



Pieces of a Man's Heart

A Play in One Act

Written by

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"Pieces of a Man's Heart"

CAST

HEIDI TRAUB - A mother of three daughters – Southern drawl

EVELYN MURTAUGH - A 19 year old woman from Chicago who has come to see Mrs. Traub

ADRIENNE TRAUB - Mrs. Traub's eldest daughter, approximately 19 years old – Southern drawl

CLARISSA TRAUB - Mrs. Traub's second youngest daughter – Southern drawl

SHAWNA TRAUB - Mrs. Traub's youngest daughter – Southern drawl

*This play originally premiered along with the
One Act play "Hopscotch Park" back in 2005.*

The Time – Fall, 2005

Synopsis:

Evelyn Murtaugh has traveled to Morganton, North Carolina from Chicago, Illinois to see Mrs. Heidi Traub on a very important matter.

Evelyn's adoptive father passed away unexpectedly, and in his will left instructions that Evelyn was to receive a package.

In the package, which Evelyn was told was twenty years old, there was a sealed envelope containing a cardboard puzzle piece. The game piece looked like half of a heart pendant.

There was also a note inside, from Evelyn's biological father. In the note, he instructs "Evie" to seek out and return the missing piece of the heart.

Act 1, Scene 1 – The Home of Heidi Traub – Front Porch

(AT THE START OF THE PLAY, two little girls are seen playing on a sidewalk area stage right. It is a crisp, fall afternoon in Morganton, North Carolina in a rural community. CLARISSA and SHAWNA TRAUB are playing "hopscotch" when their mother, HEIDI TRAUB, a woman in her later thirties, enters from the house center and stands on the front stoop)

HEIDI - Shawna! Clarissa! You girls better git inside. (Looks up at the clouded sky) Looks like rain. We'll be having supper shortly. Either you seen Adrienne?

CLARISSA - She gone out on her bike with her friends. Said she'd be back soon.

HEIDI - (Upset) Again? Without telling me? I swear I'm gonna kick that girl so hard she won't be able to ride that bike for a month.

CLARISSA – Kin I watch?

HEIDI – Clarissa! No, you caint watch.

SHAWNA - (Heading into the house) When's Daddy gonna git home? (EVELYN appears far stage right. She is well-dressed, carrying a small handbag)

HEIDI - (Looking at her watch) His plane lands at nine. I 'spect he should be home around ten thirty or so. Much past your bedtime, so don't even think of stallin'. Got it?

SHAWNA - (Now in the house) Yes, Mama. (CLARISSA takes the rocks they were using for hopscotch and tries to bring them in the house)

HEIDI - And leave them rocks outside, Clarissa.

CLARISSA - Aw, man. (Tosses rocks away then, just as she heads into the house, CLARISSA visibly hides a rock behind her back. EVELYN approaches HEIDI)

EVELYN – (Smiling politely) Excuse me.

HEIDI - (Turns. Looks at EVELYN) May I help you? If you're selling something, we ain't interested.

EVELYN - (Shakes her head) No, I'm not selling anything. Are you Mrs. Traub? Mrs. Heidi Traub?

HEIDI - Yes. (Pauses. Curiously examining EVELYN) Is there something I kin help you with, Miss?

EVELYN - Murtaugh. My name is Evelyn Murtaugh. I traveled here from Chicago to meet you.

HEIDI – You come all the way to Morganton, North Carolina to meet me?
(Suspicious) Why?

EVELYN - I thought maybe you could help me with a puzzle I seem to have inherited.

HEIDI - A puzzle? Now look here, I've got three young'uns in my house to take care of and I've no time for foolishness. (EVELYN takes out a small red cardboard puzzle piece to a heart). I don't know who you are, but...

EVELYN - I'm serious, Mrs. Traub. I think maybe you know what this is. (Shows her the puzzle piece) Have you ever seen this before?

(HEIDI notices the piece. She slowly recognizes it. She is stunned. She slowly takes the puzzle piece gently from EVELYN's hands. HEIDI sits down on the stoop to the house and examines the piece as EVELYN stares at her and doesn't say a word)

HEIDI - Neil. Neil gave this to you? (She stands back up and looks at EVELYN. She realizes who EVELYN is and why she's come) Evie? Evie? Is that really you?

EVELYN - (Surprised) I'm sorry, but nobody's ever called me "Evie" before. My name is "Evelyn".

HEIDI - I'm sorry. It's just that it's been twenty years. Land sakes. Twenty years. Look at you now, all grown up. (Fighting back joyous tears) I still remember the day you was born. How did y'all find us?

EVELYN - It's a long story, Ma'am. And really, I have more questions than answers. That's why I'm here.

HEIDI - (Nodding) No doubt. I'm supposin' you would.

EVELYN - Should I come back another time? I didn't mean to interrupt if you're just sitting down to dinner.

HEIDI - No, please. It's been so long and y'all have come so far. I'd very much welcome your company at our supper table. After all...you *are* family. Please, come inside and I'll git my girls together.

EVELYN - (Smiling) Thank you. You're sure it's no trouble?

HEIDI - No trouble at all. (Pauses, turns back) But, perhaps we shouldn't say anything to my young'uns just yet. Their father will be home later and I'll want to break the news to him first. Please. Come in. (EVELYN and HEIDI enter the house and LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 2)

Act 1, Scene 2 – Inside the Traub Home – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP, we are now inside the TRAUB home, in the living room area. It is an extremely well kept house with fine furniture everywhere. There is a staircase off to the side stage left. As the scene begins, we hear voices offstage)

HEIDI - (From offstage) All right, you two. Upstairs and get changed. I'll be up in a little while to make sure your homework is done.

SHAWNA - Kin we play outside afterwards?

HEIDI - No. It's gettin' dark out.

CLARISSA - Just for a few minutes, Mama. Please?

HEIDI – Well...just so long as you promise not to go shootin' frogs again.

CLARISSA and SHAWNA - We promise.

HEIDI - All right. Go on with you. (CLARISSA and SHAWNA are seen running in from presumably the kitchen area. They head for the stairs)

CLARISSA - Race you to the bedroom!

SHAWNA - Nuh-uh! Me first! (CLARISSA and SHAWNA bolt up the stairs offstage, then return as EVELYN comes out of the kitchen)

CLARISSA and SHAWNA - Nice to meet you, Miss Murtaugh!

EVELYN - Nice to meet you girls, too! (The girls exit. EVELYN examines the lovely living room area. She places her handbag by the couch stage right as HEIDI enters from the kitchen) They're sweet girls.

HEIDI – Oh, sure. You only knowed 'em an hour. Just wait awhile. (The two women laugh)

EVELYN - Dinner was wonderful, Mrs. Traub. Thank you.

HEIDI - I 'spect the food on your plane couldn't take the place of a home cooked meal, now could it? (EVELYN shakes her head) Please. Go on and make yourself at home, Evelyn.

EVELYN – Quite honestly, Mrs. Traub, I'm not sure how to do that. This whole thing has me so confused. (Looks at some pictures along the mantle above the fireplace stage center. HEIDI sits on the couch near her)

HEIDI - Why don't you tell me about yourself, darlin'. Then we kin talk about how you found out.

EVELYN – (Taking a moment to catch her breath) One moment, I'm with my father, or the man I think of as my father. God this is so confusing.

HEIDI – (Reassuring) Take your time, dear. I ain't goin' nowhere.

EVELYN - He died a short while ago.

HEIDI – Oh, I'm sorry, child.

EVELYN – Anyway, he's lying there, on his deathbed, and he tells me that I'm adopted. He admits that he always wanted to tell me, but my mother, my adoptive mother, passed away when I was only ten. He found it difficult from then on to break the news to me. I was all he had and he was afraid of losing me. Don't know why. (After a beat) I used to tell him all the time that he never had to be concerned.

HEIDI - It must have been very hard, losing both your parents like that. So young and so close together.

EVELYN - They were an older couple. My dad said they tried for years to have a child, but couldn't. They adopted but very late in life.

HEIDI – When he told you the news, did he say from where you was adopted?

EVELYN – No, he went quickly. He said he had gotten a lawyer who would explain the rest to me. Then, he held my hand, kissed me, and (sighing) he was gone.

HEIDI - You poor dear girl.

SHAWNA – (From upstairs, calling) Mama, kin we go outside now?

HEIDI – (Shouting back) Not until your homework is done!

CLARISSA and SHAWNA – Aw, man!

EVELYN - (Comes over to the couch and pulls an envelope from her handbag) Dad's lawyer handed me this envelope. In it, was a message from my Dad. It explained lots of stuff. How I was adopted at birth, the agency where they got me from, how there was a special request made by my biological father, which he wrote “under normal circumstances” the agency wouldn't have done.

HEIDI - A request?

EVELYN – Yes, and the agency made a special exception in his case, the lawyer told me. Apparently, he said, the whole town shut down in the nineties, but he couldn't find out why. All that he gave me was that puzzle piece which was inside a sealed envelope.

HEIDI – (Reaching out) May I see it again?

EVELYN – (Handing it to her) As you can see, it's half of a heart. They gave the envelope to my adoptive parents, and were instructed to give it to me on my sixteenth birthday so that I might seek out and find the rest of my biological family.

HEIDI – (Understanding) But your father couldn't give it to you.

EVELYN - (Shakes her head) Not until last week when he died. He just wanted me to be his little girl until the end. (Starts to cry) He didn't realize...he didn't have to worry. I'll always love him.

HEIDI - (Gets up and crosses to EVELYN to comfort her) There, there. It's all right.

EVELYN - (Breaking away) It's a lot of things, but it definitely isn't “all right”. For twenty years, I thought I knew who I was, and now this? I don't know anything anymore. (After a beat) Are you my mother? (Pointing upstairs) Are those...those my sisters? (After a beat) Am I...am I Jewish?

HEIDI - (Thinks about her response very carefully for a moment, laughs, then speaks) Oh, child, I'm your Mama's sister. My babies is your cousins. And as for being Jewish, well, our family *is* Jewish.

EVELYN - Oh, I didn't mean that there's anything wrong with it. It's just that I spent the last twenty years being a Catholic.

HEIDI - Well, nobody's *perfect*, dear. (They stare at each other for a moment, then each laughs) Have a seat and maybe I kin start filling in some of these gaps for you. (EVELYN sits down on the couch) But first, how in the world did you find *me*?

EVELYN - The orphanage where my parents got me from maintained a few documents. I did some research and found that my biological father was a textile worker named Neil O'Brien.

HEIDI – Yes, Neil was your father. He worked at the Judson Creek textile mill. We all lived there. I moved here to Morganton back in 1990 when I married my husband, Jarod.

EVELYN - (Rises again, this time pacing the room) But there was no record of my mother. There was another person with Neil going by the name "Heidi Blumenthal". They didn't enter Heidi into the records as being my mother, but it did show that she...that you...were *with* Neil at the time I arrived. Because the town closed, all other records have been lost over the years.

(At this point, HEIDI's eldest daughter, ADRIENNE, enters the room. She is about the same age as EVELYN. She approaches but is not seen by either HEIDI or EVELYN)

HEIDI – It was a really bad time. The whole town of Judson Creek just up and died when all the textile jobs started goin' away in the nineties. You know, it's sad when a person dies, but when a town dies, it's worse. Much, much worse. We lose more than just a part of ourselves. We lose part of our history.

EVELYN – Tell me about it. It was so frustrating trying to find out any info online or in any libraries or government offices. I did manage to find some old library records. I discovered that you married a "Jarod Traub" back in May of 1985. That was right around the time I was born. That's why...that's why I thought...

HEIDI – That I was your Mama? Well, that's to be expected, I guess. But I s'pose you should know the truth.

ADRIENNE - The truth about what, Mama?

HEIDI - (Rises) Adrienne! I didn't hear you come in, darlin'. Where has you been? We already had our supper.

ADRIENNE - Out with some friends.

HEIDI - Did you eat, yet? (Looks at ADRIENNE, who is staring at EVELYN) Oh, um, this is Miss Murtaugh. She's...family. She's from Chicago.

ADRIENNE - Family? We got family in Chicago? I ain't never knowed that. How come we ain't never met?

EVELYN – (Not knowing what else to say) I don't get out that much?

HEIDI - I'm just meeting her for the first time myself, dear.

ADRIENNE - You ain't staying long, is ya?

HEIDI - Adrienne! That's rude.

EVELYN - Actually, I'm only here for the weekend. My flight heads back to Chicago tomorrow. I only wanted to stop in and...and...say "hello".

ADRIENNE - Hello. Goodbye. (Starts to walk up the stairs) I'll be in my room, Mama. I already ate.

HEIDI - Adrienne! (Adrienne is out) I'm sorry. You got kids yet?

EVELYN – No. I don't. Not yet.

HEIDI – Well, she's my oldest. She's been havin' troubles and got herself kicked out of the community college last month. Now she's been a royal...well, a handful. What do you do, dear?

EVELYN – I just graduated. I'm training as a financial analyst for a bank in Chicago.

HEIDI – Lands sake. (Stares off where ADRIENNE went) So different. So very, very different.

EVELYN - (Curious) What do you mean?

HEIDI - (Nervous laugh) Just funny how family bloodlines kin be sometimes. That's all.

EVELYN - Were you and my mother very different?

HEIDI - (Long pause) Your Mama? Oh, dear. I swear your Mama was also quite a handful. The woman I knew to be your mother twenty years ago was a far cry from the woman you is today. If I had to guess, I'd say you seem to be more like your Daddy, your *biological* Daddy, that is. But I'm sure you git a lot of how you is now from those nice people that raised you, too.

EVELYN - What happened? What happened to my parents?

HEIDI - Oh, taint an unusual story, really. Your father was in the military. He and my sister were dating. My Daddy disapproved.

EVELYN - Disapproved? Why?

HEIDI - You name it. He couldn't stand Neil. Whatever reason he could find to hate him more, he found it.

EVELYN – He kept finding reasons.

HEIDI – (Nodding) One day he couldn't stand him because Neil was poor – The next time it was cause he had no family, or because he was uneducated, because (after a beat) well, because he was a...(whispering) Baptist.

EVELYN – Now, not only am I Jewish I’m part Baptist. (HEIDI and EVELYN laugh)
But, what’s that got to do with anything?

HEIDI – Well, child, even though we was *supposed* to be livin’ in the “enlightened eighties”, Judson Creek, population 205, wasn’t nearly as enlightened. It was backwoods country, and most folks didn’t marry outside their, uh, *community*. Jews married Jews, gentiles, gentiles, blacks, blacks. But *our* Daddy? I hate to speak ill of the dead, but he was a miserable man. He didn't want us to marry. Period.

EVELYN – Why?

HEIDI - He was very possessive of us, raised us all by his self. Our Mama died early on. Every boy who stopped by automatically became "the enemy". (CLARISSA and SHAWNA rush down from upstairs) Considerin’ there was only six Jewish families in town, needless to say our pickins for datin’ was pretty slim. (To the girls) Hold on! (Approaches the girls) Just where do you two think you’re goin’?

SHAWNA – Outside? (CLARISSA hides something behind her back)

HEIDI – Clarissa, what you got behind your back?

CLARISSA – Nothin’.

HEIDI – (Approaching the girls) Lemme have it. Come on.

(CLARISSA brings her hands slowly around to the front to reveal a slingshot. She slowly hands the slingshot to HEIDI)

HEIDI – (Looking at the slingshot) You was gonna go out and shoot frogs again, wasn’t you?

SHAWNA – (Pointing at CLARISSA) It was *her* idea.

CLARISSA – Shawna! (To HEIDI) We was just gonna *scare* ‘em, is all.

HEIDI – If you two ain't the limit. You knows how I feels about the takin' a one of God's creatures.

SHAWNA – But Mama, they's just dumb ol' frogs. And they's tons of 'em in that pond.

CLARISSA – We wasn't gonna...

ADRIENNE – (Appearing at the top of the stairs) Land sakes, Mama. You know they's over seven hundred frogs in that pond. They got nothin' but germs an all. They's disgustin'. Let 'em take a few out.

EVELYN – That's a horrible thing to say.

ADRIENNE – Look, lady, in these parts we got two choices when it comes to frogs. We kin either kill 'em or we kin hop 'em all into a truck and *relocate* 'em. And ain't no man with a truck within a hundred miles of here gonna do that. Lessen o'course he's goin' to some fancy French restaurant.

HEIDI – I'm afraid she's got a point, Evelyn. Frogs is a problem. But it ain't up to you three girls to decide the fate of them poor "dumb ol' frogs". Your Mama and Daddy will discuss the best way to get rid of 'em. In the meantime, you kin just head back on up to your room, Adrienne. You two kin go on outside and play.
(ADRIENNE exits)

CLARISSA and SHAWNA – Yes, Mama. (As the two girls head out, SHAWNA secretly turns to CLARISSA and shows her a second slingshot and the rock from earlier. HEIDI and EVELYN do not see. CLARISSA and SHAWNA exit smiling)

HEIDI – Now, where was I?

EVELYN – My parents. What happened next?

HEIDI - Well, those two lovebirds got it into their heads to run off together. They found the justice of the peace, got a quickie ten dollar wedding, and made it into the next county for a honeymoon.

EVELYN - I bet Mr. Blumenthal went crazy.

HEIDI - (Nervously recalling) Oh, yes, he most assuredly did. He tracked 'em down, dragged my sister home again, and forbade Neil from ever settin' foot on our doorstep again. (Looking down, ashamed) My father had the marriage annulled. Noelle was crushed. When Neal found out, it was too late. He got sent over to Iraq for his first tour of duty over there. (From offstage we hear the sound effect of a rock hitting and skipping across the pond)

SHAWNA – (Offstage) Got one!

CLARISSA – (Offstage) Don't stand so close to the water, Shawna!

EVELYN - What about my mother?

HEIDI - Well, Daddy kept her under close scrutiny from that point on. Then, she found out she was with child.

EVELYN – With me.

HEIDI – (Continuing) She feared for her life. She didn't know what else our Daddy might be capable of. So, she kept the baby secret for the whole time.

EVELYN – That's unbelievable. She feared him that much? (HEIDI nods) But how could my mother have kept it hidden for so long?

HEIDI - Well, she was a fairly stout woman, and she always wore baggy clothes, so it didn't show too plainly. She was able to keep it hidden, for a while anyways. But when Neil came home on leave, she was close to being due, and it was gettin' harder to keep it hid. So she had to see him, to tell him...to ask him for his help.

EVELYN - His help? To do what? What were they going to do with me? (Scared) Not...

HEIDI - No. No way. Honey. They never would have considered that. Not in a million years.

EVELYN – Then wha-

HEIDI – Just a sec. (Rises. Heads to the stairs) Adrienne!

ADRIENNE – (Offstage) What?

HEIDI – Come here, darlin’.

ADRIENNE – (Comes to the bottom of the stairs) Yes, Mama?

HEIDI – In my bedroom in the closet is a small white book. Would you please git it for me? It has gold letterin’.

ADRIENNE – What does the letterin’ say?

HEIDI – (Irritated) The letterin’ don’t say nothin’, dear. They’s letters.

ADRIENNE – (Sarcastic) Well ha-ha. I mean what does they spell out?

HEIDI – (Looking at EVELYN) “Noelle”.

ADRIENNE – Like in Christmas?

HEIDI – No, like in a girl’s name. Now git.

ADRIENNE – Aw, man. (Shrugs and heads up the staircase until she is gone)

EVEYLYN – (Approaching HEIDI) Noelle. My mother’s name?

HEIDI – (Nodding, gently reaches out for EVELYN’s arm and the two move back towards the couch) Anyway, Neil and my sister met in secret. She told him. Then, they was gonna leave together. But they didn’t git far when she went into labor. They found an empty old farmhouse and she had the baby.

EVELYN – I don’t understand. They went to all this trouble to have me, then just gave me up for adoption?

HEIDI – No. (Gently, reassuring) No-no-no. From the moment they laid eyes on you, they loved you more than anything they had ever seen in their life. She had every intention of keepin’ you. But then...she had problems. She died in labor. (EVELYN takes a long time to react, then, stunned, she sits down on the sofa again) I’m sorry, darlin’. I know this is a lot to take in.

EVELYN – But you knew. My father must have confided in you.

HEIDI – (Nodding) He told me.

EVELYN – But, couldn’t he have gotten some sort of discharge?

HEIDI – He took a leave of absence for a few months. We told people your Mama died in a car accident. Nobody knew about you, ‘ceptin’ a few us and a doctor in Barlow, three towns over.

EVELYN – Why all the secrecy?

HEIDI - Then everybody’d know. You got to remember Judson Creek was a small town, and you were its biggest well-kept secret. If word had gotten out, it wouldn’t have been a good life for you, trust me. The ignorant folk in Judson Creek would have labeled you a “half-breed” and that’s exactly what you would’ve been treated like. The nearest school was two hours away. Jobs was gone and they wasn’t comin’ back. The town was dying. Your Daddy just couldn’t afford to keep you.

EVELYN – He placed me with the adoption agency.

HEIDI – Neil left that puzzle piece in case you, the daughter whom he and my sister had named "Evie" ever wanted to know if they really loved you once.

EVELYN - But why did he only give me one half of the heart puzzle?

HEIDI – Actually, they was *three* pieces. Your Daddy made ‘em from some stuff they found at an old abandoned textile mills. Your father had another piece that he kept with him.

EVELYN - He went back to Iraq, didn't he?

HEIDI – (Nodding) He was killed in action – a helicopter accident during the first war in Iraq. I asked that his belongings be sent to me. Took me years to get through the red tape on that one. (ADRIENNE returns with the book in hand)

ADRIENNE – Here it is, Mama.

HEIDI – Thank you, darlin'. (Takes the book and hands it to EVELYN) This was your Mama's diary. It's the only thing I have left of her. You should have it. (ADRIENNE reacts perplexed as EVELYN takes the book. HEIDI goes over to a bookcase near the fireplace mantle. She pulls out a folded United States military flag. She approaches EVELYN and ADRIENNE and slowly pulls out another piece of the puzzle inserted within the flag)

EVELYN – The other piece of the puzzle. (Rises, takes the puzzle piece from HEIDI. EVELYN examines both the book and puzzle piece) Wow. I'm not sure how to feel. Here I just found my parents, yet I feel like I've lost them all over again. (She places the pieces together) There's still a part missing. (Trying to absorb everything she's learned thus far) I'm sorry, but this is too much. I need some air. Would you excuse me, please?

ADRIENNE – (To HEIDI) Mama...what?

HEIDI - (Rises and calls after EVELYN) Wait a minute, child, please? They is one other thing your parents meant for you to have.

EVELYN - What?

HEIDI - Adrienne, you still wearin' that necklace I made for you?

ADRIENNE – (Shows her) Sure. Why? Mama? What is goin' on here?

HEIDI - (Approaches ADRIENNE, indicating back to EVELYN) This is Evie.

ADRIENNE – Who?

HEIDI – (Repeating stronger) Evie. Your sister.

ADRIENNE – (Takes a step back in shock) But - You told me she was dead!

HEIDI – (Ashamed) I know.

EVELYN – What? (HEIDI takes off ADRIENNE’s necklace. There is a piece of the puzzle attached to the chain. She removes the piece of the puzzle from the chain)

HEIDI – It’s complicated, Adrienne.

ADRIENNE – You lied to me! Why?

EVELYN - What's that? Looks like...(Realizing) Another piece of the puzzle! (Holds out her piece of the puzzle) Where'd she get it from?

HEIDI - (To EVELYN) From me. (To Adrienne) Your Daddy, your biological Daddy, gave it to me to give to you on your sixteenth birthday. Same time he left your folks your piece, Evelyn.

ADRIENNE – I ain’t never taken it off since the day Mama gave it to me.

HEIDI - (To ADRIENNE, softly) Adrienne, I love you as my own and you knows that you will always *be* my daughter. (To EVELYN) It was your Daddy’s hope that when you both turned sixteen, the people that was takin’ care of you would tell you the truth and you’d find one another again.

EVELYN – (Dismayed) But you didn’t. Nobody told us anything.

ADRIENNE – (Furious) Mama, on my birthday back then, you told me my real Mama and sister died at birth. How am I s’posed to believe in anythin’ you tell me now? (Turns away from HEIDI, a tear in her eye)

EVELYN – (Confused) I don’t know what to do. Maybe this was a bad idea. (Grabs her bag and starts to leave)

HEIDI – No. Please don’t go, Evie.

EVELYN- (Upset) Evelyn. My name is Evelyn!

HEIDI – (Pauses) Forgive me, darlin'. But you got to understand. I been waitin' long least twenty years for you to walk through them doors. And, as I dreamed of this day, I had the name "Evie" in mind all along. So, you'll have to forgive me if it takes me awhile to git on up to "Evelyn".

ADRIENNE – Why didn't you tell me the truth?

HEIDI – When she didn't show, I figured she was never gonna show. So, I decided to tell you that she died along with your Mama. I didn't know what else to say. I'm sorry.

EVELYN – Why didn't you keep us together?

HEIDI – Girls, I know you got lots of questions, but we ain't gonna answer 'em all here today.

ADRIENNE – Uh-uh, Mama. I wanna know, too.

HEIDI – Lands sakes! It wasn't like we had this perfectly planned out from the git go. That ain't the way life works. (Pauses to recall) We just wanted what was best for you. When Noelle died, it tore me and my Daddy up somethin' fierce. My Daddy was a sick man. He had a stroke. He died not long after. I was only sixteen myself. Neil tried for seven months to take care of you both. Then he was told he was heading back overseas.

EVELYN – But he could have stayed. Gotten a hardship discharge of some kind.

HEIDI – He knew that, dear. But he also knew by then what he had to do. He had to do what was best for both you girls. I met Jarod and we married, but when Neil asked, we couldn't afford to take both of you to where we was movin'. (EVELYN sheds a tear) I could only take one of you. I had to make a choice.

EVELYN – And later?

HEIDI – (Expressing sympathy at her decision, she gently approaches EVELYN and strokes a tear from her eye) Aw, baby. I'm sorry. By the time I was in a place when I could come git you, it was too late. You was gone. It had been seven years, and like your father, I didn't want either you or Adrienne to suffer. That's why I didn't tell Adrienne on her birthday. I was just as scared as your folks.

EVELYN - It seems like a lot of people went to a lot of trouble to make sure we'd somehow find each other.

ADRIENNE – Our Daddy must have been pretty messed up.

HEIDI – (Angry, she grabs ADRIENNE) Your Daddy was one of the bravest people I ever knew. You knowed how he died?

ADRIENNE – (Breaking away) A helicopter crash. You told me already.

HEIDI – But what I didn't tell you was how he saved the lives of two men in the process. Your Daddy died a hero. But the one thing he did more braver than anything else in his life was to give you girls up.

EVELYN – How can you say that?

HEIDI – To give you a chance for a happy life. A life he couldn't ever give you.

EVELYN – But I might have wound up someplace worse.

HEIDI – Lordy, hon, I don't think that was possible. But look at your life, Evelyn. Wasn't it a good one? Didn't you love your folks? Didn't they love you?

EVELYN – Of course. The Murtaughs were wonderful to me.

HEIDI – And Adrienne – we've had our fights, but things been pretty good for you, ain't they?

ADRIENNE – Sure, Mama. I love you and Daddy.

HEIDI – Well, then. There you go. Your Mama and Daddy gave you a great gift – the lives they could never offer you. And that takes more courage than I think you could imagine.

(Suddenly, there is a sound effect of one of the younger girls falling into the pond)

CLARISSA – (From offstage) Mama! Shawna fell into the pond again!

HEIDI – Land sakes. Not again. Those girls. (Calling to CLARISSA) I'll be right there! (To ADRIENNE and EVELYN) I'll go git 'em. You two stay here and...introduce yourselves. (Turns to go)

EVELYN – (Reaching out to HEIDI) Wait a minute.

ADRIENNE – (Confused) Mama, what do we do now?

(As if in an answer to the question, HEIDI slowly takes the girls hands holding the puzzle pieces and places them all back together to form one heart. As HEIDI exits ADRIENNE and EVELYN smile at one another as LIGHTS DIM)

Blackout

The End