almost screamed, "Say something!" *(A beat.)* I think that was when I knew I had to break up with you.

ACTOR 4 returns to his dormant position.

ACTOR 7: *(Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.)* When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind of hobble. But the first thing I do, when I wake up, is look at myself in the mirror.

ACTOR 7 continues to stare straight ahead, as if transfixed by her reflection in the mirror.

ACTOR 2 and ACTOR 3: *(Beginning after ACTOR 1 says "morning" and continuing.)* When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind of hobble. But the first thing I do, when I wake up, is look at myself in the mirror.

They return to their dormant position.

ACTOR 4 and ACTOR 5: *(After ACTOR 2 & ACTOR 3 say "morning" and continuing.)* When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind

of hobble. But the first thing I do, when I wake up, is look at myself in the mirror.

ACTOR 4 and ACTOR 5 return to their dormant position.

ACTOR 6, ACTOR 8, and ACTOR 1: *(After ACTOR 4 & ACTOR 5 say "morning" and continuing.)* When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is run to the bathroom and look in the mirror. Sometimes, I walk instead of run. Sometimes, I trip and fall and get back up and kind of hobble. But the first thing I do, when I wake up, is look at myself in the mirror.

ACTOR 6, ACTOR 8, and ACTOR 1 return to their dormant position.

ACTOR 7: Specifically, at my eyes. To make sure I don't look like I'm crazy—like I'm *actually* crazy or even just *look* like I am. Like when I was little and I was obsessed with trolls.

ALL: *(Except ACTOR 7.)* Or dinosaurs or zombies.

ACTOR 7: *(Continuing as if she hadn't been interrupted.)* Or whatever I was obsessed with at the time. Because, when you're obsessed like that, and you *think* about it, and you *talk* about it, you can look pretty seriously crazy. Looking crazy...

ALL: *(Except ACTOR 7.)* Any kind of crazy.

ACTOR 7: *(Continuing as if she hadn't been interrupted.)* Is *not* a good thing. Even if you are—crazy, I mean, crazy for *real*. Even if the voices that woke you up in the middle of the night are still talking to you halfway through breakfast.

ALL: *(Except ACTOR 7.)* Or lunch.

ACTOR 7: *(Continuing as if she hadn't been interrupted.)* Or *always*. *(A quick beat.)* It's *all* in the eyes. *Your* eyes... *My* eyes... A person's eyes are the window into their soul.

ALL: *(Except ACTOR 7.)* Or something like that.

ACTOR 7: *(Continuing as if she hadn't been interrupted.)* Something deep and meaningful like that. If you pay attention to a person's eyes—a person you're talking to—you can see what they're thinking and how they feel about you—or whoever they're talking to. *(A beat.)* So, I practice looking like I'm paying attention—like I'm *listening* and paying attention. Like I *really* care. I look into the mirror

and imagine that I'm listening to one of my friends talking to me about something.

ALL: *(Except ACTOR 7.)* Something they really care about.

ACTOR 7: *(Continuing as if she hadn't been interrupted.)* And they think everybody else cares about, too.

ACTOR 3: *(Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.)* Edible glitter is a thing. An actual thing. A real thing. *(A quick beat.)* My buddy Matt is a chef, and he puts edible glitter into some of the food he makes. Not everything. Just some things—so when he *does* use it, it's special and a wow kind of thing when the server puts it down in front of the customer. Like lobster mac 'n cheese. So it sparkles. It glitters. And it's edible. But you probably figured that out because it's called edible glitter. It makes the food magical. Like it was made by fairies or elves or trolls or whatever. Matt—my buddy the chef—doesn't look like he'd be somebody who'd cook with edible glitter. He doesn't look like he'd be a chef either. But, maybe, I just don't know enough chefs to have a sense of what guys who are chefs look like. He has really big arms—biceps and the other ones, whatever they're called. The kind of muscles that stretch out the sleeves on his T-shirt. Some people find that appealing. If you saw him out on the street or in a gym or even at his restaurant, I guess, you probably wouldn't think he was somebody who'd use edible glitter. But maybe that's just me. Maybe I've made assumptions about what people who use edible glitter look like. Maybe extremely muscular chefs are the chefs who are most likely to use edible glitter. I mean, it's possible, right?

ACTOR 7: And as I'm practicing looking like I'm paying attention and like I really care—and, on some level, I really do care, I hear my mom's voice telling me that everything happens for a reason, so I listen to the voices in my head—over and over in my head, like they're playing on a loop that never ends—and I try to figure out why they're talking in my head and what I'm supposed to learn from them. Because, if everything happens for a reason, there has to be a reason.

ACTOR 3: I mean, it's possible, right?

ACTOR 3 returns to his dormant position.

ACTOR 7: Sometimes, the voices wake me up in the middle of the night. Not like, "You left your car unlocked," or, "You should go to Belize. Or Thailand. Or Croatia. You should research flight and hotel options right now!" (*A beat.*) No. It's not like that at all. Most of the time, the voices that bounce around in my head are saying things I've heard. Conversations that I wasn't a part of. But I lay there worrying about what the voices are saying.

ACTOR 2: (*Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) My dad told my sister and I that we should go on a trip together. We're both adults. *Very different* kind of people. We have our own lives. We don't even live in the same state, but my dad insisted. He said, "When your mom and I aren't around, you'll only have each other." Which is kind of a weird thing to say—especially since my mom and dad are both healthy. (*Quick beat.*) Unless he's keeping something from us. Unless this is some subtle way of telling us bad news. (*Quick beat.*) But people don't offer to pay for their kids to go on trips as a way to blunt the impact of bad news, do they? I don't think they do. Saying that my sister and I would only have each other also discounts the fact that we have other people in our lives. We have relationships—some lasting longer than others—and friends. The chosen family kind of friends, if you know what I mean, and, of course, you know what I mean.

ACTOR 7: (*As if transfixed by her reflection in the mirror.*) So, I practice looking like I'm paying attention—like I'm listening and paying attention. Like I really care. I look into the mirror and imagine that I'm listening to one of my friends talking to me about something—something they really care about and they think everybody else cares about, too.

ACTOR 2: (*Continuing as if uninterrupted.*) So, anyway, my sister and I agreed to go on a trip, and my Dad said he'd take care of all the arrangements—which is strange, because my mom usually does all that kind of stuff for them. (*A beat.*) And he sent my sister and I each a package of travel information, and there's a brochure for a riverboat cruise. (*Clarifying.*) A cruise on a riverboat—like a modern version of an old-fashioned paddlewheel riverboat. On the Mississippi River. It's called a Mark Twain cruise. And my sister sent me a message—just from her to me, not in the regular family text chain. And she said she wonders if Mark Twain will be on the cruise.

Like as the captain of the boat or just mingling with the other passengers. (*A beat.*) She really asked that.

ACTOR 2 returns to her dormant position.

ACTOR 7: And, sometimes, it's hard to care. About what the voices are saying. And about what they're saying could mean to me, or why theirs is the voice that's stuck in my head in the middle of the night—and what that could mean. (*A beat.*) Sometimes, I *can't* care. (*A beat.*) And, then, I think I must be a bad person, or that I'm not open to the messages the universe is sending me by positioning particular strangers close enough for me to listen to, because I can't *not* listen to them because they're talking on their phone like it was information that the whole world was supposed to hear. And *know*.

ALL: (*Except ACTOR 7.*) And *care* about.

ACTOR 7: And just when I think, "I can't possibly care about this," I start to worry that the guy and his sister had a bad time on the cruise, or that they didn't even *go* on the cruise, or that his parents were sick and the cruise *was* the dad's way of softening the blow of the bad news.

ACTOR 7 returns to her dormant position.

ACTOR 5: (*ACTOR 1's friend. Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) It was a lot of saliva.

ACTOR 1: I was just following the instructions.

ACTOR 5: A whole test tube full of saliva. It was disgusting.

ACTOR 1: It was a *saliva collection vial*.

ACTOR 5: (*With pointed sarcasm.*) Which is so much less disgusting than a test tube full of saliva—which is what it was!

ACTOR 1: If I'd filled the saliva collection vial only halfway, they would've sent it back or just not done the DNA test.

ACTOR 5: And they need a test tube completely filled with spit to do a DNA test?

ACTOR 1: If they didn't, the instructions would say, "Send us as much saliva as you want."

ACTOR 5: It took you like twenty minutes to do it.

ACTOR 1: I don't have a mouthful of extra saliva. I don't think *anyone* has a mouthful of extra saliva. If we did, saliva would be oozing out the corners of our mouths all the time.

ACTOR 5: Different people have different amounts of spit. It's probably genetic.

ACTOR 1: Like eye color and aversion to cilantro?

ACTOR 5: (*On a tangent.*) Baseball players have extra saliva. They spit a lot during games. Athletes, in general, I think, have an abundance of spit. (*A quick beat.*) And Curtis Palmer—a boy in my class in 3rd grade. He used to spit all the time—on the playground, in the classroom, pretty much everywhere.

ACTOR 1: So you shouldn't be unnerved by the amount of saliva required for the DNA test.

ACTOR 5: It was disgusting.

ACTOR 5 returns to his dormant position.

ACTOR 1: Sometimes, the voices are the other half of a conversation that only happened in my mirror... in my *mind*. When I never met somebody that I should've known, I can only *imagine* the voices... the *words*... the *possibilities* instead of the reality.

ACTOR 6: (*One of ACTOR 1's DNA matches. Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) I mean it's cool and all that we're third or fourth DNA cousins, but I don't know you. And you're like all the way across the country, and I only did the DNA test because everybody else was doing it and I thought, "Why not? Maybe I'll be related to, like, Mary Queen of Scots or Charlemagne or somebody fun like that."

ACTOR 6 returns to her dormant position.

ACTOR 7: (*Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) Is this some kinda scam? Are you trying to hack into my phone? Is this message like phishing—phishing with a ph? Because I've never seen you at any family reunions and you've never been in the newsletter that Aunt Joan sends out.

ACTOR 1: I'm searching... (*Struggling to explain.*) I'm trying to find...

ACTOR 7: That's what searching *is*. Trying to find something.

ACTOR 1: (*Simply.*) I'm looking for my family.

ACTOR 7: Maybe there was a mix up at the DNA place. The lab. Maybe they got somebody else's DNA mixed in with yours?

ACTOR 1: I guess that's possible.

ACTOR 7: Or maybe you got somebody else's spit in your little test tube thing.

ACTOR 1: The saliva collection vial?

ACTOR 7: Sure. Whatever you wanna call it. Maybe you got somebody else's spit mixed in with yours.

ACTOR 1: I don't see how that's possible.

ACTOR 7: You ever watched an actor or a singer? Saliva flies out of their mouths when they're performing. I don't ever sit in the first few rows at a concert for that very reason.

ACTOR 1: Nobody was singing near me at the time.

ACTOR 7: Things happen. (*She returns to her dormant position.*)

ACTOR 1: Nobody else's saliva got mixed up with mine. And I don't think there was an issue at the lab.

ACTOR 8: (*ACTOR 1's adopted sibling. Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) Don't open a can of worms.

ACTOR 1: Trying to find the people I'm related to by blood isn't opening a can of worms.

ACTOR 8: Don't go around asking questions that you don't wanna find out the answers to.

ACTOR 1: That's the whole reason to ask questions. To get answers.

ACTOR 5: (*Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.*) You ask too many questions.

ACTOR 1: That's a matter of opinion.

ACTOR 5: You know what they say about people who ask too many questions?

ACTOR 1: No. What do they say?

ACTOR 5: They say you ask too many questions.

ACTOR 5 returns to his dormant position.

ACTOR 8: And, sometimes, you wish you didn't know what you find out. But you've already asked the question. And, now, you know. And you can't *unknow* what you know, as much as you wish you could.

ACTOR 8 returns to her dormant position.

ACTOR 1: You acted like you didn't know me. You said that my saliva got contaminated by somebody singing near me while I was collecting the sample.

ACTOR 7: *(Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.)* A lot of people say a lot of things.

ACTOR 1: But not people whose DNA says we're related.

ACTOR 7: It's better to be safe than sorry.

ACTOR 1: What does that even mean?

ACTOR 7: *(As if ACTOR 1 is unfathomably dense.)* It means it's better... to be *safe*... than it is to be *sorry*.

ACTOR 1: *(Getting increasingly angry.)* You can be safe all you want. Or you can be sorry. Or whatever.

ACTOR 7: *(Firing back.)* I will. You can bet on it.

ACTOR 1: *(Not letting up.)* But you brushed me off like I had no business reaching out to you. If you show up on my DNA matches, I'm pretty sure that means I show up on yours. That's how it works. "Close family—likely sibling." That's what it said. So how can you say you didn't know about me.

ACTOR 7: I didn't say I didn't know about you. I *knew*. I didn't know where you were, but I knew you *existed*. *(A beat.)* What I said was, "I don't *know* you." *(A beat.)* And I'm not sure I want to. Being related doesn't mean we automatically have a relationship... a connection... an anything.

ACTOR 7 returns to her dormant position.

ACTOR 8: *(Rising into a sitting position, facing the audience.)* Aren't we enough? Aren't *I* enough?

ACTOR 1: No.

ACTOR 8: I can't believe you just said that. Like I was asking if you want jalapeños on your nachos.

ACTOR 1: I'm allergic to jalapeños.

ACTOR 8: I wasn't asking you about actual jalapeños or actual nachos.

ACTOR 1: I understand that.

ACTOR 8: But you said, "No."

ACTOR 1: I did.

ACTOR 8: (*Bitterly.*) So, we're not enough. *I'm* not enough. The family that's loved you and taken care of you and been there for you. None of that is good enough for you?!

ACTOR 1: Who decides what's good enough? Why should *anyone* accept good enough? Why am I the bad guy for wanting to know about all the parts of my life?

ACTOR 8: (*Bitterly dismissive.*) You had to open the can of worms.

ACTOR 1: I'm trying to figure out who I am!

ACTOR 8: You know who you are, but that's not good enough.

ACTOR 1: Anybody who's ever said, "That's good enough," knew that it wasn't really good enough. If it was, they'd say, "It was good. It *is* good." Not just good *enough*.

ACTOR 8: Could we have a conversation without having a fight? I'm on your side. I'm always on your side. I hate seeing you go through this.

ACTOR 1: It's not a lot of fun for me either. I'm the one dealing with it all.

ACTOR 8: (*Blisteringly.*) We're *all* dealing with it. Everybody in your life is dealing with it. You make it seem like everybody in the *world* is supposed to get out of your way while you deal with it. Or *hear about it* every damn day because you don't think about the fact that we're *all* dealing with our own stuff. We're all deciding what's good enough and *who's* good enough or even *just enough*, or if we'll *ever* be enough for whatever or whoever we wanna be enough for.

A beat.

ACTOR 1: (*With a breath.*) Mom told me to sit down. Next to her. On the sofa. Like we were gonna watch a movie or something. And, then, she took a deep breath. (*A beat.*) She didn't even turn her head to look at me. And she said, "There's something I want you to know. Before you start a family of your own..." (*A beat.*) I wasn't even dating anybody at the time. It's not like I was gonna start a family anytime soon.

ACTOR 8: Mom said ominous stuff like that all the time. (*Quoting their mom.*) Like, "Before I die I want you to be sure you know how much I love you."

ACTOR 1: And she died. And you know.

ACTOR 8: Six months later. She died six months later.

ACTOR 1: But you know she loved you. And this isn't about what she told *you*. It's what she told *me*. (*A beat, quoting his adoptive mother.*) She said, "You were left in a cardboard box—like an unwanted kitten—outside a gas station. About thirty feet from the door into the convenience store part of the gas station. Somebody going in to buy a lottery ticket and a candy bar found you and told the manager to call the police. My brother—your uncle—was a police sergeant. There were some legal hoops to jump through, but the adoption process went more smoothly than for some of our friends who adopted children from agencies or placement services."

A beat.

ACTOR 1: I zoned out somewhere between "unwanted kitten" and "candy bar," but she took a big gulp of her vodka tonic, and that gave me a chance to wrap my head around what was going on.

A beat.

ACTOR 1: The next thing she said really stuck. (*Quoting his adoptive mother.*) "You should do one of those DNA tests and see if you can find any of your relatives—your *blood* relatives—if you want to. If you feel like it. If it's something you'd be interested in doing." (*A beat.*) And, then, I had a craving for a candy bar. It was like the name of every candy bar I'd ever eaten went flying through my brain.

ALL except ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 8 begin to whisper the names of candy bars: Kit Kat, Payday, Twix, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, Snickers, Milky Way, M&Ms, Three Musketeers, as ACTOR 8 continues. Each actor should choose one or two candy bar names to whisper over and over. ALL except ACTOR 1 and ACTOR 8 should remain in dormant position.

ACTOR 8: (*Loud enough to be heard over the candy bar cacophony.*)

And then you started asking more questions and disappearing for days on end and taking DNA tests from two different companies. And Mom couldn't handle the way you treated us like you didn't know us anymore.

ACTOR 1: I never treated you that way. None of you. Not ever.

ACTOR 8: She was worried... scared that the more you found out about them, the less connected you'd be to us. And that's how you started to act. It broke her heart.

ACTOR 1: She had a heart attack.

The candy bar cacophony stops immediately after "attack."

ACTOR 8: (*With blazing bitterness.*) From a broken heart.

ACTOR 1: That's not how it happened.

ACTOR 8: You might as well have been a ghost. You weren't around for any of it. You abandoned us.

ACTOR 1: Dad left, and Mom spiraled out of control. And she had a heart attack. It didn't have anything to do with me.

ACTOR 8: You wanting to figure out where you came from—*who* you came from—that's what killed her.

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