



Healin' Home

Kari Catton

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*To my wonderful, beautiful daughters,
Jenny and Amy,
my most precious gifts in life.*

*To my wonderful "other" girls,
Talor Lutz and Molly Mathewson.
Also, my heartfelt thanks to
Linda Schneider, Patricia Young, Eliot Sill,
Don Schneider, Karl Bockemeier, Michelle Burgess,
and Alex Kapp.*

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Healin' Home was presented by Theatre in the Park at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, Petersburg, IL, August 19, 2011: Deb Whitson, director; Debi Iams, costumes; Deb Whitson, set design; Matthew Miller, lighting design; Travis Goodrich and Michael Frye, sound design; Montana Maurer, stage manager; and Cheryl Schlehmann, props manager.

CASEY: Jordan Guinan

ANDALUSIA: Claire Morrow

BIT: Alex Remolina

SUE COLEY: Deborah Kerley

JASON COLEY: Jim Yale

BERNADINE: Linda Schneider

TIMOTHY CROCKER: Brock Kemp

SHERIFF WILEY: Eric Woods

MISS RAMPLEWEED: Carol Woodrum

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DRAMA. This heartwarming sequel to *The Track Home* tells the story of three runaway orphans, Andalusia, Casey, and Bit, as they struggle to uphold their dying mother's wish...to stay together as a family. Not wanting to be separated, the siblings have escaped from the Orphan Train, which transports orphans from New York City to be adopted by families in the West. Headed for New Orleans, the children get caught in a thunderstorm and arrive drenched and hungry on the doorstep of Sue and Jason Coley. Afraid they will be sent back to the Orphan Train, the children tell the Coleys that they live in a neighboring county and are on their way to town to sell some family possessions. The kindhearted Coleys, who are still grieving the death of their daughter, feed the children soup and bread, give them dry clothing, and allow them to stay the night. To help fund their travels, Casey steals a silver picture frame, which contains the only picture of the Coley's dead daughter. The next day as the children are getting ready to leave, their plans begin to unravel when the sheriff and an agent for the Children's Aid Society arrive.

Performance Time: Approximately 90 minutes.

Characters

(4 M, 5 F)

CASEY: Tough and stubborn teenage tomboy who is trying to keep her family together; wears a worn shirt, pants, and boots; female.

ANDALUSIA: Casey's sister, the eldest of the siblings; wears a worn dress; female.

BIT: Casey and Andalusia's younger brother; small for his age; male.

JASON COLEY: Hard-working man who lives on a ranch; male.

SUE COLEY: Jason's kindhearted wife, who is still grieving the death of their only child; wears a dress; female.

BERNADINE: Sue's no-nonsense housekeeper who has a big heart; wears a dress and apron; female.

CROCKER: A teenage boy who works for Jason; male.

MISS RAMPLEWED: Agent with the Children's Aid Society in New York City; female.

SHERIFF: Local sheriff; male.

Setting

A small ranch in Central Missouri, 1910.

Set

Living room of the Coley ranch. There is a fireplace with a mantle. A couch is flanked by an armchair on one side and a rocking chair on the other. There is a desk and chair and a buffet. A door leads to the kitchen. The dining area has a wood table and four chairs. There is a door that leads to another room or study.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Night, a rainstorm.

Scene 2: Coley's living room, a moment later.

Scene 3: Living room, the next morning.

Scene 4: Living room, later that afternoon.

Intermission, opt.

ACT II

Scene 1: Living room, moments later.

Scene 2: Living room, later that afternoon.

Props

3 Bags or pieces of worn luggage	2 Coffee cups
Knitting	3 Pillows
Green beans	Laundry
Apron, for Bernadine	Silver picture frame with a photo of a girl
3 Towels	Vase
Coat, for Bit	2 Dresses
Coat, for Andalusia	Sash
Coat, for Casey	Hairbrush
Coat rack	Brass candlestick
3 Blankets	2 Dollar bills
Tray	Coins
3 Bowls	Plate of food
Plate of bread	Plates
2 Glasses of water	Napkins
Water pitcher	Hat, for Crocker
Lariat	Clipboard
Hat and coat, for Jason	Papers

Sound Effects

Thunderstorm
Rain
Knock at the door

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"Heal your heart
by healin' home."

—Bernadine

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: House lights up. A thunderstorm is heard. From the back of the theater, Casey enters followed by Andalusia and Bit. They run down the aisle with their bags over their heads to protect them from the "rain.")

ANDALUSIA: *(Shouts.)* Casey! Casey, wait up!

CASEY: *(Shouts.)* Hurry up!

ANDALUSIA: *(Shouts.)* We're getting soaked!

BIT: I'm hungry, Casey.

ANDALUSIA: Do you see anyplace we can stop?

CASEY: *(Points toward stage.)* There's a light over there!

ANDALUSIA: Where?

CASEY: Come on! We have to keep moving!

ANDALUSIA: Casey, wait!

BIT: Can I do it tonight, Casey?

CASEY: No, Bit. You're too young.

BIT: I want to do it!

ANDALUSIA: Oh, just let him, Casey.

BIT: *(Feigning sickness.)* Oh, I don't feel so good. *(Normal.)* Is that right, Casey?

CASEY: Fine! Come on!

(Casey, Andalusia, and Bit exit. House lights down. In the darkness, rain can still be heard but it fades as next scene begins.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Coley's living room, late evening. Sue is sitting in the armchair knitting. Bernadine is sitting at kitchen table snapping beans.)

SUE: That was a good dinner tonight, Bernadine. Jason seemed to like it.

BERNADINE: Men'll eat anythin' you put before 'em, Miz Coley. They ain't fussy. They're simply hungry.

SUE: Lucky for him you know how to cook.

BERNADINE: You know how to cook, too, ma'am. Every Thursday when I return from helpin' the Fosters, Mr. Coley tells me what a fine dinner you cooked.

SUE: *(Smiles.)* He tells you that?

BERNADINE: I do ask, ma'am. *(Casey pounds on the front door, which startles Bernadine and Sue. Bernadine quickly wipes her hands on her apron and crosses to the door.)* Are you expectin' anyone, Miz Coley?

(Sue rises.)

SUE: No. I can't imagine anyone out in this rain.

(Casey pounds on the door.)

ANDALUSIA: *(Offstage, shouts.)* Is anybody at home? We need help!

SUE: Open the door, Bernadine.

BERNADINE: Yes, ma'am. *(Opens the door to reveal Andalusia and Casey supporting Bit in their arms. Casey, Andalusia, and Bit enter.)* Come in! Come in! Lordy! *(To Sue.)* It's children!

SUE: Children?

ANDALUSIA: *(To Bernadine.)* Bless you, ma'am. *(Indicating Bit.)* My brother...he's sick!
(Bernadine closes the door.)

BERNADINE: Now, now, we'll take of him. Help them, Miz Coley.

(Unsure how to help, Sue steps back.)

SUE: Me?

BERNADINE: Help them over to the sofa.

SUE: I can't...

(Bernadine crosses to the kitchen.)

BERNADINE: I'll get some towels. *(To Sue.)* Get those wet clothes off the boy. *(To herself.)* Young ones out in the darkness, hmm-hmm.

SUE: Wait! Bernadine!

BERNADINE: Get those clothes off that boy!

(Bernadine exits to kitchen. Casey and Andalusia lay Bit on the couch. Casey steps back by the door. Andalusia begins to undress Bit.)

ANDALUSIA: He's got a fever or something, ma'am.

(Sue takes a step back.)

SUE: A fever?

ANDALUSIA: He's soaked to the skin and can't get warm.

SUE: He'll be fine.

ANDALUSIA: Thank you, ma'am.

(Bernadine enters, carrying towels. She hands a towel to Sue and crosses to Bit.)

BERNADINE: Wipe him down good, Miz Coley. (*Hands towels to Andalusia and Casey.*) Here you go, girlsies, get dry.

SUE: Maybe you should be doing this, Bernadine.

BERNADINE: You'll do a fine job of it.

SUE: But I—

BERNADINE: Get his shoes and socks off now. (*Sue takes off Bit's shoes while Bernadine removes Bit's coat. Andalusia dries herself. Casey watches. Gives Bit's coat to Andalusia.*) Here, missy, hang his coat on the rack over there. (*Andalusia takes Bit's coat and hangs it on a coat rack. Bernadine strips off Bit's shirt. Sue gently peels off Bit's socks.*) Here now. There we go. (*Gestures for Andalusia to hand her a blanket on the back of a chair.*) Hand me that blanket there, missy. (*Andalusia hands her the blanket.*) Nice and warm. Cover him tight, Miz Coley. (*Bernadine tucks the blanket around Bit and gestures for Sue to cover his legs and feet. Gathers the wet clothes and sets them by the fireplace. Shakes her head.*) Never seen a sorrier sight. What are you children doin' out in the rain?

ANDALUSIA: (*Looks at Casey.*) We didn't make it home.

BERNADINE: Where are you from?

ANDALUSIA: (*Looks at Casey.*) Ah...we live over in the next county, ma'am.

BERNADINE: Next county? You're long ways from home. There now, Miz Coley, you did do a fine job. Take his things to the fire to dry. (*Sue picks up Bit's shoes and socks and sets them near the fireplace. To Andalusia.*) Now what is it that you need to be doin' so far from home?

ANDALUSIA: Our Momma, she sent us to town. It's an all-day trek, you know. And then Bit gets sick. Will he be okay?

BERNADINE: He'll be fine. Don't you worry. Now you two have to get out of those wet clothes. What're your names?

ANDALUSIA: I'm Andalusia. This is my sister, Casey. And, well, that's Bit.

BERNADINE: Glad to make your acquaintances. This is Miz Coley, and I am Bernadine. I'll go get some blankets from upstairs. In the meantime, get your wet coats off.

(Bernadine exits upstairs. Sue struggles to find something to say as she spreads out Bit's clothes to dry.)

ANDALUSIA: This is awful nice of you, ma'am. My ma and pa will be very grateful.

(Sue spreads Bit's socks out near the fireplace.)

SUE: I imagine your folks are worried.

ANDALUSIA: They know we can take care of ourselves.

SUE: They must wonder where you are.

ANDALUSIA: We done this before, ma'am. We'll leave in the morning...be home by afternoon.

(From the stairs, Bernadine enters carrying two blankets.)

BERNADINE: Here we go. There now. *(Hands a blanket out to Andalusia.)* One for you. *(Hands a blanket to Casey.)* One for you. Get dried off now. You help the girlsies, ma'am. I'll tend to the boy.

SUE: What should I do?

BERNADINE: Hang up their coats... pat their hair dry.

SUE: May I help you, Andalusia?

ANDALUSIA: Oh, thank you, Mrs. Coley.

(Sue helps Andalusia take her coat off and hangs it up on the coat rack.)

BERNADINE: Help the other one, too, Miz Coley. She's dripping all over the floor.

(Uncertain of herself, Sue turns to Casey.)

SUE: Casey, was it? May I take your coat?

CASEY: Thank you, but I'm fine the way I am.

SUE: Oh. *(Stops and backs away.)*

BERNADINE: *(To Casey.)* It ain't fine with me. Now you get that coat off. Miz Coley, help the girlsie.

(Sue begins to help with Casey's coat.)

SUE: May I—

CASEY: Leave it alone!

SUE: *(Backing away.)* Excuse me.

(Bernadine crosses to Casey.)

BERNADINE: *(To Casey.)* Get that coat off if the Misses say so!

ANDALUSIA: Thank you, ma'am. Maybe I can help Casey. *(To Casey.)* You're dripping all over the floor. We're gonna do what we're told!

BERNADINE: *(To Casey.)* You heard your sister. You two are wet clear-through. You go in there and shuck those clothes.

CASEY: But—

BERNADINE: You shuck those clothes, girlsie, or I'll be shuckin' 'em for you. Now go! *(Pulls Casey's coat off and pushes Casey and Andalusia through door. Sue administers to Bit's wet clothes.)* I'll tend to the clothes. You see how the boy is doin'.

SUE: *(Indicating wet clothes.)* I can do this.

(Bernadine takes the clothes.)

BERNADINE: Tend to the boy.

(Sue hands the clothes and towel to Bernadine and crosses to Bit, who has been lying motionless on the sofa. Bernadine hangs the clothes on the coat rack. Sue checks Bit from a distance.)

SUE: He may have a fever!

(Bernadine hangs up the clothes on the coat rack and by the fireplace.)

BERNADINE: Feel his forehead.

SUE: *(Frightened.)* Do what?

BERNADINE: You'll be fine. Don't worry. Check him for a fever. *(Watches as Sue gingerly reaches for Bit, pauses, and draws her hand back.)* Go on...he won't bite. *(Sue sits on the edge of the sofa and gently puts her hand on Bit's head. Slowly, she reaches up with her other hand and touches Bit's face. Slowly and gently she touches Bit's forehead and cheeks.)* Does he have a fever?

SUE: *(Relieved.)* I don't believe he does.

BERNADINE: You done real good. How does his skin feel? Warm?

(Sue gently feels Bit's ears and neck.)

SUE: Yes.

(Bit moans. Sue jumps up away from him.)

BERNADINE: Nothing's wrong now. He's dreamin'. He's fine. Sit back down. Make sure he's all covered up. *(Sue carefully sits back down on the edge of the sofa and begins to push Bit's hair back. She pulls the towel up by his neck. Picks up the shoes and arranges them by the fireplace.)* They've come a long way...and on foot.

SUE: How do you know?

BERNADINE: Them boy's shoes ain't those of a boy with a horse. *(Shakes her head. To herself.)* Lettin' those children go so far on foot...

SUE: Their mother's got to be worried.

BERNADINE: (*Indicating Bit.*) Skinny little thing, ain't he? Got no meat. No wonder he's sick. (*Crosses to door. To Andalusia and Casey.*) Can I take some of your wet clothin'?

ANDALUSIA: (*Offstage.*) Just a moment, ma'am.

(Indistinguishable squabbling is heard offstage. Bernadine leans closer to the door to try to hear what Casey and Andalusia are saying. The door suddenly opens and Andalusia tosses her wet clothes and shoes onstage. Bernadine manages to catch some of the clothes but the rest falls on the floor.)

BERNADINE: I'm missin' somebody's clothes.

(More squabbling is heard. Wrapped in a blanket, Andalusia enters and places her shoes by the fireplace.)

ANDALUSIA: I have to apologize for my sister. She's not much for manners, I'm afraid.

BERNADINE: She better get those clothes off, or I'm goin' in there. (*Pause.*) I'm losin' my patience. (*Pause. To Sue, indicating Andalusia.*) Ma'am, take care of this one. I'm goin' in after the other. (*Door opens and Casey tosses her clothes onstage.*) There. That ain't so hard. (*To Andalusia.*) Stand by the fire, missy. Get warm.

ANDALUSIA: Thank you, ma'am. We'd be quite indebted to you.

BERNADINE: You don't need to "ma'am" me. Just ma'am the Misses. I'll go fetch something for you and your sister to eat. How does that sound?

SUE: I'll go and fix—

BERNADINE: You're doin' fine with the boy. I'll do the fixin'.

(Bernadine exits into the kitchen. Sue tries to think of something to say.)

SUE: It won't take but a minute for Bernadine to prepare something.

ANDALUSIA: We appreciate it, ma'am.

(Pause.)

SUE: Your brother seems to be resting comfortably now. What is his name?

ANDALUSIA: Bit, as in "a little bit."

SUE: That's an unusual name...Bit.

ANDALUSIA: He weren't supposed to live because he was so small when he was born. He was just a little bitty thing and the name just stuck.

SUE: Your folks didn't give him a proper name?

ANDALUSIA: Nope. Just Bit. *(Wrapped in a blanket but still wearing her boots, Casey enters looking solemn. To Casey.)* You were supposed to take your boots off!

CASEY: My feet are dry.

ANDALUSIA: Yeah, but you're tracking puddles. You're messing up the house!

(Sue crosses to Casey.)

SUE: *(To Casey.)* Let me set them by the door.

CASEY: *(Harshly.)* My boots stay on!

SUE: *(Shaken by Casey's outburst.)* I'll-I'll go help Bernadine...

(Sue exits quickly. Andalusia gets on her hands and knees and sops up a puddle or two.)

ANDALUSIA: *(To Casey.)* Why are you being so pig-headed?

CASEY: Why are you making such a fuss?

ANDALUSIA: This is their house, you know. Be nice! *(Snaps the towel by Casey's feet.)* Take off your boots!

(Casey reluctantly takes her boots off and sets them by the fireplace.)

BIT: *(Raises his head normally.)* I'm starved!

(Casey and Andalusia give Bit a look.)

CASEY: Remember, you're supposed to be sick.

BIT: My stomach's growlin'.

CASEY: Lay down. They'll hear you.

[END OF FREEVIEW]