

DONNA

By Shay Alldred

Lights up. Robyn is stood alone on stage with a spotlight on her.

Robyn: I'm Robyn. And if you're wondering how I got here, that's a long story, so you're gonna have to be a little patient. The story you're about to be thrown into is *my* story. *My* life. It's a story of love and lust. A story that will take you back through generations. A story of journeys. Every day we embark on a journey. Big or small- they are journeys of finding a little more about who you are. Finding your own identity. Learning to embrace your uniqueness before you get lost in the crowd. We are all one of a kind. So be you. Be loud. Be unique. You will never get this opportunity again, so why not make the most of it?

Lights up.

The door flies open.

The clock shows a time of 7:34 am.

Dad (*singing*): Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you!
Happy Bir-

Robyn: Daddddd! It's so early...

Mum: I'm sorry love, I did try to stop him.

Dad (*doing a drum roll on the wall*): It's present time! Right now, get up and comb your hair you look a mess...

Robyn and Dad break into laughter.

Re-enter Dad, holding a large box.

Dad: A little something for the birthday girl!

Robyn: I told you not to get me anyth-

Mum (*interrupts*): Don't be silly, open it!

Show a passing of time. Robyn opens another box to reveal a polaroid camera, piles of photos and a letter.

Mum: Now darling I know that we have spoken about this before, but we decided you are old enough now to do what you would like, and you are definitely mature enough.

Robyn (*confused*): What is all this?

Mum: Your mu-

Dad (*interrupting*): Your real mum.

Mum: Yes, thankyou Steve... Your real mum gave us these photos when you were very young. We want you to have this.

Mum hands Robyn a crumpled letter, held together with masking tape. The lights drop and two spotlights shine on Robyn (on the left side of the stage) clutching the letter and Donna (on the right).

Donna and Robyn: Dear Robyn...

Donna (*taking over*): I hate what I have done. But I hate what happened to me more. I know you are going to grow up to be an amazing young woman, in spite of your parents- not because of them. I couldn't raise you with the guilt of hiding the truth. But now I know that you're ready to hear it... I was 14.

Robyn (*whispering*): I was 14.

Donna: And he... was a little older, but boy was he nice to look at. He had the most piercing green eyes and a wonderful tattoo of a mermaid on his forearm. Things were different back then. It was a time where people did what they wanted to. A time where 14 year old girls got into clubs, no questions asked. Ace right? We danced.. boy did we dance all night. We drank, we danced, we drank and we danced some more. Nine WKD Blue's down and we were PISSED. We stumbled out of the club, one of us a little more drunk than the other, giggling and smiling from ear to ear. I trusted him. He led me down an alley- I didn't know what I was doing. 20 minutes. 20 minutes it lasted. The longest 20 minutes of my life. I blamed myself... every day I blamed myself for what had happened. How could I be so stupid? I needed an escape, a way out. I couldn't live with the

constant reminder of that night. So I ran. Like the coward I am, I ran. I'm so sorry.

Robyn (*taking over*): I guess that brings us today. Live a little. Travel the world for God's sake! You cannot lead a life of regret.

Robyn and Donna: And maybe I'll get to see my baby soon. From Donna.

Steve (*heading towards Robyn and comforting her*): Robyn... darling are you okay?

Robyn: I- I didn't know...

The lights come up and we are back in the living room. Dad comforts Robyn as she reaches into the box of photos and grabs a handful labelled 'Amsterdam'.

Robyn (*thinking out loud*): Amsterdam?

We are dropped into a busy town in Amsterdam with chaotic streets and a loud atmosphere. Robyn is overwhelmed and voices are vaguely heard over the chaos.

Shopkeeper: Kaas! Kaas! Best Edam in Amsterdam! Tasty Gouda!

Ticket salesman: 1 ticket for Anne Frank house. Great value!

Florist (*handing a flower to Robyn and kissing her hand*): For you.

Robyn faces the audience flustered, fanning herself.

Tour guide: Hallo! Welcome to Amsterdam!

Robyn awkwardly squeezes through the crowd of people, attempting to join the tour. On the other side of stage Donna is floating freely between people making conversation and greeting everyone.

Donna (*holding a wedge of cheese and a suitcase*): Hellooo Holland! What have you got in store?

Tour guide (on the other side of the stage): On this tour we will be visiting historic buildings, tasting only the finest cheese in Amsterdam and looking around the best breweries in the Netherlands. Remember kids, don't look at the red lights! Okay, who's ready?

The tourists and guide walk off stage as Robyn again pulls out a letter. The hustle and bustle of the street continues in the background as Donna makes conversation with everyone in her path.

As the letter is read, Donna's actions mimic what is said in the letter.

Robyn: Amsterdam... Amsterdam is amazing. Flower boys at each corner, giving out roses, bakeries full of fresh bread and pastries, welcoming strangers greeting you as if you have known them forever. Amsterdam was a getaway- 10 days of fun to forget my troubles. I enjoyed myself for once, maybe a little too much! You should go one day darling. Have some fun. Just please be careful where you buy your brownies...

Donna bites into a brownie and her eyes widen.

Robyn (*confused*): Now darling, if you ever visit, there is a place you can go- a safe place. The people there raised me as if I were their own. I felt at home.

We are transported to suburbs of Amsterdam. Enter Robyn, clutching the letter and polaroid. Robyn sits on a park bench facing a small football match.

Teen 1 (*tossing a coin in the air*): Heads or tails boys?

Keegan (*noticing Robyn*): We'll take hea-

Teen 2: What the hell happened ther- okay... a girl.

Keegan (*heading towards Robyn*): I'mma go over. I'mma talk to her!

Teen 1: Woahhh... easy bro. You know what happens when you try and speak to girls right?

Teen 2: Hey, let Keegan embarrass himself If that's what he wants to do.

Keegan (*to Robyn*): Hey hey heyy, how are y-

Robyn (*interrupting*): You speak English?

Keegan: Well yeah but I was just wondering if-

Robyn (*handing him a polaroid*): Do you know any of these people?

Keegan: A polaroid? Um, what decade have you arrived from?

Robyn (*raising her voice*): Just look at the photo.

Keegan inspects the photo, his finger resting on a Donna's face.

Keegan: How- How do you know her?

Robyn: Well that's my mother, she's the reason I'm here. I came to find her.

Keegan: I don't know where she is but you sure as hell won't find her in Amsterdam.

Keegan calls over Luuk, an older guy, from the other side of the park.

Keegan (*spudding Luuk*): This is Donna's daughter.

Luuk (*shaking Robyn's hand*): Robyn?!

Robyn: Yeah... I-, I- came to find my mother? She told me that this was the best place to find her... well, not exactly.

Luuk (*a string Dutch accent showing through*): Donna told us all about how much she regretted what she did. She said there was no other way. Every night she searched for the moon in the sky, gazing at it and hoping you would gaze back. She sent home letters and photos almost weekly, hoping to see you again one day.

Robyn: So where is she? Where will I find her?

Luuk: Oh... well she left Amsterdam years ago. And no doubt she left Holland not long after. We all miss her.

Luuk pulls a folded polaroid out of his wallet and hands it to Robyn.

Luuk: Your mother and I were very close. When she arrived in Amsterdam, she caught my eye instantly. She was beautiful. The language barrier and my awkwardness led to the worst attempt at a pickup line you have ever seen. But for some reason- she liked that. We crossed paths now and again until eventually we would see more and more of each other. She taught me how to speak English, how to write. As a group, we were so close. That was until your mother disappeared of course. She vanished, without warning... said there was somewhere she had to go. We always knew she struggled with attachment. Falling in love with someone always makes it harder to let go.

Robyn (*confused*): But... but her letter told me to come here. Why would she tell me to come here if she wasn't here in the first place? I need to find her.

Luuk: Robyn, these letters span over at least 12 years. Donna never liked being told what to do- she was a free spirit and made do with what life threw at her. She needed control. And maybe she doesn't want to be found.

Robyn (*flustered now*): But why?! It makes no sense!

Luuk: I think she wanted you to meet the people who raised her, made her feel welcome no matter her circumstance. The people she loved too much to see them walk away. That's why you're here Robyn.

Robyn: And who would those people be?

Luuk (*smirking*): You're looking at one of them right now.

Luuk grabs Robyn's arm and drags her off the bench. He takes her to a little shack on the perimeter of the park. She is greeted by another man, 2 women and Luuk's younger brother Dom.

Luuk: Guys, I have someone for you to meet. Guys this is Robyn. Robyn, these are the ones I told you about.

Dom: Shit, Luuk. This one's a bit young don't you think?

Luuk (*slapping the back of Dom's head*): this... is Donna's daughter. Don't ask me how she got here- I don't know either. Now please, look after her, she's a gooden.

Luuk starts to walk away.

Robyn: Hey! Where are you going?!

Luuk (*winking at Robyn*): I have something I need to do... Don't worry, this lot will take care of you.

Robyn: But-

Robyn introduces herself to the group in the background, as Luuk unfolds the polaroid again and stares at it for a while.

Luuk: You'd be so proud.

He gently kisses the polaroid, before folding it back into his wallet again and walking off stage. Enter Donna who stands away from the group, admiring her daughter.

Donna (*to the audience*): Isn't she beautiful? Everyday I regret what I did to Robyn... to Luuk... to the people I love most. I do regret it- I swear. I just don't know how to reconnect, or even know if I want to. I can't afford to lose it all again, you know? I just needed time to think, that was all. I never wanted anything to turn out like this. I want to say that I miss her, but I suppose you can't miss someone you never knew in the first place.

Donna looks around frantically, before leaving in a hurry. She drops another letter labelled 'Barcelona'.

Robyn (*finding the letter on the floor*): Hey Dom!?

Dom: Yuh, what's up?

Robyn: Um. How far away is the airport?

Dom: You gotta be kidding me...

Dom and Robyn start walking into the centre of Amsterdam to get a taxi for Robyn. The movement of the cast in the background reflects that of the city when she arrives.

Robyn: Hey, can I ask you something?

Dom: Sure.

Robyn: Why are you all being so nice to me? I'm a stranger.

Dom: From what I can tell, they were all fond of your mother. Especially my brother. I was very young when she left, even younger when she arrived, so I can't remember much. But they all miss her so much. I'm sure you do too.

Robyn: I suppose you can't miss someone you never knew in the first place.

Dom: Okay, my turn to ask questions. As, a 16 year old girl, where you getting all this money from?

Robyn (*laughing*): What money?

Dom: You booking flights left, right and centre, you came on your own and I know that shirt cost at least 250.

Robyn: I mean when the people you call your parents aren't biological, they'll do anything to gain your love. They basically just throw money at me.

Dom (*pulling a euro out of his pocket and tossing it at Robyn*): Did it work?

Robyn (*laughing*): You're gunna have to try a lot harder than that.

Dom: Be careful now, I don't want you falling in love too hard.

Robyn (*sarcastically*): Ugh, you're just so irresistible.

Dom (*gesturing at the cab*): Well, here's your ride I guess. Are you sure you're okay going alone?

Robyn (*laughing*): Yes I'm sure.

Dom: And you don't need a young, handsome Dutch boy to chaperone you while you travel the world?

Robyn: NO! I think I'm fine. And even if I did I'd call your brother.

Dom: Hey! Too far.

Robyn: I'll miss you Dom.

Dom: Yeah... I know.

Robyn laughs and the two part ways. She looks down at the letter and takes a deep breath. Lights drop.

A public transport tannoy is heard over head, stating that we are in Barcelona, as Robyn walks to the forefront of the stage and drops her bags to the ground and reaches for the letter. Enter Donna.

Donna: I was angry. You can see why. Right? I just needed answers. I needed closure. Why would he? When I left Amsterdam and it broke my heart, honestly it did. I will forever miss Luuk and love him for everything he had done for me. I guess, in the heat of the moment, I was selfish. Yet again. Putting myself first at every opportunity. And for what? A futile attempt at gaining unneeded, pathetic reasons and excuses. I just kept seeming to make mistake after mistake, hurting the people I loved the most. But I did it. I went to Barcelona. Even the slightest confrontation would have filled that missing piece of my life. The last piece of my puzzle. I arrived in Spain with little to no plan, no money to my name and not the slightest bit of the Spanish language in my brain. Navigating the busy streets was almost impossible and felt vulnerable. But I was left to deal with apparent own discomfort and my own problems. Independence isn't as great as it seems sweetheart.

Robyn (*taking over*): I set out to find him. I didn't even know where to start. There was no way of contacting him, I had no idea where he lived, what job he had, nothing. At that moment I regretted leaving yet another family behind for needless new beginnings. I didn't even know what I would do if I did find him. I was stranded. No money. No plan. Nowhere to go.

We are in a café in Barcelona and Robyn has just read her mother's letter. Robyn sits down at the table and Donna 'joins' her. A conversation occurs but is all in Robyn's mind.

Robyn: I did it! I'm here... Aren't you proud? I came all this way alone, like you said.

Donna: Of course I'm proud darling, you're becoming an impressive young woman!

Robyn: Amsterdam was gorgeous. I met the kindest people and they made the most amazing friends. You are missed you know. They all miss you. I miss you.

Donna: I know honey... We will meet one day I'm sure. Be careful out here. You're young, you're innocent. Be wary of those around you. And keep your loved ones close- always.

Robyn: I miss you Mum. I miss you so much.

Donna: Darling, you know I want to love you. But we're strangers- we're complete strangers. And I'm to blame.

Robyn: Mum, it wasn't your fault-

Donna: Oh but it was. I made countless irresponsible decisions. And I never looked back. There's so much we have to learn about one another and so much to learn about ourselves. You need to realise Robyn, not everything is as it seems. You'll learn this darling, you'll mature. But until then you need to be cautious about who you love- what you believe in. Not everything is as perfect as people make out. I mean take it from me- I should know.

Robyn: You were young Mum, you knew no different.

Donna: And so are you. Don't make the same mistakes I made Robyn.

Robyn: And how do I do that? How am I supposed to know what's right and wrong? How am I supposed to know who to trust? Mum, please-

Donna: Darling, I've said all I can. You are your own woman now.

Robyn: I'm not ready Mum... I'm not ready.

Donna: Sometimes life is about finding yourself. You may never find what you wanted, or what you set out to find. But you'll always find yourself. And that is what's important darling.

Robyn: You mean like when you came here. When you came lookin-

Donna (*interrupting*): YES. Yes, dear. Like when I came here for the first time.

Robyn: Why would you come looking for him? And why here? Out of everywhere in the world, why choose here?

Donna: Well, we worked together... and when I heard he had been given a placement in Spain I knew I had to come. I had to confront him. There was a spark inside me- I needed closure. I needed answers. Just why? God, I'm such a cliché.

Robyn: Well? Did you get what you wanted? Did you find him?

Donna: I think that's a story for another time dear.

Robyn: But-

Donna kisses her forehead and disappears as Robyn is left sitting at the coffee table alone.

Waiter: Hey, how can I help you?

Robyn stares blankly at the table.

Waiter: Um, are you-

Robyn stands up and stumbles out of the café, straight into a busy Barcelona setting. Robyn struggles to adjust to the chaos.

Robyn (spotting someone across the street): Is that? It can't-

A voiceover from Donna's very first letter is played, describing the man who had assaulted her years ago. Everything freezes, except Robyn who is at the front of the stage.

Robyn (*frustrated laugh*): He's here. He's still here. After all these years he has the audacity to live this luxurious life. A life he doesn't deserve. While my mum suffers in silence. MY mum. She regrets it, she really does. I just can't wait until the day finally comes- when I can finally meet her. I was always told I had her eyes you know... but I suppose that's just a thing adults say... to make you feel better. I envy those who knew my mum. I just need time. Time to get to know her. Time to prepare. How do you even prepare for this sort of thing? There's so much I have to learn about her-

about me. She left me. Years ago, she left me. How do I expect her to accept me into her life with open arms? She doesn't care. Those letters - all those letters, did she even mean any of it? Was it just a joke? A way to clear her guilt? Just an excuse to wipe her conscience after all this time? Will she even remember me after all?

The freeze frame ends and lights flash. Robyn frantically looks around, before fainting. The lights drop.

Lights up. We are in Rome.

Robyn (*on the phone, laughing*): ... just be quiet Dom! I'm in Rome, how many times! Yes... Rome is in Italy... I'm hanging up. I'm gunna do it!

Robyn hangs up, laughing. She looks around and everyone is staring at her. She awkwardly scurries past and reaches for the last letter in her bag.

Donna (*to the audience*): Well... Rome. Rome is where my story ends... for now. Rome feels like home now. And I wouldn't want to spend the rest of my days in any other place. I finally got a job you know! Well, it's debateable how much of a job it is but- well you get the point. You could say that I'm a proper adult. I just wish I was capable of being a mother to you all those years ago. I wish I could have taken you with me, but you know its not that simple. You would love Rome darling. The buildings are gorgeous, the food is amazing, and the people are beautiful. I just hope that one day you get to see it all with your own eyes. If I could go back and change everything, you know I would do in a heartbeat. Please never blame yourself, Robyn. Any fit mother would be insanely lucky to be able to call you their daughter. Stay true to yourself sweetheart. Mum.

Robyn sighs, before hesitantly ripping up the letter and watching it fall to the ground.

Robyn explores the streets of Italy, making conversation with strangers and visiting market stalls.

Robyn (*to market stall owner*): These are gorgeous!

Owner: Thankyou dear! You look amazing. What are you doing in Rome?

Robyn: I just moved out here for a little, I guess! Your country is amazing.

Owner: You could say that I guess...

Robyn pulls out her phone.

Robyn (*excited*): Dom?!

Dom (*mocking*): Robyn?

Robyn: Where have you been? We haven't called in like... forever.

Dom: It's literally been 2 days, Robyn.

Robyn: Right and?

Dom: Missing me already are we?

Robyn: You know I miss you Dom.

Dom: You're so cringe.

Robyn: Oh my god, shut up!

Dom: What a loser.

Robyn: That's literally you!

Dom: SO when are you gunna drop everything and come and live with me?

Robyn: You know it's not that simple. I can't just drop everything and move to Amsterdam. What about school?

Dom: Who needs school when you literally have me?

Robyn: You're such an idiot...

Dom: Just come to the Netherlands already, it's really not that hard.

Robyn: Are you done?

Dom: Why do you al-

Robyn: I love you.

Dom: you wha-

Robyn: Well say it back.

Dom: i-

Robyn: You know I won't leave until I say it back.

Dom (*mumbling*): I love you.

Robyn: Sorry I couldn't hear you?

Dom (*shouts*): ugh. I LOVE YOU ROBYN.

Dom's friends can be heard laughing and mocking him in the background.

Robyn: Loser.

Dom: You're the-

Robyn hangs up.

Robyn (*to audience*): Rome is so great! I love it so much here. The people here are so kind, and the landmarks are stunning. Rome feels like home now. And I wouldn't want to spend my days in any other place. Obviously, I miss my parents, and I miss home. But here it's different. I'm Robyn. I'm me. Nobody knows my past. Nobody knows that I was Donna's Kid.. or the kid that nobody wanted. I am myself again and it feels amazing. There are no words to describe how I feel. I'm finally home.. and I'm loving every second!

A mother and daughter walk past, laughing and smiling as they walk down the street. Robyn pauses and watches them as they pass.

Robyn (*laughing*): I thought I needed her. For a while, she was my priority. But in the end, I was never hers. I was never her priority- as a baby, as a teenager, even now. She had the chance.. she had so many chances to make it up to me. I blindly forgave her- I forgave her for everything. I really am an idiot, aren't I? I- I don't need her. I never needed her. I can finally live without the stress and torment of constantly chasing my tail, constantly waiting on hand and foot for the woman who never loved me anyway.

A tour guide walks past with a group of tourists.

Tour guide (*through a megaphone*): Tourists... Welcome to Rome!

Robyn (*turning back to the audience smiling*): I think I'll stay here a while.

Robyn: So. I guess that's me. *My* life. Well... my life so far. A story of love and lust. A story that has taken me back through generations. A story of journeys. And I'm sure this isn't the end. Hundreds of unwritten chapters are awaiting me. More journeys to embark on. Big or small- they were all journeys of finding a little more about who I am. Finding my own identity. Learning to embrace my very own uniqueness. We are all one of a kind. So be you. Be loud. Be unique. You will never get this opportunity again, so why not make the most of it?

