

Feb 18, 2019

ADOPTION ROULETTE: A Russian Adoption

By Elizabeth Fuller and Joel Vig

A One Act Play

Note: This is a two-person play

Elizabeth Fuller plays herself and narrator

Joel Vig is the onstage voice of all the other characters

Running time: 90 minutes

At rise: The stage is bare with the exception of one chair down Center – a small table beside it. Upstage left is another chair and a table.

LIZ ENTERS.

LIZ. (To audience.) Good evening. My name is Elizabeth Fuller, also known as Elizabeth Dorman. Liz. Lizzy. And Lizard. Tonight you're going to hear a true story that actually happened to me. For thirteen years, I have lived with memories – faces and voices that I'll never forget – and an event that changed my life forever. I shared this story with my good friend, Joel, Vig – about three years ago.

JOEL. (Enters) No Liz it was over four years ago. (To Audience) And I convinced Liz that this is a story that had to be told.

LIZ. (To audience.) And I convinced Joel. (To Joel.) The only way I can tell this story is if you do the voices locked in my head.

JOEL. (To Liz.) Let's do it.

JOEL AND LIZ. The time has come.

(Joel Moves Upstage Center beside tall table. Joel uses table for sound effects. Dressed in all black, Joel

performs the voices of the 12 characters. Liz and Joel never acknowledge each other's presence. The voices are in Liz's memory as she narrates her story.)

LIZ. (To audience.) It is the winter of 2004. Weston, Connecticut. (To Reuel. Calls off stage.) Reuel, come on – she'll be here in five minutes!

REUEL. (Off stage. Calls.) Which shirt? Blue or green?

LIZ. Blue. Come on. You gotta put the music on!

REUEL. (Enters) Lizzy, we don't need music. This isn't a dinner party.

LIZ. We have to set the stage Put on that Russian ballet.

REUEL Lizzy, isn't that a little bit over the top?

LIZ. We need to come across -- cultured. Now it's important that when it comes to education you do all the talking. Get in your Ivy League background. We'll

leave out my two year stint at Ohio State. And we can't mention my psychic stuff. I hid anything that smacks of kook.

REUEL. Well you forgot those crystals over there.

LIZ. I'll get them. You get Anna Karenina – open it up and put it on the coffee table. (Hears the car) Oh my God, she's pulling into the driveway. You do most of the talking.

REUEL. What's her name again?

LIZ. Marion. Marion MacLaine.

REUEL. Are you sure you don't want to just get one of those rescue dogs like Gerald has?

LIZ. (To Reuel.) Reuel, you get the door. I'll put the tea and cookies on the coffee table. (To audience.) Marion MacLaine and Reuel enter the room. She's right out of the Connecticut preppy handbook – from headband to loafers.

MARION. (Social worker) What a charming home.

LIZ. Thank you. It's very old but all pretty much renovated.

MARION. I love all the old beams.

LIZ. They're from a tobacco barn. Somewhere in Vermont. I thought we'd sit in here. Please, have some tea.

MARION. Thank you. (Taking a folder out of her bag) I've been looking over your paper work and I see Mrs. Dorman you have a son in college.

LIZ. Yes, first year. He just made the golf team. We are so proud.

MARION. And Mr. Dorman, I see you have two sons out of college. Have you and Mrs. Dorman discussed the adoption with them?

LIZ. Oh yes, they are as excited as we are. It's a dream to have a little sister.

MARION. And you have no children together. Correct?

LIZ. Correct. Ten years ago, we each lost our spouses – cancer . And then – three years later -- we were so fortunate to meet. Reuel's sons were in college and my son was eight.

MARION. That's a happy ending. Now I see you specifically asked for a Russian child?

LIZ. Yes. We did a bit of research and learned that Russia has the shortest wait time.

MARION. Yes. That's true. And you are only committed to adopting a girl child. A toddler with no special needs.

LIZ. Well at our age, we feel that would be the only way we could take on such an enormous responsibility – but – a very exciting adventure for all of us is to have a healthy child. You know having a daughter has been a dream of mine for a long time.

MARION. Really?

LIZ. Oh, yeah. I've had my heart set on a daughter for many years. Actually, it goes back before my son, Christopher, was born. My late husband and I were on a way to trek to the base camp of Mt. Everest --for a book project -- and we stopped off in New Delhi where I had a reading from a very famous psychic . "Ahhh, you have a long life line. In five years, you will have a boy child. It was five years – almost to the date - that my son was born. And still gazing into my palm, he

said, “I see that later in life you will have a girl child.”
(To audience.) I feel Reuel’s elbow in my side. (To
Social Worker.) But we really don’t believe in fortune
tellers. (To audience.) Marion, would you like to see
the house.

Marion. I would love to.

LIZ. Follow me. (To audience.) We had every room
staged – Martha Stewart perfect. (To Marion.) Here’s
the little girl’s room. Reuel just painted it sea shell
pink..

MARION. This room is absolutely enchanting. I love the
water color of the ballet dancers over the dresser.

LIZ. That was painted by my friend, Dianne. She’s an
amazing artist. She is almost as excited as I am. She
sent over her carpenter to custom make those two twin
beds – for the eventual sleep over. Dianne plans on
being our little girl’s Texas fairy Godmother, although
she now lives in Connecticut.

MARION. (Chuckles.) I would say that your little girl
will have quite a magical life.

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel pointed out an antique rocking horse bought by his late wife Cindy when she was pregnant with their last child.

REUEL. It was Cindy's last month of the pregnancy. She started to have contractions. We called the doctor and he said get right to the hospital. By the time we got there – only twenty minutes later – it was too late.

LIZ. (To Marion.) The doctor said that the placenta pulled away – freak of nature. The baby was a girl.

MARION. Mr. and Mrs. Dorman, I am so sorry. Thank you for sharing. It all makes perfect sense why you both are so excited about having a little girl. I don't foresee any problem with approval. Your financials are all in order. And since you are working directly with the Russian Adoption Agency you could be notified to leave for Russia at any time.

LIZ. (To audience) It is Wednesday -- two months and two days later.

REUEL. (Holding a letter. Calls.) Lizzy, come on down here we got a letter from the agency.

LIZ. (Enters. Excited.) Oh my God. What does it say?

REUEL. What's this picture.

LIZ. This must be our child?

REUEL. She looks like a little refugee.

LIZ. She's beautiful! Awww, look at those little pudgy legs.

REUEL. (Reading.) Dear Mr. and Mrs. Dorman, we are happy to inform you that your adoption application has been approved. With the recent changes in Russian law, the adoption will now be a two- step procedure. (Stops reading.) Two step?

LIZ. Two-step?

REUEL. (Reading.) The first step will require that you travel to the Children and Baby Orphanage in Koranifski where you will meet your prospective child. If all goes well, on the second trip to Russia you will go to the

courthouse in Vovoysa where a judge will finalize the adoption. (Skipping) Yadda, yadda, yadda.

Hmmmmmm. (Reading) All fees must be paid in full before the first trip. (To Liz.) We have to pay for this whole thing right now. (Reading) We have enclosed a photograph of a toddler waiting for adoption. Please understand that there is no guarantee that this will be your child.

LIZ. (Looking at photo) It's almost as if I've seen this little face before.

REUEL. Yeah, in an 1860 prairie photo Lizzy, let's not get attached to that picture. There's no guarantees. I can't believe that we have to pay for everything right now and we have to make two trips to Russia. I've been ball parking some of these figures and it looks like it's going to run us over \$30,000 dollars. We're going to have to tap into our IRAs. I have a business to run. It's going to be hard enough to make one trip.

LIZ. (looking at picture) I wish they hadn't sent this picture.

REUEL. So we're now going to need to get four round trip tickets to Moscow.

LIZ. Five tickets love. Don't forget the ticket to get her home.

REUEL. If there's enough time between the trips, maybe we can use the frequent flyer miles from the first trip to help with the second trip. I wish I had known all of this before.

LIZ. What's the difference – we're committed now.

REUEL. We're committed all right We should be committed. Two trips to Moscow. In February. (Reads) All fees non-refundable in the event that either party shall decide to not proceed with the adoption. A host family will provide you with accommodations where they can give you valuable background information about Russian culture and day to day life. (To Liz.) That'll save us a little money. (Reading) You will be met at the airport by our official Agency guide and translator, Olenka Romanov. Please make immediate arrangements to travel within twenty one days of receiving this letter. (To Liz.) That's three weeks away.

LIZ. We can do it.

REUEL. Barely. (Reading) It is recommended to bring small gifts of appreciation. (To Liz.) That's your department, Liz. And you might want to get us two heavy parkas.

LIZ. (To audience.) Two weeks and a few days later. Dianne and her husband Van are driving us to the airport. It's snowing the whole way from Connecticut to JFK.

DIANNE. Aren't you two burning up in those heavy parkas.

LIZ. They didn't fit into our suitcases.

DIANNE. Liz, we're going to trade right now. Take off that big ole ugly Eskimo sleeping bag and put on my mink coat. You will look glamorous when you arrive at that orphanage.

LIZ. Dianne that's not the image we're going for.

DIANNE. Lizzy, we are the odd couple. Here, I got a little bag of gifts to give to my new Russian Godchild.

LIZ. Little, oh my God, how many are in here – it's so over the top!

DIANNE. (heavy Texan accent.) Lizzy, everything in Texas is over the top -- from your hair to your pickup truck.

LIZ. (To audience.) At the gate area, we see a number of couples also bundled up for a Siberian winter. They all have bags filled with toys. We board the plane and take our seats.

DELTA PILOT. Good afternoon folks this is your Captain Bob Sanders and welcome aboard Flight 156 non-stop service from JFK to Moscow. Flying time today will be nine hours and 52 minutes. We expect good weather. So we should have a nice smooth ride. And we are currently number 3 for takeoff. And a special welcome aboard - what Delta has been dubbed – the baby express – our thirteen couples travelling to Russia to pick up their newly adopted children. Flight attendants take your seats.

LIZ. (To audience.) Half way through the flight I give up even trying to get any sleep. I can't sleep on planes. I

knew why. Back in the early seventies, I was a flight attendant. We had long stretches where sleeping on flights – for flight attendants – was forbidden. I actually broke that rule just once. During a brief layover – with nobody on the plane -- I climbed up into the open bin where the pillows and blankets were and fell sound asleep. The next thing I knew the pilot was saying, “Ladies and Gentlemen we are now number 1 for takeoff. We are one stewardess short today...” I was up there in that over head bin breaking out into a cold sweat. So sleep for me was not in the cards.

(Pause.) I’m in line to use the toilet when I meet...

LOIS. Lois Goldstein.

LIZ. Hi Lois – I’m Liz.

LOIS. Number one or number two?

LIZ. (Dumbfounded.) For the toilet?

LOIS. (Laughs) No honey – trip number one or trip number two – meeting or picking up?

LIZ. (Confused.) Huh?

LOIS. Your kid. Are you meeting or picking up?

LIZ. Ahhh, meeting. This is our first trip.

LOIS. Two trips. Just another way of milking us for more money. It's a racket honey. Lenny and I are on our second trip. We're picking up our daughter. Look at her picture. Eight months old. Little pink face. Couldn't you just eat her up. Thirteen years I tried to get pregnant. You can't imagine what I went through. I'm not doin it anymore. Three years on a waiting list to be considered for an adoption of a newborn in the U.S. We'll be on Social Security when we get a kid. Look at our daughter. I could eat her up. They named her Olga. I'm changing that name faster than you can change a dirty diaper. It'll be: Heather Lois Goldstein. Lenny's mother, Harriet, wanted us to call the baby after her. Like that'll happen. I told her, "We'll give her an H name after you. There's already one beautiful Harriet Goldstein in this family. One is enough. I had five baby showers. I'm schlepping the entire Bloomingdale's infant department to Russia. Liz, let me give you a tip. The Russian, they'll rip ya off every time ya turn around. I don't know what your husband does for a living but Lenny's into hotdogs. It's our company.

Kosher. But it's still hot dogs. Liz, it's all worth it. Here, take my number and when you get your daughter we'll get together. We'll have a play date. Welcome to the club honey.

LIZ. (To audience.) I go back to my seat. I find Reuel looking at the picture of our daughter.

REUEL. (To Liz.) Lizzy, I walked to the galley to get a glass of water and I met a really nice couple. Fred and Ruth. He and his wife are from Leonia, New Jersey. They're heading to St. Petersburg to pick up their child. It's their second trip. They're getting a boy --four years old. Fred said the kid's built like a football player.

LIZ. (Reaches into bag and takes out picture of child.) Our little girl looks like a ballet dancer.

REUEL. (glancing at picture.) No, Lizzy, ours looks like a little roly polly. And don't get too attached to that little girl in the picture. There's no guarantee she will be the one.

LIZ. (To audience.) The moment we cleared customs, a large- boned blonde woman looking to be in her

twenties jogged toward us with a cardboard sign. (To Young Woman.) Olenka?

OLENKA – Da. Mr and Mrs. Dorman.

LIZ. It's Liz and Reuel.

OLENKA. Roll?

LIZ. Olenka, it's Reuel. Just like a rule. Follow this rule.

OLENKA. Da. Reuel. That makes it easy to remember. There are so many rules in my country. Liz and Reuel and I am Olenka. I will take care of everything for you. I will need to take your papers.

LIZ. Papers?

OLENKA. Your Passports . I will keep them safe. Everything has been arranged.

LIZ. Great and I guess from our instructions, you drive us to our host family tonight? We brought a bag of little things to share with them.

OLENKA. Let me take care of that. (Takes bag) Olenka has arranged for you to get special treatment. Staying with a family can be so uncomfortable. Our Agency has arranged for you to overnight at the Hotel Metropol.

Moscow's finest hotel. We will have our dinner at the hotel restaurant. You will have a good night's rest for tomorrow's flight to Vovoyasa.

LIZ. But we already have our train tickets.

OLENKA. No, no, nyet. The trains in Russia are not suitable for you to travel. Not clean. The toilets are very bad. And too many hours of travel. More than thirty hours on the train. Drunk people on the train.

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel, maybe we should rethink this?

REUEL (Firm.) No Lizzy, Olenka, I was an Air Force pilot for 28 years and I am very familiar with the safety record of domestic Russian airplanes – most of them are vintage cold war. Lizzy and I are taking the train. Case closed.

Liz. (To Audience.) Olenka, I'm with Reuel.

OLENKA You know best. I will bring good food and good wine for the very long train ride.

LIZ. (To Olenka.) That sounds perfect.

OLENKA. I will need the American Express credit card

LIZ. (To audience) I think of Lois's parting words.

LOIS. The Russians, they'll rip you off every time you turn around.

LIZ. I know Reuel will never fork over his credit card. I quietly slipped her mine.

OLENKA. Now come, the driver is waiting.

LIZ. (To audience.) On the drive to our hotel, I take out the picture. (To Olenka.) Olenka, do you know this little girl.

OLENKA. (Looks at picture.) Ahhh, yes – the most beautiful child at the orphanage. But they are all beautiful.

LIZ. Olenka, do you know if she is still available. (To audience.) I suddenly felt sleezy – like I was asking a car salesman if the silver jeep is still on the lot.

OLENKA. Olenka will call the Agency when we get to the hotel. I will provide you with that information as I receive it.

LIZ: (To audience) We spend the night at the Hotel Metropol. It's everything Olenka promised. Over Beluga caviar followed by beef stroganoff sprinkled with fragrant mushrooms from the Dancing Forest -- wherever that is -- we get to know each other.

OLENKA. Liz, I am fascinated that you are a writer. Olenka's dream is to be a journalist.

LIZ. Well, I'm not a journalist. I write books – non-fiction.

OLENKA. Tell Olenka, what is your most famous book.

LIZ. I guess that would be a book about Bette Davis. The American movie star.

OLENKA. Ahhh. Yes. Bette Davis is very famous here too. I love movie stars. One day Olenka will write book. I have it all in my mind.

LIZ. About movie stars?

OLENKA. No, I will write book about finding true love.

LIZ. (To audience.) I looked down and notice Olenka's wearing a wedding band. As we eat and drink French wine we hear a lot about what Olenka is hoping to find.

OLENKA. Last week Olenka celebrate 26 year birthday. Anatole, my husband, he took us all out to McDonalds – his mother, his father, his grandparents.

LIZ. McDonalds?

OLENKA. Da. Da. Da. At Pushkin Square. For an American dinner.

LIZ. Olenka, does your husband work in Moscow?

OLENKA. Da. Anatole, he is a computer analyst for our government. He does not make much money. We live with his family in a too small apartment. Three years I have been working at the Alekseev Adoption Agency. It is a good job. But Olenka’s dream --to go back to the University, study journalism , become a writer and move anywhere –anywhere but Russia.

LIZ. Would Anatole be up for a move?

OLENKA. Pffffff. Olenka will move.

LIZ. We’re finishing our espresso and desert when Olenka’s cell phone rings.

CELL PHONE RINGING

OLENKA. (Answers cell) Da. Da. Da. (Speaking in Russian. To Liz and Reuel) Liz, Reuel, I have very good news. The little girl in your picture is your daughter. Her name is Katarina. And she cannot wait for you to arrive.

LIZ. (To audience.) The little girl in the picture is ours. Katarina. It's impossible to sleep.

REUEL. She's built just like a golfer.

LIZ. No, Katarina is built like a ballet dancer. (To audience.) I have visions of the two of them off all weekend in a golf cart – just like it was with my son – who actually – years later – became a professional golfer. Finally Reuel falls asleep and I stay up watching Dr. Zhivago one and half times – the only thing on the English speaking channel. The next morning, Olenka, Reuel and I have breakfast in the hotel and then we

check out. As we follow Olenka outside to the waiting car for our fifteen minute trip to the railroad station, Reuel shows me the hotel bill.

REUEL. Lizzy, this hotel, beluga caviar and mushrooms from the Dancing Forest just set us back about a thousand bucks. Next time it's Mc Donald's at Pushkin Square.

LIZ. (To audience.) The driver drops us off right on the train's platform with five minutes to spare.

WE HEAR THE TRAIN WHISTLE

LIZ. (To audience.) Our sleeper compartment is the size of a broom closet. It has four narrow bunks attached to the walls. And it's hot.

OLENKA. Liz, take the upper bed next to the window for bet view. Olenka will take other upper bed. Reuel can sleep under woman he chooses.

LIZ. (To audience.) She's hitting on my husband.

REUEL. Olenka, I'll take the bunk under Lizzy.

LIZ. (To Audience.) Lizzy 1. Olenka 0.

OLENKA. Olenka pay extra for large first class room near toilet.

LIZ. (To audience.) Jeee-sus – I would have paid triple to be away from the toilet.

OLENKA. Reuel, look what Olenka buy for long train trip. Orange marmalade from Egypt. Tin of the biscuit from Scotland. The sausage from Austria. The Snicker from America. And two jar of the Beluga caviar. And the good pastry from the Metropol Hotel. And special for Reuel –six bottle of the French wine. Olenka know the American man loves the best in the wine and the women.

TRAIN WHISLE

LIZ. (To Audience.) It is early afternoon. Olenka hands us each a tin cup – looks like a camping cup. She cracks open the first bottle of French wine.

REUEL. Olenka, hit me with some of that vino.

LIZ. (To audience) Olenka's large blue eyes pop wide open.

OLENKA. (Eyes open wide.) What is this hit me?

LIZ. Tell her Reuel.

REUEL. Olenka, it's American slang for pour me a glass of wine.

OLENKA. I love to hear how Americans really speak. (holds out tin cup to Reuel.) Reuel, hit me with some of that vino.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka don't forget me.

REUEL. Now you're cookin' baby.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka burst into great laughter that shook the bunk beds.

OLENKA. What is this cookin' baby? (Laughing) Olenka writes that down.

LIZ. (To audience.) She pulls out a pink Hello Kitty diary that certainly doesn't exactly say: aspiring journalist.

OLENKA. (Still laughing) Reuel, why you say "baby" Olenka is a grown woman. Ahhhh. American slang for a good looking girl. (Writes) baby – good looking girl. Reuel, what are some other American phrases for a good looking girl? Ohhhh,– hot chick. Hot. Hot. Like it's hot in here. Reuel, if you see a hot chick in the bar,

what would you say to? Baby, you're hot stuff.

(Writes) Baby, you're hot stuff. (Laughs.)

LIZ. (To audience.) While Olenka fills up her Hello Kitty diary, I drift off to sleep.

TRAIN WHISTLE

The train's whistle wakes me to a magical sight. Sunrise in Siberia. It's surreal landscape –an endless horizon of freshly fallen snow glittering in the first rays of the morning sun. No sign of life. No footprints in the snow. How many snow angels will I make with Katarina?

TRAIN WHISTLE

LIZ. (To Audience.) Olenka lumbers out of bed to the toilet. Reuel picks up tiny jar of caviar and sees the price.

REUEL Lizzy, enjoy the caviar. It's the price of one train ticket. We need to tell Princess Olenka that our last name ain't Gates.

TRAIN WHISTLE

LIZ) (To audience.) We arrive in Vovoysa.

TRAIN WHISTLE

LIZ. We stumble down the train's steps behind Olenka. It's snowing heavily and for a moment we lose her in the crowd.

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel over here!

LIZ. The driver, Igor, thirty something is dressed shockingly spring like in a jean jacket, jeans and sneakers. He has long hair in a pony tail. We are in blizzard conditions.

IGOR. Hello, my name is Igor. Welcome to Russian winter!

LIZ. Igor, I am Liz. And my husband Reuel

IGOR. Igor he drive you to the baby's and children's home in Koranifski. Igor put suitcase in trunk of car.

LIZ. (To audience) It's the size of a small Honda. But he crammed them all in there.

IGOR. Igor, he is sorry but you must all sit in the backseat. Igor has most important box that must be delivered to the orphanage. Box must stay next to Igor.

LIZ. (To audience) A gray metal box the size of a television set took up the entire passenger seat.

REUEL. Igor, we will all be more comfortable with the box in the backseat.

LIZ. Olenka can sit in the front with you and...

IGOR. Nyet – no. Box must be next to Igor. It is regulation.

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel whispers.

REUEL. Lizzy, this is fucking nuts.

LIZ. (To audience.) We crawled into the cramped backseat. Olenka volunteered to sit in the middle – otherwise known as the “hump.” What you fought against with your brothers and sisters on the family car trip.

IGOR. Liz, Reuel, you will have a most good ride. Igor is excellent driver. Igor drives this trip more than one hundred times. Igor car is in excellent condition. Please, Igor ask you don't put your feet on Igor's car seats. And you do not smoke.

LIZ. And with that we're off on our six hour journey north -- up near the Siberian border. The town we're headed to is infamous for the gulag. Each time the car skids I remind myself: Igor is an excellent driver and he's made the trip more than one hundred times. Within twenty minutes, Reuel and Olenka are sound asleep. Igor's chain smoking and singing along to a scratchy Willy Nelson tape

IGOR. (SINGING.) On the road again.....going to places that I've never been....my life is made up of making music with my friend....I can't wait to be on the road again.

LIZ. (To audience.) I'm trying to keep from coughing. A scented strawberry air freshener hangs from his rearview mirror. I complain about the smoke. Igor opens the window.

IGOR. (Lights cigarette . The artic air is freezing.)t is much healthy to have fresh air. How did you like the trip on the train?

LIZ. The scenery was ravishingly beautiful. The sunrise...

IGOR. I do not like the train. Too crowded. Dirty. When you see the orphanage and meet your child, you will see everything it is clean and healthy.

LIZ. (to audience.) I take out the picture of Katarina. (To Igor.) Igor, do you recognize this child?

IGOR. No. Who is this picture? Igor does not know this child. Why you ask Igor?

LIZ. Because this is the little girl we are going to adopt. (To audience.) Igor and Olenka are talking in Russian.

IGOR. Ahhhhh, Da, da, da. This picture is Katarina. She is tall now. More healthy. Good strong girl. (Takes huge drags) Six months ago Igor drive the German couple to adopt Katarina.

LIZ. A German couple adopted her?

IGOR. Nyet, nyet – no adoption. The Germans see her at the orphanage. They meet her. They sign documents and went home to Germany. They never came back for her. Every day Katrina she cry and cry and cry. Igor see her cry. She cry to Igor. Where my mama and papa. Pffffffffff. These Germans are no good. No good Germans.

LIZ. That's horrible. Why didn't they come back for her? Reuel, Reuel wake up.

IGOR. Germans are no kind people. Not like Americans. Americans have a heart. She is such a good girl. Pffff. Germans can all go to hell. When the Germans didn't come back for her, Katarina was so sad that she took a scissor and cut off her long hair. By herself. She cut it all.

LIZ. Igor, tell Reuel why the Germans didn't go back for her?

IGOR. (smoking. Testy) Because the Germans crazy. All of them. American are good people. (really mad) Katarina is lucky girl. Germans are crazy

LIZ. (To Audience.) The next Willy Nelson song came on as if on cue.

IGOR. (Breaks out into song.) Crazy.....ends song with whistling.)

LIZ. Olenka, why didn't the Germans go back for her?

REUEL. Yes, will somebody please explain to us why the German's didn't adopt her?

LIZ. (To Olenka.) Olenka, why didn't they adopt her? You must know.

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel, in my agency, we are given information on a need to know basis. Please trust Olenka, I have no more information.

LIZ. (To audience.) And Olenka goes back to sleep. It seems strange that in all those trips to the orphanage – more than 100 – Igor didn't recognize Katarina. There were probably so many children, it would be difficult to instantly recognize a single child from a small dog-eared photo

IGOR. We be there in two more hours. You must sleep.

LIZ. (To audience.) Fat chance. We're in white out conditions. It lasts for a good hour. Then it clears and I doze off

HORN NOISE

LIZ. (To Audience.) Igor swears to avoid an on-coming flat-bed truck.

IGOR. (Swears.) Yob Tvoyu Mat!

LIZ. (To audience) But the good news. After six hours on the frightening snowy and icy roads, we arrive at the orphanage – alive.

IGOR. Welcome to baby's home!

LIZ. (To audience.) We get out of the car and sink ankle deep in crusted snow. Igor opens the front passenger door and removes the metal box from the front seat. As he lifts the box, springs pop out of the torn seat upholstery like a Jack in the Box. Igor did not see that Reuel and I saw the springs.

REUEL. Lizzy, why the hell didn't he just tell us that all three of us had to be packed into the backseat because his front seat is all fucked up.

LIZ. Reuel, quiet -- he got us here alive. We can't embarrass him. He's proud of his car.

IGOR. (Calls) Follow Igor!

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel, Olenka and I stumble behind him. He's leading us up a hill to a large prison looking structure. Half way up, Igor stops and looks around as if he's an arctic explorer – with sneakers -- adrift on an ice floe.

IGOR. I cannot remember what door works.

LIZ. (To audience.) After two tries Igor finds the open door and we enter. It's oven hot. The only sound from inside the orphanage is the squeaking of our heavy boots. We climb the steps to the main floor. I smell pine scented cleaning fluid. We come to the top of the steps and into a colorful play room. Cartoon characters are painted on the walls. There are neatly stacked toys in each corner. In the center of the spacious room are small chairs and several plastic tables with crayons and coloring books. It's all quite cheery and very much like the nursery school my son once attended. Off to the side is a sofa where Olenka tells Reuel and me to sit. She and Igor sit on the window ledge and Igor opens the window and lights up. I played this moment a thousand times in my mind. We arrive at the orphanage and scores of happy, laughing children are playing and singing and dancing and our little girl breaks away from her friends and walks over to us and takes my hand and says "mama." But now there are no children in sight. The only sound is the hissing of the radiator and Igor inhaling. Perhaps it's nap time. But

it's already 5pm. Maybe dinner time? I don't smell cooking - only that pine scented cleaning fluid. A door opens. A large plain woman in a dark blue dress leads a girl, who looks to be about five years old, toward us. The child is quite slender. She has light brown hair that's short and unevenly cut. She's got a huge pink bow taking up half her head. She's wearing a worn but freshly pressed green jumper. Her head's buried in the woman's full skirt. The woman bends down and whispers something to the child. The little girl turns to face us but then she quickly turns away and buries her head once again in the woman's skirt. The woman reaches into her pocket and gives her a little piece of candy and whispers to her. In slow motion, the frightened little face makes eye contact with me and says:

CHILD. Mama.

LIZ. (To audience.) A montage of scenes from thirty years earlier comes flooding back. I was a flight attendant flying charters in and out of Saigon -- carrying orphans to their newly adoptive parents. On arrival at LA International airport, I am walking these children off

the plane and into the gate area where their parents are waiting with balloons, stuffed animals and banners that literally filled the gate area. And, now, just like every mother I had seen back then, looking at her child for the very first time, I burst into tears. Reuel puts his arm around me. His eyes well..

REUEL. (To child.) Well hello Katarina. It is so nice to meet you.

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel reaches out to touch her hand. She pulls it away. Her little face looks so scared. She's doing something a bit odd with her tongue. It looks as if she's licking something in the corner of her mouth.

OLENKA. Reuel, Mrs. Dubrowski says that she is very frightened of men. It takes time.

LIZ. Of course, please tell her that we both understand how frightened she must be. Olenka, can I give her the gifts we brought?

OLENKA. Mrs. Dubrowski says we can give her two of the gifts. It is not good to give her too much.

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel and I pick out a pink dress and a stuffed dog. Katarina takes the gifts and runs over to the window sill where Igor is smoking and throws them at him.

IGOR. (rattles off in Russian.) Nyet. Nyet. Nyet. Zachem ty eto sdelala. Dura!

LIZ. (To audience.) Katarina grabs the stuffed dog, jumps up on the window sill and throws it out the window.

IGOR. (Yelling at her in Russian.) Zachem ty eto sdelala. Now, Igor must go outside in the snow and pick it. Igor keep toy. (Yelling in Russian.) You no have toy! (Yells in Russian.) Zachem ty eto sdelala. Dura!

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel, please understand that it is too much of a shock to see these beautiful gifts. Katarina is not used to receiving presents. She does not know how to act.

LIZ. (To audience.) Mrs. Dubrowski takes Katarina by the hand. She leads her to a small table where she could draw. I join them. Katarina takes the entire tin of

sticks of colored chalk and throws them at me. Her frightened face now looks quite playful.

OLENKA. Katarina is showing off. It is too much excitement for her. Mrs. Dubrowski said that she was waiting by the window for us to arrive since eight o'clock this morning. Katarina became very frightened when you cried on seeing her. Mrs. Dubrowski thinks it is best if she takes Katarina to her room to prepare for her evening meal. She will see you tomorrow. Dr. Petrova will be arriving to go over any questions you may have.

LIZ. (To audience.) I bend down to give Katarina a little hug goodbye but she darts to the door and in a loud voice shouts.

CHILD. Mama.

LIZ. (To audience.) And leaves the room with Mrs. Dubroski in tow. A few minutes later the orphanage doctor arrives. Dr. Petrova is very pretty. Actually she's beautiful. Reminds me of Grace Kelly. She speaks no English.

OLENKA Liz, Reuel, Dr. Petrova would like to know what you think of Katarina.

LIZ. She's adorable. Full of energy. Isn't that right, Reuel?

REUEL. Olenka, please ask the doctor about Katarina's medical history.

LIZ. (To audience.) For the next fifteen minutes the doctor speaks to Olenka. She includes us even though she knows we don't understand Russian.

OLENKA. Dr Petrov says that Katarina is in very good health – very strong.

LIZ. Yes, I can see that. Right Reuel?

REUEL. Olenka, please ask the doctor about Katarina's mental health.

OLENKA. Da. She is very smart and very healthy.

LIZ. The doctor smiles and nods.

OLENKA. Dr. Petrova says that If you decide to adopt Katarina, then you must return tomorrow at ten o'clock. You will be able to have a longer visit with Katarina. After your visit, you will sign the documents and

arrangements will be immediately made for Katarina to go into the hospital for a full check up. Upon completion of the medical exam, you will be notified of the adoption date. This process will take up to one month.

LIZ. (To audience.) And with that we pile into Igor's car. His box is back in the front seat. It doesn't occur to me until we pull up in front of the hotel that we did not see or hear one other child, nor did we see any little footprints in the snow or any sleds or snowmen or anything that would say we were in an orphanage. No snow angels. I was just about to ask Igor and Olenka why there were no signs of children when Igor called out.

IGOR. (Calls.) We are at hotel!

LIZ (To audience) Oh my God.

REUEL. Lizzy, welcome to the Bates Motel.

LIZ. Olenka, are you sure this is where we're staying?

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel, this hotel is not good but it is the best hotel in this very poor city.

LIZ. (To audience.) The paint chipped lobby is filled with druggies, drunks and prostitutes. The wet tile floor is littered with cigarette butts and broken glass. Two anorexic prostitutes follow us to the elevator – one with green hair and one with pink hair. Neither of them look over fifteen. They proposition Reuel right in front of me.

PROSTITUTES. 5 American dollar. 5 American dollar.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka shoos them away.

OLENKA. Idi K Chortou. Prostituka go to the devil. Go to the devil prostituka! – Idi K Chartou.

LIZ. (To audience.) Our room is filled with the stench of cigarettes, booze and unfortunately no cleaning fluids. It's vile. I think I'm going to throw up. But when I see the bathroom, I realize that isn't an option. The toilet has no seat and it's wobbly and hasn't been flushed. The sink is held in place by what looks like homemade nails. There's no shower curtain and the bathtub is filthy. There is no toilet paper

REUEL. Liz, something is very wrong.

LIZ. Yeah, we're in a flea bag. But at least it isn't going to set us back a thousand dollars.

REUEL. That's not what I'm talking about. There is something seriously wrong with that child.

LIZ. What do you mean?

REUEL. For starters, she's not three. She's not four. She's maybe five or even six.

LIZ. Your point?

REUEL. There is something seriously wrong with her.

LIZ. What?

REUEL. You were there. Didn't you see the way she behaved?

LIZ. She was excited. And then I scared her to death by my outburst of tears when she came over to me and said Mama.

REUEL. There was a vacancy in her eyes. And did you not see that she threw the stuffed dog out the window. After she threw the pink dress at Igor. That's not normal. And then she threw a tin of chalk at you. Look you have chalk all over your face. That's normal?

LIZ. It's normal if you have never been given gifts and you spent your life in an orphanage. No Christmas presents. No birthday parties. She was totally overwhelmed. And you know what it's like with kids. Gawd, I remember Chris's fourth birthday party. I hired a clown to make balloon characters. And Chris and his little friends popped the balloon characters as fast as the clown made them. The clown left early, disgusted by the brats. That's kids for you.

REUEL. Something tells me that we don't go through with this.

LIZ. Are you fucking kidding me! She called me, "mama."

REUEL. Quiet – do you want Olenka to hear. She's right next door. She's probably got the glass to the door now.

LIZ. (Softens. Takes his hands.) Reuel, she called me Mama.

REUEL. (long pause.) She was coached, Liz. Didn't you see that woman give her a piece of candy for her to say: "mama?" She bribed her.

LIZ. And you never bribed your kids? Tell that to somebody who believes you. I know -- bribery is how I survived motherhood.

REUEL. (softens) Lizzy, I just have a deep gut feeling that we are taking on more than we can handle.

LIZ. And I have a deep gut feeling that this adoption is the best thing that we'll ever do.

REUEL. So I guess, you want me to defer to your gut. You're the one into all this psychic stuff. I just hope to God you're right and I'm wrong.

LIZ. So, it's settled. We're going through with the adoption.

REUEL. (softens) Let me sleep on it.

LIZ. (To audience.) I knew right then and there --I had won. (Pause) At eight the next morning, Olenka is knocking on our door.

OLENKA. Good morning Liz and Reuel. Did you sleep well?

LIZ. Not exactly.

REUEL. Olenka, how could anyone sleep in such a disgusting, filthy room. We slept with our parkas on all fucking night. Neither Liz nor I stepped foot into that hell hole of a bathroom.

LIZ. And hookers knocked on our door all night.

OLENKA. Hooker? What is this hooker?

LIZ. American slang for prostitute.

OLENKA. Ahhh, hooker – Prostituka, hooker. (Laughs) Olenka must write that down. Come. Igor is outside the hotel waiting to take us for breakfast. He has already this morning collected the documents for you to sign.

LIZ. But I thought we are doing all that at the orphanage? When we visit Katarina again.

REUEL. Liz is right. My understanding is that we give our answer – if we will adopt – at the orphanage – and then sign the papers.

LIZ. (To audience.) But it seems that there's a minor change of plans.

OLENKA. We will go over everything at the restaurant. You'll feel so much better with hot coffee.

LIZ. (To Audience.) The restaurant turns out to be a grimy place where you pour your own coffee from sticky thermoses and buy packaged pastries –sort of like Twinkies --and sit at greasy metal tables and chairs alongside the town drunks and druggies.

OLENKA. (taking out documents) I spoke with the Agency. Katarina was so excited after we left. Mrs. Dubroski said she was up all night long. She tried on all of her clothes. And look, she made this drawing for you. It is an airplane and mama and papa and Katarina. Look she drew you inside the airplane.

LIZ. Awwwww. That's so sweet. I can't wait to see her and thank her.

OLENKA. (Hesitates.) Liz, Reuel, Katarina has developed a little fever. Dr Petrova has asked that you kindly understand, but Katarina today must rest.

LIZ. But we can see her?

OLENKA. I am sorry. It is not possible for Olenka to challenge the doctor.

LIZ. We came all this way.

REUEL. Olenka, please tell the good doctor that we would very much appreciate if we could see Katarina before we leave. We came thousands of miles. Ten minutes is not unreasonable.

LIZ. (To Reuel.) Reuel, calm down.

REUEL. Why? This makes absolutely no sense!

LIZ. (To Reuel.) The important point is that we did get to see her. Remember when I was a flight attendant. I told you about the Vietnamese orphans we brought to Los Angeles . Their American parents didn't get to see them until they were actually delivered to them at airport gate.

REUEL. Olenka, I would like to see her again.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka, isn't there anything you can do?

OLENKA. Reuel, Liz, there is another reason. In addition to Katarina not feeling well, the doctor fears that like the Germans you may not return to Russia to pick her up. This second disappointment would be

grave. Katarina is a most sensitive and loving child. Please, it is not against you. You are good people. You are not like the Germans. You must understand that it is necessary for our country to protect our children. Thank you for understanding our ways.

LIZ. (To audience.) And with that Olenka spread out the documents. I grab Reuel's hand under the table. He squeezes my hand. It's a squeeze that said: okay, I'm on board.

OLENKA After the documents are signed, as Dr. Petrova told you yesterday --it will be arranged for Katarina to be taken to the hospital in Vovoysa which could take up to two weeks. At the end of that time, you will be notified to come back for her.

LIZ. (To audience.) I sign my name. Then I hand the pen to Reuel and he signs too.

OLENKA. (handing us copies and child's medical report) Here are your copies . And here is a full medical report from the time of the time Katarina entered the orphanage until last November. The Agency suggests that when you return to the United States that you

have your doctor look at the report. So you will have your daughter in about one month's time.

LIZ. (To audience.) I never envisioned such an earth shattering decision to be made in a greasy spoon a stone's throw from Siberia. I could not be happier.

REUEL. (hugs Liz.) Well Lizzy, I guess this makes us parents – again.

LIZ. (To audience.) We all hold hands around the table. It's our little kumbaya moment. Our Russian family. Igor picks up his coffee mug:

IGOR. (toasting with his coffee mug.) To mama and papa! Katarina's new family in America! Na Zdarovye!

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel clicks coffee mugs.

REUEL. Here's mud in your eye.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka pulls out her Hello Kitty diary.

OLENKA – Reuel, I love that. Here is mud in your eye. Olenka must write that down.

LIZ. (To audience.) We are home only five days when we get the call that our adoption date is set for Friday Feb. 17. It is Feb 10.

REUEL. (Flips out.) Holy shit! We've got only seven days to get there. This is ridiculous. Do you think maybe these people are just a little too anxious to unload this kid? Lizzy, I still have a very bad feeling about....

LIZ. And I have a very good feeling – you'll see.

REUEL. This doesn't give us time to take the two day luxurious train trip on the Gulag Express.

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel does research and discovers that the domestic carrier into Vovoysa actually has a good safety record. And so on Feb 15, Dianne and Van once again are driving us from Weston, Connecticut to JFK.

DIANNE. Lizzy, Reuel, I hate to be a downer but if y'all get killed in a plane crash, Van and I will adopt Katarina.

And now when she gets off that plane in New York, I want to see her wearing this little pink baseball cap that has my favorite saying.

**LIZ AND DIANNE. (Together.) Don't Mess with Texas!
(Laugh)**

LIZ. And once again Dianne has a huge bag of gifts for Katarina. (Pause.) Ten hours later we land at Moscow International Airport where Olenka greets us as if we had been gone a lifetime.

**OLENKA. (hugging us each in turn.) I missed you so much. It has been too long. You are hot stuff baby.
(laughs)**

LIZ. (Giving her bag of gifts.) Olenka, we brought you a few things.

**OLENKA. (Take bag.) Liz. this is so heavy. So many gifts. (Looking through gifts) Ahhh. What is this?
Another bag of presents?**

LIZ. Oh, those are for Katarina.

OLENKA. (Disappointed.) Of course. Yes. I just spoke with the Agency and Katarina has been at the hotel for

five days waiting for mama and papa. Come we must get over to the domestic terminal. Our flight leaves in 45 minutes.

LIZ. (To Audience.) The flight goes without incident and when we land Igor's waiting to drive us to the hotel. We have gifts for him too.

IGOR. (Surprised) No. This is for Igor? (Hugs.) A jean jacket. Raz. Dua. Three. (counts out from one to 3.) Willy Nelson cassettes. This is too much. (hugs again.) Ahhhh, what is this? N-Y Gee-ants?

LIZ. Igor, it's a steering wheel cover for your car. It says the New York Giants. It's a famous US baseball team.

REUEL. Try football, Lizzy.

IGOR. Ahhhh, Spasibo. Igor, he always remembers Liz and Reuel kindness. Spasibo.

LIZ. (To audience.) As we get into the car, Igor tucks his presents into the ever present gray metal box in the passenger seat. He slips in one of his new Willy Nelson tapes.

IGOR. (Sings Willy Nelson.) If you got the money honey, I've the time. We'll go honky Tonkin and we'll have a real good time...

LIZ. (To audience.) The trip to the hotel takes less than ten minutes which is good because once again we were in white out conditions. (Pause.) I can't wait to see Katarina. (To Olenka.) Olenka, who is watching Katarina now?

OLENKA. Katarina has been staying with a nurse since she left the hospital.

LIZ. A nurse?

REUEL. A nurse. Olenka, why is Katarina with a nurse?

LIZ. Olenka, is Katarina okay?

OLENKA. In our country this is how it is done. Katarina will stay with the nurse until the official adoption takes place in two days.

LIZ. Olenka, are you saying that Katarina won't be sleeping with us tonight – in our room?

OLENKA. She must stay with the nurse. You will see her tomorrow morning.

LIZ. Not tonight. Not for dinner?

OLENKA. It is now six o'clock. Katarina is getting ready for bed.

LIZ. Olenka, Reuel and I are very much looking forward to seeing her. And I have a few little things I'd like to give her.

OLENKA. Reuel, Liz, it will be too much excitement just before bedtime. She will not be able to sleep. In a very short time, she will be your daughter. We will have a good dinner tonight at the hotel and you will get a good night's rest.

LIZ. (To audience.) It's not worth the argument. Maybe Olenka has a point -- in less than two days she will be with us 24/7 and maybe then I'll be wishing for a little break. As we walk into the modest but very clean hotel, Reuel whispers.

REUEL. Lizzy, guess who's going to get stuck with the bill for the nurse, the nurse's room, Olenka's room and Olenka's ravenous appetite for caviar and cream puffs.

LIZ. (To audience.) At nine o'clock the next morning, Olenka, the nurse and Katarina come to our room. This

time, I will not cry. Katarina, with her head buried in the nurse's dress, says:

KATARINA -- Mama

LIZ. (To audience.) I bend down and give her a little hug. She looks so frightened . I ease back. The nurse speaks no English. She is formidable. Tall, heavy with a faint beard and mustache. She has the look of the strong woman in the circus. Olenka introduces us.

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel this is Nurse Blatovsky.

LIZ. Hi, I'm Liz.

NURSE BLATOVSKY. (Bellows.) BLATOVSKY!

LIZ. Her powerful and meaty hand squeezes my hand so hard I hear my knuckles crack like chicken bones.

OLENKA. Katarina, look at all these puzzles and books and crayons mama and papa bought for you.

LIZ. (To audience.) Katarina grabs one of the puzzles and tosses it into the air. Now she's laughing and Reuel and I join in the laughter as we pick up the pieces. The nurse is not amused.

**NURSE BLATOVSKY. (Scolds.) Chto ty delaesh dura!
(What are you doing stupid?) Chto ty delaesh dura!**

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka sits Katrina down on the chair and encourages her to put the puzzle together. Katarina has other ideas. She grabs a box of crayons runs into the bathroom and throws the entire box into the toilet.

REUEL. What the hell is this all about?

LIZ. (To audience.) The nurse grabs Katrina by the arm and yells at her. Katarina kicks her.

NURSE BLATOVSKY. (Screams.) Ahhhhhhhhh- nyet. Ahhhhhh n-yet. Ahhhhhh nytet.

LIZ. (To Olenka.) I think we should all go downstairs for breakfast.

NURSE BLATOVSKY. (Still screaming) Dura. Nyet. Ahhhhhhh.....

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka speaks to the nurse who is now tossing the crayons out of the toilet.

NURSE BLATOVSKY. Chto ty delaesch, dura! (another scream) Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh.....

LIZ. (To audience.) Katarina is now throwing the wet crayons into the bathtub. Shockingly, the nurse is throwing wet toilet crayons at Katarina. Reuel steps in and is hit on his forehead with a wet crayon.

REUEL. Lizzy, what the hell – the inmates are running the asylum!

LIZ. (To audience.) I have another idea. When my son was little, and had nervous energy, I used to play patty cake. We would start out very slow and work up to very fast. Katarina seems to delight in the game and for the first time, I see her smile and her eyes light up. Reuel joins in. Katarina becomes overly excited and patty cakes Reuel in the face, knocking off his glasses which end the game.

OLENKA. Katarina is overly stimulated. Nurse Blatovsky must take her back to the room for a rest. You will see her after nap time.

LIZ. (To audience.) But that doesn't happen. At three o'clock, Olenka comes to our room.

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel, I just spoke with Nurse Blatovsky, Katarina has developed a fever and she must rest. You

will see Katarina tomorrow. Right after the adoption. And then your daughter will be with you forever.

LIZ. (To audience.) The moment Olenka leaves the room, Reuel loses it.

REUEL. Lizzy, what is wrong with this picture?

LIZ. I know what you're thinking.

REUEL. I'm thinking -- we call it off right now.

LIZ . I can't believe you're saying that.

REUEL. How many red flags do you need? They're lying to us. And they've been lying to us from the very beginning. And what kind of nurse was that? Pelting the kid with wet crayons out of a filthy toilet. They must have dragged her in off the fucking street. It's all insane. I know what I see with my own eyes and this kid is sick.

LIZ. This child has spent her entire life in an orphanage. She is not sick. We had that medical record translated by Dr. Simon and he said she's perfectly healthy.

REUEL And Dr. Simon has not seen her in action. He just saw some trumped up medical report.

LIZ. She's acting that way because she's scared of us.

REUEL. She's scared? She smacked me in the face.

LIZ. Her hands slipped.

REUEL. Don't play dumb. She got a maniacal look in her face and she smacked me. You know it!

LIZ. She's scared of men.

REUEL. We should have never come back. Why did I listen to you? Can't you see they are keeping her away from us until after the adoption. They're not taking any chances. We can't go through with this!

LIZ. Oh my God. Are you fucking kidding me? We're no better than the Germans.

REUEL. Why do you think the Germans backed out?

LIZ. Because they didn't get it. They weren't looking at the big picture. A child raised in an orphanage needs love – lots of it. It's time. It's all about time. Time and lots of love.

REUEL. Every instinct in my body knows that this is not good. Liz, they are keeping her away from us because

they are afraid we'll see that she's demented. We are not going through with this.

LIZ. We came here to adopt our daughter and that's what I'm going to do – with or without you. She's my daughter.

REUEL. They are playing us for fools, Lizzy. And if we sign that adoption we are fucking trapped!

LIZ. Keep it down. Somebody could hear us.

REUEL. Good. I want them to hear me. I want them to know that I am not buying any of this. We were promised a kid between two and three who was mentally healthy and we are not equipped to take on a child who is mentally....

LIZ. (Screams.) I am her mother! Do you understand? I am her mother! (Long pause.) Reuel, please, listen to me. We will bring her home. We'll give her all of our love. Our attention. Opportunity. Our family and friends will adore her and they'll shower her with love. Reuel, miracles happen. They've happened to me my entire life. I had a flash when I saw the two of you playing -- I actually saw – in my mind's eye - you and

Katarina in a golf cart. Your hands over her little hands teaching her the golf swing. Just like you did with Chris. You know, you're right, she isn't a dancer. She's a golfer.

REUEL. (Lightens up.) She does pack a powerful swing.

LIZ. You will never regret this.

REUEL. I hope you're right.

LIZ. (To audience.) It is ten o'clock the next morning. We are filing into the courtroom. It's Olenka, Reuel, myself and Dr Natasha Petrova from the orphanage. Reuel's in a blue blazer and grey slacks and I'm wearing a beige Donna Karan jacket and skirt with an ivory silk blouse topped off with a pearl necklace and pearl earrings. Ferragamo pumps – heel – not too high. We were instructed beforehand that we must be very well dressed. A Russian court clerk makes an announcement

and everyone stands as the Judge enters the courtroom. She looks like a Russian Judge Judy, complete with attitude. Papers are handed to her and she looks them over before gazing down at the two of us – a smirk not a smile.

JUDGE. In the matter of proposed adoption by Mr. and Mrs. Reuel Dorman – please approach the bench.

LIZ. (To audience.) We stand and walk to the area below the bench.

JUDGE. Mrs. Dorman, do you speak English?

LIZ. Yes.

JUDGE. Do you speak Russian?

LIZ. No.

JUDGE. Then it is a good thing that I speak English. Why are you wanting to adopt this child?

LIZ. My husband and I have sons and we have always wanted a daughter.

JUDGE. You are both the age of grandparents, not parents. Do you think you are able to raise such a young child?

LIZ. We both had physical examinations and we're in very good health. We both go to the gym and Reuel is a big golfer and I'm a big swimmer.

JUDGE. Are there other children living near you?

LIZ. Yes, right next door the family has two girls. And several families have kids right down the road.

JUDGE. And what about her schooling?

LIZ. Our public school is rated one of the best in the state.

JUDGE. Did you bring a picture of your house?

LIZ. Yes. Here it is. (To audience.) I'm really getting annoyed at Reuel for not chiming in. We have been instructed to show enthusiasm .

JUDGE. This is a small cottage.

LIZ. It is bigger inside than it looks from the front. We built a large addition on in the back with a wrap around deck.

JUDGE. Do you have a picture of the room where the child will sleep?

LIZ. Yes. (gives her picture) We just had it painted a pale pink.

JUDGE. This is a small bedroom.

LIZ. It's cozy and it has bookshelves with lots of books – the classics.

JUDGE. Why are there two beds? Will somebody else sleep in this room?

LIZ. No, the other bed is if Katarina wants a friend to sleep over.

JUDGE. Is there a bathroom?

LIZ. Yes. Right in the room. Here, I have a picture.

JUDGE. (frowning.) Very small this bathroom. Is there no bath tub for the child?

LIZ. It's just a shower in her bathroom but there are two other bathrooms with bath tubs.

JUDGE. I think it is much healthier for a child to use a bath tub.

LIZ. Oh yes, and more fun. (To audience.) I smile. The judge does not.

JUDGE. Are there any Russian people near you where the child can visit while she learns your language?

LIZ. Yes, our cleaning lady is from Minsk. But she is a very good friend too.

JUDGE. Your grown children are agreeable to this adoption? They will not be jealous or unhappy with your attention going to this child? They will not mistreat this new child?

LIZ. Our sons are almost as excited as we are. They will be having a baby sister. (To audience) The judge motions to the orphanage doctor to speak with her. They speak briefly – referencing a document that the judge looks through.

JUDGE. (pounds gavel.) Adoption of Katarina Elizabeth Dorman approved. What is the official date of birth and year that you would like your child to be born?

LIZ. I don't understand.

JUDGE. This child has no known date of birth. You must choose one now.

LIZ. (To audience.) I look at Reuel. He's without expression. (Whispers to Reuel.) Love, what should we pick?

REUEL. (Looking straight ahead. No expression.) Your call, Liz.

LIZ. (To audience.) I'm embarrassed. We were prepped to show enthusiasm I can't believe Reuel's sabotaging this adoption. (To Judge.) July 4th.

JUDGE. The year?

LIZ. (To Reuel. Whispers) Reuel, please, give me a year.

REUEL. (Looking straight ahead. No emotion.) You pick it Liz.

LIZ. (To audience.) What a jerk. He's going to blow this adoption. (To Judge.) 2000 (To audience.) I quickly calculate that would make her four years old. The judge writes in the date and year and without a smile, a nod, any word of congratulations, she exits the courtroom through the side door where she had entered. It's over. Dr. Petrova gives Reuel and me a hug and says through the court house interpreter.

COURT HOUSE INTERPRETER. Dr. Petrova wants me say to you that you and your husband are very kind people to adopt Katarina. This is a copy of Katarina's most recent medical report.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka reaches for it and Reuel quickly stuffs it into his blazer pocket and says:

REUEL. That's okay Olenka, I'll keep it.

LIZ. (To Audience.) Olenka gives us a hug and rushes off to the hotel to relieve the nurse of her duties. We have only a short time to get over to the Passport Agency for Katarina's passport. Reuel's worried that they might close and that would mean we miss our morning flight back to Moscow. We arrive back at the hotel. Olenka and Katarina greet us with a stick drawing. "Bye Russia. Hi USA." I bend down to give Katarina a little hug but it's still all too new for her. She buries her head in Olenka's lap. Reuel knows better than to try to hug her.

REUEL. (bends down to child.) Hey Katarina, slap your new papa a high five.

LIZ. (To audience.) She puts out her little hand and slaps him a high five. And then they do it about a dozen more times. It's the first sign of bonding.

OLENKA. We must get to the Agency before it closes.

LIZ. (To audience.) With that we all pile into the backseat of Igor's car and he drives us to the Government Agency. We fill out the forms and then stand in a long line in a stifling hot building -- and with fifteen minutes till closing -- we're next. The stone faced clerk looks over the forms and looks over us -- with equal care -- and then says through Olenka.

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel, there is a new regulation. It went into effect yesterday. There is now a fourteen day waiting period to receive the passport.

REUEL. Jeee-sus -- what the hell....

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel keep calm.

REUEL. Fourteen days! Olenka, you have to tell this guy that this is not possible. This is not what we were promised. I have a business to run and need to be back in the United States. Something has to happen here.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka and the clerk begin talking back and forth, the clerk's voice gradually rising.

REUEL. Olenka, if I need to slip this guy a little money, just tell me. No problem. But I can't spend two weeks here. See what he needs.

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel, please sit down with Katarina. Let Olenka take care of this.

LIZ. (To audience.) Ten minutes later, Olenka returns.

OLENKA. There is nothing that can be done.

LIZ. (To audience.) And with that, we get back into Igor's car and he drives us back to the hotel. Olenka takes Katarina to her room so we can get ready for dinner.

REUEL. Lizzy, I don't know how I can possibly stay more than three days. I have four scheduled closings for next week. If I lose those we can't pay the bills – pay for this trip. Jeeesus we'll be in bad shape.

LIZ. Reuel, you need to go. I'll be fine. It'll give Katarina and me time to bond. And Olenka's staying too.

REUEL. A lot of good that'll do. Her entire day revolves around cream puffs.

LIZ. Cream puffs and you. She has a crush on you.

REUEL. Spare me.

LIZ. (imitating Olenka.) Ohh Reuel, you are hot stuff. Let me get out my Hello Kitty diary and write that down.

REUEL. Lizzy, I'm hungry. Let's go eat.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka arrives at our room with Katarina.

OLENKA. Katarina, show mama how pretty you look in your new dress.

LIZ. Katarina, you look so beautiful. The pink ribbons in your hair match your dress. (To audience.) Katarina buries her little head in Olenka's legs. (To Katarina.) Come Katarina see the new snowsuit and boots Mama has for you. (To audience.) It's the first time I call myself mama. Olenka translates but Katarina will not look at the new clothes.

OLENKA. Liz, Reuel, go wait downstairs and I will be able to get Katarina in her snowsuit. She is too excited now.

LIZ. (To audience.) We do as Olenka says and about fifteen minutes later they emerge -- Katarina in her new pink snowsuit and boots that light up as she walks.

OLENKA. Katarina, give mama your hand.

LIZ. (To audience.) I'm holding Katarina's gloved hand as we step outside the hotel. Suddenly Katarina breaks away and darts into the street, narrowly missing getting hit. People are screaming.

VOICES OF PEOPLE ON STREET SCREAMING. Stoy. Stoy. Stoy. (Stop in Russian.)

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel runs after her, and picks her up. She takes her little fists and beats at his face, knocking out a lens from his glasses. It lands in the snow covered street.

REUEL. (Screaming.) Lizzy get out of the street! You're going to get hit for chrissake!

LIZ. (To Reuel.) I found your lens!

OLENKA. Reuel, let me hold her. She is too over excited. It would be best for Olenka to bring in food. We will have a quiet dinner in your hotel room. Katarina will calm down with a warm bath.

LIZ. (To audience.) I am running a warm bath. I even add bubble bath. Katarina begins to masturbate. Reuel is in the other room trying to find some sort of kiddy show, I don't want him to see this. I hand her a floating toy and as I do she bites my hand. I let out a yell.

REUEL. What's the matter? (He saw her masturbating.) What is she doing?

LIZ. I think she may have been sexually abused.

REUEL. Let me get you a band-aid. Your hand is bleeding.

LIZ. She's safe now.

REUEL. You'd better get her out of the tub.

LIZ. (To audience.) Olenka arrives with the dinner and a box full of pastry. I have a small table set with dishes and silverware we borrowed from the restaurant below. Olenka plucks up Katarina and sits her on her

lap. (To Olenka.) No, Olenka. I have a place set for Katarina. Please let her sit in her own chair.

OLENKA. Liz, Katarina is more used to be fed. It will take time for her to adjust to life outside of the orphanage.

LIZ. (To audience.) Reuel appears as taken aback as I am to see Olenka spoon feed her. I pour her a small glass of milk. She picks up the glass and heaves it across the room. Reuel eats in silence and then goes to bed, still in silence. I tell myself that everything will look better in the morning. (Pause.) The three days before Reuel leaves were endless. Katarina is now with us 24/7.

REUEL. Lizzy, I feel like we're in the gulag. We've been stuck in this hotel like prisoners for three days. We can't even take our daughter into the restaurant without her throwing her food and breaking glasses. This is insane. She has to be at least six years old and we're feeding her like she's an infant. Lizzy, how in the hell are you going to manage without me. The moment we take our eyes off her she's kicking over the TV or

throwing stuff down the toilet. She won't even let me get near her.

LIZ. She is so scared of men

REUEL. Bull shit.

LIZ. Something's going on in that poor tortured mind. Did you hear her last night rocking back and forth muttering and crying out in her sleep.

REUEL. Did I hear her? The people outside in the street could hear her. What happens when we go back home? Are we still going to sleep in shifts? You're on for three hours and I'm on for three hours. Do you know how crazy this is?

LIZ. (To audience.) All we did was argue. (Pause.) It's Reuel's last night. Olenka offers to watch Katarina in her room so we would have a little time alone. I go to the hotel restaurant and bring our dinner back to the room. I have no energy to do anything. Reuel's in front of the TV watching news in Russian. He's had a shot or two of vodka.

LIZ. You don't even like vodka.

REUEL. I hate vodka

LIZ. Come eat.

REUEL. Not hungry.

LIZ. You need to eat.

REUEL. Lizzy, you need to come home tomorrow. I can't leave you here.

LIZ. It won't be long. It's only eleven more days.

REUEL. Together we can't handle her. How in the hell do you think you can do this alone?

LIZ. Don't worry. I'm going to work with her. Sometimes with you here she gets mixed messages.

REUEL. Mixed messages -- like stop biting mama and papa!

Liz. Love, you'll see – by the time we arrive at JFK, she'll be a different child. And I have Olenka here to help.

REUEL. I don't trust Olenka.

LIZ. She means well.

REUEL. I'm not so sure about that. Lizzy, I just have a very bad feeling about leaving you here alone.

LIZ. I will prove you wrong.

REUEL. Please come home with me.

LIZ. I need to be here. I promise you a miracle.

LIZ. (To audience.) The morning Reuel is leaving for the airport it's snowy and bone chilling cold. He gives me a hug in the hotel lobby and heads out to Igor's car. I run out to wave goodbye, Reuel climbs out of Igor's backseat and gives me a final hug.

REUEL. Lizzy, get back inside. You're only wearing a light sweater. You want to catch your death of pneumonia?

LIZ. And then Olenka can be the next Mrs. Dorman. She is hot stuff baby.

REUEL. Oh yeah, that's going to happen. Lizzy, take care of yourself. I love you. I'll call you when I get in. And do us both a favor and steer Olenka away from that pricey caviar.

LIZ. (To Audience.) Reuel is waving out the back window as the car disappears down the snow packed road, as I turn to go back into the hotel, I see Olenka watching from her hotel window. For the next five days there is no Siberian sunrise. Overcast, cloudy, it is snowing without stop. I had never seen snow piled up to rooftops. I stay in the room trying to interest Katarina with games and toys. She breaks things. She throws things – screams and cries and when I try to console her she gets angry and kicks and bites and scratches and cries even louder. The front desk keeps calling with complaints from other guests about the noise coming from our room. I've taken the phone off the hook. Katarina's not the only one crying. Olenka, on the second day, after Reuel left, could not stop crying.

OLENKA. Nothing is fun since Reuel left. Nothing is fun anymore.

LIZ. (To audience) Is she serious? I want to smack her. I can't eat. I can't sleep. I can't even call Reuel. It has become impossible to pretend that everything's fine. I'm starting to think that he was right. I should have gone home with him. But you see there's something so deep inside me that says I can turn this around. And that's what keeps me somewhat sane. (Pause.) Day 5. Katarina is sleeping. The snow is still falling. I am staring out the window. I'm hot. Wearing two sweaters to protect me from the bites and scratches. The bite on my hand is not healing. I should have gotten a tetanus shot. I drift off to sleep.

KATARINA IS POUNDING ON THE LIVING ROOM FLOOR.

What's that noise? Katarina is pounding on the living room floor. She has torn off a portion of the living room wallpaper. (To Katarina.) Stop it. Stop that pounding. Right now. Nyet. No. Bad girl. Stop laughing. Now! No! Nyet! Mama'a mad! Bad bad girl! Don't throw those wallpaper pieces at me! Stop it! No! (To Audience.) I find a jar of white paste from of her craft sets. (To Katarina.) Mama has to put wallpaper

on wall! (To Audience.) Katrina comes over and puts her fingers into the paste jar. She wants to help me. (To Katarina.) Good help mama. (To Audience.) She takes her little pasty hands and slaps me across the mouth. She laughs and runs across the room. Why did I adopt you! I am not Mother Theresa. I am not Mia Farrow. I should have gone home with Reuel. I hate this. I hate....I walk into the bathroom to wash the paste off my face. I am shaking and crying and feel sick to my stomach. I throw up into the basin. I look into the mirror. Oh God, what has happened to me? What have I turned into? A monster? I come back into the room. Katarina has fallen to sleep. I pick up the receiver. (Into phone.) Help me. Somebody help me, please! Jesus, God in heaven, please help me. I see the vodka bottle and pour myself a shot. Oh God, it burns. I pour another shot and dial the phone. Olenka.

OLENKA (groggy.) Da. Da, da.

LIZ. Olenka, I need help.

OLENKA. I am sleeping.

LIZ. I am going crazy. I want to go home.

OLENKA. You must calm down. I will be right to your room.

LIZ. (To audience.) I am still holding the phone when Olenka knocks at the door. She's carrying a napoleon.

OLENKA. Here eat this. You will feel better. You are sad. You are missing your husband. I miss him too. His laugh made Olenka laugh. It is very sad without him.

LIZ. (To audience.) Am I supposed to comfort her?

OLENKA. You must be strong. You have forgotten what it is like to care for a small child. Your children are grown. It is hard work. I will call the Agency tomorrow and they will be able to help with this transition time. Let Olenka pour us a shot of vodka.

LIZ. I hate vodka. Just a little. Olenka, look at me. I have to layer my clothes so I don't get bit or scratched. We are not bonding. I tried and I can't help her. Olenka, I cry all the time.

OLENKA. Everyone in Russia cries. Drink your vodka and eat the napoleon. Here's mud in your eye.

LIZ. (To audience.) The next morning the Agency sends over a nanny. Olenka never even checked with me.

OLENKA. Don't worry Liz, nannies in Russia are very cheap.

LIZ. So now we have a nanny on the payroll. Once again, Lois pops into my mind.

LOIS. Honey, just another way of milking us for more money. It's a racket, honey.

LIZ. (To audience.) The nanny was a stern – no nonsense woman as wide as she's tall. She moves into the room next door. She takes Katarina from nine in morning until five pm each day. I think I'm finally going to have time to rest. But Olenka had other ideas.

OLENKA. Liz, you need to get out. We will go lunch and you will feel better.

LIZ. (To Olenka.) Olenka, I'm exhausted. I need to sleep.

OLENKA. No! You need fresh air and exercise. Listen to Olenka.

LIZ. (To audience.) I don't tell Reuel that we now have a nanny and an extra hotel room on the tab. So for the next six days, Olenka and I go out for lunch and I hear more about what Olenka's looking for.

OLENKA. Liz, I have always had the attraction for older man. With all the men in the world, I would most pick the American man. Pilots are most fascinating to Olenka. LIZ. (To Olenka.) Olenka, that sounds like my husband.

OLENKA. (Laughs.) Da. Da. But Reuel is yours. I see the love in his eyes. No?

LIZ. He adores me. We adore each other.

OLENKA. Da. Da. But Liz you can never really trust men, no?

LIZ. (To Audience.) Olenka is playing mind games with me. But I have bigger fish to fry than worry about Olenka and her agenda. I have to come through with the miracle I had promised Reuel. When he first left, there were moments when I actually thought I was making headway. But those moments were fleeting and always ended up pulling Katarina and me farther

away from each other. We're cutting out silly shapes with little scissors and laughing. I have my hand over hers, helping her to use the scissors. Out of nowhere Katrina grabs the scissors and stabs me in my hand. At times, she gets a look on her face – almost like she's looking through me --and can see that I have running thoughts of dropping her off at Olenka's room and leaving. I am feeling deeply ashamed of these thoughts that are growing more and more intense with each outburst. I lie in bed and plot how I can get my passport back from Olenka and make a middle of the night escape. But nobody in the town speaks English and I'd be caught before I could leave the hotel. I'd be arrested for abandoning my child. The only thing that keeps me sane is some deep belief and trust that God, St Jude, St. Theresa -- all the saints that I prayed to as a kid --are going to give me the strength to continue to work with Katarina until she becomes healthy. (Pause.)

Day 14 – two weeks after the adoption – Igor drives us to the Government office where I get Katarina's Passport and then he takes us to the airport for our flight back to Moscow. The moment we step inside the airport, Olenka says:

OLENKA. Liz, here are your passports. You go to the ticket counter – right over there – and I will go to the coffee shop. We will have no food on the plane. I will get us something to eat. Katarina, you be good for your mama.

LIZ. Olenka I think I need your help.

OLENKA. I will be right back.

LIZ. (To audience.) At the airline ticket counter, Katarina breaks away from me. She darts in and out of kiosks grabbing magazines and whatever she can hold. I scoop her up and return to the counter but she squirms out of my arms and takes off once again. She leaps up onto the conveyer belt that the luggage is placed on and before I or security can stop her she goes through the ex-ray machine. Security's yelling at me and her.

ALARM BELL RINGS

WE HEAR VOICE OF SECURITY

GUARD YELLING IN RUSSIAN

I pluck her up and go back to the ticket counter. Again, she gets out of my arms but this time she's distracted by pink gum on the ground. She sits at my feet and eats bubble gum off the filthy floor. And I let her. It gives me the time I need to get the tickets processed. How could I let my little girl eat gum off a filthy floor? And in that moment, I see a part of me that I didn't even know existed.

OLENKA. Katarina! Nyet. Nyet. Liz, do you not see your daughter eating gum off the dirty floor?

LIZ. Oh no, I didn't see that. I was trying to get the tickets....

OLENKA. (interrupts Liz.) We must take Katarina to the toilet and clean her mouth.

LIZ. (To audience.) On takeoff, Katarina squirms out of the seat belt and crawls underneath the passengers seats biting people on their ankles. Olenka's sitting in the front of the plane, eating cream puffs, totally oblivious to the hell I'm going through. The flight attendant is yelling at me in Russian and so are the passengers.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Madam, this child is biting passengers.

LIZ. I will keep her on my lap. I just adopted her. She's scared.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. What country is this child from?

LIZ. Russia.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. This child is not speaking Russian.

LIZ. What do you mean?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. She is babbling gibberish. You must not let her off your lap.

LIZ. I hold her in my arms and her little cheek is resting on mine . As the plane touches down, I think: Maybe this is the bonding that I had prayed for? (Pause.) We're detained getting off the plane. And the flight attendant grabs me by the arm.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. You must show me your papers.

LIZ. What?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Your Passport.]

LIZ. Why?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT. I must write a report. Your child bit other passengers. And you did not control her.

LIZ. (To Audience.) I think about all the reports I had filed on unruly passengers and nothing ever became of them. It was basically a scare tactic. However, this is Russia. So I sign my name. As we start down the concourse, Katarina takes off. Olenka and I run after her.

**OLENKA (Shouting in Russia to stop.)Katarina!
Katarina. Stop. Stop. Liz, hold Katarina. Don't let her out of your arms.**

LIZ. (To audience.) I take Katarina in my arms and she socks me in the nose. My nose is bleeding. Katarina's screaming. Blood's dripping down into her hair. My nerves are totally frazzled. I have no memory of the drive from the airport to our hotel. When Katarina and I get into our room in Moscow, I begin to cry and I can't stop. I haven't spoken to Reuel in almost five days. I know I have to call him. I have to tell him the whole truth of what's been going on since he left. And then I

have to tell him that when he sees us -- in two days -- nothing will have changed. I pick up the phone to call Reuel. I dial the number up to the last digits and hang up. I try again and hang up again. I don't know how I can tell him that the miracle I had promised him hasn't happened. I can't stop crying. I dial another number I know by heart. It's my friend Dianne. I tell her everything.

DIANNE. (Texan accent.) Lizzy, stop crying.. Stop crying right now. If you don't stop crying then I'm going to start and then God help us. Van and I are getting dressed and we're going to go to your house and tell Reuel. Don't call him until we have had a chance to break this news to him. And you don't worry, I'm going to get on an airplane and come and get you. Just sit tight and wait for our call.

LIZ. (To audience.) An hour later Reuel calls.

REUEL. Lizzy, Dianne and Van are here. Dianne told me everything. I've been trying to call you for the last three days. Didn't you get my messages?

LIZ. (To audience.) No.

REUEL. I think they haven't been putting calls through on purpose. Lizzy, I had that medical report translated. It's completely different from the first report and everything we were told. Katarina is not healthy. She spent three years in and out of a mental hospital – mainly in. Her mother had syphilis. We are not equipped to deal with this kind of illness. Lizzy, stop crying. What is happening right now?

LIZ. Reuel, I'm scared. I can't control her. I don't think I can get her on the plane.

REUEL. Lizzy, you are not getting that visa. Where is Olenka?

LIZ. At her apartment -- here in Moscow. I have to get the visa!

REUEL. You call Olenka right now. You tell her that you are not bringing Katarina back to the United States. We are not adopting her.

LIZ. But we adopted her. We can't do that!

REUEL. Katarina needs help far beyond what either you or I can give her. Don't you understand she is a mentally sick child. It's insane to bring her back. You

are going to call Olenka now. Promise me that as soon as we hang up, you will call Olenka.

LIZ. (To audience.) I promised but I didn't call Olenka. I know he's right but this would be the cruelest thing I could ever do. She's beside me asleep. She's calm. Reuel calls back.

REUEL. Did you call her?

LIZ. I'll call her in the morning.

REUEL. You call her right now. Where is Katarina now?

LIZ. Next to me. She's sleeping. I can't just leave her. Please tell me this is not happening.

REUEL. If you don't call Olenka, I will. Lizzy, our lives will be a nightmare and you know it. They lied to us. Neither of us can take care of Katarina. Promise me you will call Olenka.

LIZ. Dianne said she coming to Moscow. She'll help me with Katarina on the plane.

REUEL. Lizzy, listen to me. Katarina is not coming back with you. We are not adopting her. You are coming home immediately. Now call Olenka!

LIZ. (to audience.) I call Olenka. (On phone.) Olenka, it's Liz. I am so sorry but I am not going to get Katarina's visa tomorrow. I can't take her home.

OLENKA. (On phone.) Liz, Katarina is your child. You adopted her. You are her mother. You are just too tired and get a good night's sleep and I will see you in the morning.

LIZ. (To audience.) At eight o'clock in the morning, Olenka's in the hotel lobby. She's not alone. As Katarina and I got off the elevator, I come face to face with six others. Olenka takes Katarina back to her apartment and I am led to a sofa in the lobby -- beside a cappuccino bar. A middle aged woman with dyed jet black hair pulled into a bun speaks for the group.

SPOKESPERSON. Mrs. Dorman, please sit down. We need to speak with you.

LIZ. (To audience.) I sit down and she sits beside me -- way too close.

SPOKESPERSON. I am Sonja Baranovsky. You look very, very tired. It is very hard. It takes time to adjust --for you and for Katarina. Olenka will keep Katarina for the

rest of the morning. You get some sleep. At two o'clock we will take you to get Katarina's visa for your flight back to America with your daughter.

LIZ. I will not be taking Katarina on the flight.

SPOKESWOMAN. Olenka has told us that Katarina was frightened on the airplane.

LIZ. It was beyond horrible. Katarina bit passengers.

SPOKESPERSON. We can help you with all of this. Many children are afraid of airplanes. Katarina has never flown on one before.

LIZ. I couldn't control her. The flight attendant filed a report on us.

SPOKESWOMAN. Mrs. Dorman we will help you with all of this. There are medications to help the child to relax and make her sleep. Olenka has offered and we have been granted government approval for Olenka to accompany you on the flight. Olenka can stay as long as needed – up to two weeks. We understand that there is an extra bed in the child's room.

LIZ. No. No. No. Please listen to me. I am not getting Katarina's visa. She is not flying to America and neither is Olenka. I can't do this. I am sorry. (To audience.) I burst into tears.

SPOKEPERSON. There is no question. You are this child's mother. You cannot abandon her. We have laws in this country.

LIZ. I can't be her mother.

SPOKESPERSON. You are her mother.

LIZ. My husband says....

SPOKESPERSON. Your husband is not here. I am speaking to you as a mother to a mother. You must get her visa. You have no other choice.

LIZ. I can't be her mother! (To audience.) I run to the elevator and back to my room. I pick up the phone to call Reuel. There's a knock at the door. I think it's the cleaning lady. But it's not.. It's a tall, heavy set man around fifty. He's wearing a Russian fur hat. (To Man) Who are you?

AGENCY OFFICIAL. My name is Vlad Andropov. May I come in?

LIZ. What do you want?

AGENCY OFFICIAL. We need to go to the hospital.

LIZ. Hospital? What's happening? Is Katarina all right?

AGENCY OFFICIAL. Katarina is good. We need for you to go to the hospital.

LIZ. What?

AGENCY OFFICIAL. We have an appointment for you – with the doctor – at the hospital. You are worn out. You are tired. You are confused. He will help you.

LIZ. (To Audience.) This is every Russian spy movie I had ever seen. A trip to the mental hospital.

AGENCY OFFICIAL. You will get good medicine.

LIZ. I'm not going to any hospital. I'm not sick. You need to leave.

AGENCY OFFICIAL. You need to come. Now. I am helping you.

LIZ. Get out! Get out of my room! Right now! (To audience.) He grabs me by the arm.

AGENCY OFFICIAL. Mrs. Dorman, get your coat and all of your medications.

LIZ. (To audience.) I break his hold. (To Agency official) Get out of my room! Right now! Get the fuck out of here!

AGENCY OFFICIAL. If I have to get them for you, then I will.

LIZ. (To audience.) He pushes past me. I smell alcohol. I follow him into the bathroom. He's rummaging through my make-up bag that's on the counter. (To official) Get away from my stuff! Get out of here! Get the fuck out of here!

AGENCY OFFICIAL. Where is your medicine? In your handbag?

LIZ. (To audience.) He walks to the bed to pick up my purse. I grab my hairdryer that's on the bed and start swinging it at him. I am screaming at the top of my lungs for him to get out. I remember that if your life's

in danger to make as much noise as you can. He backs up toward the door.

AGENCY OFFICIAL. Mrs. Dorman, you are only making this worse for yourself. We know everything. Olenka has filed reports -- your drinking problem. Your husband's drinking problem.

LIZ. What the hell are you talking about... what are you saying....

AGENCY OFFICIAL. Did you know your husband made improper advances toward Olenka? A happily married woman – thirty years younger.

LIZ. My husband would never, ever. He doesn't even like Olenka.

AGENCY OFFICIAL. What have you done to this healthy child? There has been sexual abuse

LIZ. (over talks.) How dare you say that. We would never hurt her. There was sexual abuse at your orphanage!

AGENCY OFFICIAL. There are laws in this country about this kind of child abuse. We can notify authorities.

LIZ. These are lies. Nothing but lies. Get out of here. Get out of here with your lies. Get out!

AGENCY OFFICIAL. They will not be as understanding the way we are at the Agency. You will be charged with a most serious crime. Do you know that?

LIZ. Get out. Get out. You're a fucking liar and Olenka is a fucking liar and I'm not listening get out...

AGENCY OFFICIAL. Now, you come with us and we take you to the hospital and you will be okay. We will not call in the authorities.

LIZ. No! No! No!

AGENCY OFFICIAL. Stop! You are crazy.

LIZ. Get the fuck out of here! (To audience) I swing the hairdryer by the cord. He backs up to shield himself from the swinging hairdryer. He steps outside into the hallway. I slam the door shut and turn the double latch. Wildly, I pile furniture in front of the door. I call Reuel. Three rings, four rings. Oh God please pick up. Five rings. He picks up. (On phone) Reuel, I need help. They want to take me to a mental hospital. They say I am

crazy. Maybe I am. Help me! Help me, Reuel. I am going insane!

REUEL. Who wants to take you to the hospital?

LIZ. Some guy from the Agency. He burst into my room and was going through all my stuff. He said that Olenka filed reports that we're drunks and that we abused Katarina and that....

REUEL. (Screams.) Lizzy, listen and listen close. You're in fucking Russia. Do exactly as I say. Get your jacket and get over to the American Embassy. Right now. In the meantime, I will be contacting the embassy.

LIZ. How do I get there? What do I do?

REUEL. Go to the concierge and ask for a taxi to the American Embassy. Check the zippered pocket inside your suitcase. I stuffed a bunch of rubles in – just in case of an emergency. Do you have your passport?

LIZ. No, Olenka has it.

REUEL. You don't need it. Do you have your driver's license?

LIZ. Yes.

REUEL. Now get your jacket on and leave. Call me when you get there.

LIZ. (To audience) I open the door and peer out. He's gone. I make a beeline to the elevator. When I get off and turn the corner into the lobby they're all still sitting there. I walk by them to the front desk clerk. (To clerk) I need a taxi to take me to the American Embassy. (To Audience.) The clerk shrugs his shoulders as if he doesn't understand me. He points to the group. "I need a taxi." Again he points to the group. I have no choice but to go outside and hopefully flag one down – if there is one – I don't have a clue what Russian taxis look like. Sonja, the woman who first talked to me, appears.

SONJA. Mrs. Dorman where do you want to go?

LIZ. To the American Embassy.

SONJA. Please come back into the hotel. We need to talk to you.

LIZ. No. I am going to the embassy.

SONJA. You must not go there. It will cause many problems. It will affect many people. You must not go there.

LIZ. I just spoke with my husband. He is calling the American Embassy and telling them to expect me. I will call my husband and tell him that you are preventing me from going there. My husband is a Lt. Colonel in the United States Air Force and he has government connections.

SONIA. We will take you there.

LIZ. (To audience.) A small car pulls up and I got in. The six people in the lobby get in too. It looks like that clown act in the circus with an impossible number of people piled into a car. On the way there two of the people are speaking in Russian on cell phones while Sonja keeps up a constant argument that how there are better ways to deal with this. The longer we drive the more it seems that I am seeing the same landmarks again and again. I begin to get a panicky feeling that I'm being kidnapped, perhaps being taken to the hospital. (To Sonia.) Why aren't we there yet?

SONJA. Moscow is a very big city.

LIZ . You're not taking me there, are you? You have no intention of taking me there. Get me the fuck to the American Embassy right now! Do you hear me! Stop this car. I want to get out!

SONJA. Stop acting crazy.

LIZ. (To audience..) I see a sign with an H. The Universal sign for hospital. The driver turns in the direction of the H. I lose it. (To people in car.) "Hand me a cell phone right now or I'm going to jump out! I start to climb over Sonja and she gives me her cell phone.

SONIA. Here call your husband. Maybe he can help you.

LIZ. (To audience.) I don't call Reuel. I call Dianne. "This is Elizabeth Dorman, could you please put me through to Attorney Dianne Bernhard? (To audience.) Dianne catches on immediately. All of her years watching Perry Mason re-runs are about to pay off.

DIANNE. Elizabeth, where are you? What is happening?

LIZ. (on phone.) I am in a car in Moscow. I am with people are supposed to take me to the American Embassy and they're not taking me there. They've been driving me around in circles now for almost one hour. They say that I am crazy. I think they are taking me to a mental hospital. They are threatening that if I don't bring the child home, I'll be arrested and charged with child abuse.

DIANNE. Elizabeth, put me on speaker. (pause.) Am I on speaker now?

LIZ. Yes.

DIANNE. Listen up! This is Dianne Bernhard. I am Elizabeth Dorman's lawyer. This is unacceptable. You cannot keep my client from our Embassy! She is asking now for sanctuary. You have to honor her request. That is an International Law!!! If you don't immediately take my client to the American Embassy, I'll have every senator and representative in Connecticut on a plane to Moscow immediately. This is the United States of America you are talking to!

LIZ. (To audience.) While Dianne continues her diatribe, Sonia begins speaking in a hushed voice to the driver.

SONIA. (Softly whispering to driver.)

LIZ. (To audience.) Minutes later we turn the corner and there it is. The American flag flapping in the breeze. We're stopped in traffic a good block away. I leap over two people, somehow find the door handle and jump out. I run toward the flag. Behind me, I hear a chorus of voices.

VOICES. Mrs. Dorman, we are only trying to help you. Come back to the car. Mrs. Dorman. Wait for us. Mrs. Dorman stop acting crazy.

LIZ. (To audience.) I am running, looking behind me, dodging pedestrians on the busy street.

VOICES. Mrs. Dorman, please wait for us! We are not trying to hurt you. We want to help you!

LIZ. (To Audience.) They were gaining on me. The driver in the little car's honking his horn, causing a chain reaction of honking cars that blend with the voices.

VOICES. Mrs. Dorman! Mrs. Dorman!

LIZ. (To audience.) I am within sight of the glass front door. I cry out. "I'm an American. I'm an American. Help me. Help me please. I am an American. Please, let me in." The glass doors open. I'm face to face with a Marine in full military garb. He stands aside for me to enter. He closes the door behind me. I am safe. No questions are asked. He leads me into an office. A moment later a woman in her thirties and in uniform tells me to have a seat.

EMBASSY WOMAN. Can I get you some tea or coffee?

LIZ. No, thank you. (To audience.) I tell her the whole story --- from the beginning to the end – every detail . She does not interrupt me. And she does not hurry me along. And she doesn't judge me.

EMBASSY WOMAN. Mrs. Dorman, I have spoken with your husband. He urged me to tell you that this child cannot come back to the United States with you.

LIZ. How can I leave Katarina here?

EMBASSY WOMAN. When I was in college I was a life guard. I took all the classes and had all the certification

and training, the hardest thing they taught me was that there may come a time when a drowning person cannot be saved and that if you continue to try that person will take you down with him.

LIZ. (To audience.) I can't leave Katarina behind.

EMBASSY WOMAN. Mrs. Dorman, this isn't the first time a child has been put up for adoption with the Russian agencies falsely claiming that the child is mentally healthy. I could tell you many horror stories. It is good that the child is still in Russia as this makes the process much easier. But in order to avert an international incident, it would be best if you fly back to Vovoysa and formally overturn the adoption. Over the past few years, there have been many problems with Russian adoptions. Mrs. Dorman, are you willing to do this? This situation could shut down all Russian adoption.

LIZ. I will fly back to Vovoysa and do whatever is best. (To audience.) Phone calls are made and appointments set. Olenka and Katarina need to be there with me when the papers are signed. We fly up early the following morning. Katarina comes into the room

holding Olenka's hand. She's wearing the same outfit that I first saw her in – the green jumper and oversized bow attached to her head. The Russian Judge Judy is only speaking Russian now with Olenka. I can only imagine what they're saying. We are ushered out of the courtroom and wait. Twenty minutes later, the courtroom clerk comes out and speaks to Olenka.

OLENKA. Mrs. Dorman, the clerk has told me that the judge will make a ruling in six months. You must remain in Russia until the ruling is final.

LIZ. (To audience.) For a brief moment, I think, six months isn't that long. I can do that. My second thought is to put on my parka and walk out. (To Olenka.) No Olenka, I will sign the papers now or never. I fly home tomorrow papers or no papers. (To audience.) I put on my jacket to leave and the clerk disappears and moments later returns with three documents which she hands to Olenka. And Olenka -- as sterned face as I've seen -- says:

OLENKA. Mrs. Dorman, you must sign here.

LIZ. I sign the paper. With that Olenka and Katerina are whisked out of the courtroom. I will never see them again. As I wait in the hallway for Igor to drive me to the airport, the judge appears.

JUDGE. Feel better now, Mrs. Dorman.

LIZ. (To audience.) Igor drives me back to the airport. We ride in silence with Willy Nelson singing On the Road Again. At the airport, he gets out my suitcase.

IGOR. You and your husband are good people. Sometimes these things just don't work out.

LIZ. (To audience.) The flight from Moscow to JFK is the next afternoon. I have a window bulkhead seat – the middle seat next to me is empty.

DELTA PILOT. Good afternoon ladies and gentleman this is your Captain Martin Richards speaking and welcome aboard Flight 692, nonstop service from Moscow to JFK. Flying time today will be 9 hours and 42 minutes. We are currently third in line for takeoff so please fasten your seat belts. We wish a special welcome to our sixteen families bringing home their newly adopted Russian children.

**(THE SCREAM OF THE JET ENGINE SOUNDS AS THE
LIGHT GO TO BLACK)**

THE END