

House A

A DELIGHTFUL QUARANTINE

13

Start

~~BARBARA. I don't quite remember.~~

KITTY. How can you not remember?

BARBARA. Well, you came at very nearly the same time, dear. If my birth canal had been wide enough, I have no doubt that you both would have popped out side by side. Just like the song.

KITTY. What song?

BARBARA. The song about not having a barrel of money and being ragged and funny.

KITTY & PAULA. (*In unison.*) So we're twins?

BARBARA. You're twins.

KITTY. And you kept her and gave me away?

BARBARA. Well, I couldn't afford to keep you both, dear. Times were hard and your father was...well, nowhere to be found. I was working two jobs to put myself through school. There wasn't room in the papoose for the both of you.

KITTY. I still don't understand how you could have just given one of your children away. It doesn't make any sense.

BARBARA. Well, it seemed to make sense at the time. Obviously, if I'd had my druthers, I would have kept you both. But I didn't have any druthers, dear, so I did the only thing I knew to do – and that was to hold together what little family I could – given my situation – and pray that my farewell-child might enjoy an even better life for herself elsewhere. (*Beat*) And did you?

KITTY. You decide. I was a ward of the foster system until I turned eighteen.

BARBARA. Oh dear. Nobody ever adopted you?

KITTY. One couple filed the papers. But then they were run over by a tractor.

BARBARA. Oh my! The both of them?

KITTY. Yes.

BARBARA. But how?

KITTY. They were playing Twister in a cornfield.

BARBARA. What?

KITTY. They were playing Twister in a cornfield.

BARBARA. The farmer didn't see them?

PAULA. Or the Twister mat?

KITTY. (*Shaking her head.*) He was colorblind. But that's neither here nor there.

BARBARA. I feel so terrible about how things turned out.

KITTY. (*Skeptically*) Do you really?

BARBARA. Well, of course I do.

KITTY. Then tell me why *I* was the one you gave away. How did you decide? Give me a glimpse into the decision-making-process vis-à-vis my abandonment!

BARBARA. Well, I'm sorry, dear, but I don't recall just how it was I came to that decision.

PAULA. I find this a little hard to — (*To KITTY.*) Mother remembers everything. She remembers the birthday of the girl at the drug store who only works on Tuesdays.

BARBARA. (*An angry outburst.*) I REMEMBER HER BIRTHDAY BECAUSE SHE'S A LEAP YEAR CHILD! A LEAP YEAR CHILD! (*Beat, pulls herself together.*) I'm sorry. (*To KITTY.*) My daughter Paula doesn't know everything. (*A deep calming breath.*) May we change the subject, please? Are you aware that there are aliens from outer space in our very neighborhood right now *taking soil samples*?

KITTY. (*Ignoring this.*) Did you never think about me? Did you never wonder what might have happened to me?

BARBARA. I thought about you every single day, dear.

Thought. Wondered. Worried. And when Paula went through that self-destructive phase right before her second divorce and stayed up all night with her Sara Lee chocolate cream cakes and her Crown Royal and I had to bail her out of jail after she put a bowling ball through the front windshield of her ex-husband's Taurus, I started thinking about you even more.

PAULA. What a perfectly awful thing to —!

BARBARA. (*Interrupting*) You must admit, Paula, that you *have* been quite the handful.

PAULA. Well, having you for a parent hasn't been a bed of roses either. And now I find out that you're the kind of mother who gives her children away.

BARBARA. I kept *you*, didn't I? For whatever *that* was worth.

KITTY. I should probably go. I didn't mean for this to happen.

BARBARA. You can't go, dear. We're quarantined. Let me get you some limeade. I'm defrosting turkey cutlets. You can have my bed. I'll sleep on the sofa. Paula, you can have your old bed. (*Beat*) I have Twister.

(*SHE EXITS. There is a silence, KITTY and PAULA staring at each other, each scoping the other one out.*)

PAULA. (*To KITTY.*) Well, what did you expect?

KITTY. She isn't anything like the way I imagined she would be.

PAULA. I hope you aren't *too* disappointed. (*Softening*) No mother is perfect. Mom and me — we've had our problems, but I wouldn't trade her for anyone else's mother.