

Blend

A Choir Play

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SMITH – The Choir Director. Wants the Choir to sound good. Thinks this is what is best for the students.

ALICE – Alto. A senior. Loves music. Loves singing. Wants to be heard.

JILL – Alto. A senior. Doesn't think she is as skilled as she is. Wants to belong.

ELIZA – Soprano. The President of the Choir. A senior. A born performer. Wants to shine.

KELLY – Soprano/Alto. A senior. Has been in the Chamber Choir since her freshman year. Natural talent. Wants to fit in.

THE CHAMBER CHOIR – An auditioned ensemble. Performs music that is a cappella, or without accompaniment, throughout the play. Haunts the space, half-real, almost ghost-like.

SETTING

A high school. Not so long ago.

The space should act as the literal auditorium/theater in which the Chorus concert is happening. As the performance progresses, it transforms to host various sites of memory—a hallway outside the Chorus Room, the Chorus Room itself, a back room, a practice room, the cafeteria, and a bathroom—as well as the interior of some of the characters. There should be no obvious “scene breaks” between these moments of memory, nor should they be presented as “flashbacks”—rather, the memories literally *occur* in the present, fluid and connected, if not necessarily chronological, blending together in the space, re-lived. But there still should be a progression to the piece—like any well-performed piece of choral music, it should have dynamics, should build and crescendo as it goes on. All actors remain in the space for the whole show.

NOTES

A (//) indicates where overlapping dialogue should begin, and the next character should begin speaking. When dialogue overlaps with singing, they appear alongside each other.

SMITH may be played an actor of any gender, and represented as a person of any gender, and has thus been written with gender-neutral pronouns. Be sure, when casting the character, to be conscious of the implications the gender of the actor, and the gender of the character, will have upon the story.

Diversity is strongly encouraged in the casting of this piece, just as actors are encouraged to bring their full identities to the characters they play.

The CHOIR may be literally there or imagined, but either way, its presence must be felt.

*Lights up on the CHAMBER CHOIR and SMITH,
facing the audience.*

SMITH

Parents and faculty, siblings and family members and people who wandered in accidentally—welcome to our spring concert. My name is *[Insert Appropriate Name]* Smith and I'm the director of the program here. You might know me better as "That Crazy Teacher Who Keeps Our Kids Afterschool Every Tuesday and Thursday To Learn Even More Music." And before we start, let me just say, thank you. Thank you for lending your children, and their beautiful voices, to this program. Thank you for letting them study music. My own parents were not so— Well, that's another story... On that note, I'm so excited and happy to present to you the Chamber Choir. We are an auditioned ensemble, unlike the Main Choir, who you will see later, and we perform music that is a cappella, or without accompaniment, and more advanced. I love working with these kids. Even when I hate it. And I hope you love what we have for you tonight. Let's begin, shall we?

They turn, raise their arms, and pause. In the audience, ALICE stands, speaks out to the audience.

ALICE

There's a moment—right before the arm comes down. A moment of pure suspension. Of silence. Of held breath, waiting to burst forth into pitch. Into resonance. Into song. It's this moment I like best—the anticipation of it. The quiet right before something magical happens. Or before everything goes wrong.

SMITH brings their hand down, and the CHAMBER CHOIR begins to sing the Kings Singers' arrangement of Imogen Heap's "Hide and Seek." As they sing, ALICE moves to the stage, traveling, dreamlike, across it...

CHAMBER CHOIR
(sings)

Where are we?
What the hell is going on?
The dust has only just begun to form
Crop circles in the carpet
Sinking, feeling...

ALICE

Stop.

The CHOIR goes silent.

I don't like to listen to them for too long.

Not because it's not beautiful. The opposite. Sometimes it gets too beautiful to stand.

A shift.

pianissimo

JILL, ELIZA, and KELLY step out of the CHOIR, and stand, with ALICE at various points in the space. The following is a thought quartet, comprised of their interiors, their lines slightly overlapping.

ALICE

Nobody really likes me.

JILL

I used to have trouble making friends.

ELIZA

I just want people to notice me.

JILL

Joining Choir, especially Chamber Choir, helped a lot with that.

ALICE

I mean, nobody particularly hates me either.

KELLY

I like other people. Until I get to know them, anyway.

ALICE

Sometimes I wish they did. At least then I'd know they care. That they notice me.

ELIZA

I want people to care, you know? To remember me.

JILL

I never really thought I'd be in a choir.

ALICE

I don't know how to talk to people.

ELIZA

I've basically been performing since I could walk.

ALICE

It's like the words can't formulate, like, like they get blocked.

JILL

I always hated my voice growing up.

ALICE

So sometimes when...when the words don't come...

KELLY

I just like to sing, y'know?

JILL

But I guess there's *something* to like about it...

KELLY

I feel like I'm pretty good at it. I mean, I've been told I am.

ELIZA

I don't waste my time on people less talented than me.

ALICE

Song is different from speech.

KELLY

It's just always come naturally to me.

ALICE

When I sing...it's opening...

KELLY

I've got a pretty wide range. That's cool.

JILL

I'm a fast learner. That helps.

ELIZA

A born performer, you might say.

ALICE

But talking... Talking is enclosed. You're trapped in your mouth. Conversation is like a box.

A box of some kind forms around ALICE.

When I'm inside, I can't move around inside it, and I can't bust out. It's claustrophobic.

KELLY, JILL and ELIZA surround the box. During the following, they all talk simultaneously to each other, creating an incomprehensible cacophony of improvised talk. They speak through ALICE, as if she is not there, while ALICE talks out to the audience.

See.

Where do I insert myself?

How do I make them see me?

Hear me.

The girls all burst into laughter.

It wasn't always like this.

ALICE steps out of the box, and she and JILL connect.

JILL

Hi. I'm Jill.

ALICE

Hi. Alice.

(turns to the audience)

It used to be so easy...

...where did I go wrong...?

Music is like memory. It brings things back.

SMITH appears, speaks out, their lines overlapping with ALICE's.

SMITH

When singing a cappella, one is creating the purest form of music one can as a human.

ALICE

It hums beneath everything, drives our consciousness, gives it all meaning.

SMITH

Music comprised of nothing but the voice.

No instruments but the voice, the musician becoming their own instrument, the instrument of something higher—the music.

The song.

ALICE

But talking...talking is confusing. It's just all the scraps and bits and detritus of people's brains layering over one another in this sick jumble of words no one's listening to.

SMITH

The body acts as the vessel through which a piece of song can emerge, which, when combined with other pieces, forms into a unified whole.

ALICE

At least songs are straightforward.

They have a beginning. They come to an end. You know the words, you know what you're supposed to say.

Behind them, a line of song floats up eerily from the CHAMBER CHOIR, overlaps with ALICE's speech...

ALICE

And then sometimes...a scrap of a song
floats up...gets stuck in your
head...reminds you...

CHAMBER CHOIR

(sings)

There are moments in your life that stay
with you forever...

*A shift.**piano**SMITH and ALICE pass each other on the stairs.*

SMITH

Hey. Alice, right?

ALICE

Yeah?

SMITH

Why aren't you in Choir?

ALICE

I uh...I don't know I never really...

(to the audience)

Because they scared the shit out of me.

SMITH

Well. You should join. Come by tomorrow at F Period, after 1st lunch, alright?

ALICE

I—uh—I—okay—

*Around her, the space transforms into the Chorus
Room. ALICE sits while SMITH addresses the Choir.*

SMITH

All right people, let's take it from the top, and see how far we can make it. All the way
through to measure 39, at least. Ready?

Ready?

They raise their arms, not waiting, and the CHOIR messily starts. SMITH stops them almost immediately, sharp.

Alright. Are we awake now?

(lets the question hang there; then, raises their hands)

Again.

SMITH starts the CHOIR again, and they struggle through the song as best they can. As the CHOIR sings, ALICE turns to the audience, in awe:

ALICE

I can't describe...the thrill of it...the way everyone vibrates around me...and I vibrate with them...the same frequency, pure emotion flowing...we open our mouths...and music comes out.

SMITH

(stopping them)

Well. // That was terrible.

ALICE

(to the audience, ecstatic)

Finally. I'm a part of something.

A shift.

metsopiano

JILL and ALICE hang out in the hallway, JILL pacing, ALICE sitting on the floor.

JILL

I just hope there's enough space. You know?

ALICE

Mhm.

JILL

Like, last year there were twenty-four people, you know, and that wasn't even an even, six-way split, there were what, four basses, five tenors...seven sopranos, seven altos? Wait no, I'm one short. Who'm I forgetting...? Maria! Maria was a soprano. So eight. Eight sopranos. Seven altos.

ALICE

Yeah.

JILL

So, assuming they keeps Chamber the same size as last year—and they may not, it might be bigger, might be smaller, but we only really have last year to go off of—but that's four slots for the altos. Because there are only three altos left, right, it's Donna Holt, Jacelyn, Amy Lambell.

ALICE

And Kelly.

JILL

Kelly's a Soprano.

ALICE

She's switching down to Alto.

JILL

Oh, wait, shit, what?!

ALICE

I heard a couple people talking about it. Smith wants more reliable people in the Alto section.

JILL

But that leaves less room for us! Fuck, that gives us, what, a one in three chance...out of everyone who auditioned... how many people auditioned... // how many altos—

ALICE

Jill. Will you calm the fuck down. You're stressing me out.

JILL

Well sorry I'm just really nervous—!!

ALICE

Well, yeah, so am I! I'm doing enough obsessive calculations on my own in my head right now without you working them out out loud. Can we...can we just...?

JILL

Yeah, sure... Sorry. Didn't realize you were worrying // a lot too.

ALICE

Of course I'm worrying too.

JILL

Well, how did your audition go?

ALICE

I told you already.

JILL

Well, yeah, I know, but I wasn't really listening.

ALICE

Huh.

JILL

I know that sounds awful to say, I know, but what I mean is, you know those times when you get so focused on yourself, on your own crap, that everything around you becomes sort of abstract. Like you'll be listening to someone talk, but the only context in which you can process that is in the frame of reference of the crap you're worrying about yourself. So like when you tell me about your audition, it's hard to concentrate on what you're actually *saying*, because I just get so wrapped up in relating it back to how *my* audition went, comparing them, wondering if *I* was—

ALICE

Yeah. I get it.

JILL

No, no, don't take it like that! Look I'm sorry. I'm being a bad friend today. I'm listening now. I really am. How did it go?

ALICE

I dunno...

It was scary. Really fucking scary.

I think I did okay. They didn't seem to hate me. But it's just so hard to tell, you know?

JILL

Yeah. Especially when you want to impress them. Make them proud.

They're so cool. I want to be them when I grow up.

ALICE

Yeah.

JILL

I'm sure you did great. Better than me, probably. You've been doing this longer.

ALICE

I'm not *that* good. Not as good as some people...

JILL

No one is as good as Kelly, Al. Or Eliza. Don't compare yourself to them.

(Beat.)

Hey. What's wrong?

ALICE

(suddenly very afraid)

Promise me if one of us gets into Chamber but the other doesn't...it won't change anything?

JILL

What do you mean?

ALICE

Like. No hard feelings.

And

we'll still be friends?

JILL

Of course. Always.

(Pause.)

Hey. How many sopranos does it take to change a lightbulb?

ALICE
(smiling—it is an old joke)

How many?

JILL
One. She holds the bulb...

ALICE & JILL
...and the world revolves around her!

They burst into laughter.

In their mirth, they do not see SMITH appear and pin up a sheet of paper. They vanish, and then JILL notices.

JILL
Holy shit, look!

ALICE
(noticing)
Oh Jesus.
Is that it? Is that it?

JILL
Of course it is you dork, what else would it be?

She scrambles up to it—ALICE stays where she is.

Oh my God.

ALICE
(terrified)
What is it?

Beneath them, the CHAMBER CHOIR sings, haunting.

JILL
OhmyGodohmyGodohmyGod

ALICE
Jill?? What does it say?
(a confession)
...I'm scared to look.
Jill, what does it say?
Jill?

CHAMBER CHOIR
(sings)

There are moments in your life that stay
with you forever

There are moments in your life that
change the way you are...

(A shift.)

metsoforte

JILL, KELLY, and ELIZA hang out at lunch. It is the same scene as before, but this time, a new box has formed around them, and ALICE stands on the outside, watching. She addresses the audience, the others oblivious to her, their dialogue overlapping with her words.

JILL
How many sopranos does it take to change a lightbulb?

KELLY
Oh oh oh, I know!
Four.

ALICE
I was wrong.

KELLY
One to change the bulb and three to pull the chair out from under her.

ALICE
Most of the time, it's not like being in a box at all.

JILL and KELLY burst into laughter. ELIZA does not.

JILL

Exactly!... Exactly...

ALICE

It's the opposite. You're always on the outside.

ELIZA

Ha ha, very funny guys...

KELLY

Oh, come on Eliza, it's only a joke.

ELIZA

Sure. Remind me, how does the alto one go again?

JILL

Oh, I don't know // the alto one...

ALICE

// Yes, you do, I told it to you...

KELLY

How do you not know the alto one, you're an alto!

JILL

Well, you were a soprano last year!

ELIZA

I remember now. How many altos does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

JILL

How many?

ELIZA

None.

They can't get that high.

The girls all burst into laughter, while ALICE tries to find a way into the box, to get to them.

ALICE

That's not the version I know. That's not the version I told you, Jill.

ELIZA

Doesn't quite work for you, Kelly. You *can* get that high.

ALICE

It takes two.

KELLY

Well, yeah, but it's not good for my voice to do that, though.

ALICE

One to screw it in and the other to say, "Isn't that a little high for you?"

KELLY

Smith says if I sing up there too much, I might damage my voice later in my life.

JILL

Oh. Then you'd have to get vocal surgery, like Adele, huh?

KELLY

Exactly! Or worse, end up like Julie Andrews. Can you imagine being Julie Andrews, like *THE* Julie Andrews, of *The Sound of Frickin' Music*, and literally your whole life and career has been based on the fact that you can sing better than pretty much anyone on the planet and then just...not being able to? Not being able to sing at all? What must that do to you?

(Beat.)

ALICE

Yeah. You wouldn't know, // would you?

KELLY

Well, that's not going to happen to me. // No way.

JILL

Yeah, sure.

I always wanted to be a Soprano. You know, to have a high voice, be able to hit those notes. That's what you're told you should be, y'know—you get rewarded with all the good parts—it took me a while to like the fact that my voice was lower.

KELLY

Me too, honey, it's okay.

JILL

It's funny. I spent so much time wanting to be something I wasn't, I never really got to explore what I am. What I can do. Being in Chamber helped.

ELIZA

Well, being in Chamber helps with pretty much everything.

JILL

Yeah. Like, it's such a confidence boost. You feel like you're part of something important, like you're performing on a higher level. Like you're part of a family. Even on the days when I don't love my voice... I'm in Chamber, y'know? So I'm still *good*.

KELLY

Exactly. Better than most people.

JILL

And some of the Alto parts I've gotten to sing have just been so much more interesting, y'know? Like the arrangement for "Hide and Seek", I mean...

KELLY

Same! *God* that piece is gorgeous.

ELIZA

(nodding in agreement)

It's my favorite, honestly...

ALICE finally enters the box, approaches carefully.

Last week, when we finally got that overlapping section—

JILL

Oh my God, yeah, it was so... I gave *myself* chills. Like it was almost, // spiritual...

KELLY

I thought Smith was going to cry.

ALICE

(speaking up, at last)

Hey guys.

JILL

Oh. Hey, Al.

(turning back to KELLY)

But yeah, anyway. We just felt so in sync. I kinda left my body for a minute...

Awkwardly, ALICE sits at the table.

ALICE

(she knows already)

What're you guys talking about?

JILL

Just Chamber stuff.

(to KELLY)

The end was kind of weak though...

KELLY

Oh, yeah, the whole blend got thrown off.

(speaks loudly, pointedly, at ELIZA)

I don't understand the Sopranos can't get their shit together there. I mean it's not that hard! // You're singing the goddamn melody, while we're working our asses off to support you.

ELIZA

I don't know what you're looking at me for. I'm singing my part perfectly.

KELLY

Yeah. If only you were the only Soprano in the Soprano section, huh, Eliza?

(to JILL)

God, Sopranos are such fucking divas sometimes! I was a Soprano, so I can say that.

ELIZA turns away, stung, but trying to not show it.

Come on, Eliza, I'm *joking*. What is up with you today?

ELIZA

We should be working.

KELLY

It's lunchtime. Lighten up, // will you?

ELIZA

Do you realize how much new music Smith is expecting us to learn by Wednesday? Not only do we have those three for All States, but we have to learn six new pieces for the winter concert. Six!! Normally they just have us do four, maybe five at most. I don't know why this year—

KELLY

Because they know we can handle it.

ELIZA

Can we though?? I'm just saying, we should be more responsible. We're the seniors. It's our job to set an example. There are people... I honestly don't think they deserve to *be* in Chamber. // That Taylor girl only joined last year and she's a complete—

KELLY

Look. Look. I know you're President of the Choir now and everything, and that's making you feel like everything's on you, and that // you need to take care of everybody else's problems—

ELIZA

I just can't let us do badly. I *can't*. It's our *last year*, Kelly. Our last time singing in this group.

KELLY

Don't say that.

ELIZA

Don't you want to make it count?

KELLY

Sure, but I want to enjoy myself while I'm doing it! I can't constantly be thinking about how soon it's gonna end—!

ALICE

(loudly and suddenly, cutting across KELLY)

I wrote a song for Smith.

The others turn, half-surprised to realize she is there.

ELIZA

What?

ALICE

A song, I, I wrote a song for Smith.

Like—Like a thank you for all they've done for us. Since we're going to be leaving soon.

JILL

Wow, that's—
—that's cool, Al...

ALICE

(speaking very quickly—she may never have the courage for this again)

I have lyrics and a melody, and I've been working out chords for it on a guitar, and I thought maybe, like maybe you guys could help me transcribe it to voice parts, or find me someone who can, like Travis or, or, and and then maybe maybe Chamber could sing it at the last concert.

ELIZA

Would you be singing with us?

ALICE

Well...yeah.
It's my song.

(Beat.)

JILL

Uh. We'll talk about it with the others, Al, sure.

ALICE

(can tell she's being deflected)

...Okay. Okay.

(Beat—struggling to get the words out.)

Great. I'm gonna go...finish working out the chords, then...let you guys...yeah...see you.

(She leaves. Beat. Then ELIZA turns to JILL, cold.)

ELIZA

Why didn't you just tell her we have a song picked out for Chamber to sing to Smith already?

She's going to find out eventually. Why get her hopes up?

JILL

Well...why didn't you tell her?

On the other side of the stage, ALICE is alone in a corner with a guitar, on which she is trying out chords for a song. She writes in a notebook. As she strums and tests chords, she sings quietly to herself. Meanwhile, over in the box, the scene between JILL, KELLY and ELIZA continues, overlapping with ALICE's song.

KELLY

What should we do?

JILL

I mean, I don't want to say no // to her—

ALICE

(sings)

Every time we close a chapter we will have a new beginning...

KELLY

We can't say yes though.

ELIZA

No, yeah, obviously. Absolutely not.

Even though the time we had is gone...

(Slowly, somehow ALICE hears them—and it throws her off. She fumbles a chord.)

Fuck.

ALICE

I mean—I know she's not in Chamber, but—

JILL

// Why does everything...never works...why can't I...

ALICE

She had her chance to be a part of Chamber. She's not. So she's not part of the discussion.

ELIZA

What are you talking about?

JILL

...Do you // not know?

ELIZA

N-No.
Please.

ALICE

She was in Chamber, Jill.

KELLY

What?

JILL

She was for about two months // our junior year.

ELIZA

S-Stop... Stop it.

ALICE

She never told me that...I didn't even realize...
So why isn't she in it anymore?...What happened?

JILL

ALICE

Please...I don't want to...

But it's too late.

A shift.

forte

ALICE is forced to take JILL's place in the box, which becomes a practice room. We are in the past.

KELLY

Look, it's really simple if you just—

ELIZA

Will you stop wasting time trying to be nice, Kelly. She can't read the damn sheet music.

KELLY

But she can still *sing*. We can teach her the part.

(turning back to ALICE)

Listen, it's like this.

(sings it for her)

There. See? Now, you try it with me.

Fearful but determined, ALICE straightens up, sings along with KELLY.

Nice, okay. You got it? Now on your own.

ALICE sings the part on her own, does pretty well.

There, you've got it? Now, with Eliza on the soprano part.

The two girls begin singing together. ALICE is way off.

ELIZA

Stop. Stop! You're off! You sounded fine a minute ago, what the hell is wrong with you?

KELLY

Eliza...

ELIZA

It's the same problem we've been having all week, can you only sing your part when there isn't anyone else around?

KELLY

Maybe...maybe if you cup your hands around your ears...so you can hear your own voice—

ELIZA

Oh, what, so she's going to spend the whole performance with her hands cupped around her ears? Get real, Kelly. This is hopeless. We can't make her a good singer by the time this sectional ends. I don't even think we can make her a good singer by the concert.

KELLY

Eliza, be...be nice—

ELIZA

For *what*, Kelsey? What sort of difference is being *nice* supposed to make? Smith isn't nice. How many times have they had to shout at us, or snap at us, or make us cry in order to make us good at what we do? We're not the best choir in the state because they're *nice* to us. *I* didn't get to be where I am in this Choir by being nice. Not even to myself. Not all of us have natural talent like you, Kelly, some of us *also* have to work our asses off for it to mean anything!

KELLY

You saying I don't work my ass off?

ELIZA

I'm saying you're too scared to make *her* do it!

(to ALICE)

You want to be in this group? You want to stay?

ALICE

...yes.

ELIZA

I can't hear you. Speak up, bitch. Do you want to stay?

ALICE

Yes.

ELIZA

Louder!

ALICE

Yes!

ELIZA

Sing it!

ALICE

What?

ELIZA

Sing it to your part in that song. Now. Go.

ALICE

(sings)

Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes...

ELIZA

Now sing it with me. And *listen*.

They start singing together. ALICE is all over the place. ELIZA stops her.

ELIZA

You sound like a dead horse trying to get air into its lungs. Did you even fucking audition for Chamber? Or did Smith just let you in out of pity?

KELLY

Eliza, calm down—

ELIZA

I'm not gonna let this stupid, tone-deaf bitch ruin our performances, Kelly. It's people like *her* that have Smith so upset lately.

SMITH *appears, facing the Chamber Choir, their dialogue overlapping with ELIZA's.*

SMITH

Alright, we need to talk.

ELIZA

(turning on ALICE)

Did you think this was just supposed to be fun? Do you take this seriously at *all*?

SMITH

I've been doing this for fifteen, sixteen years, and I have never had to do this.

ELIZA

Your voice sticks out like...like more than a sore toe, you're a whole fucking sore *person*.

SMITH

You all knew, going into this group, how much I expect from all of you.

ELIZA

You need to *listen*, goddammit, and *blend*.

SMITH

I expect the best. Not just your best, but *the* best.

ELIZA

Nobody at this concert is coming to see *you*. They're not there to hear *you* sing. It's about the group. You need to become one with the group, that's what Smith is always saying. Fit your voice into the large sound. If you can't fit into the group, then why the fuck are you even *here*?

ALICE

I...I just want...I'm trying...

ELIZA & SMITH

Try. *HARDER!*

ALICE cowers, runs out of the practice room, out of the scene, while SMITH comes even more forward.

SMITH

So here's what we're going to do.

As of right now, you are all no longer members of the Chamber Choir. In a week's time, we will be holding reauditions for the whole group. I don't want you to think of this as anyone specific being kicked out of the group—you are all being kicked out, and reauditioning.

If you've been doing the work, and you know your crap, then you have nothing to worry about—you'll be back in the group in no time. And if not... Well, then you can go cry in a bathroom, or whatever.

SMITH slowly sits, the scene transforming to the audition room. SMITH looks up, sees ALICE.

SMITH

Ah, yes. Alice. And what are you singing for me?

ALICE

"Come Again."

SMITH nods, gives the starting pitch. ALICE sings

Come again! that I may cease to mourn
Through thy unkind disdain
For now left and forlorn
I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die
In deadly pain and endless misery.

She finishes. Pause.

SMITH

See, when you do it on your own, it's not half bad.

(Beat.)

I don't know Alice, it's just this...this thing when you're singing with everybody else, and

you get...lost in traffic. You know what I mean?

(Beat.)

I don't know what to say, Alice, you're a good student. I let you into Chamber because of that. You pay attention in rehearsal, you work hard outside of it. And you clearly love the music. But there just seems to be something that's missing... I wish I knew how to help you.

ALICE stays completely still during all of this, just letting it wash over her. SMITH sighs.

Well. Thank you. You can send the next person in.

ALICE nods, as much as she can, leaves. A moment, and then KELLY enters. SMITH glances up, sees her.

Oh, get out. You know you're in.

KELLY smiles, turns, leaves, while downstage, ALICE huddles in the bathroom, sobbing. Slowly, she looks up into the mirror. Hates what she sees.

ALICE

Song is different from speech.

Under her, the CHAMBER CHOIR starts to sing "Hide and Seek," beautiful, horrifying.

ALICE

(fast)

And there's so much I would sing if I could.
If my vocal chords weren't these worthless flaps. If I could get my lips open without being revolted by my mouth, if I could make a sound and be sure anyone was listening, I, I don't—I can't—I can't keep doing this...
I just want to *sing!*

CHAMBER CHOIR

(sings)

Hide and seek

Trains and sewing machines

I just want to be able to be a part of
something more than me, for my voice
to matter, I just want to be fucking
heard, please—!

Not good enough not good enough I'll
never be good enough never never...

Blood and tears

They were here first

*As ALICE talks, she puts her hands over her ears,
trying to block out the sound of the CHOIR, of her
own thoughts.*

CHAMBER CHOIR

(sings)

Mm, what'd you say...?

ALICE

STOP!!

Silence.

A shift.

fortissimo

*And now we are outside, in a garden, and JILL is
there. She is startled to see ALICE, then
uncomfortable.*

JILL

...Hey.

ALICE

Hey.

(Beat.)

You just get out of Chamber?

JILL

Yeah... What are you doing out here?

ALICE

I like to come sometimes, to this garden.

JILL

I...didn't know you'd been doing that.

ALICE

Yeah. Well. You haven't been around much recently, have you?

(Beat.)

When I'm in here, it's like I'm in this safe, quiet pocket of space where the rest of the world goes away. Everywhere else for me it's just...cacophony. There's so much *noise*, so much *sound* exploding around me—in my head—and—

—and I try to fit inside it, I do, I want to feel like my voice matters in so much din, but I...it never feels like anyone hears me.

Here, at least...I can hear myself. I breathe. I try to find some peace.

(Beat.)

How do you do it? Blend yourself in and still be able to keep your own part? How do become one with the group without...losing yourself? Hear yourself, hear the parts around you, and be able to fit yourself within them? Why does it come so easy for you? And why do I always end up back here?

In the silence. Silenced.

(Beat.)

Did you ask them about my song?

JILL

I—Look...

ALICE

I didn't think so.

JILL

Don't be like that—

ALICE

Fine, then I'll just sing it for them on my own.

JILL

What?

ALICE

You guys don't have to sing the song, I know we don't have enough time to arrange. Just let me go up there, with my guitar, and sing it alone to them.

JILL

Alice...

ALICE

(growing desperate)

It'll even sound better if it's just me singing! I sing better on my own! Just let me do it, please, just let me go up and sing my song, let me sing my song—

JILL

Why is this so important to you?

ALICE

Are you actually asking me that question?

JILL

I— Well, how was I supposed to know—
Why didn't you *tell* me you'd been in Chamber!

ALICE

Would it have made a difference?

JILL

Yes! You could have trusted me—

ALICE

It's not a question of trust when—when all that was going on, you—you weren't in Choir yet. You were another world, for me. You were my only sanctuary from it...

JILL

Well, I'm not a fucking sanctuary, Alice. I'm not a place where you can come and hide when the rest of the world is too much for you. I'm a *person*.
And you could have told me.

ALICE

You didn't need to know I'd been in Chamber to treat me better—

JILL

Why can't you just be *happy* for me?

ALICE

// It—It's not *about* that—

JILL

You're just jealous—

ALICE

(*it bursts from her*)

YOU PROMISED!

You promised me things wouldn't change. You said always, you said we'd still be friends—

JILL

We—We are.

ALICE

Don't lie to me. I have known you too long, don't you lie to me—

JILL

Is it so wrong that I wanted to have some new friends? But you have to have me all to yourself, don't you, Alice—

ALICE

You were all I had!

JILL

Yeah, well, maybe if you were better at making friends, // at at talking to people, maybe if you actually *tried* for once—

ALICE

You say it like it's so easy, but you don't know, // you don't know what this feels like—

JILL

I *do* know! That's why I wanted to *belong* somewhere, // not just cling to the same person—

ALICE

But you, you, you didn't have to abandon me!

JILL

You're being melodramatic, you're talking like a kid—

ALICE

What would talking like an adult sound like, Jill?! Talking like you and Kelly and Eliza do with each other?? All teeth and masks and hiding your feelings and jabbing and nipping at each other to hide how fucking scared you all are of yourselves, // how bad you all want to belong—

ELIZA

What am I supposed to tell you, it's just part of getting along—

ALICE

WELL THEN I DON'T WANT TO GET ALONG!

I want my best friend back!

I want to be a kid again!

I want to be able to sing, and not give a fuck *how* I'm singing, to hit some wrong notes, to not fit in, and not feel like I have to hurt for it!

I want to not have to hurt anymore!

(Beat.)

But I guess that's not gonna happen, is it, Jill?

(Beat.)

You should go.

JILL

I—

ALICE

Just...just go. Please.

I won't bother you anymore.

JILL stares at her, heartbroken.

Then, slowly, she leaves, leaving ALICE alone.

Silence.

ALICE

(to the audience)

Music is like memory. It brings things back—whether you want it to or not. And no matter how much you want to sometimes...no, you can't get rid of it. You can't get it out of your head. People tell me it gets better. That it will stop hurting. But will it stop hurting because I've healed or because I just managed to forget? And how easy will it be for all that hurt to come rushing back with one line...one strand of one song...even a few notes...

In her mind—and to us—the CHAMBER CHOIR starts singing her song.

And no matter how quiet it gets...sometimes, in my head, I can still hear it...how it would have sounded if they'd sung it...how I would have sing it with them...

As they sing, she moves about the space, letting the song wash over her, the dream of it.

CHAMBER CHOIR

(sings)

Every time we close a chapter we will have a new beginning
Even though the time we had is gone

Slowly, ALICE joins the CHAMBER CHOIR, entering the group and standing in the middle of their ranks.

But not singing.

Just listening, silent.

Every time we close a chapter we will have a new beginning
We know endings start
A new beginning

ALICE *looks to* JILL.

There are people in your life that stay with you forever...

Forever...
Forever....

The lights fade on the CHOIR into a final

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY