

ALBERTA
an Opera in Four Acts

ALBERTA

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Music by Beverly Standish

Libretto by

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CAST:

Alberta, soprano
Roy, tenor
Dolores, mezzo-soprano
Professor, baritone
Secretary, bass

Media, Activists, Dancers

Prelude: A dance of the wolves

Act I: Scene I, Scene II

Act II: Scene I, Scene II, Scene III

Act III: Scene I, Scene II, Scene III

Act IV: Scene I, Scene II

PRELUDE

Dance troupe depicts baby Alberta's abandonment, her being taken in by a wolf clan, raised by them, then being discovered by scientist/professor, captured and studied by him.

ACT ONE

Scene One:

Hall outside classroom at the University
of Montana, Helena. ROY and PROFESSOR
are conversing.

PROFESSOR

Rumor has it that the government will intercede.
They say we cannot allow ranching to die.

ROY

Ranching itself is not at stake in Montana.
Big business is sure to succeed.

PROFESSOR

What you say may be true.
But ranchers have united.

ROY

Bringing back the wolves is not what ranchers wanted.
Yes, the wolves are killing our herds. Their release
onto our lands has decimated
sheep and cattle,
and ranches as well.

PROFESSOR

An announcement will be made today.
I heard it through my sources,
the Governor will name today,
the Leader of the Hunt!

ROY

Secretary of Interior will
authorize a hunt?

PROFESSOR

Yes, the wolves will be eliminated.
The ranches will be saved.
A leader will be chosen
on this very day.

ROY

Oh! Lucky man!
If I were that leader!

PROFESSOR

Young and brave and strong is he!
I leave you now. (Exits)

ROY

The Leader of the Hunt!
If I were that man
If my dreams were realized

A rescue for the ranchers -- Victory!
The respect and the thrill
of my saving from vanishing,
Small ranches in Montana!
All would look up to me!

And I would return to you,
sweet Alberta,
to tell you I succeeded,
for you,
for our love.

Alberta! Light of my life,
mystical form. Alberta,
You fill my thoughts
you haunt my dreams
You are the joy of my soul.

I would go home with you,
and bring you back
to your own sky
I'd bring you home.

To the mountain breeze
of your own land
that bears your name.

I would build a cabin in the sky
and harbor you, and harbor you.

Alberta! Light of my life,
mystical form. Alberta,
You fill my thoughts
you haunt my dreams
You are the joy of my soul.

I would go home with you,
and bring you back
to your own sky
I'd bring you home.

To the mountain breeze
of your own land

that bears your name,
your precious name.

(ENTER DOLORES)

DOLORES

Oh happy man!
I see delight in your eyes,
I see the look
on your face!
She must be quite a woman.
If only I could bring you such joy.

ROY

I was dreaming aloud, I fear.
Thinking of only myself as a leader,
The Savior of Montana!
The Leader of the Hunt!

DOLORES

[Spoken] Ha, ha!
[returns to singing]
the savior of Montana --
how grandiose!

ROY

Okay, it's true!

DOLORES

Still I feel you hide the truth from me.
Are you sure there's not a woman
behind the flame in your cheeks?

ROY

Who?
(She must have heard my secret.
What will I do?)

DOLORES

(I hope that I am that secret woman.)

ROY

(She knows I love Alberta!)

DOLORES

(Is he shy? Or am I not the one?)

ROY

(She has read my mind, or
read my journal, or
she has heard me call the name ...)
[ALBERTA ENTERS]
Alberta!

DOLORES

Alberta! My friend, come to me.
You know Roy, I believe?
What's this? Are you tearful?

ALBERTA

It's weak of me, I know.
But I have learned
that the government plans
to kill the wolves!
In Montana!
The wolves were brought here from my country Canada.
Why? I don't know why!

ROY

The re-introduction project is a failure.
The wolves are preying on our herds.

ALBERTA

Why not send the wolves back to Canada?

DOLORES

How naïve your thinking! Surely you must know
the cost involved in our returning them.
Far easier to kill them than return them.

ROY

Montana will be saved.
The hunt will be humane, you will see.

Better to shoot them than to let them starve.

ALBERTA

Why not feed them? Simply feed them?

ROY

The wolves must be eliminated.
Montana will be saved!

ALBERTA

(I love him! How can I love him,
when he believes the wolves should die?)

DOLORES

Alberta, still you cry.
Can you not see the logic of this plan?
(Something more must trouble her.
Is she the love in Roy's heart?)

ROY

(Rip my heart from its cage! How can I
love Alberta
when she loves the wolves more
than Montana?)
The man that I am
can't abandon Montana.
To know who I am,
see where I stand.

ALBERTA

(My heart cries out to Roy
as well as to the wolves
who raised me from a baby.
Oh pain and sorrow,
fill my soul.)

ROY

(Dolores sees something; just look at her face.
She knows our secret.
Look at her face!
Look at the anger
upon her face.)

DOLORES

(These two! How dare they carry on?

He is mine,

Oh, he is mine.

Alberta is a misfit, not truly

a woman, not really

a wolf. She belongs nowhere.

She should leave him be!)

[SECRETARY ENTERS]

Father!

SECRETARY

Dolores my pet, I am happy that I found you.

I am about to name the man

who'll lead the hunt.

DOLORES

Alberta, this is my father,

Secretary of Interior.

Father, you know Roy.

SECRETARY

The student rancher!

I do. Please, all of you

follow me outdoors.

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO:

[THEY ALL walk to the quad, where a
media conference is assembled.]

SECRETARY

Ladies and gentlemen of the press.

I've called you here today to say
our introduction of wolves has failed.

Our experiment has failed in
bringing back the wolves
here in Montana.

The wolves will be hunted and eliminated.

I hereby name the Leader of the Hunt:

A student rancher from Missoula: Roy.

ALBERTA, DOLORES, MEDIA

Roy! Roy! Roy!

ROY

Thanks be to the gods!
My dream has come true!

DOLORES

(My love! the leader!)

ALBERTA

(Why do I tremble?)

SECRETARY

Now, young hero,
go to the Federal Building.
Your weapons and victory
wait for you.

ALBERTA

(Why do I cry? For whom shall I pray?
What power binds me to the wolves?
Or Roy?
Who is my friend?
Who is the enemy?)

ROY

A thrill of glory enters my being.
Filled to overflowing, I hurry
now to gather my hunters!
Death to the wolves!

DOLORES

[To ROY] Take this locket, wear
my picture next to your heart.
Your victory is assured.
I share your joy.
My darling, I must tell you --
I asked my father to appoint you --
to further your dream.

(I want only to see him happy,
Oh, I love him so.)
I share in your dream
I share in your joy.
Go now, save Montana!

SECRETARY

(Failure of my project tastes bitter.
May victory bring happiness to me.
My heart cries
out for victory!
Sweet Victory!
[TO ROY]
Go, go now, Roy!
Bring victory!
[REPEAT]

ALBERTA

(For whom shall I weep?
For whom shall I pray?)

MEDIA, SECRETARY
Go, go now Roy!
Bring victory!
Save our land,
bring victory.
Save the sheep and ranches,
bring victory.
Live your dream,
Save Montana!
[REPEAT 10 times]

ALBERTA

(For whom shall I weep?
For whom shall I pray?)
[REPEAT 3 times]

DOLORES

Live your dream! Save Montana!

ALL

Go now Roy. Save Montana!
[ALL EXIT EXCEPT ALBERTA]

ALBERTA

Save Montana?
My own voice gives an outrageous cry!

How can I love a man who
goes to kill the family
that raised me?
These are the animals who sheltered me
and fed and nurtured me.
My human parents abandoned me,
and left me to the wolves.
The wolves then claimed me, and
Adopted me as one of their own.
Now I turn my back on them?
Allow my heart to turn to stone?

Goddess of the Moon, hear my
prayer, look on my tear-stained face.
Lead me to the truth of my soul and
show me what to do, give me direction.
Roy is the only man I've ever loved
he is handsome and
he is brave
He treats me with tenderness and care.
He holds a grand vision
to save the small ranches from their extinction.
And yet, and yet -- Goddess of the Moon,
you know my heart is breaking,
and why my heart is breaking.
My clan faces certain death.
How can I love the man who
destroys them?
All I ever wanted was a family.
A normal family.
Goddess, do not abandon me.
[SHE BEGINS TO HOWL. SOON, THE WOLVES JOIN IN.]
END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene One:

In the classroom. Professor is
lecturing. ALBERTA is seated in
student chair. DOLORES stands
behind desk to right of
PROFESSOR (who leans back
against front of desk.)

PROFESSOR

Today we cover much ground,
preparing you for your exam.
What would you do
if your herds weremained or
slaughtered by wolves?
You've seen the results of my study,
the introduction of one
human child, and orphan
rescued from the wild.
She is your fellow classmate,
your friend.
Does she share your dreams?
Is she what she seems?
(I secretly pray she is
more than she seems.)

DOLORES

Thank you, Professor.
By your leave, if I may.
I will lead the class from here.

PROFESSOR

Please do. Please do.
(I pray Alberta's soul is still wild.
That she will rise up and speak for the wolves.)
I leave you in the best of hands.
[HE EXITS]

DOLORES

Alberta, there is no need for you
to take the test.
To write the examination,
there is no expectation.

ALBERTA

I require no special favors
I will write the essay like everyone else.

DOLORES

Whatever you choose.
We will now see

a film of the creatures in the wild.

DANCES OF THE WOLVES

[Note: this is an instrumental section of music for dancers, which expresses an emotional range of beautiful, funny, happy and sad feelings/colors.]

ALBERTA

(My family! My family!
my heart belongs to you,
and you are a part of me.)

Scene Two

[SHE RUNS FROM THE CLASSROOM TO
THE QUADRANGLE]

ACTIVISTS

Stop the killing!
Save the wolves!
[REPEAT]

LONE ACTIVIST

Look! It is Alberta --
Alberta, raised by wolves.
She must know their ways,
the truth of their lives!

ACTIVISTS

Alberta! Alberta!
Come join us!
Save the wolves,
stop the killing!

ALBERTA

Please, leave me alone.
(I cannot help myself,
how can I help their cause?)
Leave me in peace.

LONE ACTIVIST

Alberta! Hear our plea,
only you and you alone
know first-hand the truth,

and beauty, of their lives.

ACTIVISTS

[SURROUNDING ALBERTA] Stop the killing!

Save the wolves!

[REPEAT]

Scene Three

[ALBERTA breaks free, returns to the classroom, which is empty except for the PROFESSOR, who is preparing to leave.]

ALBERTA

Professor please help me,
only you can help me!

PROFESSOR

Alberta, my dear girl,
what can I do?

ALBERTA

I don't know which way to turn.
My heart is breaking.
My very soul's in pain.
Oh Professor, what do I do?

PROFESSOR

Why? What has happened?

ALBERTA

I love Roy, I love him fiercely
And yet, my heart is tearing itself
from my body.
All I want is a normal life,
a family of my own.
I dream of Roy and our children
together, playing under the sun.
But the wolves! They own my soul!
The wolf clan's my family
and Roy has gone
to save Montana!

PROFESSOR

Dear Alberta, my child, you
must put these things from your mind.
Put them behind you.
Think only of your studies.

PROFESSOR (Continued)

Science is the answer,
the only answer.
You should write a grant for further study.
(And yet, and yet, my heart leaps
to know she knows her true family
is the wolf clan!)

ALBERTA

Thank you, Professor for listening
to my tale.
I leave you now to return
to my prayers.
(For whom shall I weep?
For whom shall I pray?)

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

Scene One

ALBERTA alone in the moonlight.

ALBERTA

Goddess of the Moon,
Hear my prayer.
O hear me on this night.
Why do I love this man who
will destroy the family who raised me?
No one begins to understand my plight.
Or my bewildering fears.

Why do I love Roy?
[ROY ENTERS]
Roy!

ROY

Alberta! Heavenly Alberta!
So it is true!
Do not turn away,
I love you, too.

ALBERTA

Yes, I love you,
but I cannot be with you!

ROY

Alberta, listen.
I love you.
If I succeed, I want us to marry!

ALBERTA

Marry?
(He wants us to marry!
Oh joy, he will be mine!)

ROY

I will save our ranch, we
will marry.
We will raise a family!
We will howl at the moon!
Howl at the moon!
[HE PLAYFULLY HOWLS AT THE MOON. ALBERTA JOINS HIM, BUT THE
HOWLING CATCHES HER AND TAKES HER OVER. SHE HOWLS AS A WOLF.]
Or maybe not!
Maybe we won't howl at the moon!

[HE LAUGHS. SHE TRIES TO LAUGH.]

So you see my love,
you are my love.

It is for you, as well as for me,
that I must lead the hunt,
must save Montana!

Please keep our secret safe,
and pray for my victory.

[KISSES HER; EXITS]

Scene Two

Return of the hunters. A crowd has gathered at the university quadrangle. Most are the ranchers and students, but a few are the animal activists, of whom Alberta is now one. They face off against each other while they await the return of the hunters.

ACTIVISTS, ALBERTA

Stop the killing!
Save the wolves!
[REPEAT]

RANCHERS, STUDENTS

Save the ranches!
Save Montana!

[ENTER PROFESSOR, DOLORES, SECRETARY]

PROFESSOR

Wait! The hunters are returning.

DOLORES

He will return victorious.

SECRETARY

I hope they've been victorious!
I'm sure they were victorious!
(If only there'd been a better way.
(Why does it have to end this way?))

DOLORES

Look! It's my beloved Roy!

[ROY ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY THE HUNTERS. THEY CARRY ONE WOLF TIED TO A LIMB.]

CHORUS (ALL except activists & Alberta)

Hail to the leader of the hunt!
Welcome return to everyone of you
who took up your weapons,
to save our ranches from the enemy
from our enemy
from the wolves.
Roy! Roy! Roy!

SECRETARY

Roy! Receive the commendation
from your grateful government.
We honor your commitment,
your vision for our nation.

CHORUS

Roy! Roy! Roy!

CHORUS

WE honor your commitment
and your vision for our land!

(REPEAT)

ROY

I proudly accept
this honor for our efforts
(And I am proud, except ...)

DOLORES

Roy, you are my hero!
You are the man I adore.
Come, my sweetheart, let us go.
Pray, what do you linger for?

ROY

(Where is Alberta? Have I lost her?

Forever? I long for her.

Wait! She is here, I'm sure.

[THEIR EYES MEET WHEN HE SEES HER WITH THE PROTESTERS]

I have lost her!)

Yes, why do we linger here?

We must celebrate the victory!

[ALBERTA LEAVES, CRYING]

DOLORES

Lover, now that you have fulfilled your dream,

why not fill mine?

Marriage would be

the perfect way to show

the world your victory.

Father would happily bestow

his wealth as well as honor

upon our union. Will you make it so?

ROY

Yes, Dolores! Let us marry!

We will return to my ranch lands,

we'll raise a beautiful family.

Let the justice join our hands!

ROY/DOLORES

Fine people, share our joy!

Celebrate our engagement!

CHORUS

He has returned a hero,

filled with joy and victory!

Celebrate! Share the joy!

Scene Three

Outside the building where a
wedding shower is in progress.

Reveling guests, including
DOLORES and ROY can be seen
within. ALBERTA is outside,
looking in. ROY comes outdoors
for a breath of fresh air.
ALBERTA tries to hide, but he
sees her.

ROY

Alberta! You are here!
Why are you not inside?

ALBERTA

I did not come for the shower,
see? I brought no gift, nothing.
I'm sorry, I will leave. I don't want to interfere,
or cause you pain.

ROY

It is true that the sight of your face
brings me sorrow and pain.
We should be in this place
together. It is you I should be marrying.

ALBERTA

No! We have made our choices --
each of us. You chose to shoot and kill
innocent animals, who had no voice
in their fate, no choice but to be killed.

ROY

Can't you see that I did only
what I had to do to survive?
To save the ranches, I had to be
the one to end their lives?

ALBERTA

No! No, it is not true. Here is what I see:
You are a pawn in their game.
It is the mega-ranches that are the enemy.
Dolores, the Secretary
they mislead and misguide you
They use your own vision
to betray you!
Roy, open your heart.
Your mind, your eyes!
Help me save the wolves,
Help me save their lives!

ROY

You are deluded. The wolves are gone!
We killed them all
we counted every one!
The project is over,
the work is done.

ALBERTA

Oh dear, oh my ...
I wish this weren't the terrible truth.
The activists are planning a massive release
of wolves from Canada
They are bringing them here,
to Montana!

ROY

Make them cease!
Stop the release!
If the activists follow through
You know what the Secretary will do!

ALBERTA

Roy, please, stand with me!
If we join forces -- and publicly --
together we can form a bond
together we're stronger than either one
Do you not see?
They will have to stop the kill,
stop the release.

ROY

Alberta, you are the one who must stop them
you can and must plead
Make them cease the release.

ALBERTA

Roy, you are the one who must stop them
You can and must plead
Make the government see
that no more wolves should have to die.

ROY

You don't understand!
You must make a stand!

ALBERTA

You don't understand!
You must make a stand!

ROY/ALBERTA

You don't understand!

ALBERTA

I thought, deep inside
I was certain
you loved me.

ROY

I hoped, deep inside
I was praying
you loved me.

ROY/ALBERTA

I dreamed and
I prayed
I was certain
you loved me ..

I do!
I do love you!
You don't understand me --
I don't understand you.

ROY

Can you not see

that if I choose you
I lose everything I've ever dreamed of. I lose
My ranch, my newfound place in the world?
Montana!
My heart cries out for you, [REPEAT]

ROY (CONTINUED)

cries out, Alberta!
But I am a rancher,
and if I have to,
I will once again: Save Montana!

ALBERTA

You belong to Dolores.
You belong to Montana.
Your heart will never be free.
You will do what you must,
you will kill again,
and my heart is with my family.

[THEY BOTH ARE IN DESPAIR. THEY BOTH SOFTLY HOWL AS THEY WALK AWAY FROM EACH OTHER, TO OPPOSITE SIDES OF DOWNSTAGE. THEY TURN TO LOOK AT EACH OTHER.]

LIGHTS FADE; AS THEY DO, A SMALL SPOT CATCHES DOLORES SITTING AT AN OPEN WINDOW.

ACT FOUR

Scene One

DOLORES pulls SECRETARY
outdoors from the shower
party.

DOLORES

Father, Father, there is something you need to know.
As I waited by the window for Roy,
I overheard a plot to overthrow
your recent success and victory.

SECRETARY

You overheard Roy plotting to undo
his own victory?

That is blasphemy!

DOLORES

No, not Roy, you misunderstand.
hear me out, listen now.
It is the activists' plan
to release thousands of Canada's
hungry wolves in Montana!

SECRETARY

We must stop them now.
Before the news spreads.
Blast those damned protesters to hell!
Everything was going so well!
We have to find Roy,
I will appoint him again.
He can renew the hunt
He can round up his men,
and once again,
Save Montana!
[ROY ENTERS]
Roy! My boy!
You are just the man
I wanted to see.

DOLORES

My darling! Where have you been?
You are needed again,
to save Montana!

ROY

I don't know what you mean,
I have already been
on the hunt and completed my mission.

SECRETARY

We were recently told
of an evil plot, that's unfolding

to undo what we've done
The protesters will discredit you
unless you pick up your gun.

ROY

No! I will not go again!
I will not gather the men
I will not kill another innocent wolf!
I cannot!

DOLORES

What are you saying?
Have you lost your mind?
Or, do you prefer to lose your land?

SECRETARY

My son, I see it's a blow
Believe me, I know
What it means to have your work
undone.
But you must go again,
now, go gather your men
And once again, go
Save Montana!

ROY (to Dolores)

I know we are to marry
I know I am being unkind
I cannot kill wolves any longer.
Somehow I have changed my mind.

DOLORES

Somehow? You mean someone!
I know you love Alberta.
I thought my love had won,
but then, well then, I heard her.
And I knew I had lost you.
Lost your love to her --
you love Alberta!

ROY

I'm sorry, it is true.
I find that I do
love Alberta!
And I can never again
do what hurts her.
The wolves are her clan.
What kind of a man
would choose their death
over life with Alberta?
I love Alberta!
I love Alberta!

[to Secretary]
I'm sorry, it's true.
I find that I do
love Alberta! /and I'll
no longer hurt her!
Alberta!
[EXITS]

Scene Two

ALBERTA sits in the moonlight,
surrounded by a wolf clan.
She pets them; they comfort her.

ALBERTA

All I ever wanted was a family.
How long it took me to see --
my family!
You loved and protected me,
nurtured and held me,
You gave your all to me.
Now I ask that you also
forgive me.
My family! I love you.

Once you stood prepared to die
to protect me.
Now I stand prepared to die
to protect you.
My family! I love you,

my family! How I love you.

For awhile I forgot you,
tried to outrun you.
Thought I had to be normal,
whatever that means.
Forgive me for pretending
to be only human.
You taught me to know better.
I tried to forget.

I wanted to be a woman.
I wanted a man.
You taught me to always
remember my clan.
I'm not only human
I'm one of my clan.
You are my only family,

ALBERTA (Continued)

my real family.
We are family.
Together we live, or
together we die.

[ROY ENTERS. ALBERTA PUSHES THE WOLVES INTO THE CAVE, AND STANDS PROTECTIVELY IN FRONT.]

ROY

Alberta! At last I have found you!

ALBERTA

Don't shoot!

ROY

Alberta, my love, I will never again hurt you.
I have no weapon, I come only to find you.
Heavenly Alberta, dancing with death,

you are the dream that haunts me.
Enter the harbor of my heart, beating for you
with all the breath that's in me.
You are the love of my life.

ALBERTA

I cannot leave my family.
I am making my stand.
I will live or I will die.
I will not leave my clan.

ROY

Then I will stand with you
if you will allow.
I'll love and protect you, forever and forever
our life here together begins now.

ALBERTA

How long it took me to see --
my family!
They loved and they protected me,
they nurtured and they fed me.
They gave their all to me
Once they stood prepared to die for me.
Now I stand ready to die.

ALBERTA (Continued)

My family!
They have forgiven me.

ROY

Forgive me, can you ever forgive me?
You and your family?

BEHIND THE SCRIM, DOLORES
PLEADS WITH HER FATHER.

DOLORES

Father, Father, please!
You are the Secretary!
You can call off the hunt,
give in to their pleas.

Oh Father, I'm on my knees!
Begging you, Father, if you love me,
make it stop
call it off!
If you don't, he'll be killed
and I do love him still.

SECRETARY

Daughter, please stand.
He's no good for you
He's not even a man.
He does not love you.
Stand up for yourself,
Be a woman, be strong
the pain won't last long.
Come on, Dolores.
Let him go, Dolores.

DOLORES

Father, please!
Do you not see?
You know what he is to me --
I want to marry Roy --
not bury Roy
because you won't stop the hunt!

SECRETARY

I cannot stop the hunt.
The men have all gone.
There is no turning back.
The hunt must go on.
Forget him, Dolores!
Roy will save himself
even though he won't
Save Montana.
I will save Montana!

[SECRETARY EXITS. DOLORES SITS WEEPING.]

DOLORES

Oh, Goddess of the Moon,
you are all I have now.
I pray that you will
save him somehow.
I can't save him.

HUNTERS are heard in the
distance. ROY and ALBERTA rise
to their feet. ROY pulls a hunter's
vest from his backpack, tries to
put it on ALBERTA. She refuses.

ROY/ALBERTA

Goddess of the Moon,
hear our plea.
The hunters will be here soon,
will you save our family?

ROY
We make our stand!

ALBERTA
Roy, hold my hand!

ROY/ALBERTA

We pledge our love!

[THEY FACE THE MOON AND BEGIN TO HOWL.]

THE END