A House Named Eden

By
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**A House Named Eden**

(In darkness. A Native American flute is heard playing. A light rises on PASTOR WILLIAMS. He an African-American man in his late sixties/early seventies.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

(Our MUSICIAN stands in a pool of light. He is playing a flute. He is dressed in a suit and tie. On another part of the stage LITTLE EMILY, TEENAGE EMILY and EM stand together in a pool of light. The MAN IN BLUE and LADY IN BLUE also stand in a pool of light looking on.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female...

(A small three-dimensional two-story house appears. Our COMPANY is revealed standing or sitting on stage. They are both the living and the dead. The dead are dressed in blue. A large blue sky frames our COMPANY. As the play progresses more three-dimensional buildings will be added until by the play’s end the stage is filled with community homes. It is the year 2006 but time will become fluid between the present and past, the real and unreal.)

ACTOR #1

And God blessed them, and God said unto them—

ACTOR #2

--Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it--

ACTOR #3

--and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air—

ACTOR #4

--and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

MUSICIAN

The native Suangna, the “people of the earth” believe that Quaoar, the great force of creation, sang and danced the world into existence.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden—

ACTOR #5

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying—
ACTOR #6
Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.

MUSICIAN
In 1542 the people of the earth lived here long before the first Europeans arrived. They greeted the Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo near what is now San Pedro.

ACTOR #7
But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it—

PASTOR WILLIAMS
--for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

MAN IN BLUE
In 1784 my grand uncle Juan José Dominguez settled Rancho San Pedro with a land grant of 75,000 acres from Spain.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise—

ACTOR #1
--she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat--

ACTOR #2
--and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

LADY IN BLUE
In 1827 I married my husband Manuel Dominguez. We had 10 children. Only 6 survived. They were all girls.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden—

ACTOR #3
--and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

EM
By the 1940’s there were hundreds of oil wells and junkyards. The rain flooded everything out.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
And the LORD God called unto Adam—

ACTOR #4
Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?
TEENAGE EMILY
In the 1960s it was frogs that allowed me to escape the terror I found at home.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Therefore the LORD God sent Adam forth from the garden of Eden—

MUSICIAN
The people of the earth were enslaved in the Spanish missions. Many died there. Some worked on the ranchos becoming vaqueros. Some survived and had families. And in 2006 the people of the earth are still living among you.

ACTOR #5
--and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims—

ALL
--and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

(MUSICIAN, MAN IN BLUE, LADY IN BLUE and LITTLE EMILY and TEENAGE EMILY join the COMPANY. MANUELA, a young woman runs in. She is distraught.)

EM
Manuela?

MANUELA
Leave me alone, Em!

EM
What’s wrong?

MANUELA
Nothing! Everything’s fine!

EM
I don’t believe you, Manuela.

MANUELA
Em, I’m past help! Don’t you see?

EM
I’m not giving up on you!

MANUELA
Why not? Everybody else has! I’m a junky, Em! I’ve wrecked my life and my family! There are no angels in heaven to save me!
EM
I know what you’re going through! I’ve been there. I felt the sting.

MANUELA
And I can’t take it anymore! Goodbye, Em!

EM
Don’t even think about it, Manuela!

MANUELA
You can’t stop me!

(She runs off.)

EM
MANUELA!

(EM exits.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Eden House will be a sanctuary for those in need. Our community built Eden House. And today we open it. It will serve our community’s lost souls who seek a giving heart. It will be more than just a place of shelter, food, and clothing. Eden House will be a second chance. I would like to ask our mayor to officially open it. Your honor.

MAYOR
Thank you Pastor Williams. I dedicate Eden House to those who taught us that we must never forget those in need. For once we do we have forgotten our own humanity.

(The MAYOR stands up cutting the ribbon on the house. COMPANY applauds and cheers. Our CHOIR sings “I’ll Take You There.”)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
I ask you what is the price of building a community? Each of us has our own answer. I would like to share mine.

ACTOR #4
You tell it like it is, Pastor Williams!

ACTOR #5
Amen!

PASTOR WILLIAMS
My great African ancestors came to America not by choice. They were taken and enslaved to create another man’s Eden. For hundreds of years they toiled across this land. The bones of my ancestors lie buried across this great country. Our roots run deep. Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden. And many of us who first came, we too were looking for a second chance. We found it here on the edge of the Pacific coast. We’ve tried creating our own version of Eden. I know it’s not perfect. Nothing ever is. But a garden must be nurtured to grow even when things stand in the way.
(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE whistles happily to himself. He rolls on a small real estate model home. He uses a feather duster to keep it clean. The MAN IN A COAT AND TIE sees them and hides behind the model home with his feather duster.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
When I first came here with my family in the early 1960s things were then much different. I was much taller back then.

(Several COMPANY MEMBERS stand up. It is YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS, MRS. WILLIAMS, his wife; and children, KAREN and NATE. NATE is dressed in blue. They wear 1960s clothing. NATE carries a kite.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
This must be the place!

MRS. WILLIAMS
Are you sure, Thomas?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Sure I’m sure. I’ve got the nose of a bloodhound!

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS barks. NATE follows. The family bursts out laughing.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
After convincing my wife Sarah that we needed a bigger house. She agreed reluctantly. You see, we had two growing children, Karen, Nate, and a third on the way. We came searching for a new house in Carson.

Hello?

MRS. WILLIAMS
Hello?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
That’s weird I could have sworn I saw someone.

MRS. WILLIAMS
Kids, why don’t you wait outside?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAM
How are you feeling, Nate?

NATE
Okay, Daddy. My tummy doesn’t hurt right now. When are we going to fly my kite?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Soon. I promise.

KAREN
Come on slowpoke, let’s go!
(KAREN and NATE return to the COMPANY.)

Well, where are they?

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS)

(_MAN IN A COAT AND TIE sneezes loudly._)

Hello, there!

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS)

Hey!

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE)

Bless you!

(MRS. WILLIAMS)

Thank you.

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE)

We didn’t think anyone was here.

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS)

Yes, well, our salespeople are out showing some prospective customers the new model home. How may I help you?

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE)

Well, we’re interested in seeing it too.

(Pause)

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE)

Oh, you are?

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS)

That’s why we’re here.

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE)

Well, our salespeople may be gone a long time.

(MRS. WILLIAMS)

We don’t mind waiting.

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE)

The young couple getting the tour will probably purchase the house.

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS)

Probably?

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE)

Most definitely, positively. These new homes are a bit expensive and the down payment can be a bit—
YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Steep?

MAN IN COAT AND TIE

Yes.

MRS. WILLIAMS

Well, we have it. Every penny. I should know. I’m the one counting the pennies.

(Pause)

MAN IN COAT AND TIE

May I be honest with you? This housing track is geared for a different clientele.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

What are you saying?

MAN IN COAT AND TIE

There’s another housing track down the road that you may be interested in.

MRS. WILLIAMS

But we’re interested in this one.

MAN IN COAT AND TIE

It’s not available.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

But you just said--

MAN IN COAT AND TIE

This other place is for colored people.

THE VERY OLD WOMAN WITH SHAWL

What did he say?

MRS. WILLIAMS

So we’re not allowed to see the house?

MAN IN COAT AND TIE

Look, I’m just trying to do my job. This other housing track is going to serve your community. They’re the same houses built by the same company.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Now, wait it minute.

MAN IN COAT AND TIE

But if you’d like to speak to my manager, he’ll be back after the house tour. I don’t know how long he’ll be. It may be a—

MRS. WILLIAMS

Thomas, let’s go.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

This isn’t right, you know?
I don’t make the rules. I do what I’m told.

God knows. God sees.

(MAN IN A COAT AND TIE sneezes loudly.)

Bless you.

Thank you. Look, I’m sorry. Good afternoon.

It wasn’t long before things changed. We got organized. The NAACP and other civil rights organizations picketed. It didn’t happen over night but we got our house. There were many sacrifices to create our Eden.

And what of us?

Sarah?

Did you sacrifice your family to create Eden? Come on kids.

(They sit. A YOUNG MAN (JAMIE) runs in. He is dressed in blue.)

Pastor Williams! Pastor Williams!

Jamie, why aren’t you at Bible study?

There’s a little girl missing out in the slough. Mrs. Parks saw her running out that way.

Why didn’t Mrs. Parks stop her?

You know, she’s got arthritis in her hips and her knees are just as bad. She yelled to her but it didn’t do any good.

And her parents?
YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
Nobody really knows them. They keep to themselves.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
What’s the little girl’s name?

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
Emily, I think.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Go get Jonathan and Noah from Bible study to help us look for her.

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
Yes, sir!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
That poor little girl.

(Night. Crickets. A slough. Several COMPANY members manipulate FROG PUPPETS. They leap every now and then. LITTLE EMILY, a young Anglo barefoot girl stands up crossing away from the COMPANY. She speaks to a frog.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Emily? My gosh, you we’re so little and innocent.

LITTLE EMILY
Hello, Mr. Frog. Don’t be scared I won’t hurt you. I like frogs. You got to be the biggest I ever seen. You out here with your family or are you all alone like me? Do you want to make a wish on a star? I do. I wish I could be somebody else maybe like you. Then we could be friends. Maybe neighbors. Hop everywhere together, be free, and eat bugs. I wouldn’t need a home ‘cause this place would do just fine.

(Yoffstage)
Emily!

MAN #2 (NOAH)
(Offstage)
Emily!

LITTLE EMILY
(Desperate)
I wish! I wish! Please God make me a frog! Turn me into a frog and I’ll never ask for anything! I’ll be a good girl! Please! Oh, please!

(Yoffstage)
Emily!

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
LITTLE EMILY

(Angry)
I hate you! I’m never talking to you again!

(LITTLE EMILY runs off. The PUPPET FROGS leap away. A few MEN enter using flashlights.)

Emily!

MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

Emily!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Gosh darn it!

MAN #2 (NOAH)

What is it, Noah?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I just ruined my new leather shoes!

MAN #2 (NOAH)

It’s only mud and water.

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

Emily!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Man, and it’s cold out here!

MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

We’ve been out here a long time.

MAN #2 (NOAH)

EMILY!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Gosh darn it!

MAN #2 (JONATHAN)

What is it?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Now, my new pants are ruined too!

MAN #2 (JONATHAN)

A man can hardly walk out here without sinking up to his ankles.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Jamie, you don’t think she’s fallen in somewhere?
YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
I don’t think so but I can’t say for sure.

MAN #1 (JONATHAN)
This swamp goes on and on. She could be anywhere. It wasn’t this deep just a month ago.

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
You never know what it’s like after a rain.

MAN #2 (NOAH)
My folks are gonna kill me when I get home.

EMILY!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Why are they gonna kill you?

MAN #1 (JONATHAN)
These are my new church pants and shoes, man.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
They’ll be a forgiving family.

MAN #2 (NOAH)
How do you know that, Pastor Williams?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS & PASTOR WILLIAMS
Because you’re doing God’s work.

ACTOR #6
That’s an Amen! Do I hear an Amen?

COMPANY
AMEN!

MAN #2 (NOAH)
You don’t know my momma and poppa.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
You tell them what I said.

MAN #2 (NOAH)
Yes, sir.

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
Pastor, we’ve looked just about everywhere. There’s no sign of her.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
She must be so frightened.
Hey, is that crawfish? MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

Sure is! MAN #2 (NOAH)

Come on fellows! EMILY! YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

EMILY! MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

EMILY! MAN #2 (NOAH)

Pastor, it’s late. MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

I’m not leaving until I find her. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

She could be back home by now. YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

Sure thing. MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

Pastor, what kind of folks let their kids run wild and why aren’t they looking for her? MAN #2 (NOAH)

You gotta get training and a license to drive a car but to have children you don’t need nothing. MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

We are out here because we are Christian people. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Amen! ACTOR #7

They must be poor white people. MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

I didn’t hear that come from you, did I Jonathan? YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I’m sorry, Pastor. MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

I don’t care what color she is. In God eyes we’re all the same. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
That’s right! You tell them, Pastor!

It just seems that we’re the ones being the parent.

They should be locked up.

Jonathan, I don’t know this family or what goes on in that house but we got a responsibility to find that little girl. Come on now! EMILY!

EMILY!

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS and YOUNG MAN exit.)

He thinks this is Eden, huh?

Yeah, it looks more like Hell to me!

(The MEN follow. MANUELA enters running. She is out of breath. EM follows. She is also out of breath.)

Manuela, you’re killing me here!

Stop following me!

You can’t run forever!

Stay away!

I can’t do that!

(MANUELA runs off.)

Manuela! If I die of a heart attack it’s on you!

(EM exits. Our MUSICIAN plays his flute while PASTOR WILLIAMS speaks.)
PASTOR WILLIAMS

In the 18th century, a Spanish soldier came to California to serve his king and queen and for the glory of God. He settled here in the area and his family thrived. By the 19th century his descendents had become one of the most important California families. It was said that Don Manuel Dominguez liked to go for walks with a silver-headed cane looking out at his vast estate. He too believed this place was Eden.

(Moonlight. The MAN IN BLUE stands up and looks out. He is a ghost. He is dressed as an early California Don. He uses a silver headed cane.)

Es una noche muy bella.

(The PUPPET FROGS leap in. LITTLE EMILY follows. Our MUSICIAN stops playing his flute.)

¿Que haces, Nena?

Are you God--

Ah, hablas inglés.

--or are you the Devil?

I’m neither.

Are you the “Great Wizard of Oz”?

A wizard? No. What is a child like you doing out here alone?

I’m not a child I’m a frog.

A frog?

Yes, ribbet.

(The FROG PUPPETS respond with “ribbet.”)

How did you get here?

I hopped.
MAN IN BLUE

There’re only a few settlers living out this far from the *pueblo de Los Angeles*.

LITTLE EMILY

I live that way. Ribbet.

(The FROG PUPPETS respond with “ribbet.”)

MAN IN BLUE

Yes, of course, everyday more and more of you come to this country.

LITTLE EMILY

What are you talking about, Mister?

MAN IN BLUE

You’re on my *rancho*.

LITTLE EMILY

This land belongs to you?

MAN IN BLUE

Yes, as far as the eye can see and then some.

LITTLE EMILY

How come I never seen you before?

MAN IN BLUE

I like to keep a low profile.

LITTLE EMILY

Huh?

MAN IN BLUE

I don’t want my enemies to know much about me, you see?

LITTLE EMILY

Can I live here?

MAN IN BLUE

Why?

LITTLE EMILY

‘Cause I like it.

MAN IN BLUE

You should be home.

LITTLE EMILY

This is going to my new home. Ribbet.

(The FROG PUPPETS respond with “ribbet.”)
(Offstage) YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Emily!

MAN IN BLUE
Someone’s looking for you.

LITTLE EMILY
Can I please stay?

MAN IN BLUE
Everyone is welcomed to my rancho. Buenas noches, little frog. Ribbet!

(YOU NG PASTOR WILLIAMS enters.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Are you Emily?

LITTLE EMILY
Yes.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
I’m Pastor Williams and I’ve come to take you home.

LITTLE EMILY
This is my home. The man said I could live here.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
What man?

LITTLE EMILY & PASTOR WILLIAMS
The man in blue.

LITTLE EMILY
He told me this was his land.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Nobody lives out here.

LITTLE EMILY
That’s what he said.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Your parents must be worried about you.

LITTLE EMILY
Mister, I don’t want to go!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
We should start back. It’s late.

LITTLE EMILY
No, I’m a frog! Ribbet!
PASTOR WILLIAMS

Don’t take her!

LITTLE EMILY

I’m a frog!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Come now!

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Listen to me!

LITTLE EMILY

I’m a frog!

(The PUPPET FROGS respond with “Ribbet!” YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS takes hold of LITTLE EMILY.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Why couldn’t I see it, Emily? All you were trying to do was survive. Was I standing in your way? How could I have been so blind?

LITTLE EMILY

You did good, Pastor Williams.

(TEENAGE EMILY stands up. She crosses to LITTLE EMILY. They circle one another.)

TEENAGE EMILY

Oh, really? Did he?

LITTLE EMILY

Yes.

TEENAGE EMILY

What do you know you stupid little girl.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Teenage Emily.

(LITTLE EMILY and TEENAGE EMILY sit down. MRS. GARCIA is dressed in blue.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

I could have done more to help you. Much more.

MRS. GARCIA

Pastor Williams, you helped build 13 parks in 13 years.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Mrs. Garcia.
MRS. GARCIA
There was nothing in this community.

MRS. EVANS
That’s right!

MRS. GARCIA
We planted more than 5,000 trees, paved sidewalks, there was so much green. Tell him, Mrs. Tupua.

MRS. TUPUA
You helped my husband and I when our son was sliding into trouble as a teen. You said, “If you believe in kids, you tell them enough, it can make all the difference.” Well, we took your advice. It made all the difference.

MAN #2 (NOAH)
My grandfather never finished high school. He rode in the back of the bus. If a person wants to do it they can. We have to take responsibility for what’s in our community. He liked you because you both thought the same way.

PHILLIP
I like the donuts after service at church, Pastor Williams!

MRS. EVANS
Amen!

MRS. GARCIA
Dios esta en nuestra vida. God is in our life.

(The CHOIR sings a song. Afterwards, a small adobe house appears.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Since the days of it’s original inhabitants our community has always had to adapt to survive. Our house has always stood strongly even it was taken over by others.

(LADY IN BLUE stands up. She opens a parasol.)

¿Querido?

PASTOR WILLIAMS
It’s Doña Maria Engracia.

MAN IN BLUE
Yes, my dear wife?

(The MAN IN BLUE joins her.)
LADY IN BLUE
Why are these newcomers trying to take our land, husband?

MAN IN BLUE
*La ocasión hace al ladrón.* The occasion makes the thief. These American interlopers come everyday to *California* with dreams of becoming wealthy.

LADY IN BLUE
They hunt for gold as if they were a pack of bloodthirsty wolves.

MAN IN BLUE
We’re being over run in our own country. They’re everywhere.

LADY IN BLUE
We should build walls to keep them out.

MAN IN BLUE
It’s only matter of time before everything changes. I fear them.

What will become of us?

MAN IN BLUE
There’s talk of statehood. We’re going to have to fight to keep our *rancho*. There are two things that are important to me, *Queirda*, keeping this land and never going into debt. It’s the only way we’ll survive these American locusts.

LADY IN BLUE
I find them rude. They constantly speak English and I don’t know what they are saying.

MAN IN BLUE
Yes, I know, but we’re going to have to learn their ways, our children too.

LADY IN BLUE
They should all be sent back to where they came from!

MAN IN BLUE
Now, now, you’re getting flushed. There’s no need to get upset. If I have any say, our family will be taken care of.

Oh, you are such an optimist.

MAN IN BLUE
I have to be. I’ve got six daughters to care for!

(BLUE DAUGHTERS enter. They wear masks and veils. They curtsy as they are introduced.)

MAN IN BLUE
*Ana Josefa Juliana, Maria Guadalupe, Maria Dolores Simona, Maria Victoria, Maria Susana Delfina y Maria Jesus de los Reyes!*

(They all sit.)
PASTOR WILLIAMS
Time keeps pace and the years ticked by. Sarah and I had our third child. We named her Shannon. Our dirt front yard bloomed into a lawn and garden. The small church I had started began to grow. And little Emily turned into teenage Emily. Her innocence was fading away replaced by a mysterious darkness I didn’t understand.

(A small white house is added to the other buildings on stage.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
That’s Mr. and Mrs. Burrows’ house.

(MR. & MRS. BURROWS cross to their white house. MR. BURROWS is dressed in blue. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS and TEENAGE EMILY stand up.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
I brought your daughter home again.

TEENAGE EMILY
Don’t touch me!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
She was out hiding under a bridge near the new freeway smoking cigarettes.

TEENAGE EMILY
Who cares?!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
I know it’s not my business—

TEENAGE EMILY
That’s right. It’s not!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
--but she needs--

TEENAGE EMILY
Why do you even care?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
--attention.

TEENAGE EMILY
I’m leaving!

MR. BURROWS
Be quiet.

TEENAGE EMILY
Yes, sir.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Look, Mr. and Mrs. Burrows, I don’t want to report this to the authorities but I—
PASTOR WILLIAMS

Do it! Report them!

MRS. BURROWS

Pastor, my husband and I thank you. We won’t let this happen—

MR. BURROWS

That’s enough.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Well, good night then. Emily.

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS begins to exit.)

TEENAGE EMILY

Poppa, I didn’t mean to cause you any trouble!

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS over hears them.)

MR. BURROWS

Shut up stupid! You good-for-nothing! You don’t bring trouble to my house! You won’t live here anymore! ’Cause they’ll be hell to pay! Do you understand me! Do you!

TEENAGE EMILY

Yes, Poppa!

MR. BURROWS

Go to your room and stay there! I don’t want to hear a peep out of you!

TEENAGE EMILY

I’m sorry, Poppa!

MR. BURROWS

What did I just say!

(MR. BURROWS crosses to her. He looks at her smiling malevolently.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

NO!

(Blackout. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS and PASTOR WILLIAMS remain a pool of light. Lights fade away on YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS. A crack of thunder is heard and then a flash of lightening is seen. EM enters.)

EM

Manuela?

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Em? Em, it’s me, Pastor Williams!

EM

Have you seen Manuela?
PASTOR WILLIAMS

No.

EM
I’ve got to find her. She’s going to do something terrible to herself. I just know.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
I’ll help. I’ll go look—

EM
No. You’ve got to rest. You’re not well. I’ve got volunteers out searching for her. I’m so glad that we started Eden House together. It was a good thing.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
It was your idea and it was brilliant. Em, find Manuela and bring her back safely.

EM
I will!

(EM exits. A small 1960s style house appears.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
It’s my house.

(MRS. WILLIAMS brushes her SHANNON’s hair. KAREN works on a school report. PASTOR WILLIAMS looks on.)

MRS. WILLIAMS
Your father is late again.

SHANNON
Something kept Daddy.

KAREN
Something always keeps Daddy.

MRS. WILLIAMS
Since we moved out to Dominguez Ranch he has had very little time for us.

KAREN
He never used to miss dinner.

MRS. WILLIAMS
Well, he missed it again tonight.

SHANNON
Momma, why is Daddy so busy?

MRS. WILLIAMS
Well, he’s involved himself in lots of planning committees, action committees and who knows what else.
SHANNON

Why?

MRS. WILLIAMS

Because he wants this place to be special.

SHANNON

Why?

KAREN

Be quiet you.

MRS. WILLIAMS

Karen, that’s no way to talk to your sister.

KAREN

Sorry. He promised he’d read my social studies report. It’s due tomorrow.

SHANNON

He said he’d fly his kite with Nate and me after dinner.

KAREN

Momma, is Nate going to be okay?

MRS. WILLIAMS

Don’t you worry about your brother. He’s going to be fine.

KAREN

You sound like daddy.

SHANNON

I wish there was a park where I could play.

MRS. WILLIAMS

In time, dear, everything comes to those wait. (to KAREN) Let me see your paper.

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS stand up and enters. He is exhausted.)

SHANNON

Daddy!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Hey, Pumpkin! (to MRS. WILLIAMS) I’m sorry I didn’t call. I was held up.

MRS. WILLIAMS

(Coldly)

What was it this time?
YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Emily Burrows.

MRS. WILLIAMS

Don’t tell me she ran away from home again?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Yes, she did. I wish I could do more but I don’t know how. If only there was place to help her.

SHANNON

Daddy, will you read me a book?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I’ll be right there, Pumpkin. Just give me a minute.

KAREN

I’ll go read you your book, Shannon. Daddy never has time.

(KAREN and SHANNON exit.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

What was that about?

MRS. WILLIAMS

She’s upset at you. Social Studies report?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I’ll read it now. Where’s Nate?

MRS. WILLIAMS

He’s had a fever. I put him to bed.

(Direct)

Was he in pain?

MRS. WILLIAMS

Just a little.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Did you call the doctor?

MRS. WILLIAMS

Of course.
YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

And?

MRS. WILLIAMS

He said to watch him. Nate’s been extremely irritable. Doesn’t want me to baby him.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

We’ll do whatever we have to do!

MRS. WILLIAMS

I know that!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

If that means babying him—

MRS. WILLIAMS

Will you please stop!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I’m sorry. You were here and I wasn’t. You did the right thing.

MRS. WILLIAMS

He and Shannon waited for you.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

What? (realizing) Oh, how stupid could I be? I forgot! I’ll go apologize right now.

MRS. WILLIAMS

Don’t wake Nate.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

He’s going to get through this illness.

MRS. WILLIAMS

He’s got sickle cell anemia! I don’t know if I can get through this! How he suffers and we can’t do a thing!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

It’s not our fault. The doctor’s are trying to understand--

MRS. WILLIAMS

Spare me the clinical babble! They know as much as we do which is nothing! I’m trying to hold on and you’re not helping.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

What does that mean?
MRS. WILLIAMS
It’s just that ever since we moved here we haven’t spent time together as a family.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
My work has kept me very busy you know that.

MRS. WILLIAMS
Get brother Jonathan to help!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
He can’t. He’s not ready. Look, my parents helped build their community. I’m trying to do the same thing. There’s nothing here. We’ve got so much to do.

MRS. WILLIAMS
Why does it always have to be you?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Look, we’re building this city from the ground up. This is a chance for us to create something different.

MRS. WILLIAMS
Sometimes you need to say “no!”

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
A place we can call home.

MRS. WILLIAMS
What about our home? When do we matter? You always got to be out in front leading the others, everyone seeing you, the pastor, the community activist. You enjoy it. Is that godly?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Sarah, I promise you things will slow up.

When?

You’re not alone in this.

MRS. WILLIAMS
I feel I am. I feel like that lost girl Emily.

(Pause)
YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Do you want to pray together?

MRS. WILLIAMS

No.

(She walks away from YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Sarah, I’m sorry. I tried my best.

MRS. WILLIAMS

But your best wasn’t good enough, was it? You were gone almost every night. You gave your heart and soul to this community and the cost was losing your family. I’ll never forgive you for it.

(She sits down. Our COMPANY MEMBERS stand up and speak to PASTOR WILLIAMS. MRS. ROBINSON stands up. She is dressed in blue.)

MRS. ROBINSON

Pastor Williams, I just wanted a decent home and a place for my sons.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Is that you, Mrs. Robinson?

MRS. ROBINSON

They said to us, “You can’t afford to live here.”

I remember.

HOUSEWIFE

Civic Center was nothing but wrecking yards. Nothing was here. The rain flooded the land.

MRS. CLARKSON-MEADOWS

We out grew the house and moved to Center View ‘cause we were told, “Center View was built for you all.”

MAN # 1 (JONATHAN)

I see students so lost. I want to make a difference but I don’t know how.

IMELDA

You don’t drop a tear.
PASTOR WILLIAMS

*Imelda, Doroteo Cabacungan?*

IMELDA

We’re 75 years old. We play bingo.

DOROTEO

*Tayong matatanda ang laro natin ay bingo lamang, sawa na tayo diaan.*

IMELDA

He says, “Seniors only want to play bingo. We’re getting sick of bingo.”

PASTOR WILLIAMS

It isn’t my favorite game either.

MAN #1 (NOAH)

We’ve come so far but we still got far to go.

DOROTEO

*Ikaw ang magaalaga sa inyong mga kasama.*

IMELDA

You are your brother’s keeper.

(The CHOIR sings “His Eyes Are On The Sparrow.” Afterwards, several small track homes appear. Our COMPANY MEMBERS enter rolling three doorframes on stage. They stand behind them as TEENAGE EMILY enters. She has an old mason jar filled with tadpoles. She knocks on a door. A VERY OLD MAN WITH CANE steps out.)

VERY OLD MAN WITH CANE

What do you want?

TEENAGE EMILY

I’m selling tadpoles for a penny each.

VERY OLD MAN WITH CANE

Why would I want to buy tadpoles?

TEENAGE EMILY

To raise as a pet.

VERY OLD MAN WITH CANE

A pet? Why would I want a pet frog?
TEENAGE EMILY

Maybe your grandkids would!

VERY OLD MAN WITH CANE

Why would I want grandkids? They’re just like pets. All they do is eat and poop! Shoo!

(He exits with door. TEENAGE EMILY knocks on the next door. VERY OLD WOMAN WITH SHAWL steps out. She is dressed in blue.)

VERY OLD WOMAN WITH SHAWL

(Loudly)
YES, WHO IS IT?

TEENAGE EMILY

Would you like to buy a tadpole?

VERY OLD WOMAN WITH SHAWL

(Hard of hearing)
HUH?

TEENAGE EMILY

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUY A TADPOLE, ‘MAM?

TADPOLE?

VERY OLD WOMAN WITH SHAWL

TEENAGE EMILY

FOR A PENNY! PLEASE!

VERY OLD WOMAN WITH SHAWL

NOT UNLESS YOU GOT FROG LEGS! I LIKE MY FROG LEGS IN BATTER!

TEENAGE EMILY

NO!

(VERY OLD WOMAN WITH SHAWL exits with door. TEENAGE EMILY knocks on the last door. HOUSEWIFE steps out. She dries her hands with a towel.)

TEENAGE EMILY

Mam, would you like buy some tadpoles?

HOUSEWIFE

You’re selling tadpoles?
TEENAGE EMILY
Yes, mam, see? They’re a penny each.

HOUSEWIFE
I don’t know.

TEENAGE EMILY
(Crying)
Please buy them from me! Please!

HOUSEWIFE
All right, Honey. I’ll take two. Maybe my kids will like them.

TEENAGE EMILY
Yes, they will.

HOUSEWIFE
Here you go!

TEENAGE EMILY
Thank you, mam! Oh, thank you!

(PASTOR WILLIAMS exits. TEENAGE EMILY sits. Our MUSICIAN plays his flute.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Each culture has left its mark on this land. The spirit of giving has been one of the constants throughout. The Bible says Eden existed. I know that we can never go back but if we could this would be my Eden. I think of the people who lived here before me. Did they feel the same way?

(The MAN IN BLUE enters.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Don Manuel?

MAN IN BLUE
Pastor.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Am I having a dream?

MAN IN BLUE
No.
PASTOR WILLIAMS

Then what is it?

MAN IN BLUE

It’s something in between, a passage of sorts, a look at the past, present and perhaps future.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

I don’t understand.

MAN IN BLUE

You will.

(Our MUSICIAN finishes playing. A small adobe house becomes illuminated. LADY IN BLUE enters.)

LADY IN BLUE

Ya llego.

MAN IN BLUE

He’s here now?

LADY IN BLUE

Yes, waiting to greet you.

MAN IN BLUE

And he’s interested in our daughter?

LADY IN BLUE

Yes.

MAN IN BLUE

And she’s interested in him?

LADY IN BLUE

Of course! Why do you keep him waiting?

MAN IN BLUE

Patience woman. Give me a moment.

(Pause)

Fine. Send him in.

(LADY IN BLUE signals YOUNG MAN IN BLUE to enter.)

YOUNG MAN IN BLUE

Buenos dias, Don Manuel.

MAN IN BLUE

Buenos dias, Señor Carson. How may I help you?
YOUNG MAN IN BLUE

Con su permiso. I’ve come to ask you for your daughter’s hand in marriage.

I see. Do you love her?

YOUNG MAN IN BLUE

Con todo mi corazón.

Ah-huh. And what does she have to say about it?

I think she feels the same way,

MAN IN BLUE

Huh-huh. So that is why she is hiding under the bed?

Pardon?

YOUNG MAN IN BLUE

(to LADY IN BLUE)

Bring her.

(YOUng MAN IN BLUE

(She collects her DAUGHTERS and they listen discreetly while fanning themselves.)

MAN IN BLUE

I’ve had my eye on you for some time now.

Oh?

MAN IN BLUE

You are an excellent businessman; a respected político and I will be honored to have you as a son-in-law, Señor Carson!

Call me George.

YOUNG MAN IN BLUE

Okay, Jorge. I see great things that will come of this.

YOUNG MAN IN BLUE

Your Rancho San Pedro is a magnificent estate.

Gracias.

YOUNG MAN IN BLUE

I imagine one day it will make you and your familia even more wealthy.

(A small Victorian house appears.)
I like your way of thinking.

The possibilities are endless.

Go on.

There’s so much to be done.

(Another small track house appears.)

Yes, I can see it now.

It will secure your place in history.

Without debt and losing our land?

Yes. The real gold is here. It’s a paradise.

No, it’s Eden.

(LADY IN BLUE and DAUGHTERS enter.)

Maria Victoria come, meet your future husband, Jorge Carson!

¡Ay!

(DAUGHTER IN BLUE faints. Blackout. A giant moon appears in the sky. TEENAGE EMILY’s house becomes illuminated. TEENAGE EMILY lies asleep on a bench. Frogs are heard. MR. BURROWS walks in watching TEENAGE EMILY. She sits up. Lights fade. The slew. The PUPPET FROGS appear.)

Ribbet.

Ribbet.

Watch out for the barefoot girl.
FROG PUPPET #1
Why?

FROG PUPPET #2
Ribbet.

FROG PUPPET #3
She likes to put us in a jar and sell us.

FROG PUPPET #1
Why?

FROG PUPPET #2
Ribbet

FROG PUPPET #3
Because she’s a nut case!

FROG PUPPET #1
Why?

FROG PUPPET #3
Is that all you got to say?

FROG PUPPET #2
Ribbet.

FROG PUPPET #3
Oh-oh! Here’s she comes.

FROG PUPPETS
Ribbet, ribbet, etc.!

TEENAGE EMILY tries to collect frogs but they escape. A face appears in the moon. She is unaware of it. Several COMPANY members lift up a giant hand reaching for her.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Emily, run! RUN!

TEENAGE EMILY looks up and screams. Blackout. Lightening and thunder. Our COMPANY moves their platform creating a high space. MANUELA runs in climbing to the top. She is a young woman. She is about to jump when EM runs in.
Manuela, don’t you dare do it!

Go away!

I’m not going away! You come down right now ‘cause you’re scaring me!

Who cares!

Okay, then, I’m coming up!

No!

I break my neck it’s on you!

Em, just leave me be!

I can’t do that, honey. I couldn’t live with myself.

(EM starts climbing to MANUELA.)

I don’t want to talk to you!

Come on help me up. Okay? Okay?

(EM reaches her hand out to MANUELA. Lights fade on them. NATE stands up looking at YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS who is looking over some papers. NATE carries a kite.)

Nate?

Daddy, you want to fly a kite together?

How you feeling son?
YOUNG BOY

Good. Do you?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I can’t Nate. There’s a meeting I’m preparing for right now.

Then when?

YOUNG BOY

Soon, okay?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Okay, Daddy.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

My son suffered from sickle cell anemia. It’s a disease that affects the blood. At first we didn’t know much about it. Not even the doctors knew. He became a case study for them. Nate was in constant pain and we couldn’t do anything to ease his suffering.

(Our COMPANY speaks to PASTOR WILLIAMS.)

MRS. CLARKSON-MEADOWS

There were others in our community whose children were also afflicted by it.

MAN #2 (JONATHAN)

My mother was.

MRS. CLARKSON-MEADOWS

It was you who got us organized and created a parents group to educate ourselves about it.

MAN #2 (JONATHAN)

My mother raised a family of five. She was always afraid she might pass it on to us. But she didn’t. And each day she thanks God for it.

MRS. SANCHEZ

I thank God that I knew your son Nate. We were best friends in elementary school. We even built a California mission together. I remember he wanted to grow up to be an astronaut.

MRS. GARCIA

My papá got active and went papering the neighborhood for that first parents meeting you organized. He got so excited about it that he forgot to pick me up from school!

(NATE walks away and sits.)
PASTOR WILLIAMS
There are things I wish I could redo.

MISS SANCHEZ
You have to learn to forgive yourself, Pastor.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
I’d get calls late at night trying to keep people from committing suicide--

MRS. EVANS
You told me to go Eden House to volunteer after I retired. My elderly friends died after a year and I was determined to last longer. I’m still there because of you.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
--Or lonely seniors looking to talk to somebody, anybody.

MRS. TUPUA
My first service was in Carson at an African American church. You could feel the spirit through the choir. It touched me. I looked around and saw a lot of mixed people, so many cultures. It was a new beginning for me.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
I was gone all the time. It meant I was home evenings by 10-10:30. I was gone 3 or 4 nights a week.

MRS. TUPUA
The Holy Spirit moved me to get involved. Through the church, doors opened to me.

MRS. EVANS
I’m from the south. We all have roles where we come from. We lost hope with what happened in New Orleans but you would never let us down if it had happened here.

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
You did right Pastor.

(The moon appears. A sinister face appears within it momentarily. A science fiction film is heard playing. Lights rise on our COMPANY MEMBERS seated on benches wearing 3-D eyeglasses. The movie house is packed. TEENAGE EMILY enters. She wiggles in and sits eating her popcorn and drinking her soda.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Emily, you went to the movies to escape.

TEENAGE EMILY
Shhh!
(Lights rise. Another film is heard. It is a syrupy love story. TEENAGE EMILY moves from seat to seat playing. She sees COUPLE MAKING OUT.)

TEENAGE EMILY

Eeeew!

(They shush her.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Sometimes you stayed there for two or three days alone.

(Lights rise. Another film is heard. It is a western. When lights rise a few COMPANY MEMBERS are now gone. TEENAGE EMILY yawns. She falls asleep.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Your parents never concerned themselves about you. It’s as if you never existed.

(Lights rise. Another film is heard. Lights rise to reveal only TEENAGE EMILY watching. MAN IN BLUE enters. He sits by TEENAGE EMILY.)

MAN IN BLUE

_Buenas noches_, Little Frog.

Hi.

TEENAGE EMILY

What is this that I see before me?

It’s a picture show.

Are they real?

They’re moving pictures of real people.

_Increíble._

TEENAGE EMILY

Do you want some popcorn? You eat it like this.

_Muy delicioso._ They’re called “palomitas.” What is this moving picture called?

_Lilies of the Field._
Impresionante.

Have some more.

Gracias.

(They eat popcorn together.)

Are you dead?

Yes, I think I am. Does it scare you?

No.

Do you believe in ghosts?

I don’t know. You’re the first one I ever met. You’re not scary looking. You like walking a lot, don’t you?

Yes, I do. I have a big rancho. And you like coming to the moving pictures by yourself?

Ah huh. I can hide from the moon.

¿La luna?

He comes to haunt me at night when I’m in bed.

Won’t the moon find you here?

No, ’cause he doesn’t know where I go. I’m going to stay here all weekend.

How will you do this?

When this last movie’s finished I’ll hide out in the bathroom while they clean the theatre.

And then?
TEENAGE EMILY
I'll sneak back in. I hide up where they run the picture.

MAN IN BLUE
But what do you do for food?

TEENAGE EMILY
I’ve got popcorn and there’s a water fountain. I don’t need anything else.

MAN IN BLUE
You remind me of my daughters. They’re very inventive too.

TEENAGE EMILY
Do they like to play dolls?

Oh, yes.

MAN IN BLUE
Do they like to wear fancy dresses?

TEENAGE EMILY
What young lady wouldn’t?

MAN IN BLUE
Do they like to have their hair combed every night before bed?

Yes, my wife and daughters like to comb each other’s hair.

TEENAGE EMILY
I don’t like any of that.

MAN IN BLUE
Why not?

TEENAGE EMILY
Because it’s not important. I’d rather be invisible.

MAN IN BLUE
I thought you wanted to be a frog?

TEENAGE EMILY
Not anymore. Do your daughters ever run away from home?

MAN IN BLUE
Oh, no, that would break my wife’s heart and mine too.

TEENAGE EMILY
It would?

MAN IN BLUE
Oh, yes. We couldn’t live without them.
Does the moon haunt your daughters?

No, I would never allow la luna to haunt them.

You swear it?

I swear it.

Can I be your daughter?

Don’t you have parents?

I’d rather not talk about them.

I think my daughters would like a little sister.

When can I play with them?

How about now?

Right now?

Yes!

Let’s go!

But there’s only one thing.

What is it?

I’m a ghost and you’re not.

Oh. How do I become a ghost?

I’m dead. So I guess that’s where to start.
TEENAGE EMILY

Oh.

(They eat popcorn.)

MAN IN BLUE

¡Palomitas!

TEENAGE EMILY

¡Palomitas!

(A heart monitor is heard. PASTOR WILLIAMS looks on.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Why must I relive this again? I don’t want to watch this.

MR. EVANS

You’re not alone, Pastor Williams. We’re right here with you.

(Several COMPANY MEMBERS create a hospital bed. NATE lies on it as a white sheet is placed on him. A COMPANY MEMBER dressed as a DOCTOR MORENO examines him. MRS. WILLIAMS, KAREN and SHANNON stand there waiting. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS stands up and enters.)

MRS. WILLIAMS

(Upset)

Where have you been?

I got here as soon as I heard.

SHANNON

(Frightened)

Daddy.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

It’s okay, Pumpkin. (to MRS. WILLIAMS) What happened to Nate?

MRS. WILLIAMS

He collapsed. I brought him as soon as I could.

Is he going to be all right?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I don’t know!

MRS. WILLIAMS

What does Doctor Moreno say?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I don’t know!

(The heart monitor begins to slow down.)
KAREN
Oh, my God!

SHANNON
Daddy?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Everything is going to be fine. Wait here.

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS crosses to the DOCTOR MORENO.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Doctor Moreno, is he going to be all right?

DOCTOR MORENO
There’s nothing I can do. I’m sorry, Pastor.

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS crosses to NATE. PASTOR WILLIAMS and
the MAN IN BLUE stand nearby watching.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Nate? It’s me Daddy. I’m here. You’re going to be fine. Everything is going to work
out. You’ll see.

MAN IN BLUE
(to PASTOR WILLIAMS)
I’m sorry for your loss.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
I’m staying right here with you, okay?

I too lost children.

MAN IN BLUE

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Mommy, Karen and Shannon are right here.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS & PASTOR
WILLIAMS
Can you squeeze my hand?

(Heart monitor flat lines.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Nate?

MRS. WILLIAMS
Nate?

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Son?

MRS. WILLIAMS
NO! NO! NO!
PASTOR WILLIAMS
I failed them. I broke their hearts. I lost everything.

MAN IN BLUE
Not everything.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
What?

MAN IN BLUE
Listen.

(A glass jar is heard being shattered. The BURROWS’ house becomes illuminated. TEENAGE EMILY’s mason jar lies in pieces. TEENAGE EMILY cries.)

MR. BURROWS
I don’t want these filthy things in my house! How many times do I gotta tell you!

TEENAGE EMILY
Yes, Poppa.

MR. BURROWS
Clean up this mess! Stop crying! I’m sick of you and your stupid frogs!

(MRS. BURROWS crosses to TEENAGE EMILY.)

MRS. BURROWS
I’ll clean up.

MR. BURROWS
What are you doing?

MRS. BURROWS
I’m helping her pick up the glass.

MR. BURROWS
She don’t need any help!

MRS. BURROWS
(Whispering)
I’m so sorry, Emily!

(She exits. TEENAGE EMILY picks up a broken piece of glass and runs off. Thunder and lightening. Our CHOIR sings “Fill My Cup.” A solo. Afterwards, lights rise on EM reaching up to MANUELA.)
Manuela, I’m slipping here! Are you going to stand there and watch me be a statistic?

(MANUELA helps her up.)

Why do you gotta be in my business?

‘Cause I care. I think I’ll stay seated.

(Silence.)

What?

I didn’t say a thing. You don’t want to talk, remember? I’ll sit here quietly like a little tadpole.

(The PUPPET FROGS appear. They leap out into the slough.)

Ribbet, ribbet, etc.

Do you hear them?

Who?

The frogs out in the slough.

What about them?

It’s their Eden. They’re at peace. I love frogs because of it. I love everything about them.

You’re weird.

I know. You’d make me less nervous if you sat down.
MANUELA
No tricky stuff?

EM
Cross my heart.

(MANUELA sits beside EM. MANUELA starts to cry.)

EM
It’s okay.

MANUELA
(Upset)
Em, what am I gonna do? I failed my mom and my dad. I’m a total screw up. They took me back in. Then I lied and stole from them again.

EM
Are you clean, right now?

MANUELA
Yeah, but it ain’t easy. I just need--

EM
Honey, we got to get you some help but you gotta want it first.

MANUELA
I don’t want people to know my business. My mom’s Honduran and my dad’s Samoan. That’s enough pressure coming from two families. I’ve embarrassed them enough.

EM
You think they care about that?

MANUELA
Maybe! I don’t know!

EM
Your mom and dad just want their little girl back.

MANUELA
Did they tell you that?

EM
Not in so many ways but I see things.

MANUELA
What things?
EM
Their eyes speak to me.

MANUELA
Eyes don’t speak.

EM
Well, they do to me. And they’re saying there’s a lot of love there for you and a lot of heartache too.

MANUELA
I wish I could take it all back! Start over!

EM
You can’t, honey. I’ve walked that road. All you can do is move forward.

MANUELA
They don’t understand me.

EM
Of course they do.

(The giant moon face appears.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
What’s happening?

(TEEANGE EMILY runs in. She carries a red apple in her hand. She freezes frightened with fear when she sees the moon is looking at her. The MOON reaches for her.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
No, don’t touch her!

(The large hand caresses her. She turns her face away. The giant hand tears off her dress. She wears a slip underneath. TEENAGE EMILY has red marks on her body.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
No!

(The giant hand disappears. The giant moon face laughs fading away. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS stands up and enters.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Emily!

TEENAGE EMILY
Stay away from me!
Who did this to you?

TEENAGE EMILY

Why should you care?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

I want to help you.

TEENAGE EMILY

I don’t need any help from you! What is it you want from me? Do you want to be nice to me? Do you want to whisper sweet words to me? Do you want to caress me?

What?

TEENAGE EMILY

Do you want to eat this apple?! Do you want to taste its sweetness?! We’ll go ahead and take it! That’s what you really want don’t you?!

No!

TEENAGE EMILY

THEN GO AWAY AND LEAVE ME ALONE YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING! YOU BASTARD!

(PTEENAGE EMILY throws the apple at him.)

I froze up.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Leave me alone…

TEENAGE EMILY

I should’ve done something then but I didn’t. I walked away. I left her alone in Hell.

(PTEENAGE EMILY and YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS sit. Our MUSICIAN plays his flute. A soft rain begins. PASTOR WILLIAMS looks on as YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS, MRS. WILLIAMS, KAREN and SHANNON enter. They are dressed in black. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS opens an umbrella. They cross to a small headstone. NATE stands there watching them. He holds his kite. They do not see him. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS reaches for MRS. WILLIAMS but she brushes him off. She kneels placing flowers by the headstone. NATE opens his hand and a monarch butterfly appears. The butterfly is a puppet on a rod manipulated by a COMPANY MEMBER. It flutters in the air. SHANNON reaches out and chases after it. KAREN, SHANNON and NATE exit.)

Please talk to me.
There was nothing to say.

You haven’t spoken to me in weeks.

Leave me alone! My son is dead!

You blame me?

Yes! You, those awful doctors, the hospital, this godforsaken place!

Nate was a sick boy! It wouldn’t have mattered where it happened!

We should never have moved! We could have been closer to family! They would have been there to help me!

You knew about the sacrifices we’d make when we married!

Your son needed you and you weren’t there for him!

No, you don’t mean that!

When did we ever come first?

Everything I did is for my family!

Was it? What good is building a community when your family doesn’t see you anymore? Was the cost worth it?

Sarah, please don’t do this!

I don’t know who you are!

I’m your husband!

No, I lost you long ago.

(YOUNG MAN (JAMIE) enters. He is out of breath.)
Pastor Williams?!

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

Jamie?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

It’s Emily Burrows. Something bad has happened!

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

What is it?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

You gotta come!

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

I can’t right now…

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

But you have too!

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

I can’t do this anymore--

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Just go!

MRS. WILLIAMS

Sarah, we’ve got to talk.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Pastor, come on!

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

Get brother Jonathan to help!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

He’s all ready out there looking for her.

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)

Just go! Go!

MRS. WILLIAMS

Is that what you want?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

MRS. WILLIAMS

Karen, Shannon and I won’t be here when you come back.

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS and YOUNG MAN exit. TEENAGE EMILY stands up and begins cutting her wrists with a broken piece of glass. LITTLE EMILY looks on. Our MUSICIAN plays music. Several COMPANY MEMBERS pull long red pieces of cloth from her wrists. The red cloth gets larger and larger while other COMPANY MEMBERS lift TEENAGE EMILY up into the air. TEENAGE EMILY seems to be floating away in a sea of red. The
MAN IN BLUE, LADY IN BLUE, and DAUGHTER IN BLUE appear. LADY IN BLUE holds a parasol.)

MAN IN BLUE, LADY IN BLUE, DAUGHTER IN BLUE

¡Hola, niña!

TEENAGE EMILY

Hello!

MAN IN BLUE

This is the girl I was telling you about!

LADY IN BLUE

Are you my new daughter?

TEENAGE EMILY

Yes!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

(Offstage)

Emily!

LADY IN BLUE

I made you a dress! ¡Mira!

LITTLE EMILY

Don’t leave me!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

(Offstage)

EMILY!

MAN IN BLUE

Your new family is waiting for you!

DAUGHTER IN BLUE

¡Hola, Hermanita!

LITTLE EMILY

I’m afraid!

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS, JAMIE and MAN #1 (JONATHAN) enter.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Oh, my god! Emily!

(They pull at TENAGE EMILY bringing her back down to earth. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS wraps her wrists with a handkerchief.)

MAN #1 (JONATHAN)

She’s lost a lot of blood!
She’s cut deep!

TEENAGE EMILY

Leave me a lone!

TEENAGE EMILY

Don’t you pass out on me!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

They’re waiting for me!

TEENAGE EMILY

We’ve got to get you to a hospital!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

You can’t hide your children from the moon!

TEENAGE EMILY

What are you saying?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

He comes to me at night! He touches me!

TEENAGE EMILY

Who does?

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

(The BURROWS houselights come on. MR. BURROWS enters. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS see him.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS & PASTOR WILLIAMS

The man in the moon!

TEENAGE EMILY

But he won’t anymore! Let me go!

(TEENAGE EMILY passes out.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS

Emily, you’re not alone! I won’t let you fall! We’re in this together!

(Blackout. A siren is heard. Our CHOIR sings “Lean On Me.” Lights rise on EM and MANUELA)

EM

There are so many stories out there Manuela. And they need to be told. They’re important because they tell us where we’ve been and who we are. It’s stories that bring us together. I knew your family story before you were even born. It started with your momma.
MANUELA
You knew her?

EM
I knew your momma when she was your age. She had nothing when she came. I first saw her at Pastor Williams’ church.

(A small church appears. The lights in the interior become illuminated. ESTRELLA enters. She is a young LATINA. She is a cake decorator. She wears a white uniform. It is covered with many sweet colors. She places on a shawl over her head. She enters the church. Crosses herself and kneels. She prays.)

EM
She was undocumented. An illegal. She worked in a factory as a cake decorator. Years later she told me that when she first came to church the choir mesmerized her. The many different faces she saw moved her. She said God spoke to her.

(PASTOR WILLIAMS greets ESTRELLA.)

Bienvenido, Señorita.

Pastor Williams.

EM
Your momma got involved in the church. Went to night school to learn English. Sent money back to her family in Honduras.

(Music. YOUNG SUITOR crosses to ESTRELLA.)

EM
She met your dad at the Aloha Jam at the Velodrome. It was a hot summer and love was in the air.

Hi.

ESTRELLA
Hi.

You wanna dance?

YOUNG SUITOR

I don’t know how.
YOUNG SUITOR
That’s okay. I’ll teach you! Samoan style!

(They laugh. He offers her his hand. She takes it and they dance a traditional Samoan dance. ESTRELLA’s YOUNGER CHILDREN join her.)

EM
They fell in love, got married, and then you and your little sisters came along. She was granted amnesty and she got her papers to be a citizen. Your dad got himself through college.

MANUELA
Yeah, so it’s a Cinderella story. Happy ending. So what?

EM
Nobody ever gave them anything. So you got to reach down deep and hard and do what your momma and poppa did. Face your fears head on. I learned that from Pastor Williams.

MANUELA
I don’t know if I can. I got demons hiding, waiting to make me fall.

EM
You got to want to try help yourself. Manuela, you’re not alone. I won’t let you fall. We’re in this together.

MANUELA
I gotta get clean.

EM
You come and stay at Eden House, all right?

MANEULA
What’s that?

EM
It’s a place for second chances. I run it. Pastor Williams and I opened it a while back with the help from our community.

(PASTOR WILLIAMS looks on as YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS walks quickly across the stage to the BURROWS’ house. He carries TEENAGE EMILY soiled dress.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
No! Don’t do it!
(MR. and MRS. BURROWS stand looking out. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS walks up to them.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
How could you do this to her?! What kind of beasts are you?! ANSWER ME!

(They say nothing.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
I’m reporting you to the police! You’re going to jail!

MRS. BURROWS
Please don’t!

MR. BURROWS
Shut up!

MRS. BURROWS
I know she did something bad to herself! I just know it! Is she going to be all right?

MR. BURROWS
I told you to shut up!

(He pushes her roughly.)

MR. BURROWS
(to YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS)
You better mind your own business!

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Or what?!

PASTOR WILLIAMS
(to YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS)
No!

MR. BURROWS
You want to mess with me boy?!

PASTOR WILLIAMS
NO!

(YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS pushes MR. BURROWS down to the ground.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
That’s for your little girl who can’t defend herself!
(MR. and MRS. BURROWS exit. YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS falls to his knees.)

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Oh, heavenly Father, forgive me!

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Each of us has our own road that we must walk.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
I acted out of anger and hate!

PASTOR WILLIAMS
And we are tested along the way.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
I’ve failed you! I’ve failed that little girl! I failed my family!

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Our failures litter the road with regret.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Am I worthy of your blessings?

PASTOR WILLIAMS
But they remind us that we are human.

YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
Guide me and I will serve you. I will rededicate my life to those who ask for help.

(PASTOR WILLIAMS goes to YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS. He helps him up. He embraces his younger self.)

MANUELA
I’m sorry about Pastor Williams passing.

EM
Thank you.

MANUELA
We’re you close to him?

EM
Yes. He died just after we opened Eden House.
MANUELA
They say he always had a trunk full of used clothes for anyone who needed it.

EM
He did. *Manuela*, will you come and stay at Eden House?

MANUELA
Okay.

(ESTRELLA, YOUNG SUITOR and YOUNGER CHILDREN stand up and cross to MANUELA.)

ESTRELLA
*Manuela*!

MANUELA
Mom?! Dad?!

(She climbs down hugging them. A blue sky. Our CHOIR sings under PASTOR WILLIAMS speech.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
So where do we go from here? Who will pick up the torch after we are gone? Will it be our children? They’re children? Will it be our neighbors? Our politicians? Love for community lies within each one of us. It has no age limit. This house that we have built together must stand because everyone needs a second chance.

(Each COMPANY MEMBER begins to stand.)

MAN #1 (JONATHAN)
Shout it out!

TEENAGE BOY (PHILLIP)
My football coach is like my dad since I don’t have a dad.

MISS SANCHEZ
My friends say you’re not Hispanic, you’re Black, Filipino. Samoan too.

IMELDA
We raised four sons--

DOROTEO
--*Ibat-ibang lahi ang mga asawa nila*--

IMELDA
--each married different ethnic women.
EM
The words are simple: Please God don’t let her grow up to be me.

MRS. ROBINSON
I traveled the world. I have three children. I have eight grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren and they are all geniuses!

LADY IN BLUE
Todo viejo se limpia. Everything old seems new.

TEENAGE BOY (PHILLIP)
I’m thinking its me against the world and knowing there’re others in front me and one day I’m going to be an elder at a young age and I’m passing the torch, passing it on as soon as I can.

TEENAGE EMILY
I have 4,000 frogs. I have frog slippers. They remind me of the people who care about me.

DOROTEO
Ang mga mobile parks ay tumatanggap ng mga bata. Baket mahal namin sila? Gusto naming mapakinggan silang naglalaro keysa sa maingay na ambulansya na kumukuha ng matatanda.

IMELDA
Mobile parks are open to younger people. Why we like children? We like hearing them playing instead of sirens taking the elders away.

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
My hero is my grandfather ‘cause I live with him. He’s a man of few words. I started to go to church. Now he’s going too.

MANUELA
Mix people are bridges between the races.

MRS. TUPUA
I believe in the capacity for people to change. I believe children have a voice. Working at the high school, teenagers are wonderful. I feel passionate about it.

MRS. BURROWS
I am very concerned with all the immigrant bashing that is going on.

MRS. GARCIA
We decided that Carson needed mariachi music and ballet folklórico. Mi comadre Raquel said, “Let’s do something!” So we did!
MRS. CLARKSON-MEADOWS
Grandmas know why a kid is locked up in a room on a computer. That’s why I’m taking computer classes.

LITTLE EMILY
Ribbet-ribbet!

KAREN
On campus our students speak different languages. You hear different voices. You don’t understand but you hear diversity.

HOUSEWIFE
We’re the greatest community in America!

YOUNG MAN (JAMIE)
Right now I am in Fort Bliss Texas… If there’s anything that I would like the people of Carson to know is that I’ve made it out and went far away, still standing strong, still haven’t forgotten where I came from...

MRS. EVANS
Sometimes politicians forget they are here for the people.

VERY OLD LADY WITH SHAWL
The Goodyear Blimp is one our claims to fame. But it is a very noisy machine.

ESTRELLA
I was born in Honduras. French-Arab. My stepfather is Black. I married a Samoan.

MAN #1 (JONATHAN)
What’s the best place to eat? Bayou Grill, Shakey’s, In & Out, Las Palmas, Bunny Dip, Chili’s, Apollo Hamburgers, Tummy Stuffers, M & M Soulfood, Ikea 99 cents for 2 pieces of bacon, eggs and potatoes. Oh yeah, an panquequis. Yeah, panquequis!

YOUNG MAN IN BLUE
I know the majority of kids don’t know their history. We need kids to get connected back to make this a better place.

SHANNON
Unity Day!

MRS. WILLIAMS
Maybe someday we can have a governor or a president from Carson.

MR. BURROWS
There’s always hope. We all need second chances.
YOUNG PASTOR WILLIAMS
I see something that is like circling the wagons. I see pioneers that have paved the way for us, younger leaders. No matter what the ethnicity, no matter what our political difference, I see us come together as one.

MAN #2 (NOAH)
I hear the drum sounding that is change.

DAUGHTER IN BLUE
Future Unlimited!

EM
What I needed was a family and I found it here in Carson.

DOCTOR MORENO
The people of the earth believed that after death an important person became a star in the sky.

(Our MUSICIAN plays his flute. NATE appears. He is flying his kite.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Nate?

(LITTLE EMILY and TEENAGE EMILY appear. They wear brand new dresses. A FROG PUPPET leaps to her.)

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Emily.

LITTLE EMILY
You should go to him.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
Are you going to be all right?

TEENAGE EMILY
Yes.

(EM and TEENAGE EMILY walk up to LITTLE EMILY. EM embraces them.)

EM
You saw to that.

PASTOR WILLIAMS
I’ll miss you.
I will too.

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Okay, then goodbye, Emily.

LITTLE EMILY, TEENAGE EMILY, EM

Goodbye, Pastor Williams.

(PASTOR WILLIAMS crosses to NATE.)

NATE

Daddy, you want to fly a kite?

PASTOR WILLIAMS

Yes, son, I do.

(They fly a kite together. MAN IN BLUE and LADY IN BLUE watch.)

MAN IN BLUE

You did well for yourself little frog.

EM

He was a father more to me than my real father.

MAN IN BLUE

I am proud of this rancho. We all are. Its people have done well.

(Lights fade on PASTOR WILLIAMS and NATE flying a kite together. Our COMPANY looks on. The houselights in the small houses glow brightly in the night sky. Our MUSICIAN finishes playing. End of play. Music. A rousing CHOIR song is heard as our COMPANY takes its curtain call.)
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