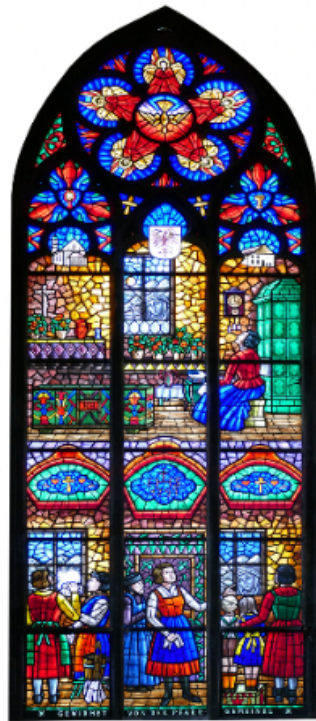


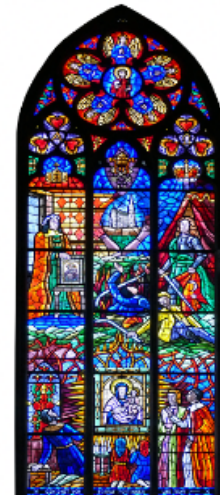
The Trial of Mira Vance



Playwright:
Annika
Andersson



Full Length
(Two Acts)



Dramaturg:
Krissy
Castellese

Development History:

Oakland University - Staged Reading (2019); Ann Arbor Civic Theatre - Staged Reading (2020); Self-Directed - Virtual reading (2021)

Synopsis

As an extreme form of confession, The Clarified Church of the Cross drugs 18-year-old Mira Vance, putting her into a hallucinogenic coma. When her hallucination takes the shape of a court room occupied by the people of her past, Mira rushes to the stand to defend her life. Ultimately, the overbearing Judge must decide what sentence matches Mira's sins. After all, she cannot return to reality until her soul is properly cleansed.

Characters

Mira: 18 years old; would smile forever if it meant that no one would ever cry; has an unassuming sense of humor; shy

Judge: 40 years old; strongly committed to authenticity and justice; tends to hide her humanity; strong

Father Michael/Court Reporter: 62 years old; the lead pastor; automatically commands respect, but tends to bumble; passionate

Ashley/Defender: 25 years old; the big sister you always wished you had; sees the best in others; compassionate

Father David/Prosecutor: 27 years old; the associate and music pastor; sticks to the facts; eager to please; cunning

Mira's Mom: 34 years old; strong advocate for what she believes in; concerned about her family and the world they live in; commanding

Mira's Dad: 35 years old; trying to keep it all together but failing miserably; the "fun parent"; advocate for change

Diana: 18 years old; has an incredibly intoxicating personality; image conscious; impulsive

Ross: 19 years old; a boy who's trying to decide what kind of man he'll be; charismatic; sincere

Time

The near future

Place

The Clarified Church of the Cross

Notes on:

Choral Work

There are lines where characters speak in a chorus. A slash with character names (ex. JUDGE / ASHLEY / ROSS) will indicate who is speaking in unison and when. This was inspired by the Greek Chorus and moments of unified speaking in Church services. Feel free to fully explore these elements throughout the piece.

The Set and Audience

There is potential to incorporate the audience within the design of The Clarified Church of the Cross by having them act as the congregation. This is noted in several moments throughout the piece (ex. characters are written to be planted in the audience). This was a part of the original intention, but it may be adjusted to fit the performance space.

Pronunciation

The N+I translation of the Bible is pronounced "N and I."

"What's a vision if it's driven to imprison?"

I don't know."

- *Sticks & Stones* (Kings Kaleidoscope)

[1 Peter 1:13]

Dear Friend,

Do not leave me alone.

Leave me with my heart slowly dissected by the gentle tug of names that run through my mind, opening what otherwise would remain silent.

Thank you for not leaving me in silence.

With love,

A

{ACT 1}

PRE-SHOW

Entering the space, we are transported into the Clarified Church of Cross. FATHER DAVID plays hymns at the organ. ASHLEY and ROSS enter at different times. Upon entering, they approach a bowl of water, hold their rosaries to their mouths, whisper a confession, sign the cross, dip their rosaries into the bowl, and seat themselves within the audience. MIRA and her MOM enter last and seat themselves within the audience.

SCENE 1

When it is time, FATHER DAVID concludes his hymn. FATHER MICHAEL enters, smiling and carrying a pile of papers. He suddenly trips, drops the papers, and falls to the ground. FATHER DAVID runs to his aid.

FATHER MICHAEL

No, you don't have to... please...

FATHER DAVID gathers the papers and helps FATHER MICHAEL stand. FATHER MICHAEL takes the papers back from FATHER DAVID. FATHER DAVID sits in a seat behind the pulpit. FATHER MICHAEL takes out a decorated flask as he approaches the pulpit (its design doesn't suggest it's alcohol- but it certainly isn't water). He takes a sip.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

Well... wasn't that exciting? He does have an interesting sense of humor...

FATHER MICHAEL looks to the heavens.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

Here I was, on fire for today's service, but I lost my footing. I lost my ground. I can't help but feel that it was God's way of humbling me. Perhaps, I entered with love for myself and not for the Lord. Funny, how quickly he repays you for your sins. Let us think on this during the opening prayer.

FATHER MICHAEL puts away his flask and raises his arms. FATHER DAVID, MIRA, MIRA's MOM, ASHLEY, and ROSS stand. The congregation speaks.

FATHER MICHAEL / FATHER DAVID / MIRA / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Lord,

Your clarified church calls upon you

FATHER MICHAEL / FATHER DAVID / MIRA / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS (cont.)

Others do not understand your will
But we do
With your hand, you cut the wheat from the field
and banished it to the sky
You separated the broken chaff from the golden grain
And burned it with unquenchable fire
Do this now
And make us whole again
Amen

FATHER MICHAEL lowers his hands and flips through the papers. FATHER DAVID, MIRA, MIRA's MOM, ASHLEY, and ROSS sit.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

Um... Sister Rios would like to remind the children that next Thursday is your annual trip into town. Parents, be sure to sign those permission slips. It can be scary, I know, but I promise you, your children are in good hands. I would not send the 4th and 5th generation to witness the outside world if I did not think it was essential to their learning. Witnessing the unbelievers in their broken world... it will teach them how to appreciate what we have here. The community.

FATHER MICHAEL flips to the next paper in the pile.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

I was told that some of the women were absent from last week's bible study. Life can be busy, I know but full submersion into God's word is essential. So... noon on Tuesdays at Sister Tracey's house. Be present.

FATHER MICHAEL flips to the next paper in the pile.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

Last but not least, next Sunday is the Day of Light. Yes. That time of year has come again! We will celebrate Saint Isaiah as he completed the N+I translation of the Bible. By his hand, God filtered through centuries of text, muddled by the mind of man, and restored it to its true form. Its New and Improved form, the foundation of the Clarified Church of the Cross. Be sure to see Sister Leila if you have not signed up for volunteering. We need all help we can get.

FATHER MICHAEL slides the pile of papers to the side.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

Now, my children... are we *blessed*? Are we blessed to be here on this day? Together?

FATHER MICHAEL / FATHER DAVID / MIRA / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Yes, Father.

FATHER MICHAEL

Are we blessed to live on an earth graciously given to us by God?

FATHER MICHAEL / FATHER DAVID / MIRA / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Yes, Father.

FATHER MICHAEL

Are we blessed to have God's true words at our fingertips? The N+I translation?

FATHER MICHAEL / FATHER DAVID / MIRA / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Yes, Father.

FATHER MICHAEL

Then, tell me, why don't I believe you?

Silence.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

I know most of you trust in God, however... I also know that doubt has planted itself into our community. And if one sheep strays, the whole flock is lost to the wolves.

FATHER MICHAEL pulls out a crumpled piece of notebook paper from his pile.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

Can Mira and Katherine Vance step forward please?

MIRA and her MOM rise and walk towards FATHER MICHAEL. MIRA is wearing a simple white dress.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

The Lord gave Katherine the eyes to see her daughter's doubt and the mind to bring it forward. Just yesterday, she presented me with this-

FATHER MICHAEL holds up the crumpled notebook paper.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

- where Mira *confesses* that she does not belong on God's earth.

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Confess the sin.

FATHER MICHAEL

Confesses that she does not wish to live at all anymore.

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Confess the sin.

FATHER MICHAEL

Confesses she has no desire to change.

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Confess the sin!

FATHER MICHAEL

But, my children, we have heard these lies before. They are the devil's black stain, and we can remove it from our thoughts. Amen?

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

Amen.

FATHER MICHAEL

Today, we will conduct a purification for Mira. This cleansing ceremony, however, is only possible with your help. My children, will you save your sister in Christ?

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

In the name of the Lord.

FATHER MICHAEL

In the name of the Lord. Father David, you may begin.

FATHER DAVID forward with the N+I translation and reads from it.

FATHER DAVID

My child, state your name for all God's people to hear.

MIRA

Mira Vance.

FATHER DAVID

And why do you stand before us today? In white with a blackened heart?

MIRA

I have sinned.

FATHER DAVID

Did you confess these sins into your rosary?

MIRA

No.

FATHER DAVID

Did you confess these sins to the Clarified Church of the Cross?

MIRA

No.

FATHER DAVID

Who confessed on your behalf?

MIRA

My Mother.

FATHER DAVID

Do you wish to confess now? In your mind's most vulnerable state to ensure your repentance?

MIRA

I...

FATHER DAVID

Yes?

MIRA

I am ready to confess, Father.

FATHER DAVID

Mira's family, please state your name and relationship to the child for all God's people to hear.

MOM

Katherine Vance, Mira's Mother.

FATHER DAVID

Will you support Mira as she is purified? Recognizing sin as a generational flaw?

MOM

Yes.

FATHER DAVID

Will you confess your generational sin into your rosary, the Clarified Church, or enter a Purification yourself?

MOM

I have confessed all my sins to Father Michael.

FATHER DAVID

Good. Mira, present your rosary and kneel. You may speak to your family as we prepare the sacrament.

FATHER DAVID and FATHER MICHAEL wash their hands in the bowl of water. FATHER MICHAEL grabs a goblet. FATHER DAVID pours liquid from a decorated pitcher into the goblet, then grabs a vial. During all of this, MIRA takes out her rosary and kneels. MOM kneels beside her.

MOM

This will make it all better, Mira. I promise.

MIRA

This really helped Dad?

MOM

Yes. Do you remember what he said? When he woke up?

MIRA

It was a long time ago.

MOM

He said the mind might take a moment to figure out what's going on. The drink is very powerful. He said it helps to pick something specific to focus on. Like a shape. Something that completely embodies your sin. It may help you sort through it all.

MIRA

How long does it take?

MOM

He was only under for 45 minutes. For others, it takes hours, days- it's just- however long your mind needs to confess, get rid of what's wrong, and choose a different path.

FATHER MICHAEL and FATHER DAVID step forward with the ceremonial elements.

MOM (cont.)

Just breathe. And- do not be afraid.

MOM steps aside. FATHER MICHAEL and FATHER DAVID stand on either side of MIRA. FATHER MICHAEL raises the goblet high.

FATHER MICHAEL

Mira Vance. As God knit you in your Mother's womb, we created a home for you in this world.

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

We love you, Mira.

FATHER MICHAEL

As God guided your feet to walk, your hands to write, and your eyes to see, we have taught you how to connect with the world.

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

We love you, Mira.

FATHER MICHAEL

We embrace your life and all that we've contributed to it.

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

We love you, Mira.

FATHER MICHAEL lowers the glass it in front of FATHER DAVID.

FATHER DAVID

But now, we sever you from this world in the hope that you will find your way back to the light.

FATHER DAVID slowly pours the contents of the vial inside the goblet.

FATHER DAVID (cont.)

As God left Jesus in isolation to be tempted by the devil-

FATHER MICHAEL / MOM / ROSS / ASHLEY

-We leave you, Mira.

FATHER DAVID

As God left Jesus into the garden, alone, to pray upon his burdens-

FATHER MICHAEL / MOM / ROSS / ASHLEY

-We leave you, Mira.

FATHER DAVID

As God left Jesus in death, the ultimate separation, to transform sin itself-

FATHER MICHAEL / MOM / ROSS / ASHLEY

-We leave you, Mira.

FATHER DAVID

Lord, we hate the sin that has rooted itself in Mira's heart.

FATHER DAVID / FATHER MICHAEL / MOM / ROSS / ASHLEY

We love you, Lord.

FATHER MICHAEL

And when you kill the parts that are bad, we will love you, Mira.

FATHER MICHAEL kneels and offers the cup to MIRA. MIRA hesitates.

MIRA

What if- it doesn't work for me?

FATHER MICHAEL

Then we will continue until all the rot is burned out of you. Now, receive the blessing.

MIRA drinks. The lights begin to flicker. NO ONE notices the lights flickering.

FATHER MICHAEL (cont.)

Return to your community, purified and whole.

MIRA

Mom...

MIRA blinks lazily. A dull ringing can be heard.

FATHER MICHAEL

Confess. Kill the bad.

MIRA's body begins to go limp. The lights flicker faster. The ringing grows louder.

FATHER MICHAEL

Accept what is good.

MIRA loses consciousness as the lights go out. The ringing is almost unbearable.

SCENE 2

The ringing stops. Silence. A finger snaps. A faint light turns on. We barely see MIRA's silhouette. She stands with her head collapsed on her chest and her eyes closed. She is wearing a necklace that resembles her rosary.

MIRA

Mom... Mmm...

VOICES echo through the space.

COURT REPORTER

Sorry.

MOM

Your mind might take a moment to figure out what's going on.

PROSECUTOR

The drink is very powerful.

MOM

Pick a shape. It may help you sort through it all.

MIRA jolts awake.

MIRA

MOM!

MOM

Do not be afraid.

MIRA (cont.)

I... I heard you speaking! Didn't I? I think so. I don't know. I can't remember. I... I can't see anything. I..

MIRA tenses her body, but cannot make her arms and legs move.

MIRA (cont.)

I can't *feel* anything... HELP? My legs- I can't feel my legs? I know I have legs. I have legs? Yes. And I need to move them? See- I enjoy using my legs. I look forward to it?

MIRA (cont.)

Yes. Walking is a *huge* part of my life, but I don't want to run- and fall- he repays us so quickly- can you help me?

Silence.

MIRA (cont.)

Are you too scared to speak? I get that. It is really quiet.

Silence.

MIRA (cont.)

But somehow, it's so loud and I can't think and I just need you to talk or else I'm-

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

What do you see, Mira Vance?

MIRA

Yes! Yes, hi, I'm-

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

What lies in the haze?

DAD

Where is the bad? Should we kill it?

MIRA

What, do you actually want me to kill someone?

MIRA faintly laughs. Silence.

MIRA (cont.)

Sorry. Not funny.

COURT REPORTER

Reminder, the women meet on Tuesdays at noon.

MIRA

Thank you? But I- where am I?

MOM

Where families send their children when they are afraid of them.

DAD

Where children go when they are mischievous in action or in thought.

PROSECUTOR

Call it a sanatorium.

ASHLEY

Or a sanctuary.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

I can fix it.

MIRA

God? Is that you?

MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA

God is a potter.

ASHLEY / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

I am a goldsmith.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

I am another being entirely.

MIRA

Oh... so... you're a different God?

ROSS

No.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

I am not confined to the number three.

MIRA

Okay. Okay. Then... am I dead?

MOM

Do you actually want that?

MIRA

Excuse me?

DIANA

Mira,

ROSS

You're getting off topic.

ASHLEY

What do you see? Stay focused.

MIRA

I can't even tell what to focus on. Where are we?

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

You don't remember?

MIRA

I only remember- what do I remember?

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

Let me show you.

A finger snaps. The light shifts. We see the outline of MOM, DAD, ASHLEY, ROSS, DIANA, PROSECUTOR, and COURT REPORTER, but MIRA does not notice them. MIRA notices her legs and wiggles them around.

MIRA

Hey! My legs!

ASHLEY

Stay focused.

PROSECUTOR

What do you see? What is bad?

COURT REPORTER

Reach a conclusion.

MIRA

I'm sorry but- I still can't see you.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

Should we kill-

ASHLEY

-wait.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

You can't see me?

MIRA

No. Maybe... you could turn on another light?

MOM

Oh, the darkness.

PROSECUTOR

You see the darkness.

COURT REPORTER

I'm often mistaken for the darkness.

MIRA

You're not the darkness?

ROSS

No.

DIANA

Dammit!

MIRA

So... you're the light?

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER
NO!

DIANA

I knew this was a shitty plan.

PROSECUTOR

Stupid.

MOM

Stupid.

COURT REPORTER

Stupid.

ROSS

Wait a second.

DAD

If I died, would it matter? To you?

MOM

Of course it would.

DAD

I don't believe you.

MOM

You don't really care what I think, do you?

DAD

Yes I do.

MOM

No you don't.

DAD

Yes I do.

MOM

No you don't.

MIRA

Excuse me! I'm still confused.

COURT REPORTER

Of course you are.

PROSECUTOR

You're still deciding what shape to take.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

Focus. Pick a shape.

MOM

Embody the sin.

JUDGE

Maybe this will help.

JUDGE enters behind EVERYONE and makes her way to the front.

ASHLEY

Church Coffee Hour.

DIANA

Evil Queen game.

DAD

Mint Chocolate Chip.

ROSS

Your Easter dress.

MOM

The law.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

Your memories.

JUDGE

All those sins.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

You have to confess-

JUDGE

-the bad-

COURT REPORTER

- and the good-

JUDGE

- to release your true self.

MIRA

Do you only speak in riddles?

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

Yes.

MIRA

That's not very helpful.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

Then you're not very intelligent.

DAD

Just pick a shape. Any shape!

COURT REPORTER

Like Sister Tracey's house!

PROSECUTOR

Or something in the outside world!

MIRA

You're not making any sense.

JUDGE

Mirrors make perfect sense.

MIRA

Are you a mirror?

JUDGE

Are *you* a mirror?

MIRA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to-

JUDGE

I'm not scolding you. I'm asking you.

PROSECUTOR

What is bad? Are you guilty, Mira Vance?

COURT REPORTER

Guilty of something unforgivable?

ROSS

Someone thinks you are.

DIANA

Clearly.

MOM

Someone put you here.

ASHLEY

Why?

JUDGE

Repent and return to the man upstairs.

COURT REPORTER

Are you guilty?

PROSECUTOR
Reach a verdict.

JUDGE
A verdict?

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER
A verdict!

JUDGE
That's it!

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER
The shape!

JUDGE
I have found my shape!

MOM, DAD, ASHLEY, ROSS, DIANA, PROSECUTOR, COURT REPORTER, and JUDGE approach MIRA. MIRA notices them for the first time.

MIRA
Oh, hello, is this... you?

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER / JUDGE
Find out what is bad. Come with us.

DIANA
Somewhere better.

MOM
With order.

ASHLEY
And justice.

ROSS
Clear cut sentences.

DAD

Clear cut sentencing.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA /PROSECUTOR/COURT REPORTER /JUDGE

There, we will reach our verdict. Are you ready to be purified?

MIRA hesitates but decides to walk into the center of the group. EVERYONE lays their hands on MIRA (her feet, head, etc.) If they cannot reach MIRA directly, THEY lay their hands on the body of the person in front of them, creating one flesh.

MIRA

Okay, hello. Okay, okay, are we really-

ROSS touches MIRA's hip.

MIRA (cont.)

CAN WE JUST- can you just-

EVERYONE closes their eyes.

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA /PROSECUTOR/COURT REPORTER /JUDGE

Mira,

ASHLEY

do you promise to tell the truth,

PROSECUTOR

the whole truth,

COURT REPORTER

and nothing but the truth,

JUDGE

so help you God?

MIRA

I promise.

The lights flicker, then go out.

SCENE 3

Lights up on a courtroom, complete with a witness stand, counsel tables, court reporter's desk, and a judge's box. A crucifix rests at the base of the judge's podium. Throughout the courtroom, piles of seemingly random items are thrown about (coffee cup, eye patch, spoons, etc.). MIRA, PROSECUTOR, MOM, DAD, ROSS, DIANA, and ASHLEY are onstage. PROSECUTOR walks to the Prosecutor's chair. MOM, DAD, ROSS, DIANA, and ASHLEY seat themselves within the audience. MIRA remains where she stands.

MIRA

Wow... okay...

PROSECUTOR

Is something wrong?

MIRA

I just... I didn't think you'd pick this place.

PROSECUTOR

Welcome to-

PROSECUTOR / MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA

-your shape.

PROSECUTOR

Our job is to examine your character and see what is bad. Once we know your crimes, we will choose the proper sentence. Death is on the table, but it isn't the only option. There's also rehabilitation. Purification, after all, is the real goal. Ready to reach your verdict?

MIRA

But I haven't prepared for a trial.

COURT REPORTER (offstage)

You've been preparing your whole life!

The COURT REPORTER runs into the space with a bag and stack of papers. He approaches the court reporter's table.

COURT REPORTER (cont.)

All the lessons you've learned, the friends you've made, your sins, your dreams, all of it, all of it, all of it is-

PROSECUTOR

You're late.

COURT REPORTER

I apologize. I fell on the way over and couldn't get back up for two whole hours. Then, once I finally stood, you wouldn't believe it, I fell again! Hilarious!

The COURT REPORTER places his things on the table and pulls a laptop out of his bag. He starts transcribing everything that is spoken.

MIRA

Wait, aren't you-

PROSECUTOR

Don't look at him, Mira. Focus.

MOM/DAD / ASHLEY / DIANA / ROSS

Focus.

PROSECUTOR

Focus on the part of you so deeply hidden in the back of your mind, you wouldn't even recognize it if you saw her on the street. The bad. The sin. What is that dark crevice? Can you right her wrongs?

MIRA

But what if I don't want to?

JUDGE

Good. Because that's my job.

The JUDGE enters, carrying a case file, and crosses to the podium. MOM, DAD, ASHLEY, ROSS, and DIANA rise.

PROSECUTOR

Your honor!

JUDGE

Were you suggesting to Mira that this is *her* courtroom?

PROSECUTOR

No.

JUDGE

That *she* had the right to judge her own actions?

PROSECUTOR

Of course not, your honor. That wouldn't make any sense.

JUDGE

There are some things I don't mind, like walking. In fact, it's a huge part of my life. But I refuse to walk in circles, especially around you. So, sit down and let me do my job.

PROSECUTOR

Yes, your honor.

The JUDGE opens the case file and starts flipping through it. MOM, DAD, ASHLEY, ROSS, and DIANA sit.

MIRA

It's nice to meet you? Your honor.

JUDGE

It is nice to see me. Now... will you be defending yourself or using a lawyer?

MIRA

I didn't prepare-

MOM / DAD / ASHLEY / DIANA / ROSS

She will choose a lawyer.

JUDGE

Who will be defending you?

MIRA

I- I don't know any lawyers.

JUDGE

Anyone you trust? Who can speak to your character?

MOM stands.

MOM

I can defend Mira.

MIRA

Mom?

MOM

I know her better than anyone.

MIRA

No you- your honor, I don't want her here.

JUDGE

All are welcome to the trial, Mira. That includes your Mother.

MIRA

But I don't want her to see-

COURT REPORTER raises his hand.

COURT REPORTER

If I may... don't forget your whole body. It has many parts. If one part suffers, the rest suffers too. Judge the part that is suffering.

MIRA

But does she have to... see the suffering?

JUDGE

Mira, focus. Who will defend you?

MIRA

Uh, um... I would like... Ashley. Ashley Hendrick?

ASHLEY stands.

ASHLEY

Here!

MIRA

Oh! You're already- you came to my trial?

ASHLEY

Of course. By the way, I love your necklace! Where did you get it?

MIRA

I think my Mom gave it to me? Or was it him?

MIRA looks at the COURT REPORTER.

JUDGE

Ashley, state your relationship to the accused for all God's people to hear.

ASHLEY

Of course. I-

MIRA

-I've known Ashley my whole life.

ASHLEY

We're both a part of the community.

MIRA

But she's older than me.

JUDGE

By how much?

ASHLEY

I think- 7 years? I'm 25. You're 18, right?

MIRA

Yeah, I am! And, well, she's been defending me since the beginning.

JUDGE

How, exactly?

MIRA

It's sorta hard to explain...

ASHLEY

It'd be much easier to show you. Can't we just show you?

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, it's a waste of time.

ASHLEY

We have the right to show you.

JUDGE

Then... I suppose you may show us.

ASHLEY and MIRA speak.

ASHLEY / MIRA

Thank you.

MIRA

How do we do this? Exactly?

ASHLEY

Well, I was thinking...

ASHLEY makes eye contact with MIRA.

MIRA

Oh, so you're talking about-

ASHLEY

Yes, I am talking about-

MIRA

Okay, let's do it!

ASHLEY

Amazing! Go!

SCENE 4

ASHLEY takes the defender's chair and positions it in the middle of the room. MIRA takes a coffee cup and an eye patch from the pile of random items. MIRA tosses ASHLEY the coffee cup.

MIRA

Pretend that I am 6 years old.

ASHLEY

And I'm 13.

MIRA

And it's the coffee hour after church.

ASHLEY

Classic church.

MIRA

Classic church.

ASHLEY

And it begins!

MIRA puts on the eye patch and sits with the coordination of a 6-year-old. ASHLEY stands with the coffee cup and disposition of a 13-year-old. The lights flicker briefly. ASHLEY looks at MIRA.

ASHLEY (cont.)

Cool eye patch.

MIRA hides her eyes from ASHLEY.

ASHLEY (cont.)

No, I'm serious. You look super tough.

Silence.

ASHLEY (cont.)

My name is Ashley. You're Mira! Mira Vance.

Silence.

ASHLEY (cont.)

So... uh... how did you get that eye patch? Did you get in a fight?

MIRA

I punched myself in the eye.

ASHLEY

Oh... why?

MIRA

I broke my Grandma's vase.

ASHLEY

Okay...

MIRA

I didn't mean to. I just did. Okay? I broke it. And I got mad. And I punched myself in the eye. And it kinda scratched my co- my cor- c-

ASHLEY

Cornea?

MIRA

Yeah. That.

ASHLEY

Oh.

Silence.

ASHLEY (cont.)

One time, when I was shopping with my Mom, I hid in a rack of shirts. I was hiding for so long that my Mom thought she lost me. I guess we're both a little rebellious.

MIRA

Really?

ASHLEY

Oh yeah.

MIRA

Why'd you do that?

ASHLEY

I guess... I wanted to see what my Mom would do if I was in danger.

MIRA

Oh. That makes sense.

ASHLEY

Yeah.

MIRA

She did.

ASHLEY

Huh?

MIRA

She did something. That means she loves you.

ASHLEY

Yeah! She does love me.

MIRA

Yeah.

ASHLEY

Your Mom loves you too.

MIRA

I know.

ASHLEY

My mom was just talking to her. I wasn't talking. I was kinda just standing there. Ya know how we do... when parents talk? And she said that you're the smartest kid she's ever known.

MIRA

It's because I watch the animal channel. The channel about animals. Not cartoons. Those are bad. My Mom and I watch animals and I memorize facts and I tell her and she says I'm so smart.

ASHLEY

I mean, you remembered the word "cornea"! That's pretty smart.

MIRA

I also know all my times tables!

ASHLEY

They don't teach us our times tables until we're 10!

MIRA

I'm six!

ASHLEY

I know! I know. Can- can I ask you something?

MIRA

Okay.

ASHLEY

Why would a smart girl like you punch yourself in the eye?

MIRA

Because I'm a bad person.

ASHLEY

I... I don't think you're a bad person.

MIRA

No, I am. So I hit myself. Because I'm going to cause pain in some way. Right? Every person causes pain. Every person sins. I broke my Grandma's vase and it made me very- upset inside. But I didn't yell at Grandma. I didn't sass Mommy. I hit myself. Because if anyone is going to receive the bad I create- it's going to be me. I don't want to hurt anyone else.

ASHLEY

You don't really believe that, do you?

Silence.

ASHLEY (cont.)

Mira, you don't have to hurt yourself.

MIRA

But I do.

ASHLEY

No, because... sometimes when you hurt yourself... it actually causes more pain.

MIRA

It does?

ASHLEY

Yeah. People who love you get really sad when they see you in pain.

MIRA

They do?

ASHLEY

Yeah. I mean, look at me. I only just started talking to you, but- I love you! And I don't like seeing you in pain.

MIRA

I'm sorry.

ASHLEY

No! No, it's okay. Just... you have a very kind heart. It's good. I'd love it if you could show some of that kindness to yourself?

MIRA

Okay... I will.

ASHLEY

There's something else you can do when you feel bad. They show us in Sunday school.

MIRA

Um... pray?

ASHLEY

No. Confess into your rosary. See?

ASHLEY reaches out and touches MIRA's rosary necklace.

MIRA

Oh, I tried that, but- I don't know.

ASHLEY

It helps us feel closer to God.

MIRA

I felt further away. From God. I don't know.

ASHLEY

Well... maybe you weren't doing it right?

MIRA

Maybe...

ASHLEY

Tell you what. Give your rosary another try, and next coffee hour... you can tell me all about it.

MIRA

Really?

ASHLEY

Yeah! I like talking to you, Mira.

MIRA

And I like you-

ASHLEY

Ashley.

MIRA

I knew that. You're Ashley Hendrick.

ASHLEY

Great! Then we're friends.

MOM enters with the playfulness of her 30 year old self.

MOM

Mira! Where is my little meerkat?

MIRA

I'm here Mom!

MOM

Are you sure? You don't look like a meerkat to me.

MIRA straightens her back and holds up her arms - like a meerkat when it stands on its hind legs. MOM mimics a meerkat with her.

MOM (cont.)

What are you girls talking about?

ASHLEY

About Mira's eye. And how the rosary can help.

MOM

I was actually just discussing that with your father.

MIRA

Really?

MOM

Really, really. No need to be afraid of the beads. Now, unfortunately, it's time for us to go. I'll see you at Bible study, Ashley!

ASHLEY

See you then!

MOM walks back to her place in the audience. MIRA starts to follow her.

ASHLEY (cont.)

Confess into the beads and keep what is good. Get rid of what's bad.

MIRA freezes. The lights flicker, and MIRA looks up at them. ASHLEY melts out of her childhood self and faces forward.

ASHLEY (cont.)

And that is why I'm qualified to defend Mira today.

MIRA is still looking up at the lights. ASHLEY nudges her.

MIRA

Ashley- Ashley has fought for me since the beginning.

ASHLEY

And I'm not going to stop now.

The JUDGE leans forward.

JUDGE

Ashley, you may step forward and accept the title of Mira's Defender.

ASHLEY takes a step forward and assumes the role of DEFENDER.

DEFENDER

Thank you, your honor.

PROSECUTOR

And thank *you* for revealing Mira's first prominent sin.

DEFENDER

What... punching her eye? Mira already confessed that as a kid. She just confessed it again, right now.

PROSECUTOR

But did she change? Mira, after that day... did you stop expressing these "bad feelings" in unhealthy ways?

DEFENDER

There's no way to prove that beyond reasonable doubt.

PROSECUTOR

If that were true, we wouldn't be in court. Mira, did you properly confess? Or did you continue the sin?

DEFENDER

There is no further evidence of Mira hitting herself.

PROSECUTOR

But the rage that motivated you... were you able to get rid of it? The wrath you exhibited as a child is concerning.

JUDGE

Ignoring the bad parts of yourself can cause them to manifest into something bigger.

DEFENDER

She was just a child.

PROSECUTOR

A child attracted to violence. Tell me, Mira-

PROSECUTOR / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA

-did your rage continue to harm others? And yourself?

MIRA / JUDGE

I don't-

MIRA

I-

DEFENDER

Wait! Mira cannot testify against herself.

JUDGE

She can confess.

DEFENDER

Mira isn't confessing to anything.

JUDGE

Then, one of you needs to provide legitimate evidence to support your claim. Mere speculation is not enough.

PROSECUTOR

Yes. Of course.

DEFENDER

So, can we agree that Mira is innocent from this particular sin?

JUDGE

I suggest you call someone forward, someone... from later in Mira's life. Maybe they can give us the answer.

DEFENDER

Mira, were you close to someone else growing up? Maybe... a classmate? Or a friend?

MIRA

I... I did have a best friend later on. When I was... 12?

DEFENDER

What was her name?

MIRA / JUDGE

Diana Thompson.

SCENE 5

DIANA stands.

DIANA

You called?

JUDGE

Very good. Approach the stand.

MIRA

Diana... where did you...

DIANA walks past MIRA and approaches the witness stand. MIRA turns to the DEFENDER, who returns the defender's chair to its place.

MIRA

No one's seen her in years. How is she here?

DEFENDER

You can never leave the community. Not truly. Besides, all are welcome. Even runaways.

JUDGE

Diana, state your relationship to the accused for all God's people to hear.

DIANA

Well, Mira and I technically met when we were babies. But we didn't really become friends until later. Maybe... 13 or 14?

PROSECUTOR

Why such a long gap?

DIANA

I'm pretty sure Mira didn't speak a word until we were 13. And when she did... I don't know. There weren't a lot of kids our age. Didn't exactly have a lot of options for friends.

PROSECUTOR

Your class was small?

DIANA

Our *cohort* was made up of the community's fourth generation. No one from the outside world. No one secular. So, yeah. It was small.

PROSECUTOR

Did you consider her your "best friend"?

DIANA

She was a friend. I can prove it. I know that's something you like... evidence.

JUDGE

Bring it forward.

DIANA walks to a pile of random objects and pulls out a plastic crown. She walks to the JUDGE and places the crown on the stand.

JUDGE (cont.)

This is the crown that-

MIRA

- Diana used to wear! She loved that crown.

DIANA

I thought I was supposed to be the one answering questions. Mira and I... we stole it from the costumes for the Christmas pageant. It's meant for an angel, but I used it when we played dress up.

PROSECUTOR

You played dress up when you were 13?

DIANA

The community had just rescinded their ban on "The Brothers Grimm" and Mira couldn't stop reading it. She was obsessed with fantasy. And I liked humoring her. On my terms, of course.

PROSECUTOR

And what were those exactly?

DIANA

Mira always played the poor servant girl. I played the evil queen.

PROSECUTOR

What exactly made you “evil”?

DIANA

I’d make her clean the castle and stuff. She wanted to be a princess, like Cinderella, but I was so powerful that Mira never got to be the princess. I usually would hang her in the town square by the end.

DEFENDER

Didn’t you find that cruel?

DIANA / MIRA

No.

DIANA

I did it to toughen her up. If she was gonna play princesses at 13, she might as well learn how the world works. How *this* world works.

DEFENDER

And what is this world?

DIANA

Where a public hanging is just another Sunday. Especially for girls.

DEFENDER

Could you elaborate on that?

DIANA

Actually... why don’t you tell them Mira?

MIRA doesn’t respond.

DIANA (cont.)

I’m giving you permission. Tell them.

MIRA

I don’t want to.

DIANA

You had no problem telling them before.

JUDGE

What is she talking about, Mira?

MIRA

I didn't tell anyone about it. Only you.

DIANA

Then, how did they find out?

MIRA

I don't know.

DIANA

Yes, you do. You told someone!

MIRA

No! I didn't!

DIANA

Yes! You did!

JUDGE

Be as straightforward as you can.

DIANA

Just tell them. Everyone else knows now, anyway.

MIRA

Uh... Diana... kissed someone.

MOM wails. COURT REPORTER cries out. PROSECUTOR noisily grabs the nearest piece of furniture, struggling to remain standing. The JUDGE hits their gavel on the table.

JUDGE

Order! Order in the court!

MIRA

But I didn't tell anyone it happened! I swear!

DEFENDER

Mira had trouble speaking to people. We know this. Reporting her friend for inappropriate behavior is completely out of character.

PROSECUTOR

That's not true. Mira talked to Ross.

DIANA

Yes! She has a crush on him.

MIRA

But he was just a friendly person. Lending me pencils, asking me how I was doing-

DIANA

Ross was my boyfriend. Secret boyfriend. He was in love with me! Besides, he could never like her anyway.

DEFENDER

Why not?

DIANA

I mean, Mira's nice. But that's not a personality trait. Also, she's got wide hips. Boys don't want that.

MIRA

It's true. She explained it to me. He wants someone like Diana, who- knows who they are. Confident in who they are. Not me.

DEFENDER

Diana, how would you describe Mira?

DIANA

Innocent. Pure. And Innocent.

DEFENDER

If she had such a pure demeanor, why would she turn you in?

DIANA

I don't know. She just... did.

DEFENDER

Mira, did you ever talk about this with Diana?

MIRA

The kiss?

DEFENDER

No. About how people found out about the kiss?

MIRA

I... no, I didn't. One morning, all the girls just had an emergency assembly about... protecting our bodies. She was there. Onstage. They made her sit up there. She was an example. She didn't come to school the next day. I went to her house, but she wouldn't see me. There were rumors about having a purification for her. Next thing I knew... she was missing. I never saw her again.

DEFENDER

So, everything, this whole conversation... is purely speculation?

MIRA

I... I guess you could say so. Yes.

DEFENDER

Your honor, there is no true evidence to support this accusation. I must ask that we move on and discuss more tangible matters.

PROSECUTOR

Diana brought the crown! That's evidence.

DEFENDER

To prove a friendship. Not betrayal.

PROSECUTOR

But out of their entire friendship, why choose the crown?

DIANA

It was just the first thing that came to mind.

PROSECUTOR

Why?

DIANA

I don't know.

PROSECUTOR

I think I do. Read back the report please.

The COURT REPORTER scrolls on his laptop until he lands on what he's looking for.

COURT REPORTER

"Mira didn't talk to anyone until we were 13. I did. She wished that-"

PROSECUTOR

Next.

The COURT REPORTER scrolls.

COURT REPORTER

"She dreamed of being a princess, but I was queen. She always wanted-"

PROSECUTOR

Next?

The COURT REPORTER scrolls.

COURT REPORTER

"Ross wanted someone like Diana. Beautiful. Confident. Someone who knows who they are. I wanted to be like Diana."

PROSECUTOR

"I wish... I want..." Sounds like jealousy to me. A sin perfectly embodied by the crown that Mira wanted so badly. Tell me, Mira, did you confess this into your beads? Or did the bad manifest into something bigger?

MIRA

I don't-

PROSECUTOR

Something like betraying your best friend? Causing her pain?

MIRA

I didn't tell anyone.

PROSECUTOR

Then, maybe you wanted it to stay hidden. The envy. Because who envies a betrayer of the community? A traitor themselves.

DIANA

Wait-

PROSECUTOR

Mira, do you share her doubts?

DIANA

Wait! Can I see the crown?

The JUDGE hands the crown to DIANA.

DIANA (cont.)

I- the things I did as a kid are true. I did say she wasn't strong enough to be queen. I did say that Ross could never love her. But I never said she's the reason I ran away. Not in real life. Why did I say it now? I always said things and I don't know why. I just said them. Why did I do that? I was- I didn't think about how my words affected you, Mira. And I'm sorry.

MIRA

Diana, you don't have to say that.

DIANA

But I do. You can let me apologize.

DIANA looks to the JUDGE.

DIANA (cont.)

And maybe I was the jealous one, ya know? She was the epitome of innocence. I wasn't. Maybe that's why I was so mean? I- I knew I could never be like her. Good.

DIANA places the crown on MIRA's head.

PROSECUTOR

How sweet.... Mira is the evil queen now.

DIANA

No, that's not-

PROSECUTOR

You confessed that Mira caused you pain. She remained sinful.

DEFENDER

But Diana confessed that she hurt Mira too. Intentionally, I might add.

PROSECUTOR

So? Tell me-

PROSECUTOR / MOM / DAD / ROSS

-why didn't Mira get rid of what was bad?

PROSECUTOR

Could've saved Diana a lot of tears.

MIRA

But I'm a good person. She said I'm good!

PROSECUTOR

Just by being around you, Diana called herself-

COURT REPORTER

-“a coldhearted bitch. Incapable of being good.”

PROSECUTOR

What kind of person makes someone feel like that?

DEFENDER

Diana made Mira feel just as terrible.

PROSECUTOR

By calling her “nice” and “innocent”? Sounds like compliments to me.

DIANA

Stop that! This- this is why I left. You're twisting- that's not what I said!

DEFENDER

Diana is the sinful one here.

MIRA

No, Diana is good.

PROSECUTOR

A pure person doesn't make their friend regret their entire childhood.

DIANA

I only regret that I didn't leave sooner.

PROSECUTOR

Are you proud, Mira?

DEFENDER

Your honor-

PROSECUTOR

Are you proud of who you've become?

DEFENDER

-can we focus on truth?

PROSECUTOR

Who could ever be proud of who you are now? Hm? Who?

DAD

I'm proud of you.

SCENE 6

DAD stands.

MIRA

Dad... how are you... here?

JUDGE

All are welcome, Mira. That includes your Father.

DAD

I am so proud of you, pumpkin'.

MOM stands.

MOM

Your honor, permission to address my husband?

The JUDGE leans back in her chair.

JUDGE

I'll allow it.

MOM

Have you been here this whole time?

DAD

Katherine- I- yes. I wanted to support Mira on her big day.

MOM

You mean her trial?

DAD

Yes. Her trial.

MOM

Do you know how she got here, James?

DAD

Yes.

MOM

And who, do you think, taught her that behavior?

MIRA

Mom, Dad, please.

DAD

I don't think it's appropriate to-

MOM

Since when have you concerned yourself with what's "appropriate"?

DAD

Please. Not now.

MOM

Why? There are guidelines, laws, that tell us what to do. You are not an exception. Mira isn't either.

DAD

Just let me talk to my daughter.

MOM

No, I won't let you.

JUDGE

I will.

MOM

No! Your honor, he can't talk to Mira until he talks to *me*.

JUDGE

Then talk.

DAD

What more do we have to talk about?

MOM

Maybe why you think you can just show up and... why you left.

DAD
Jesus.

MOM
Why did you leave?

DAD
I didn't leave! That wasn't leaving!

MOM
Then what is your definition of "leaving" because you certainly haven't been *here*!

Simultaneously, MIRA takes a step forward and the JUDGE stands.

MIRA
Please stop, Mom.

JUDGE
Keep going.

DAD
Don't pretend you even wanted me here in the first place.

MIRA
Dad...

JUDGE
It's alright, Mira. Listen.

DAD
All you ever talked about was what was wrong with me. And you probably do the same to her!

MOM
The way you live is not healthy!

DAD
Right! Because I'm sick.

MOM

You're not sick, you- do you realize what you're teaching her? Give into the bad, your sin, your-

DAD

She understands that I'm trying. Why can't you?

MOM

She's your *daughter*! She shouldn't be a part of it.

DAD

You mean my sickness?

MOM

There is a cure! Actually show up on Sunday, repent-

DAD

It doesn't matter.

MOM

-let it go and get better-

DAD

I don't matter.

MOM

-before Mira ends up just like you!

MIRA

STOP. Please stop.

JUDGE

GO. Keep going.

DAD

And if I died, would it matter? To you?

MOM

It would. It did.

DAD

I don't believe you! You wouldn't care if I was dead or alive.

MOM

You don't really care what I think, do you? About your death? You chose that all on your own.

MIRA / JUDGE

Mom! Dad!

MIRA tries to run in between her parents, but she trips and falls to the ground. MOM and DAD both try to help MIRA stand, but MIRA only accepts DAD's help.

JUDGE

Wonderful job. You finally provided something real. Evidence in action, really.

MIRA

Do want more "evidence in action"? Let me speak to my Dad. Alone.

PROSECUTOR

No! No. Any conversation is a development in the case. She cannot simply-

JUDGE

I'll allow it. As long as someone supervises.

MIRA looks at DEFENDER.

MIRA

She can supervise.

JUDGE

No. Him.

The JUDGE points to the COURT REPORTER.

MIRA

But-

JUDGE

A brief recess might do us the rest of us some good, anyway. Give us a chance to collect ourselves and...

JUDGE glances at PROSECUTOR and MOM.

JUDGE (cont.)

...prepare for the rest of the trial. Never know what might come up. We'll resume in 10.

The JUDGE hits their gavel on the podium. MOM tries to approach MIRA, but is escorted off by the PROSECUTOR. ROSS and DIANA exit together. DEFENDER approaches MIRA.

DEFENDER

Be careful. They may try to take your words out of context again. Stay truthful but... don't confess to anything. Avoid the bad. Alright?

MIRA nods and DEFENDER exits.

JUDGE

Have fun.

JUDGE exits. MIRA and DAD look at one another. The lights fade.

{ACT 2}

SCENE 7

Lights up. MIRA, DAD, and COURT REPORTER are in the same spots they were in before intermission. Years of silence sit between them. MIRA and DAD try to break this silence at the same time.

MIRA / DAD

So...

MIRA

Oh, sorry.

DAD

No, no no. I'm sorry. What were you going to say?

MIRA

I- I don't know? It's just very... weird. Having you back.

DAD

It's okay, Mira. You don't have to be afraid anymore. Just let everything melt away, pumpkin.

MIRA

Okay...

DAD

It can be just you and me.

MIRA

You and me.

DAD

How have you been? Since I, uh, ya know.

MIRA

Good. I've been good, Dad.

DAD

Oh, that's a relief!

MIRA
Yeah.

DAD
I was so worried you'd want to- that you'd end up being like-

MIRA
Can you read me the book?

DAD
The book?

MIRA
Sorry. God's book. I miss hearing you read it.

DAD
Oh, yes. I haven't read in a while, I suppose.

MIRA
Yeah and... we left off in the middle of a story. I've always wanted to finish it. With you.

DAD
They really should allow us to read more books. Bring back the ones that were banned, not just fairytales. Stories are a part of- who we are! Where we came from. Our stories, our words, our flesh! We need to challenge what we truly believe and-

MIRA
Dad, I know. I'm on your side.

DAD
That's right, you are! Yes. We did talk about belief. And if ours aligned with the community. You're very smart.

MIRA
Thanks Dad.

DAD
My happy little girl. Do you still agree? With the community?

MIRA

Let's... find that book, yeah?

MIRA walks to a pile of random items and starts searching. DAD joins her.

DAD

Now, where on earth could it be?

MIRA

It's here, I'm sure.

DAD

Where IS IT goddammit?

DAD starts throwing the items around the room.

MIRA

Dad-

DAD

WHERE IS THE FUCKING BOOK?

MIRA notices the Bible tucked away under a blanket and grabs it.

MIRA

Dad, it's okay! Look! Look here. I found it.

DAD

FUCK!!!

MIRA

I FOUND THE BOOK!

DAD stops when he sees MIRA and the Bible.

DAD

Oh, wonderful. Thank you, pumpkin'.

MIRA sits on the ground and taps the spot next to her.

MIRA

Let's finish that story.

DAD sits next to MIRA. He takes the book from her and opens it to a marked page.

DAD

This is- this isn't the N+I translation.

MIRA

I know. You prefer the original.

DAD

Oh, that's right... let's see... "Joseph said to him, 'When... when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness and get me out of this prison...'" Is this the right section, Mira? Are you sure?

MIRA

That's where the bookmark was, right?

DAD

Right.

MIRA

Then, it's the right spot.

DAD

"Show me kindness and get me out of this prison. I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."

MOM/ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / DEFENDER / JUDGE (offstage)

Do you deserve to be locked away?

DAD

"The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph; he forgot him."

MOM / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / DEFENDER / JUDGE (offstage)

What have you forgotten?

DAD

And... that's it. That's where the story ends.

MIRA

No, there's more.

DAD

Well, the chapter ends. We can pick it up another time.

MIRA

But we just started.

DAD

I know, but- it's hard- Mira. Being back. That's all.

Silence.

MIRA

So... in the story... the cupbearer forgot Joseph?

DAD

Yes.

MIRA

But Joseph spoke with-

DAD

-God. He spoke directly to God.

MIRA

How could the cupbearer forget that?

DAD

I think for the same reason they threw Joseph in jail.

MIRA

What?

DAD

People, Mira. They can twist anything.

MOM / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / DEFENDER / JUDGE (offstage)

Anything.

DAD

Even what's good. The innocent.

MIRA

I know that Dad.

DAD

Do you? I'm not sure you do. I do.

MOM / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / DEFENDER / JUDGE (offstage)

I do. I do.

DAD

There's a difference between people and God, Mira. Can you remember that, even when I'm gone?

MIRA

I- I haven't forgotten. I promise. How about we-

MIRA tries to stand, but DAD pulls her back down.

DAD

Will you show me kindness? Mention my name and release me from this prison?

MIRA

Let's- let's have, um, some ice cream. Okay? We like that.

DAD

People like us, they keep us in prison. They want us in prison.

MOM / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / DEFENDER / JUDGE (offstage)

The bad. Lock it away. Kill it.

DAD

It's here, honey-

DAD taps his temple.

DAD (cont.)

- just don't give in like I did.

MIRA breaks away and starts looking around the room.

MIRA

Just wait, I know what will help.

DAD

Were you able to get pills, Mira? Or did they ban that too? It just balances us out. It keeps us sober. Awake.

MOM / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / DEFENDER / JUDGE (offstage)

Don't let us rot here, Mira.

MIRA finds a carton of ice cream and two spoons.

MIRA

Here! I found it!

MIRA rushes to her DAD's side.

DAD

Don't let us rot *here*.

DAD places his finger on MIRA's temple.

MOM / ROSS / DIANA / PROSECUTOR / DEFENDER / JUDGE (offstage)

Don't kill it. Don't leave.

ROSS and DIANA enter and return to their place in the audience. When MIRA notices ROSS and DIANA, she breaks away from DAD.

MIRA

Dad, look. Mint chocolate chip. Your favorite.

DAD

Mint chocolate chip? I had forgotten mint chocolate chip!

MIRA hands her DAD a spoon. THEY eat straight from the carton.

DAD (cont.)

Mmmmmm. That's it.

MIRA

Just like our movie nights, remember? Ice cream and...

DAD

...something good to drink. Too bad you weren't 21. You're not 21 now, are you?

MIRA

No.

DAD

Good.

MIRA

But you'd let me have sips.

DAD

I did that? Right. but your Mother- she- she said-

PROSECUTOR and MOM enter.

MIRA

She was no fun.

DAD suppresses laughter.

MIRA (cont.)

What?

DAD

It's just- she used to say the same thing about her Mother.

MIRA

She did?

DAD

Yes. You- you two are so *different*, and yet, so alike.

MIRA

I think I'm more like you.

DAD

I still love your Mom. You know that, right?

MIRA

I know.

DAD

If I was still, ya know... do you think she would still be with me?

MIRA

You can't get divorced. Not in God's eyes.

DAD

But, even if divorce was allowed... would she still love me?

MIRA / MOM

I think so.

MOM and PROSECUTOR return to their places.

DAD

So, did you ever find someone else to... have movie nights with?

MIRA

I mean, I do have a friend.

DAD

You do? Wait. Don't tell me it's that one girl.

MIRA

Diana?

DAD

No. Ashley. She's sweet but- I don't know. I want you to develop your own voice and not rely on hers. Understand?

DEFENDER enters and returns to her place.

DAD (cont.)

Sorry, I didn't mean to- wait. When there's tension, don't I usually say something? To break it? I do. What was it?

MIRA

Turn your gilded life into gold.

DAD

Yes! That's good.

MIRA

I know.

DAD

Turn your gilded life into gold... don't simply decorate the surface of your soul in gold. Make it pure. Make it true.

MIRA

And I'm trying to, Dad. I really am.

DAD

And then...

DAD jumps up.

Dad (cont.)

...we throw up now? Yes. We eat and then throw up.

MIRA

What?

DAD

That's what we do. We have movie nights when we're sad.

MIRA

I'm not sad.

DAD points at self.

DAD (cont.)
Drink.

DAD points at MIRA.

DAD (cont.)
Food. Fill up, then make room for more sad. And you've got more sad. My sad little girl.

DEFENDER
Mira, did you confess this?

MIRA
No, I- he's lying! I didn't do that. I don't do that!

DAD grabs MIRA's shoulders.

DAD
It's okay. Just keep eating, make them melt away, like the ice cream, then, we can start all over.

MIRA
Let me go.

DAD
Admitting the bad is the first step to getting better.

MIRA / DEFENDER
Stop.

DAD
Say it. It's just you and me. Or would you rather leave together?

MIRA / DEFENDER / DIANA / MOM
Stop.

DAD / PROSECUTOR / ROSS
Do you want to kill the bad like I did?

MIRA / DEFENDER / DIANA / MOM
Please STOP!

DAD / PROSECUTOR / ROSS

Cause if you're all bad, why keep living?

MIRA / DEFENDER / DIANA / MOM

STOP!

MIRA pushes DAD away.

DAD

Mira, it's just me.

MIRA

That's not "just you", Dad.

DEFENDER

Stop this! We shouldn't- we can't continue the trial until the Judge returns.

DAD

The Judge is already here! And she will hear this!

DAD / PROSECUTOR / ROSS

We're hungry. We're gluttonous. We will never be satisfied.

DAD

Just admit it.

DEFENDER steps between MIRA and DAD.

DEFENDER

You need to step back.

DAD

Let Mira speak for herself! Confess!

PROSECUTOR

It's what the Judge would want.

DEFENDER

She would *want* to be present.

PROSECUTOR

The Judge wants “evidence in action”, and this-

The JUDGE enters.

JUDGE

What about the Judge?

DEFENDER

Your honor, the Prosecutor is trying to conduct the trial without you.

PROSECUTOR

I was examining evidence and drawing conclusions. It's my job.

DEFENDER

Illegitimate evidence! Off the record.

JUDGE motions to the COURT REPORTER.

JUDGE

Whatever was said here is very much on the record. Remember?

DEFENDER

But your honor-

JUDGE

Show it to me.

The JUDGE approaches the COURT REPORTER and reads off the laptop.

PROSECUTOR

Mira continued to cause harm with unhealthy behavior. To her God-given body! It's all there.

DEFENDER

There wasn't a tangible confession. And even if it was true, would shameful sentencing really lead to rehabilitation? Purification?

The JUDGE sighs.

JUDGE

Just as a clear confession was approaching, Mira and her Father were cut off. I cannot draw a definitive conclusion from this.

PROSECUTOR

So, can we-

JUDGE

Finish it now. Dad, say what you need to Mira. One last chance.

DAD

I'm... I'm so sorry you're like this, pumpkin'. It's my fault, I gave it to you. Those thoughts that hide right here...

DAD gently taps his temple.

DAD (cont.)

...but you can do what I never could.

MIRA

You could've done anything you wanted, Dad.

DAD

No. You can look at the darkest part of yourself and identify her. I can't. I chose my ending. You still get to choose yours. Turn your gilded life into gold. Don't be afraid.

MIRA embraces DAD.

MIRA

I love you, Dad.

DAD

And I love you, Mira.

JUDGE

Love, but no confession. Return to your seat, Dad.

DAD

But-

JUDGE

It's over. Sit. Down.

DAD returns to his place.

PROSECUTOR

May I suggest a different approach, your honor? This entire trial, we've been stuck in the past. What happened, who said what...

JUDGE

Your point?

PROSECUTOR

Why not examine the future?

DEFENDER

How would we do that?

PROSECUTOR

Create it for ourselves... Ross, step forward please.

ROSS stands and walks forward.

MIRA

Wait a second-

PROSECUTOR

Prove that you truly eliminated the badness inside you. Prove that you are worthy of love.

DEFENDER

Your honor, can Mira and I have a moment alone?

JUDGE

Why? Don't you trust her?

DEFENDER

Mira, you are innocent. Remember that. He is just a boy.

PROSECUTOR

And you are just a woman.

DEFENDER

Trust what you know. Breathe.

JUDGE

And begin.

SCENE 8

DEFENDER, PROSECUTOR, and JUDGE return to their places.

ROSS

Uh... so you got daddy issues, huh?

MIRA

Um, yeah, I... I guess all are welcome to my trial, even... childhood crushes?

ROSS takes a step towards MIRA.

MIRA (cont.)

Ross. You're Diana's boyfriend.

ROSS

Diana ran away 5 years ago. You're still here. Besides, why do you think I picked up all your books in the hallway? I care about you.

ROSS steps closer to MIRA. She breaks away.

MIRA

This is where I live!

ROSS

In a... courtroom?

MIRA

Yes! Wait, no. But it's my shape. Back of the mind.

ROSS

Cool.

MIRA

Yeah.

ROSS

Messy.

MIRA

Yeah.

ROSS

You're a hoarder.

MIRA

What?

ROSS

You got a lotta shit to deal with.

MIRA

I got- shit. Yeah.

ROSS

Lotta baggage.

MIRA

Uh-huh.

ROSS

What if you shared it with someone else?

MIRA

Hmm?

The COURTROOM speaks.

ROSS / DEFENDER / DAD / MOM / DIANA

What if someone helped you sort through it all?

ROSS

It must be a hard job to do alone. I can help. If you want me to?

MIRA

Only if you want to.

ROSS

I do. Only if *you* want me to.

MIRA

Okay. I want you.

ROSS

Great. Wanna start... here. What's this?

ROSS walks to a pile of random items and picks up a portrait of a girl made with oil pastels. The girl is frowning and wearing a crown.

MIRA

Oh that's- that's a self portrait I made in school.

ROSS

You made this?

MIRA

Yeah? I did. I- I don't know why I still have that. It's stupid.

ROSS

I think it's amazing.

MIRA

Really?

ROSS

Yeah. I like the crown.

MIRA

I was really into princesses.

ROSS

You look like Cinderella.

MIRA runs to another pile of random items and grabs a pack of papers.

MIRA

Okay, well... this is the last math exam I took.

ROSS

Really?

MIRA

Yeah. I know it's not special or anything, but I got 95% on it. I know we're not supposed to apply for college, leave the community, but I-

ROSS

You should apply. Seriously. You would totally get in.

MIRA reaches into a pile of random items next to ROSS and grabs a photo album.

MIRA

Here's our family photo album. When we were all- I mean, I know you knew what we looked like. But I've lost a lot of weight! Don't ask why.

MIRA hands ROSS the photo album. ROSS struggles to hold all the items in his arms. MIRA runs to a box of clothes. She bends over and rummages through the box. ROSS gently places all the items down and walks towards MIRA.

MIRA (cont.)

I just made a new dress for Easter with my Mom. You'll love it.

ROSS stands next to MIRA.

MIRA (cont.)

I, honestly, wanted to make it a little tighter, more flattering, but Mom said-

ROSS places his hand on MIRA's back. MIRA pauses but continues.

MIRA (cont.)

-she said that wouldn't be necessary and that-

ROSS slowly moves his hand down MIRA's back. MIRA finds her Easter dress, grabs it, and breaks away from ROSS.

MIRA (cont.)

See? It's perfect.

ROSS

Is it alright if I... take a closer look?

MIRA nods her head. ROSS places his hands on MIRA's. They hold the dress together. ROSS leans in closer. MIRA doesn't move. ROSS pauses.

ROSS

Is this okay?

MIRA

Yes.

ROSS kisses MIRA. MIRA kisses him back. DEFENDER tries to step forward and stop them, but JUDGE holds out their hand and stops her. ROSS breaks away.

ROSS

Don't worry. I won't confess this. Not again.

ROSS goes to kiss MIRA again. She stops him.

MIRA

What did you say?

ROSS

I said we don't have to confess this.

MIRA

You said "not again."

ROSS

Yeah.

MIRA

Have you confessed to a kiss before?

ROSS

I mean-

MIRA

No one's ever been caught except... are... are you the one who turned Diana in?

ROSS

I came to help you. Your future! You asked me to be a part of your future.

MIRA
Did I?

ROSS
You are so good, Mira. And I wanted to be a part of that. I didn't-

JUDGE
That's enough.

ROSS
-want to ruin it for you. No! Please. She has to understand.

JUDGE
You're dismissed, Ross.

ROSS
I want to be with you, but not here. They're watching.

JUDGE
Sit down.

ROSS
They're always watching. Why? We should- run away!

JUDGE
Enough!

ROSS
Let's leave the community.

JUDGE
ENOUGH.

DEFENDER
Ross, step away.

ROSS
No! You don't control me.

PROSECUTOR

You're right. She does.

PROSECUTOR points at MIRA.

PROSECUTOR

A seemingly sweet girl attracted to foul disdainful behavior.

ROSS

Bullshit.

PROSECUTOR

Lust. Pure lust.

ROSS / DEFENDER / MIRA

That wasn't lust!

PROSECUTOR

Read the record back.

The COURT REPORTER scrolls on his laptop.

COURT REPORTER

Mira, you invited a man into your home, teased him with emotional intimacy, and let him touch you in a sexual manner.

ROSS

Neither of us confessed it!

PROSECUTOR

But we all saw it.

COURT REPORTER

You bent down with the knowledge that a man stood behind you. You said "come here Ross. I want you to. I want you to *touch* me."

MIRA / DEFENDER / ROSS / DAD / DIANA

No!

COURT REPORTER

“Touch me, Ross.”

MIRA / DEFENDER / ROSS / DAD / DIANA

That’s not true!

COURT REPORTER

“Touch me all over. I want you to.”

MIRA

I didn’t say that! Did I?

ROSS

No, no-

DEFENDER

-you didn’t say that at all.

ROSS

Why do you keep making things up?

COURT REPORTER

I write what is true.

ROSS

It’s not true for her. It’s not true for me!

COURT REPORTER

Once it is written, it is true.

ROSS

Then, it’s wrong. The whole system!

COURT REPORTER

The system works.

MIRA’s rips off her rosary necklace.

MIRA

My necklace has a cross on it, I don’t own anything too “showy”-

MIRA places the necklace at the feet of the JUDGE. She grabs a pair of shoes.

MIRA (cont.)

- I don't own any heels, I resist showing off my figure-

MIRA places the shoes at the feet of the JUDGE. She grabs her clothes in the box.

MIRA (cont.)

- everything falls below the knees, nothing with straps, three fingers below the collar bone, no straps- I follow the rules. This is proof! I'm not bad, I'm- I'm a good girl.

PROSECUTOR

Then why do you still exhibit lust?

DEFENDER

Your honor, "lust" is not simply connecting with another physically. It is the complete surrender to sexual desire, uncontrolled and unhealthy. To wear heels, to bend down in front of a boy... a *kiss*? Why are we equating these to completely destructive behavior? If we criminalize a kiss, how will Mira ever become a mother?

ROSS

If she even wants to be a mother.

MOM stands.

MOM

You don't want to be a mother? Mira, what about your promise?

MIRA locks eyes with her MOM. She cannot look away.

DEFENDER

I think this has all gone too far. This unorthodox method, anyone just speaking when they want to- it's not right.

DEFENDER steps towards the JUDGE.

DEFENDER (cont.)

Aren't you supposed to be the one in charge? Keeping order? What happened to that?

JUDGE

I've been doing this job longer than you realize. Don't question my methods. They're long, they're exhausting, but they work. I would rather be doing a million other things right now, but I'm here, aren't I? I show up. Every day, I try to make sense of all your voices, the shapes, the noise. That's my job and that's Mira's job. That is our law.

ROSS

But why like this?

JUDGE

I'm actually protecting Mira and those around her.

DEFENDER

How do your "laws" protect anyone?

JUDGE

Through purification. Killing the bad.

MIRA / DEFENDER / ROSS / DAD / DIANA

What about salvation?

MIRA

But there are no exceptions to the law. My Dad wasn't an exception, I'm not an exception. You go to court and you, you just, you receive punishment. You pay for what you've done. Only then, can there be good.

DEFENDER

You don't really believe that, do you?

SCENE 9

MIRA looks to the ground, avoiding eye contact with EVERYONE.

JUDGE

She does. And I think I know why. Would you like to use your ability to “show us”? Like you did with Ashley? Or shall I?

MIRA

I’m already in court.

JUDGE

This is your shape. Not the real court.

MIRA

Don’t bring me back.

JUDGE

If you can do it, so can I.

JUDGE raises her hand. The lights start to flicker. MIRA looks up.

JUDGE (cont.)

Don’t worry. You’re so close.

The JUDGE snaps their fingers. The courtroom falls into darkness.

JUDGE (cont.)

Sorry. I have a soft spot for the dramatic.

A finger snap. A dim light illuminates the center of the courtroom, where MOM sits on a bench with the energy of her 35 year old self. MIRA stands on the edge of the light pool.

JUDGE (cont.)

Do not be afraid.

MIRA takes a step into the light pool and MOM notices her.

MOM

Mira Elizabeth Vance-

MIRA sits beside MOM.

MOM (cont.)

Where have you been?

MIRA

Mom, I-

MOM

It doesn't take that long to go to the bathroom. Where were you?

MIRA

I got lost. I'm really lost, Mom.

MOM

You nearly gave me a heart attack. I was just about to- these aren't our people, Mira. We have to stick together.

MIRA

I know.

MOM

The community has a better way of doing this, a much more gracious way of doing this, but we live on this earth and we must follow its rules.

MIRA

Are we gonna... see him?

MOM

Yes. We go in and hear what his charges are. He will plead "guilty", and the Judge will announce his sentence. Do you remember what a sentence is?

MIRA nods.

MOM (cont.)

Good.

MOM looks at her hands, fidgeting.

MIRA

Mom. It's gonna be okay.

MOM

He could've seriously hurt someone, Mira. If he didn't get pulled over, he could've- he was in no condition to be driving. He knew that.

MIRA

But he didn't hurt anyone. And he won't do it again.

MOM

Mira, can you just- we can love your father, but we do not have to pretend that this is okay. He will face the consequences for his actions. He will repent before the Lord. And he will repent *here* because that's what we're supposed to do. Face the law. There are no exceptions. Not me, not you, not your father- you go to court and receive punishment for your crimes, only then, is any kind of good possible.

MIRA

Only through God's grace are things possible.

MOM

Not for unbelievers.

MIRA

But- that's not true.

MOM

Excuse me?

MIRA

That's not true. Jesus died to save the broken, he died for our sins. Everyone's sins.

MOM

Jesus died for his people. Not sinners.

MIRA

But that's not what the Bible says.

MOM

Stop this, stop this doubt.

MIRA

Dad, he- he loves God. God loves him.

MOM

He committed a terrible *crime*.

MIRA

Maybe if you didn't make him feel like a criminal, he wouldn't have done it!

MOM's may be holding back tears.

MIRA (cont.)

Mom, I'm sorry, I-

MOM

No, you're just a child, you- you don't know what you're saying.

MIRA

I didn't mean-

MOM

I forgive you. That was the same spirit that overcame your Father. But I forgive you.

MIRA tries to place her hand on MOM's back. MOM moves, rejecting the touch.

MOM (cont.)

I'm okay, it's okay. Are you okay?

MIRA nods.

MOM (cont.)

And how do we show we're okay?

MIRA forces a smile.

MOM (cont.)

There's my little meerkat, my good girl. You are... I confess, if it wasn't for the community, I wouldn't be your mother. Remember they're our family too. Even if this one is broken.

MIRA

We aren't broken, Mom. I promise that... when I'm older... I'll have so many children that it won't be possible to break because we'll be so full.

MOM

Is that so?

MIRA

I promise.

MOM smiles.

MOM

Well, let's go in. I think we're ready.

MOM steps toward the edge of the light. She extends her hand to MIRA.

MOM (cont.)

Are you ready?

MIRA remains sitting.

JUDGE

Are you ready, Mira?

MIRA does not move.

JUDGE

Or do you remember what happened next?

MIRA takes a breath.

MIRA

I... I don't know how it worked. But they hated him. They didn't even know him, but they hated him. And he hated him too. I mean, himself. He really hated himself. And that night... that was the night he...

JUDGE

And what did you learn?

MIRA

I just had this feeling that- I'd be in the exact same place as Dad one day. At the fingertips of a Judge. Sharing the bad about me.

JUDGE

Good.

The JUDGE snaps. The lights flicker and go dark.

SCENE 10

The lights return to the normal courtroom, but only MIRA and JUDGE remain.

JUDGE

That wasn't so hard now, was it?

MIRA

Where is everyone?

JUDGE

You don't need them anymore. You're ready.

MIRA

No. NO. You don't get to decide that. You don't-

JUDGE

What makes you think you can tell me what to do? Are you the Judge?

MIRA

No, no. I'm sorry.

JUDGE

I'm not scolding you. I'm asking you. Are you the Judge?

MIRA

No, that's your job.

JUDGE

Every time we get close to confessing, you pull away. Focus!

MIRA

I am.

JUDGE

Focus on me! ME!

MIRA

I'm looking right at you!

JUDGE

Why are you always so literal?

The JUDGE snaps their fingers and MIRA's legs give out. She collapses onto the floor. MIRA struggles to stand.

JUDGE (cont.)

Your body knows what is true. Always. You'll make it sick, but still use your legs. You enjoy using your legs. So do I, remember? We look forward to it. But I refuse to walk in circles, and you keep falling. You're here. And I'm here.

JUDGE taps her temple. MIRA stands.

MIRA

Whatever you're doing, stop.

JUDGE

Stop denying me! Look into the mirror. Mirrors make perfect sense.

MIRA

Stop speaking in riddles! You're not making any sense.

JUDGE

Then, you're not very intelligent. I thought you'd get it by now, I thought- all of these people, all of these sins, what do they have in common?

MIRA

Me.

JUDGE

YES. And me! ME. "What do you think, Judge? Can you take a look at these bad bad things? Where's the Judge? Where? WHERE?" It's both of us! I tried to do this in a way that would help you. You couldn't think of a shape, so I created one for you. You didn't want to confront your sins alone, so I stepped in. You didn't want to confess and confront what's bad, so I summoned the others to give you a voice.

MIRA

I'm on trial. I'm not the Judge.

JUDGE

Why did I let you reconnect with Ashley and Diana? Why did I give you time alone with Mom, Dad, and Ross? You needed them. To find me.

MIRA

No... no.

JUDGE

I know what hides here because it's my domain. My home. I'm the voice that whispers at the back of your head, the thoughts that keep you up at night. I'm the part of you that was ignored for so long... it manifested into something darker. Only I can judge you because I'm the only one who knows who you truly are. It's me.

MIRA

I don't believe you.

JUDGE

YES! Evidence! That's what we like!

MIRA

But I'm nothing like you! I'm not controlling and demanding and-

JUDGE

You hid your true feelings from Ashley, you made Diana's life worse, you betrayed yourself with Ross, you listen to Dad, you lash out at Mom... Mira, I motivate your actions. They've all seen me through you.

MIRA

Those are just speculations. And speculation is not proof.

JUDGE

Maybe not. But this is.

JUDGE holds up the piece of notebook paper.

JUDGE (cont.)

Not wanting to live on this earth anymore? That was my idea, but you wrote it down. We've been working together your entire life. You were told it was a devilish spirit, the bad inside of you. No, it was me. You. Us.

MIRA takes this all in. Silence.

MIRA

But... I...

JUDGE

It's okay. We can finally be honest about it. We can be free.

MIRA

But why... why did you make Mom see it? Today, the trial... seeing Dad go through it was enough.

JUDGE

You're the one who wrote the note. I think you wanted her to see.

MIRA

Shut up, SHUT UP!

JUDGE

I'm trying to help you! Protect you! Make your life golden, don't be afraid, see the bad, confront the truth! You and I? We are the only things that are true.

JUDGE approaches the stand and picks up the rosary necklace.

JUDGE (cont.)

Tell me, why did you write this note? Say it.

JUDGE tosses the rosary necklace at MIRA's feet.

JUDGE (cont.)

Confess!

MIRA

I don't know! I don't know. I- I know you want one moment, one person, but... it's not that simple, I... I did hit myself when I got angry. I did envy Diana. I loved my Dad. But he knew I threw up. And we never told anyone. Especially Mom. She loves me, but I don't think she likes me very much. I know I don't. Will someone ever like me? Like Ross? Or does fantasizing about that make me... I think I've always felt this way because... maybe I always knew that I was just born broken. Bad. And who could love someone who is just... bad.

JUDGE

And Mom found the note.

MIRA

Mom found the note.

JUDGE

And that's the only reason we made it to today.

MIRA

But the purification... it's supposed to make us feel closer to God. Why do I feel so far away?

JUDGE

Well do you remember what they said? About a purification?

MIRA

What?

JUDGE

Kill the bad. Keep the good.

MOM / ROSS / ASHLEY / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER (offstage)

When you kill the parts that are bad, we will love you, Mira.

JUDGE

So... what do you think? Reach a verdict. What should be our sentence?

MIRA looks around the space, trying to ground herself to something. She cannot.

MIRA

I think we got it right in the note.

JUDGE points at themselves.

JUDGE

Bad.

JUDGE points at MIRA.

JUDGE

Bad... what do we do with it?

MIRA

We save everyone else from ourselves. Protect them. Take away the bad. But how?

JUDGE

No one said we had to wake up. We can just... go to sleep. Together. I'm sure we have just the thing.

JUDGE digs through the piles of random objects. MIRA goes to help but drops her rosary necklace.

JUDGE (cont.)

It's cute you and Ross thought you could sort through all this. I've been doing it alone, for years, and this is the cleanest it's ever gotten.

MIRA picks up the rosary necklace.

JUDGE (cont.)

I'm just so glad you're here now. Doing this job alone? Please. I'm exhausted.

MIRA stares at the rosary necklace.

JUDGE (cont.)

We always had a hard time picturing the future. Maybe it's because we never had one.

MIRA closes her eyes. The lights flicker.

JUDGE (cont.)

What are you doing?

MIRA

The story- I- I promised I wouldn't forget. If we're going, I need to remember. I need to finish the story.

MIRA takes a deep breath. COURT REPORTER appears at the edge of the courtroom holding the N+I Translation. His face is expressionless, an echo of his former self. MIRA exhales. COURT REPORTER opens the N+I and begins reading.

COURT REPORTER

“When two full years passed, Pharaoh had a horrible dream that-“

MIRA

No. Skip ahead.

COURT REPORTER flips to the next page.

JUDGE

Mira-

MIRA

Just wait. If you can do it, so can I.

COURT REPORTER

“Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘It was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me caretaker and ruler of the land. Now hurry back to my Father and say to him-“

COURT REPORTER / DAD (offstage)

“Come down to me; don’t delay.”

COURT REPORTER

“Tell my father about the life entrusted to me in Egypt and about everything you have seen.”

MIRA takes a deep breath. The lights flicker. DAD enters, reading from the Bible. MIRA exhales.

COURT REPORTER / DAD

“Bring my father down here quickly.”

JUDGE

Okay, How about we-

MIRA

What did his Father say?

JUDGE

Mira-

MIRA
Tell me!

The COURT REPORTER and DAD simultaneously flip to another page.

DAD
“My son Joseph is still alive? I will go to him.”

MIRA
And what did God say? To Dad?

MIRA takes a deep breath. ASHLEY, ROSS, DIANA, MOM, and PROSECUTOR emerge at the edge of the courtroom, one by one. Their faces are expressionless, echoes of their former selves. Mira exhales.

ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / MOM / DAD / COURT REPORTER / PROSECUTOR
“I am the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will go with you and I will surely bring you back again.”

MIRA opens her eyes and looks to the people who love her.

JUDGE
Mira, Mira, look at me. Focus.

MIRA snaps. COURT REPORTER and PROSECUTOR step back, falling silent.

MIRA
What else?

ASHLEY / ROSS / DIANA / MOM / DAD
“But the advocate, the Holy Spirit, will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

DAD
Don't leave.

MOM
Remember.

ASHLEY
Hurting yourself doesn't solve anything.

ROSS

Only living can.

JUDGE

Mira-

MIRA

Keep going.

DAD / MOM

“Do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God.”

ASHLEY

“Even from your own number, people will arise and-“

ROSS/DIANA

“-distort the truth-“

ASHLEY

“-in order to draw disciples after them.”

JUDGE

Please.

ASHLEY / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA

Distort the truth. Distort the truth. People will arise from your own number and distort the truth.

JUDGE

Mira-

JUDGE snaps. COURT REPORTER and PROSECUTOR fall behind them.

JUDGE / COURT REPORTER / PROSECUTOR

Do not be afraid. I'm here to help you.

MIRA

You say that but- why am I still afraid? Why don't I believe you?

JUDGE

Because they're distracting you! Look to the truth. What is true?

MIRA

That... you're the one who's been distorting the truth?

JUDGE / COURT REPORTER / PROSECUTOR

I'm the only one who is truly honest with you.

MIRA

But they've been honest too.

MOM / DAD / MOM / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY

You are the twister of words.

MIRA

You've twisted my words.

ASHLEY

And mine.

DIANA

And mine.

ROSS

And mine.

DAD

And mine.

MOM

And mine.

MIRA

And the N+I translation... it's harder to hear God's voice when you're in charge.

MIRA / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY

It's harder to see the good.

MIRA

And confiding in someone is supposed to help, but confession- purification-

JUDGE

I look at information and draw conclusions. I protect you. That's my job.

DIANA

See someone living in sorrow and you'd throw them in the madhouse.

ROSS

See someone living in pure joy and you'd send them to the sanatorium.

JUDGE

I am not your enemy!

MIRA

You are the Judge.

MIRA / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY

And I'm ready for my confession.

MIRA drops her rosary necklace.

MIRA

I have sinned, yes. But there is also good. I confess that-

MIRA / ASHLEY

As a child, I tried my best to process the pain I inherited.

MIRA / MOM / DAD

And my parents tried too.

MIRA / DAD

But I also inherited a voice.

MIRA / MOM

I discovered my faith.

MIRA / DIANA

And a kindness that is deeply admired.

MIRA / ROSS

The right person will see that.

MIRA / COURT REPORTER / PROSECUTOR

And my sins do not make me unworthy of God's love.

MIRA

I mean, God sacrificed himself for our sins. I believe that. So, dying for my sins... it's a little redundant. Don't you think? It's the wrong sentence.

MIRA / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY

Looking at the evidence, that is what I know to be true.

MIRA

I can see why you tried to isolate me.

MIRA / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY

It's easier to forget who I am.

MIRA

But standing with them- remembering what I've gone through-

MIRA / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY

It reminds me that I'm not alone.

MIRA

And I can see the good.

MIRA / MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY

The spirit that powers the universe is rooted in them. So don't you dare question my relationship with God or with them.

MIRA

Because you are not a part of it.

Scene 11

JUDGE tries to break MIRA, MOM, DAD, ROSS, DIANA, ASHLEY, PROSECUTOR, and COURT REPORTER out of their "trance."

JUDGE

You- you can't say that- I lived this life too! I lived this life alongside you, you can't- you can't take them away from me, you, you can't get rid of me, I'm here, I'M HERE, ALWAYS, working and trying and listening and solving and I'm so tired. So tired. But I'll keep doing it. I will. I would do anything for you.

MIRA

I don't need you anymore.

JUDGE

Please. Don't leave me.

MIRA snaps her fingers. PROSECUTOR and COURT REPORTER pull JUDGE away. JUDGE may try to break free, but they hold her still and stand at attention.

MIRA (cont.)

The three of you have hurt me beyond comprehension. And I don't want it anymore. I don't need you anymore. From here on out, I sentence you to exile. I banish you from my mind.

JUDGE

What?

MIRA

You will be pushed to the back, where eventually, you will fade away. I will forget you, but you will never forget me. I promise you that.

JUDGE

Please-

MIRA

I never want to see you again.

JUDGE

Mira, please listen-

MIRA

And that's final!

JUDGE

Please, that's like death- you're- you're killing me- us- you can't do that.

MIRA

Yes, I can. It's my mind.

JUDGE

And who's been running it this whole time? If you get rid of me, you might not know what to do, you might make the wrong choices-

MIRA

Would that be so bad?

JUDGE

-you might hurt the people around you! Look at them. Look at them, Mira, who are they? What have you done to them? They aren't themselves.

MIRA

They're just- this is how you did it.

JUDGE

I thought you didn't want to be like me.

MIRA snaps her fingers. COURT REPORTER, PROSECUTOR, ASHLEY, MOM, DAD, ROSS, and DIANA all return to their "normal" selves. They react as if they are waking up from a dream.

MIRA

There. But I still want you gone.

JUDGE

Please.

MIRA

You are no longer welcome here.

JUDGE

This is my home, they are my home, please...

JUDGE tries to connect to DAD, ASHLEY, ROSS, and DIANA.

JUDGE (cont.)

.... don't leave me, don't leave me, don't leave me, don't leave me...

MIRA

Leave! You said what you had to, now leave!

JUDGE kneels before MOM. The lights flicker.

JUDGE (cont.)

Why did he leave Mom? Why didn't he want to stay? I don't... I don't understand... why does nobody want to... be around me? Why do they leave?

JUDGE rocks back and forth.

MIRA

Why is she doing that?

MOM

I don't know.

DAD

I know that... you know that it hurt you. What happened.

DIANA

Maybe this whole time, she's just been avoiding... this.

JUDGE

... don't leave me, don't leave me, don't leave me...

ASHLEY

You decided that killing yourself wasn't the answer. Maybe that includes her. She's a part of you. Like us, but more. You can't kill her.

MIRA

But I don't want to be... good to her.

PROSECUTOR

You said that your sins do not make you unworthy of God's love.

COURT REPORTER

Which means that... the "bad" parts of you deserve love too.

MIRA

But... I don't know. What if she takes back over?

ROSS

Well... you'll know what to do. You know what worked last time.

PROSECUTOR picks up the rosary necklace.

PROSECUTOR

Maybe it's not all black and white. What purpose do the parts of you serve?

PROSECUTOR breaks the cross off the rosary necklace. He drops the beads, but hands MIRA the cross.

ASHLEY

And how can you love every single one of them?

MIRA takes the cross and thinks for a moment. MIRA sits next to JUDGE.

MIRA

You... you can't be in charge anymore.

JUDGE

...don't leave me...

MIRA

I'm in charge. And you need to accept that.

JUDGE

...don't leave me...

MIRA

But you don't care about that do you?

Silence.

MIRA (cont.)

Listen. You're tired. And... that's... that's okay. You... you did what you had to do to get us through it all. And I am grateful. I am. You were so young and... you shouldn't have been put in that position. But you were. And we're here. And that wouldn't have been possible without you. And, so, well... you can stay.

JUDGE embraces MIRA. MIRA hesitates at first, but then, she embraces JUDGE back.

MIRA

But I'm in control now, okay? You don't have to worry anymore.

JUDGE

But protection.

MIRA

We will be protected.

JUDGE

Careful...

MIRA

I will be. Things are going to be better now.

JUDGE

But if we go back... they won't.

MIRA

What do you mean?

JUDGE

There. Up. Back.

MIRA

Do... do you mean the community?

JUDGE nods.

MIRA

You're scared? Of the community?

JUDGE

How can we heal in a place that needs us to be sick? That needs us to be bad?

MIRA

It's okay. We have them now.

DIANA

Sorry, but... we're not technically real. The "real us" are outside right now, praying, talking... or miles away from the community. I mean, there's a reason I ran.

MIRA

But Mom will be there and you... you'll at least be in my head.

DIANA

Is that enough?

MOM / DAD / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

Are we safe in the community?

MIRA looks to the JUDGE for the answer.

JUDGE

I... don't know. I think you get to decide this time.

The lights flicker, go out, then return. A dull ringing can be heard.

DAD

Mira, I think you're ready to wake up.

The ringing grows in volume.

MIRA

But, I have so much more I want to -

DAD

It's okay. Find time up there.

The lights flicker again. The ringing continues to grow in volume.

MIRA

But I- I don't know what to do. I don't-

MIRA runs to the center and lays down. She tries "waking up" (squints her eyes, thinks really hard, etc.). The lights increase in unpredictability- sometimes it's for a short time, sometimes it's for a long time, sometimes they reach a blackout, other times they don't. But MIRA doesn't wake up.

MIRA (cont.)

Can you help me?

EVERYONE lays their hands on MIRA (her feet, head, etc.) If they cannot reach MIRA directly, they lay their hands on the body of the person in front of them, creating one flesh. When they're all in position, MIRA closes her eyes. EVERYONE follows.

MIRA (cont.)

Do not be afraid.

DAD / MOM / ROSS / DIANA / ASHLEY / PROSECUTOR / COURT REPORTER

We'll be with you. WAKE UP.

MIRA snaps her fingers. The lights turn off. The ringing is almost unbearable.

SCENE 12

Lights up on the chapel. The ringing stops. Things look exactly how we left it - the pulpit, crucifix, and organ all in their places. FATHER MICHAEL, FATHER DAVID, and MOM are sitting around MIRA's body, praying quietly to themselves. ROSS and ASHLEY are sitting in the audience like before, also praying. MIRA jolts awake, dressed in her white dress, gasping for air as if she was breaking the surface of water. Her rosary, which was laying on her chest, falls to the ground.

FATHER MICHAEL

Breathe, Mira. Just breathe.

MIRA works to normalize her breathing.

FATHER DAVID

Our sister in Christ has returned! In the name of the Lord.

FATHER MICHAEL / MOM / ASHLEY / ROSS

In the name of the Lord.

MIRA breath normalizes. She sees MOM and reaches forward to touch her face. MOM tenses at her touch.

MIRA

Is... is that really you? Mom!

MIRA embraces MOM. MOM doesn't embrace MIRA back.

FATHER DAVID

Has your sin been purified? Have you accepted what's good?

MOM

Mira... did you confess?

MOM pulls back from MIRA. It sinks in. MIRA really is back to reality.

MIRA

I... yes. I did.

FATHER MICHAEL lowers himself to MIRA's level. He looks deeply into her eyes.

MIRA

I decided to keep living. I did.

FATHER MICHAEL closes his eyes and breathes deeply, as if he's hearing something no one else can. Then, he opens his eyes.

FATHER DAVID

The Purification is completed. Stand, my child.

FATHER MICHAEL supports MIRA as she stands.

MIRA

How long was I out?

FATHER MICHAEL

You were *processing* for about five hours.

MOM

Mira...

MOM picks up MIRA's rosary from the ground and hands it to her. MIRA gazes at it.

FATHER MICHAEL

Do you remember what that's for, Mira?

MIRA

Yes.

FATHER MICHAEL

The Purification is a grueling process, I know. That's why we confess into the beads. Will you use them this time? The right way?

MIRA

I will do whatever I can to stay faithful.

FATHER MICHAEL faces the congregation.

FATHER MICHAEL

Let today be an example as we prepare for the Day of Light. The Clarified Church of the Cross continues to uphold Saint Isaiah's vision and deliver anyone, even the deepest sinners, out of darkness. Always. All because of the Father. Amen, my children?

FATHER DAVID / MIRA / MOM / ROSS / ASHLEY

Amen.

FATHER MICHAEL

I thank you all for dedicating your time to save Mira Vance. Have a blessed week. May God reveal your future-

FATHER DAVID / MOM / ROSS / ASHLEY

-and guide you down the path of righteousness.

FATHER DAVID, ROSS, and ASHLEY stand and exit. FATHER MICHAEL gathers his things at the pulpit. MOM approaches MIRA.

MOM

Good, good. That was good. Everything's fixed.

MIRA

Father Michael, have you ever had a Purification?

FATHER MICHAEL

Yes, I have. The more involved form of confession may be necessary sometimes. Even for the anointed.

MIRA

And it helped you?

FATHER MICHAEL smiles a little bit too wide.

FATHER MICHAEL

Of course. It always helps to erase what's purely bad.

FATHER MICHAEL takes a sip from his flask and exits.

MOM

Are you ready? To leave?

MIRA

Actually, Mom, I'd like to have a moment alone. With God. I feel like I need to pray and... let some things go.

MOM

Oh... sure. Will it be a long prayer or...

MIRA

I don't know.

MOM

Okay. I'll just... wait by the door.

MIRA

Hey, Mom?

MOM

Yes?

MIRA

I love you.

Silence.

MOM

I'm giving you five minutes. You're not going to- you're fine.

MOM exits. Alone, MIRA allows herself to succumb to the weight of the space. She looks around, taking in the pulpit and the rosary in her hand. Her place. Her home. Her eyes stop at a nearby window. Stillness. MIRA drops her rosary and runs to the window. She struggles at first, but succeeds in getting it open. She's about to crawl through, but stops. She looks back into the chapel and notices her rosary laying on the ground. MIRA crosses over to the rosary and picks it up. JUDGE, MOM, DAD, ASHLEY, ROSS, and DIANA appear at the edge of the space. MIRA does not see them, but she hears them.

JUDGE

It's okay.

DAD

Your mind might take a moment to figure out what's going on.

MOM

It hasn't experienced anything like this before.

JUDGE

Just try to make sense of the haze.

JUDGE / MOM / DAD

Remember what is true. What purpose do the parts of you serve?

MIRA snaps the cross off the beaded string of the rosary. She drops the beaded string on to the ground, but places the cross in her pocket. MIRA approaches the window and prepares to climb through it.

DIANA

Do not try to harness your emotions.

ASHLEY

Do not react in a way you believe to be "right"

ROSS

or "correct."

DIANA

Be genuine.

JUDGE

Be true to yourself.

MIRA slips through the window and into the outside world. Simultaneously, JUDGE, MOM, DAD, ASHLEY, ROSS, and DIANA exit.

MIRA / JUDGE / MOM / DAD / DIANA / ASHLEY / ROSS / FATHER MICHAEL /

FATHER DAVID (offstage)

Do not be afraid.

The lights fade on the empty chapel. End of Play.