

## More Than All the Sky (Synopsis)

### Act 1

Chirpy, a beautiful macaw played by a graceful dancer, dances alone on an empty stage. The ensemble joins Chirpy's dance, but they are interrupted when Lenna Harris, 26, breaks into a house through an open window (**1. Break-In**). Lenna's movements are unstable and labored, but it's clear that she knows her way around this house. She steals money from a purse and grabs a blanket from the couch. As she goes to leave, she passes a huge, heavy birdcage that holds a plant. She kicks it so hard that it topples over. This launches Lenna into a flashback:

*Young Lenna, 7, and her mother, Mae, 48, play with Chirpy and teach him new tricks. Mae casually explains adoption to Young Lenna and asks her if she might like to have a brother to play with. Young Lenna thinks this sounds fine, although she's perfectly happy with just Chirpy for a best friend (**2. Flashback #1**). As Mae is putting Young Lenna to bed, they lament the recent death of Lenna's father. To help her sleep, Mae sings Young Lenna her favorite lullaby (**3. Mae's Lullaby**).*

**The flashback ends.** Mae, now 66, sees Lenna run out of the house, but Alex, Mae's 21-year-old adopted son, does not. He assures Mae that Lenna couldn't possibly have been in the house because she's been gone for nine years, not to mention that Mae has dementia. Although Mae grapples with the fact that she is losing her memory, she is certain that she just saw her daughter (**4. Interlude #1**).

Lenna makes her way to Harte Park and takes up residence on a park bench. Despite the loud, adversarial voices in her head, she is cognizant enough to know that her life is in shambles (**5. Okay**). Desperate for relief, she sets up her heroin, shoots up, and nods out on a park bench. Jordan, 27, ambles through the park on her way to grad school when she and Lenna see each other. They are both speechless (**6. Interlude #2**). This launches them into another flashback:

*Teen Lenna, 14, tells Teen Jordan, 15, that her mom is finalizing an adoption, and that Teen Lenna will soon have a brother. She feels as though she will be replaced. Teen Lenna finds a box in her mom's closet that she suspects has memorabilia in it from her late father. Teen Lenna and Teen Jordan plan to peek into the secret box and celebrate by drinking alcohol for the very first time. Teen Jordan hooks them up with some blackberry brandy she has taken from her parents' liquor cabinet. When Lenna takes her first sip, she feels a sense of freedom that she has never experienced before, and she falls instantly in love with alcohol. They open the secret box and the very first letter they read is a suicide note from Lenna's dad. He despairs about his alcoholism, and he can't forgive himself for his behavior. Teen Lenna, now drunk and spiraling out of control, is furious that her mom has kept this secret from her. Teen Jordan convinces her not to confront her mom until she has more information (**7. Pandora's Box**).*

**The flashback ends.** Jordan continues walking. Though she knows that she is not responsible for Lenna's illness, she continues to feel guilty for introducing Lenna to drugs and alcohol. She hurries to find Alex to let him know that Lenna is in town (**8. Ghost**).

Alex, Lenna's brother, now an accomplished artist, manages a local coffee shop where he has adorned the walls with his drawings and paintings, including a new piece; a beautiful portrait of Mae, Lenna, and Alex. Lenna sneaks into the shop to use the bathroom and grabs a scrap of sandwich off a patron's plate. As she exits the shop, she sees the painting of her family. This prompts a flashback to when her adopted brother Alex moved into the Harris home **(9. Family)**.

*Young Alex, 9, is silent and frightened as he is dropped off by a social worker. He is shy, somewhat shut down and mistrustful, because none of his prior foster homes have worked out. Teen Lenna is not happy about her new adopted brother moving in. Regardless, Mae asks Lenna to show him around the house and help him get settled in his new home. Teen Lenna is insensitive to Young Alex's struggles. Mae comforts him, promising that their family will finally be complete with him.*

**The flashback ends**, and Lenna darts out of the shop. Jordan enters and asks Alex if they can talk. She tells him that Lenna is back in town. Alex realizes that perhaps it was Lenna who broke into their home earlier in the day. In addition, he is dealing with Mae's dementia and now she doesn't recognize him. Alex is distraught and upended **(10. Try/With Birds)**. Jordan thinks that given the family's fondness for the now deceased Chirpy, this might be a good opportunity to test out her master's thesis project with Mae. She plans to explore how birds can help people with memory issues. Alex is not interested, thinking it would do Mae more harm than good. Before she goes, Jordan apologizes to him for how she and Lenna treated him when they were younger. He accepts. Torn, he leaves work and goes to the park.

Alex looks around the park for his sister. Although he longs to see her, he believes he will only be disappointed again **(11. Will I Know Her)**. He sees a woman lying on a park bench, and though she is barely recognizable, he knows it is his sister. They have a requisite, hostile conversation in which Lenna asks Alex for help finding a doctor as she is feeling ill. Alex agrees to arrange for Lenna to see a doctor. He also reveals that their mom is sick as well. After a number of tests, Lenna learns that in addition to having three different staph infections, she is also pregnant. Despite her haziness, she knows that she is not fit to have a child **(12. Bugs)**.

Back in the park, Jordan tries to catch up with Lenna, who remains dismissive and annoyed that Jordan is prying into her business. Jordan insists that Lenna is still loved by so many people. She believes that if Lenna would stop using and get clean, she could have a wonderful life. If Jordan could get sober, Lenna can too **(13. When You Love Someone)**. This prompts another flashback:

*Teen Lenna and Teen Jordan, drinking, alternate between working on their algebra homework and making out, while Chirpy flies around the room. Young Alex wants to play, but Teen Lenna yells at him and he runs off crying. Teen Jordan surprises Teen Lenna with some pill samples she took from her dad's dresser. Her brother showed her how to take them and told her that they can give you a fantastic high if you don't take too much. They crush the pills into powder, snort it up, and enjoy the high **(14. Without You)**. Mae bursts into Teen Lenna's room to confront her about Young Alex and sees an open bottle of Blackberry Brandy in the room. Mae has noticed Teen Lenna's increasingly volatile behavior and accuses her of drinking too much and cutting school. They fight, and Teen Lenna finally confronts her mom about her dad's suicide note **(15. Trust)**. Mae is*

*mortified. She expresses how difficult it is to be a parent and make certain decisions, but at the time of her husband's suicide, she felt she was doing the best thing for her daughter by not telling her (16. Best That I Could Do).*

**The flashback ends.** Jordan encourages Lenna to go to a 12-step meeting, trying to lure her with the promise of hot coffee, snacks, and heat in the church. Plus, her ex-drug dealer Virginia will be there. Jordan leaves, and Lenna begrudgingly goes to the meeting after all.

At the meeting, Lenna stands by the snack table drinking hot coffee, while Virginia tries to convince her to sit down with her group of friends and listen. Lenna hears several stories about how these folks changed their lives by becoming sober (**17. A Million Forms of Fear**). When they all turn to her inviting her to speak, she panics and storms out, claiming that everyone in this meeting is nuts and they are part of a cult.

Lenna returns to her spot in the park and calls Jordan. She asks if she can stay the night with her to get out of the cold and take a shower. To protect her own sobriety, Jordan refuses and says that until Lenna has thirty days clean, she can't let her stay in her home. Lenna hangs up on Jordan, grappling with excruciating thoughts. She is pregnant, unsheltered, wants desperately to see her mom who she now knows is sick, and feels rejected by her ex-best friend and lover. Lenna has a vision of Teen Lenna and remembers all she could have been before her life was ravaged by her disease (**18. Water**). She wants out. She shoots up one more time and overdoses. Two people from the 12-step meeting are walking through the park and see Lenna in the snow. They find a cop who has Naloxone. They inject Lenna with it, and she is rushed to the hospital.

## Act 2

A delusional Mae walks outside in the snow, dressed only in a nightgown and grieving for the family that she lost (**19. Snow**). Alex, panicked, finds Mae and brings her back home. As he tends to her nearly frostbitten legs, he asks if she would be interested in having a bird visit her, and she seems intrigued. He has acquiesced to Jordan's offer to try out her bird therapy on Mae. Jordan brings by a macaw named Ocean that bears a striking resemblance to the late Chirpy. While Mae is nervous initially, she warms up to Ocean and they share a dance (**20. Mae & Ocean**). As Alex puts Mae to bed, Jordan gets a call from the hospital that Lenna has overdosed. Not wanting to leave Mae alone, Alex and Jordan agree that Jordan should go to the hospital.

Lenna lies in a hospital bed, defeated after her failed suicide attempt. Jordan tells Lenna that the hospital has a detox with an available bed. Lenna has no interest in detoxing, but she also has no place to go. She asks Jordan for Virginia's phone number. Virginia comes to the hospital to see Lenna, who asks if she can stay with her. Virginia refuses, but she informs Lenna that she will be her sponsor in the 12-step meetings and will help her get clean and sober.

Lenna stays in the detox for a while and then is moved into a longer-term rehab. She goes to meetings, works with other alcoholics, incrementally moving in the right direction, while Alex and Jordan try to remain hopeful about her recovery (**21. Recovery Montage**). After she sneaks pills from someone in the rehab, she escapes and finds her way back to the park. She trips and falls on

a broken bottle, cutting her leg open. Alex checks the park and finds Lenna in agony; physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Lenna seems to surrender, admitting that she can no longer live like this. Alex lets her know that Mae's health is declining, and he wants to arrange for them to see one another. He encourages Lenna to get a few more weeks clean first. Embarrassed and full of shame, Lenna asks Alex to help her go back to the rehab, where she finally begins her recovery process.

While Lenna and Virginia work through the steps, Virginia shares a secret with Lenna that was the reason behind her addiction. She explains that by sharing secrets, people can help one another to find healing and ultimately sobriety. Conversely, if we squander our secrets, we become more soul sick (**22. Secrets**). Lenna wants more than anything to apologize to her mom for ruining her life. She wonders if perhaps she takes responsibility for some of her actions in the past, that she could get well too (**23. Hey, Ugly Secret**). Jordan and Virginia arrange for Lenna to go back to her childhood home to see her mom in the hopes that they can reconcile.

Lenna arrives at home and sees that her childhood bedroom is now set up for hospice. She learns that Mae has anywhere from a few days to a few months. Lenna is furious that she wasn't told how advanced Mae's illness is. Upon seeing Lenna, Mae launches into a delusion, in which she thinks Lenna is a teenager and is skipping school (**24. Mae's Delusion**). Triggered by the chaos, Lenna dives for her mother's oxycodone, but stops herself. She runs into the backyard and sits where Chirpy had been buried ten years ago, sending her into a flashback.

*Teen Lenna's behavior is erratic and wild as Teen Jordan tries to get her to stop drinking. Teen Lenna ignores her and throws Chirpy around, reenacting what her dad used to do when he was drunk. Teen Lenna bumps into a huge and heavy vase that knocks her to the ground. She lands on top of Chirpy, accidentally smothering their beloved bird to death. She is hysterical as she begs Chirpy to live. Mae walks in and screams at Teen Lenna to leave (**25. Chirpy's Death**). Teen Lenna melts down.*

**The flashback ends.** Lenna comforts Teen Lenna, and Young Lenna joins them as they struggle to integrate the horror of that terrible night. By acknowledging and accepting that Chirpy's death was caused by her using, the three parts of Lenna manage to find forgiveness for themselves (**26. Promise**). Virginia has witnessed this and tells Lenna that she has in essence just done a 4<sup>th</sup> step. Virginia encourages Lenna to talk to her mom, whether or not her mom understands her.

Inside, Mae plays with Ocean and suddenly recognizes Alex after many months. Mae does not however recognize Lenna, still thinking her daughter has not come home. She encourages Lenna to play with Ocean, nonetheless. Finally face-to-face with her mother, Lenna apologizes for all the pain she feels she has caused her. She reveals that she is pregnant, but she knows that she could not be a mother when she has just started to learn to care for herself. She feels she could never be as good a mother as Mae was. Mae is perplexed that this stranger looks so much like her daughter, and she can't understand why this lovely young woman keeps calling her "Mom". But this stranger seems to know a lot about Lenna, so Mae asks if the stranger could bring her daughter

to visit **(27. My Daughter)**. They embrace for the first time in nine years, and Lenna puts Mae to bed by singing their lullaby.

Lenna joins Jordan, Alex, and Virginia in the living room. She has decided to put the baby up for adoption, since it is the most humane thing to do. She invites them to family night at the rehab; Jordan and Virginia are in, but Alex is still on the fence. Lenna stares at Ocean, and Jordan invites Lenna to play with him. Lenna and Ocean share a dance as the ensemble joins them. Lenna steps forward with her hand raised, as if called upon at a meeting, and says for the first time in her life, "Hi, I'm Lenna, and I'm an alcoholic and addict" **(28. Finale)**.