



Enslaved by Dreams

by

Chris Bowler

(with additional material by Jo Anderson, Celia Gore-Booth and Tamsin Heatley)

This is a scanned copy of the script for this 1984 production from the Monstrous Regiment archive, held at the V&A Theatre and Performance Archives. Further information about the show is provided in the Production pages of this website.

In preparing the script for the company's records, after the show's production, Chris added some explanatory notes, and inserted photocopies of several production photos. These are all included here. We have not yet found the audio tapes with recorded songs, to which she also refers, though Sylvia Hallett has kindly provided a sound tape she created for one scene, which we hope to add to this website in due course.

All requests for permission to perform or translate the play should be addressed to:

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ENSLAVED BY DREAMS

by

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ENSLAVED BY DREAMS

was written by Chris Bowler with additional material by Jo Anderson, Celia Gore-Booth, Tamsin Heatley, and original writings by Florence Nightingale.

The play was given it's first production by Monstrous Regiment at the ICA theatre in London and on tour.

The original cast was:

BLUE
GREY
WHITE

Sally Cranfield
Tamsin Heatley
Celia Gore-Booth

Directed by
Design was by
Lighting Design was by

Chris Bowler
Gemma Jackson
Stephen Whitson

The first performance was on Feb.17th 1984.

"Dreaming always, never accomplishing, thus women live, too much ashamed of their dreams."

Florence Nightingale

The following playtext includes visual and sound elements from the original production. I feel that with a work of this nature they are essential in helping to convey a flavour of the piece. Future productions will obviously have to find their own way of interpreting the text.

Florence Nightingale is played simultaneously by three actresses. They represent different stages in her life and also different aspects of her character. The colours refer to the colour of their costumes.

BLUE	The younger Florence, living at home, dominated by her family.
GREY	The Florence of the Crimea, the nurse and administrator.
WHITE	The older Florence, the invalid who, by choice, spent most of her last fifty years in bed.

The solo speeches which each character has are culled from original writings which span the whole of Nightingale's life.

While each of the three should have a distinct character, we should see echoes of the others. Their names are never mentioned, and they interact on stage like sisters.

The Costumes in the first production had a solid period feel and were all accompanied by the appropriate accessories; button boots, layers of petticoats, long bloomers; I feel that this authenticity was vital.

BLUE Florence wore an evening gown made of a vivid blue silk. GREY's costume was a practical woollen two-piece, jacket and shirt, and small lace cap. WHITE wore a white cotton-silk nightie and bed-jacket with matching headscarf, all decorated with blue ribbons. It was suited to an old lady but at times she could also look like a small child.

The Set was an interior space, a room within which each Florence had her own area; WHITE's a day-bed and bedside table; GREY's a small wooden octagonal table; BLUE's a dark blue velvet chaise. This furniture and it's props were all correct for the period, but other things were modern and anachronistic; all three areas had modern electric lamps; WHITE had a metal filing cabinet and wrote her notes on continuous computer print-out. The three spaces could be completely isolated by area lighting, but the room was simultaneously the Nightingale drawing-room; her workroom in her Crimea hospital; and the invalid Florence's bedroom.

The room was delineated by a wooden floor, which rose up at the back into a low (Three foot) wall broken by a door frame at Stage Right. This was the only entrance to the space. Stuck to the floor and wall were scatterings of hand-written and typed pages; mostly letters. The areas outside the room, occasionally used, represented the Crimea, and all it's dirt and chaos.

The Music and Sound Effects were a complete mixture of periods and styles; Strauss waltzes and Chopin nocturnes; snatches of modern instrumental music; and Bulgarian folk music, both vocal and instrumental (Turkish music would have been more appropriate but we could find none with quite the dramatic qualities we needed.). There are two period songs about Nightingale and the Crimea, which were set to music by Helen Glavin and specially recorded. Sound effects representing the Crimea were created and recorded by Sylvia Hallet.

"Rock Me to Sleep", the only song sung live in the piece, is a Victorian lullaby composed by Sir Julius Benedict and written by Elizabeth Akers Allen.

OPENING SEQUENCE

Out of a blackout three flickering candle flames appear. They are carried by the three Florences.

Tape: Fade up on long drawn out flute sounds.

The three Florences follow each other into the room, walking in step to a slow rhythm, which includes pauses. Keeping in step they move separately about the stage area. We catch glimpses of them and the set as they are illuminated by the three candle flames.

Tape: The flute noises are overtaken by some similar Bulgarian Bagpipe sounds.

The three Florences move slowly into a line across the back of the stage.

Tape: The Bagpipe music was the intro to a song, which now starts - a woman's voice, full and high-pitched, with lots of vibrato.

The three walk forward in step. They lift the candles to their faces, hold them a second, and snuff them out. They EXIT.

Light: A corridor of light appears through the doorway. It shines diagonally downstage.

GREY appears in the doorway with two full buckets, she crosses the stage down the corridor of light and empties the buckets into a wooden tub placed just outside the room in the Downstage Left corner.

Light: A top light comes up on the tub. It contains raw sewage (Prop, not real!).

GREY makes three more journeys, filling the buckets from a source upstage of the rear wall, and emptying them in the tub. She finishes her task, puts a lid on the tub, tidies her hair and clothes, and goes to sit at the table.

Tape: The song fades out.

AT HOME

The three Florence's sit around GREY's table. GREY is taking up most of it with a chart she's making. WHITE is writing. BLUE is bandaging a teddy. The teddy is completely swathed. TAPE : domestic sounds - children, doors, etc.

GREY I can't imagine why the government have not adopted the chart method to elucidate dense bodies of information .
It's so satisfactory. (small pause)
And of course certain vital patterns appear without which the investigation of any area of concern can never be more than hazy conjecture.

WHITE I thought you enjoyed the colouring.



AT HOME P 5

GREY Nonsense.

BLUE How can I practice elbow bandaging, he hasn't got one.

GREY You've got the ankle all wrong anyway, how could he walk?

BLUE He can't walk, he's got a broken ankle.

GREY But he will when it's better. When bandaging joints you must always consider their mobile function.

WHITE You continually state the obvious.

GREY If it's so obvious why hasn't she done it?

BLUE You're right of course. But I'm bored with Teddy. I've scaled the bandages down, but I'll never improve unless I can practice on the real thing. He hasn't got fingers either.

GREY The red shows the deaths from Cholera, typhus, etc.; orange is dysentery; yellow, chest infections; green is wounds; and purple, after surgery.

BLUE What a lot of red.

WHITE How are your lists for Mama? I've nearly finished silverware.

GREY What? When did you do it?

WHITE Last night.

GREY After I went to bed?

WHITE Uh huh.

GREY Hmphh.
If only I could convince myself that quarterly household inventories serve some useful purpose perhaps I wouldn't resent them so much.

BLUE Well, I suppose they tell us what has to be repaired and replaced.

GREY Would the house fall down? Would we find ourselves penniless on the street?

BLUE I quite enjoy them actually.
(GREY and WHITE look at each other)

I find the routine reassuring, it gives me a sense of security to know that no detail is overlooked.

GREY Good. You can overlook a few of mine. I'm down for crockery.

BLUE No I can't do yours too. I'm busy. Anyway, that's not the point.

WHITE It is necessary for each one of us to demonstrate our dedication to household affairs. You don't just count the china, you have to love it too.

GREY Rubbish!

BLUE But you're always making lists. You've got a cupboard full of them.

GREY Important lists.

BLUE You're just being difficult.

(Sharp intake of breath from White, she senses a battle.)

GREY I've been up since 6 o'clock and this is the first time I've sat down. I'll be here until midnight, when I can talk to the Medical Officer. What have you done today?

WHITE She was staring out of the window all morning, and at the fire all afternoon.

BLUE How do you know?

WHITE Except at midday when she crept off for a quiet pray.

BLUE It's hideous. I've no privacy.

GREY So please don't attempt to organise my priorities.

BLUE God, how can I go on in this house?

GREY If you're so unhappy why do you stay?

BLUE don't be ridiculous.

GREY You've a good education, wealthy and influential friends.

BLUE The family would disown me if I went anywhere near a hospital.

WHITE You might find that an advantage.

BLUE They'd be upset. I couldn't. I want them to be proud of me.

WHITE Aahhh.

BLUE They're trying to protect me, they want me to be happy.

GREY But you're completely miserable.

BLUE They'll see that soon.

GREY I admire your stamina.

WHITE Meanwhile you can go to the opera three times a week, and make trips to Europe. Not a bad old life really.

BLUE It passes the time. But I want some work.

(BLUE Florence throws the teddy down and moves across to her area. She flings about frustratedly during the following SOLO. She speaks by turns to herself and the audience. LIGHTS: a large centre spot in which she moves, low light still on the table.)

THE DAUGHTER AT HOME

BLUE What is my business in this world and what have I done this fortnight? I have read the 'Daughter at Home' to father and two chapters of Mackintosh; a volume of Sybil to Mama. Learnt seven tunes by heart written various letters. Ridden with Papa. Paid eight visits. Done company. And that is all.

No advantage that I can see comes of my living on, excepting that one becomes less and less of a young lady every year.

Oh weary days. Oh evenings that never seem to end - for how many years I have watched the drawing room clock and thought it never would reach the ten, and for twenty, thirty more years to do this. The thoughts and feelings that I have now, I can remember since I was six years old. It was not I

that made them. Why oh my God, can I not be satisfied with the life that satisfies so many people.

(LIGHTS: go down on BLUE Florence, and up on WHITE and GREY at the bed.)

THE QUEEN OF HOLLAND

WHITE is sitting up in her day bed. GREY enters with a cloth and bottle of liniment and begins to massage her back in a rather vigorous manner. There is an atmosphere of some tension.

GREY How on earth do you expect to strengthen your back if you never use it?

WHITE Congestion of the spine doesn't respond to exercise, bed rest and no excitement is the only course.

GREY If you say so.
What shall I tell her?

WHITE That I don't see people without appointments.

GREY You can't say that to a Queen.

WHITE Holland is a damp insubstantial place, I really don't think we need wet our knickers about her.

GREY I'll say your back is giving you great pain, and the doctor has advised absolute quiet.

WHITE Tell her I'm busy.

GREY I won't.

WHITE Suit yourself.
(Consults diary)
I can offer her next Friday at 11.0 for fifteen minutes.

GREY She'll be in Fiji by then.

WHITE Perhaps she could send me a post card.

GREY Lord Herbert and Dr Sutherland are here for the Commission of Enquiry meeting, and Clough says



THE QUEEN OF HOWLAND p. 9.

have you finished the draft of that memo for Lord Palmerston?

WHITE I really can't be doing with Sutherland today, but ask Sidney to come up in five minutes. This is for Clough, tell him to be sure to wait for a response.
(Picks up wire 'Out' tray full of letters). These are for the post. I don't care who takes them as long as they put the correct postage stamps on them. The last batch of questionnaires to India were returned. Surely nobody can imagine you can get to India on 3d these days.

GREY I'm sure it was an oversight.

WHITE There'll be some more this afternoon when I've looked at this lot. (Indicates another heap of envelopes on the bed in front of her.)

GREY There's one there from Mama.

WHITE Yes?

GREY She's got to come up to town tomorrow and thought she might drop in.

WHITE Out of the question. My diary's full.

GREY Five minutes?

WHITE Of course it would give me great pleasure, but I cannot allow personal gratification to interfere with my work.
Besides, I've got a bad back.
The very thought of such enjoyment makes my heart beat uncomfortably fast. Oh! I can feel it palpitating. I really am most unwell. I'll see Sidney for ten minutes, but on no account must I be disturbed after that.
(She starts to snuggle down under the covers)
Please tell Mama. Too unwell. Love to Daddy.
Beautiful flowers. Perhaps next summer.

(WHITE appears to go to sleep, GREY quietly leaves.)

THE FAMILY

When GREY has excited, WHITE sits up in her bed and begins to deliver the following SOLO to the audience. Half way through she gets out of bed, moves downstage and strides up and down - still addressing the audience.

WHITE Families! We ought to develop the family, not annihilate it. We want not to destroy, but to fulfil the hopes it holds out. Where is there such rudeness as in a family? Everywhere but in our own family our feelings are regarded. Where is there such an absence of tenderness, such constant contention, as in a family? And the oddest part of the thing is that everybody thinks it peculiar to themselves.
(Moves) Parents assume they have responsibility over their children, even after they come of age. The parents feel that they are going through a great deal for their children; the children feel that gratitude is exacted from them for that which does not make them happy. Both sides suffer equally from disappointment, and both are alike to be pitied.

(WHITE goes back to bed.
The Lagoon Waltz by Strauss begins on tape, and BLUE waltzes into the space, nearly colliding with GREY who is making repeated journeys across to the chaise with a trunk and various heaps of clothes, notebooks, etc.)

NOT NOW

As the Waltz music continues, BLUE succeeds in drawing first GREY and then WHITE into dancing with her. GREY is packing a trunk for her expedition to the Crimea, as the music fades out, BLUE moves back to GREY and tries to help her. Throughout the scene WHITE talks mostly to herself, she sits at GREY'S table working - writing a difficult letter, and then checking through a notebook. GREY is energetic and cheerful.

GREY (Looking round) Now, Have I forgotten anything?

WHITE (From the depths of her work) Since you keep meticulous filing systems on everything down to your garters, I should say it is highly unlikely...just do it quietly.

- BLUE Why on earth take supplies with you. Your personal luggage is so restricted - Herbert says there are 15,000 pairs of bed-sheets waiting.
- GREY Hmphh (She concentrates on her packing, oblivious to BLUE's desire to help/be involved.)
- WHITE (Reading from what she's writing) 'I wish to inform all sides and to take part with none...
- GREY Just these bits and then I'll be off.
- WHITE ..You will see therefore, that it would transgress the rule were I to become a patroness....
- BLUE How can you be so sure you are doing the right thing?
- WHITE ...of your Nursing Association.' So much for Dr. Ogle!
- GREY (To BLUE) Please, not now!
- WHITE (Outburst of scribbling) 'I am sorry you are ill. But I suppose as I have not heard again, that you intend me to believe you are either well or dead...' (chucking note over shoulder) I have no time to die!!!
- BLUE (To GREY) You should apply a leech to that gumboil.
- GREY It is not a gumboil. It is an abscess. (GREY is walking about bringing back items to pack in her trunk, BLUE is following her doggedly.)
- BLUE It makes your face look so bloated. What kind of impression will you make when you turn up looking like that.?
- GREY Is that my Bible? I'll take that.
- BLUE Oh, we still subscribe to the Good Book do we?
- GREY (Taking it) Thank you.
- WHITE (Reading from her latest batch of mail) 'Col. L to be instructed by Lord Palmerston to draw up scheme for Army Medical School.' ...I won!
- BLUE I just wondered, with your new-found largesse for all persuasions, whether you felt the Koran more uplifting, or perhaps the Torah?

GREY I said...not NOW!

WHITE 'Netley Hospital ...(mutters to herself) ... I won!
'Commissariat ...(mutters)... India.' ... I lost!

BLUE (Feeling GREY's forehead) You're running a temperature.

GREY Naturally, I have an infected tooth.

BLUE Perhaps, perhaps all this is prompted by delirium? You haven't thought it out in the cold light of day?

GREY I said...not NOW!

WHITE 'Camp at Aldershot to 'do' for themselves ... (mutters)... Lord Palmerston will consider.' That means, will do nothing!

BLUE I understand that such pressing affairs preclude decent farewells to Mama and Papa, but will you go down and see Mrs Meadows? Just a minute of your time? It is the least you can do.

GREY I can only attend to one thing at a time. The ship sails on the 17th. I must get the connection.

WHITE Sir J Hall NOT to be made Director-General....I won!

BLUE You will be hideously sea-sick. You will lose your complexion entirely -

GREY For God's Sake!! -

BLUE Look! Mrs Meadows has lost her husband. Just poke your face found her door, let her glimpse her 'heavenly angel', she'll draw succour from that -

GREY You believe that?

BLUE But you fancy so, don't you?

GREY Nonsense.
(GREY and BLUE stare at each other.)

WHITE 'About Statistics, Lord Palmerston said ... (mutters)... I must not know better than my CHIEF!

BLUE Oh yes, you're beginning to believe it aren't you? That is what sustains you in your... monumental presumption. A belief in the divine in yourself. Not like mere mortals ...

WHITE QUIET!

BLUE ... who have FUN. .

WHITE Lord Palmerston contradicted everything I put forward, so I retain the most sanguine expectations of success! Tra La!

BLUE (To GREY who is still packing) I hardly recognise you any more.

(The CAMPAIGNING SONG begins on tape and underscores the rest of this scene. NOTE: FOR THE WORDS OF THIS SONG SEE APPENDIX A)

GREY Pass me that shawl, and that delousing comb.

BLUE Delousing!

GREY Long hair, a haven for lice.

BLUE Your hair!

GREY (Slapping her hands away) Will you stop. Enough of this. (BLUE is hurt.) Lord Herbert would have ordered me to go even if I had not already decided to myself.

BLUE But not, it seems, to spare ten minutes of your valuable time to walk to the village and offer your condolence to a bereaved woman and her child.

GREY (Tired) Not now...

BLUE You just cut your teeth on all that caring. She was just a .. a dress-rehearsal.

GREY Individuals are unimportant. There should be creches for rich and poor alike - well managed of course.

BLUE Oh naturally! Love does not enter into it.

WHITE 'My dear Dr. Ackland. You are not yet in a position to move at all. You have no feet. If you attempt to walk without feet either you stand still or fall over.' (Signs with a flourish.)

BLUE Please...

GREY I'm going.

BLUE I have to know WHY.

GREY I love the race.

BLUE So that's it. The French have better facilities than us don't they?

GREY The French have superb medical arrangements.

BLUE That is what gets up your nose. The French do it better! Where are OUR sisters of Charity ...

GREY God, my tooth hurts

BLUE Heal thyself!

WHITE I was so ill on Thursday and Tuesday from leaning forward to shout at you. You think the world moves about you.

GREY Oh, here are the Sunday School lessons I promised to prepare.

BLUE (Taking them) You make my blood run cold.

WHITE Your five minutes is up! (Fresh papers) Next!

GREY (Her trunk won't shut) Will you sit on it?
(BLUE does so.)
There. That won't burst open. Quite closed!

GREY FLORENCE carries her trunk off-stage L, while BLUE FLORENCE moves up-stage Centre. The Lights go down. BLUE runs into a spot Down Left, her arms desperately trying to clasp the empty air she emits a long wailing scream. The run, clasp and scream are repeated in another spot down Right. She comes to herself, and stunned, backs away centre stage.

WHAT IS TO BECOME OF ME

During the following solo speech, BLUE FLORENCE slowly circles the chaise, kneels on it, and lies backward across it, her arms flung out behind her.

BLUE

My God what is to become of me. My present life is suicide. Slowly I have opened my eyes to the fact that I cannot now deliver myself from the habit of dreaming, which like gin-drinking is eating out my vital strength.

(Lying down) There is not a night I do not lie down in my bed, wishing that I may leave it no more. Unconsciousness is all that I desire. I remain in bed as late as I can for what have I to wake for? I am perishing for want of food. And what prospect have I of better.

(She suddenly jumps up into a kneeling position on the chaise, fists clenched in front of her.) I shall never do anything, and am worse than dust and nothing. Oh for some strong thing to sweep this loathsome life into the past.

(GREY and WHITE move across to the chaise and gaze down at her. She pulls herself together.)

HOME SWEET HOME

GREY and WHITE have brought with them a harmonica, and a musical saw. BLUE retrieves a child's xylophone from underneath the chaise.

They play a chorus and verse of the 19th C classic, HOME SWEET HOME. They play in a formal manner, grouped around the chaise as in a Victorian photograph.

At the end of the verse while BLUE slowly packs away her xylophone and exits, and WHITE goes back to bed with her saw, GREY moves across to her table beginning the following solo speech.



HOME SWEET HOME p.16

DOCTORS

GREY

As people put in the 'Marriages' the name of the clergyman who married them, I would put in the 'Deaths' the name of the doctor who killed them.

(She takes an army blanket out of her trunk, Up L, and during the rest of the speech moves over to the chaise, wraps it tightly around herself, and lies down on the chaise with only her head sticking out.)

I have, by strict subordination to the authorities and by avoiding all individual action introduced a number of improvements within the Regulations of Service. This could not have happened if I had not worked WITH the medical authorities and not in rivalry against them. What I have done I shall continue doing, but I am weary of this hopeless work.

AFTER THE OPERA

BLUE flounces in wearing a shawl, and carrying a libretto. She humms to herself, she is in a very good mood. GREY has composed herself for sleep.

BLUE

Oh dear!

(GREY makes a bad-tempered noise as of someone having been woken up.)

Oh that's better. I thought there was something wrong with you. There isn't is there?

GREY

Of course not. I was warming myself up. It becomes terribly damp at night.

BLUE

Yes. (She's not really very interested. She takes off her shawl, and sits at GREY'S table to study the libretto - her latest acquisition.)

GREY

I've been thinking about soda again. I've decided it IS more effective than lye.

BLUE

Good. Has Mama been looking for me?

GREY

You see the trouble is the lye doesn't penetrate the fibres of the wood, so any animal matter which has found it's way in fails to be dissolved and thus expelled.

But it's no use on the walls, and that's where we've been making our mistake. Soda on the floor, but wash the walls with lime, that's the answer. Frequently. In the worst cases they must be scraped, then lime washed, carefully dried, and treated with an oil paint. Then I believe we shall see a real reduction in unnecessary cases of sickness and vomiting.

BLUE La Somnambule was breathtaking.

GREY But without ventilation you can have no thorough cleanliness. What's the time? Have you been out? You look pale.

BLUE I've been to the opera.

GREY Ah!

BLUE Bellini.

GREY The hospitals in Rome are filthy, but I found great devotion among the sisters.

BLUE Must I dine with the Smiths tomorrow? I want to see the Rossini again. I've been studying the score and I'm interested in the conductor's interpretation. I think it too romantic. This is the fifth opera I've seen in three weeks, and my libretto collection will soon be up to twenty. You don't look very comfortable, wouldn't you rather be in bed?

GREY I don't believe so.

BLUE Perhaps I could adjust these for you. (She plumps the cushion behind GREY's head, meanwhile looking for prohibited Maths book which she had hidden there. GREY is unaware of the search, still being sunk in matters of hygiene.)

GREY How can one persuade them that dabbing does more harm than good. The floor becomes saturated but not cleansed. A brush must be used with vigorous strokes along the grain of the wood, and then the moisture mopped off with a cloth before thorough rinsing in clean water. (BLUE spots her book on the floor by the chaise, she quietly picks it up and is about to creep off with it.)

GREY I'm sorry, was that hidden for a purpose? It was digging into my back.

BLUE Oooh! (Exasperated)

GREY Why do you need Higher Mathematics at this time of night?

BLUE It's for tomorrow. I must study at least two hours before breakfast if I'm to master it. You know I can't do it later, Mama insists I'm too busy.

GREY You used to be such a happy child.

WHITE (She's in bed, and was asleep.) Oh for God's sake let her have her bloody book!

GREY Right. That's enough chit chat. Back to work.

(GREY unwraps her blanket and rises briskly from the chaise. She goes over to her table and begins her file-box ritual, sorting, ordering, and exulting in her filing system. The ticking clock has faded in on the sound-track.

BLUE has flung herself down on the chaise, she lies still for a moment, and then with a cry of anger and exasperation rolls off onto the floor. While the clock ticks, and GREY admires her filing system, BLUE by turns: groans, thrashes about, and ends up in a collapsed heap having pummelled the floor.

The lighting is very low on BLUE's bit of the floor, and there is a practical lamp on GREY's table.

The ticking stops and the clock chimes. Hearing it GREY shuts her file-box, rises from the table, and goes upstage - outside the room - to collect a heap of sewing.)

SEWING BEE

The lights go up on the whole room as GREY re-enters. BLUE has collected herself and is kneeling on the floor looking calm, if resigned. WHITE comes to sit on the end of her bed. In passing on her way back to the table GREY gives them each a heap of rough calico material, with a needle and thread. BLUE's are large mattress covers, and WHITE's small oddly shaped cushions. This is not a new task for them.

GREY Keep the stitches small and the thread tight. Half the straw will fall out, they'll be useless. (She sits at the table to do some admin work.)

BLUE My fingers are full of holes. This fabric is too stiff, it's impossible to sew.

GREY It's stiff because of the wax, surely that's obvious.

WHITE Wax?

GREY To keep the straw in, and stop it sticking in people's bottoms.

WHITE Are they in any state to worry about their bottoms?

GREY If they aren't, I am. Spiky straw today, itchy rash tomorrow.

WHITE Hmph!

BLUE How many of these are there?

GREY 320. There were more, but I had to use some to cover the operating table.

BLUE I can't, I won't do it. I'll be up half the night. I must have some time to myself. I've been running after people all day. I've got things I must do!

(GREY and WHITE look at each other)

GREY Well just make a start on the first hundred or so.

WHITE Far be it from me to complain, but what exactly are these, and is it really necessary that I make so many of them?

GREY They're for the stumps.

WHITE Come again.

GREY The amputees.

WHITE I think I catch your drift.

GREY To rest their stumps on.

WHITE Thank you, very graphic.

(They sew in silence for a while.)

GREY The St. John's sisters couldn't stand the stump pillows. They were the last straw. (She smiles serenely, she's made a joke.)

(BLUE and WHITE look at each other.)

Oh well, they're off my hands now.

WHITE You've disposed of the opposition very efficiently. What was wrong with those other nurses?

GREY They were useless. No point in them hanging about, cluttering the place up.

BLUE Couldn't they have done the cleaning, or the sewing?

GREY They think that nursing consists of making the odd cup of beef tea and saying a few prayers. They had no idea of discipline. I will not have people contradicting my instructions - there's quite enough mess and confusion. Nurses must be seen as skilled professionals if the doctors are to accept them. Who's going to respect a bunch of ninnies who faint at the smell of the patients.

(As GREY turns back to her work, the general lights go down, leaving her lit only by the practical lamp at her desk. Tape in: a Bulgarian unaccompanied song, a sorrowful song of a young wife who is being bricked up in a wall. The song continues on under most of the following solo speech.

CALAMITY

GREY sits at her desk, caught in the middle of work, and addresses herself to the audience.

GREY I am witnessing a calamity unparalleled in the history of calamities. The British Army has eleven thousand men laying siege to Sebastopol, and twelve thousand men in hospital. It is being destroyed. Not by losses in battle, but by sickness - most of it avoidable. The barrack Hospital is spacious and magnificent in external appearance, but underneath are sewers of the worst possible construction; cesspools through which the wind blows sewer air up the pipes of numerous open privies into the corridors and wards. Those in beds next the privies always die. The central courtyard is a sea of mud and refuse.

In clearing it we have to date removed five hundred and fifty-six handcarts of rubbish and twenty-six dead animals, including two dead horses.

(The music fades.)

The British Ambassador paid us his first visit yesterday. After five minutes he was carried from the building with an attack of vomiting and diarrhoea. Let us hope he puts **that** into his report.

We have erysipelas, fever, and gangrene. The dysentery cases have died at the rate of one in two. The mortality of the operations is frightful. This is only the beginning of things.

(TAPE: The sound of tinkling china and voices chatting at a distance. LIGHTS go up on general area as the introduction to Strauss' 'Lagoon' waltz begins on tape. The three Florences twirl into their starting positions round the chaise.

TEACUP DANCE.

At the beginning of the waltz proper the three Florences start off waltzing individually around the chaise. WHITE has brought a china cup and saucer with her. Elegantly, and in time with the music, they perform cartwheels, somersaults, and leap over the chaise, while passing the teacup and saucer about among themselves.

ODD MOMENTS.

The waltz music stops abruptly after 20 seconds and is replaced by 2 Bulgarian women singing in strident discord. The 3 Florences here come to rest on or around the chaise. The taped singing goes on under this section.

BLUE If we lived in a society which knew how to employ our strength instead of frittering it and repressing it, how different life would be.

WHITE It is often said that if people made the most of their odd moments they would not have much to complain of. A most misleading and dangerous

maxim. Would not a painter spoil his picture by working at it at 'odd moments'?

GREY Can we fancy Michaelangelo running up and putting a touch to his Sistene ceiling at 'odd moments'? If he did he would almost certainly have to take it out again.

(GREY moves to the table. WHITE picks up an armful of work from her bed and moves to the sofa displacing BLUE. BLUE EXITS in a huff, and almost immediately RE-ENTERS, carrying her shawl and evening bag.)

GOING TO A BALL.

BLUE You aren't dressed.

GREY Sorry?

BLUE What can I do to help?
(She starts toward papers on table to put them away. GREY makes cat-scaring noise. BLUE desists.)

BLUE The carriage will be outside in five minutes. I'll wait for you in the hall.
(Quite a loud SCREAM from WHITE. BLUE and GREY speak more quietly.)

GREY What are you talking about?

BLUE I don't believe this. I'm talking about the ball at the Nicholsons'.

GREY That was last week.

BLUE No, that was the Carters'.

GREY We went to it.

BLUE No, that was another one.

GREY You mean this is another one.

BLUE YES!

GREY Why on earth did they want another one?

BLUE They didn't, somebody else did.

GREY Not me.
 (Growl from bed.)

GREY Have a lovely time dear.

BLUE You promised. You know I can't go without you.....
 and you enjoyed yourselves last.....

GREY & Enjoyed it?
WHITE, TOGETHER That takes the biscuit.

GREY I sat in a corner all evening. I couldn't read, I
 couldn't think.

BLUE You're supposed to dance.

WHITE Limp young men. Brainless girls, and women talking
 about their children. I'd rather be trampled
 underfoot.

GREY I thought you were too busy?

WHITE Two days ago you said social functions were a
 time-wasting, mind-deadening diversion, and you
 wouldn't touch one with a barge-pole.

BLUE Weddings, Christenings, At-homes, but dancing is
 different. I lose myself.
 (GREY AND WHITE look at each other.)
 If we don't get there in half an hour we'll miss
 the first waltz.

GREY I'm in the middle of my weekly report to the War
 Office, it's impossible.

WHITE You must go by yourself.

BLUE I can't.

WHITE Why?

BLUE It's NOT APPROPRIATE.
 (Pause)
 I spend days and days doing things I don't want to
 do.

GREY Very silly of you.

BLUE It's so unfair.
 Only a few hours. I'm always helping you.

GREY I won't be coerced.

WHITE

Quite simply; Time is of great value and must be spent carefully. I regard mine as far too important to squander on activities that do nothing to feed my understanding or (GREY and BLUE join in) further my work.
I think I'll write that down.

(BLUE flings herself down on the bed.
LIGHTS: fade down on the table and chaise, leaving a top spot on the bed.
TAPE IN: A child's voice reciting her poem.)

IT WAS UPON A WINTERY NIGHT

TAPE

It was upon a wintery night
The angel of the Lord came down,
Said, 'Florence dear, the time is right
For you to clear that awesome frown.

'I've news for you', the Lord has said,
Put on these wings of speed.
And with your owl rise from your bed
And leave this house of greed.

And you will fly where 'ere you wish
O'er mountain, ocean and plain,
See every bird and every fish
Touch clouds of crystal rain.

France I saw and her ripe grape
Then o'er Swiss lakes did I fly
And passing mountains capped with snow
Reached Italy's Cypress by and by.

Down to Rome with speedy flight
I observed her ancient and symbolic places.
Then onto Greece through day and night
Was welcomed by sunned and eager faces.

Oh Oracle! Thou dost know it all
Deeds of God and men,
Please tell me what will befall?
What is my mission - now I'm ten?

When my secret had been told
I rose up into the sunny sky,
and suddenly I was in my bed -
I was peaceful, no longer did I cry.

I know you cannot believe my story
From one with manner so meek and mild,

Of all those adventures of terrible glory
In far-off places - in places so wild.

(LIGHTS: cross-fade to GREY at the table.)

NOTES ON NURSING

GREY (Addressing the audience.) Is it far better for women to learn the piano forte than to learn laws which promote the preservation of health?

(She rises, and moves towards the audience.
LIGHTS: up on down-stage area, and house-lights on audience. During the following speech GREY moves into the audience and addresses them as she might a group of student nurses. She focuses on individuals, and uses them to illustrate her points.)

NOTES ON NURSING! What it is, and what it is not! The very first cannon of nursing is VENTILATION. The question is often asked 'When ought the windows to be opened?' The answer is: 'When ought they to be shut!' Never be afraid of open windows. People don't catch cold in bed. A common mistake is to ventilate a room by opening the door straight onto the hall where the air is stagnant. Windows are made to open, doors are made to shut - a truth which seems extremely difficult of apprehension.

As to visitors and conduct in the sick room. There is scarcely a greater worry that patients have to endure than the incurable chattering hopes of their friends: 'Oh, what a pretty chamber pot.' Tell your patients things that will give them pleasure: 'The first daffodils are out' or 'The Prime Minister has resigned'. Such good news will freshen up a sick person's whole mental atmosphere.

Do not hold a whispered conversation within the patient's hearing. Always sit within their view, and never gesticulate when talking to them. Do not overtake a patient who is moving about in order to speak to them. You might just as well give them a box on the ear! They are hardly likely to be going to the East Indies! I have seen a patient fall flat on his face when his nurse came suddenly into the room.

I hope these notes have been absorbed, I'll be questioning you later. (She turns and EXITS briskly.)

CREEPING WORM

The following SOLO speech is delivered in the manner of someone sharing a secret, enjoyable, vice. The last section sung in a pseudo-operatic style with much glee and gusto.

BLUE Rubbed Mrs Spence's leg for the second time. I am such a creeping worm that if I have anything of the kind to do I can do without marriage or intellect or social intercourse, or any of the things people sigh after. It supplies every want of my heart and mind. It heals all my disease. It saves my soul from destruction. I am at home.

(TAPE: The repeated section from BLUE's waltz music. She dances, laughing very gaily to herself.)

DEAD HORSE

As the music fades BLUE sits at the table. She is immediately joined by WHITE, who dumps down a mound of books and papers and sets to work. GREY enters, and finding her table occupied lays herself down on the chaise, book over face, for a cat-nap.

WHITE (To GREY) What a pleasant life you lead. Floating round the wards, people kissing your shadow.

BLUE (To GREY) They've said no to Salisbury Infirmary! What shall I do? I must go. I must train.

WHITE What's wrong with it? Drunkenness or immorality?

BLUE Both.

WHITE Hmph.

BLUE (To GREY) But I've found somewhere they must accept. It's in Germany, run by a Protestant Pastor. The nurses are all deaconesses!

WHITE The old fool what does he think he's doing.
(Crossing out something in front of her.)

BLUE (To GREY) I'm sure they'd listen if you supported
me. Please, you will won't you? I'm desperate.

WHITE I think you'll find she's asleep.
What's that smell?

BLUE (Looking at GREY) Just the wards.

WHITE No. God, it's much worse.

GREY Oh. (She has been half-awake and has heard this
exchange.)
You remember I told you the Sanitary Commission
were going to investigate our water supply?

BLUE & WHITE Mmmmmnnn?

GREY They found a dead horse in one of the channels.
From the look of it, it's been there for months.

BLUE What are you going to do about it?

WHITE What did you say to them?

GREY The next task is cleaning out the courtyard. We
start on that tomorrow.
(she gets up and crosses to the table.)
Can I have my table back. I must write some
notes.

BLUE You will find time to talk to Mama won't you?

GREY Where are my lists?

BLUE You're the only person they listen to.

GREY I will not have my belongings moved. Where have
you put them? Oh, here they are.

WHITE Is it too much to ask? Six inches of table and a
little peace and quiet. I'll go back to bed if
you prefer.

GREY & BLUE No, of course not.

GREY Look there's plenty of room for both of us. (She
moves her things into BLUE's area of the table.
BLUE has no choice but to move to the chaise.)
(To BLUE) Yes, yes, I'll try. But they listen
only when it suits them.

(There is peace for a few seconds. BLUE lies on the chaise lost in thought. WHITE is reading. GREY is in the middle of a regular task - writing letters to the families of dead soldiers. She had left one half finished, and she reads it back to herself before continuing. LIGHTS: down on everywhere but the table.)

GREY

Dear Mr and Mrs Assailed, In great sorrow I must inform you of the death of your son David. He died at 10.00 last night having been brought here two weeks ago from his regiment. He had suffered a grievous wound to his thigh, which we thought to have conquered, but his vitality was low, he contracted typhus and faded rapidly. His last thoughts were of you ... (As she says this her voice comes in on TAPE. This letter, and many others - NOTE: SEE APPENDIX B - are continued on tape, underscoring the whole of the following speech, which is made to the audience.)

The hospital is supplied by two departments. The Purveyor and the Commissariat. They are governed by red tape which bears no relation to our present needs. As a result we suffer the most extraordinary shortages.

Goods have been refused although they were to our personal knowledge lying in abundance in the store of the Purveyor. Refused because they had not been examined by the Board of Survey. Out of my own funds I have supplied: nightcaps, slippers, shirts, socks, plates, spoons, knives, forks, trays, tin-cups, combs, scissors, tables, clocks, scrubbing-brushes, towels, soap, screens, tin-baths, bed-pans, operating tables, and stump pillows. (She leaps up, and storms about the front of the stage, letting fly with her foot at a pile of metal buckets. Then comes to the front of the stage and speaks urgently to the audience.)

I am in a state of chronic RAGE. Through all the long dreadful winter I saw men come down from Sebastopol without any covering but an old pair of regimental trousers - WHEN I KNOW that the stores were bursting with warm clothing. Living skeletons, devoured by vermin, ulcerated, hopeless, speechless. They wrapped their heads in their blankets and died without a sound. Can we hear of the promotion of the men who caused this colossal calamity, we who saw it? Would that the men could speak who died in the puddles of Calamita Bay.

As GREY finishes speaking the TAPE of her letters is heard more audibly, fading out as she turns and walks upstage. LIGHTS go down on GREY's areas, and up on the chaise.)

DON'T WORRY

BLUE is sitting with her feet up, but rather rigidly on the chaise. She stares ahead with a preoccupied and anxious expression. GREY approaches, and without taking her eyes off BLUE, walks slowly around the chaise. She makes three circuits, getting closer each time, then stops behind BLUE placing her hands gently on BLUE's shoulders.

GREY Don't worry.

(As GREY slowly turns to go, BLUE quickly gets up, she looks purposeful and resolved. She takes a book from under the chaise, and crosses to the empty table.)

LINT

LIGHTS: cross-fade from the chaise to the table.
TAPE: the clock ticks in the background. BLUE sits, opens the book at a marked spot, and starts reading. Her attitude to what she reads is a mixture of fascination and revulsion.

BLUE There are various salutary uses for SHARPE, or scraped lint.
The PELOTE - which is merely a ball of scraped lint tied up in a piece of linen rag commonly called a DABERE. This is used in the treatment of protrusion on the navel. The TENTE, used to dilate fistulous openings so as to allow the matter the escape freely. (She begins to feel nauseous.) BOULETTES, used for absorbing blood and matter in cavities, or blood in wounds. Or we can roll a mass of scraped lint into a long roll, the middle is then doubled and pushed into a deep-seated wound so as to press upon the bleeding vessel, while the ends remain loose and assist in forming a clot. Or we can use the Boulette to push into deep-seated ulcers to absorb the matter and keep the sides apart - but if it is allowed to congeal, flies are apt to lay their eggs

underneath it and generate maggots. (She gets up very deliberately, pushes in her chair, stands for a second, and then rushes off to be sick.)

I CAN DO IT

During LINT, GREY has been walking the wards with her (practical) lantern. For our purposes the wards is a 3' wide strip that runs up the left side, across the back, and down the right side of the Room - the main acting area. So far, GREY has only patrolled the upstage area. She holds her lantern high as she looks down at the floor on either side of her, where she can see ill and wounded men lying on mattresses.

As BLUE exits, LIGHTS: go down on the table, and up to illuminate the corridors down which GREY walks. TAPE: fades up with non-naturalistic ward sounds: dripping, clattering, slamming noises, and cries. All the sound effects are treated with echo and reverberation. As this section progresses the character and volume of the TAPE sounds reflect her state of mind.

GREY walks the wards, increasingly fighting back a felling of panic. She returns once or twice to the upstage doorway to the room in an attempt to maintain her hold on normality - and when she does the TAPE ward sounds retreat. But at last she can no longer fight back the agony of panic. She rushes back into the room. The TAPE fades out and she begins to feel safe - brushing down her dress, and rearranging her disordered hair. But she cannot escape the horror. A small moaning cry forces itself from her lips, as the cry grows in volume her face and then her body collapses, leaving her crouching on the floor like a frightened animal.

MARRIAGE

The focus switches to WHITE sitting up in bed looking at her newspaper. As she begins to speak the LIGHTS fade quickly down on GREY and up on the bed.

WHITE (Reading) 'Sir Richard and Lady Monckton Mills are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter...' Marriage, marriage, marriage. Daughters, daughters, daughters, daughters. So many, so young. Marriage is supposed to exercise a magical effect upon the judgement - for a married woman of eighteen has more independence, and is thought



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better able to act for herself than a single one of thirty-six.
The 'noble union', by which a man and woman become together the one perfect being, probably does not exist on earth. It is only surprising that there is so much love as there is. What does it live upon? Husbands and wives never seem to have anything to say to one another.

(LIGHTS: down on the bed and up on the general downstage area as BLUE walks in.)

THE PROPOSAL

BLUE

(She walks over to the table, and stands, troubled, holding on to the back of a chair.) Since I refused him not one day has passed without my thinking of him, life is desolate without his sympathy.

(She walks up and down, clarifying the argument to herself.) I have an intellectual nature which requires satisfaction: and that would find it in him. I have a passionate nature which requires satisfaction: and that would find it in him. I have a moral, an active nature which requires satisfaction: and that would NOT find it in his life. It is not to be found in the arrangement of social and domestic matters.

(Circling) To voluntarily put it out of my power ever to be able to seize the chance of forming for myself a true and rich life, would seem to me like suicide.

I feel as if all my being were gradually drawing together to one point.

(Her hands go up and clasp behind her neck, she throws her head back. LIGHTS: general lights out, cut to a down spot on her.)

O God, no more love. No more marriage O God.

(TAPE: BLUE's waltz music. LIGHTS: a pink wash.)

(BLUE waltzes round the space, her hands pressed tight to her tummy, stopping at three points to mime an increasingly violent bout of vomiting. As the TAPE fades out she stops waltzing and walks naturally out of the room.)

SICK VISITING

WHITE is still in bed, at present slumped down under the covers. As the LIGHTS go up, BLUE arrives at her bedside, she is very purposeful, she has come to minister to the sick. She is wearing a shawl and carries a basket of medicines, etc.

- WHITE Thank goodness, I've had the most terrible fluctuations. I do so want to be among some friends when IT happens. My pulse (she holds out her wrist).
- BLUE You do look peaky. Have you taken your medicine?
- WHITE I'm weak as a kitty. I tried, but I couldn't lift the spoon, and then somehow the bottle fell over, and all that lovely medicine ran away.
- BLUE Never mind, I've got something new for you.
- WHITE Kind of you, but with all the excitement I don't think I could keep it down.
- BLUE Powder will be more easily ingested by a delicate system. (She is unwrapping a small folded paper containing powdered medicine.)
- WHITE God alone knows how delicate.
- BLUE And then a small measure of port wine.
- WHITE You couldn't imagine what I suffer. I think I might just manage a sip of the port, but I can't promise. Perhaps if I was a bit tidier.
(BLUE straightens the covers, and plumps up the pillows.)
What a good girl. So kind to a poor invalid.
- BLUE Better now?
- WHITE I do so hope you never have to depend, as I do, on the goodwill of others. Not even to be able to wash one's own face.
- BLUE Haven't you had your wash?
- WHITE I didn't like to mention it.

(BLUE gets a basin with water, flannel, and towel. She washes WHITE's face gently and delicately. WHITE is blissful.)
- WHITE Thank you mummy.

(BLUE starts to pack up her things.)

I hardly like to ask. One last service for a dying woman.

(BLUE helps WHITE to lean forward, and supports her with one arm while inspecting her sheets and back of her nightie.)

Too kind, too kind.

BLUE Nothing to worry about.

WHITE Are you sure?

BLUE Absolutely.

WHITE Hmph. (A little disappointed.)

BLUE (Getting the powdered medicine ready to be taken.)
Here we are. One two three and down it goes.
(WHITE unwillingly swallows the powder and BLUE gives her a small drink of port.)
I do enjoy coming to see you. I feel thoroughly useful.

WHITE I think I'll have my egg now...

BLUE A little more colour in the cheeks, growing appetite...

WHITE and two slices of toast - one with honey and crusts off.

BLUE We'll soon have you striding about.

WHITE I don't think so.

BLUE Nonsense. Here we go.
(She flings back the cover from WHITE's legs to find that she is wearing shoes.)
Oh! Shoes.

WHITE They're to keep my stockings from slipping off.

BLUE What a good idea.

WHITE I don't want to go for a walk. I want my egg.

BLUE You'll enjoy it much more after exercise.

WHITE I'm VERY HUNGRY INDEED.

- BLUE Even a healthy organism cannot hope to prosper without the vital and regenerating flow of blood to all it's parts. But how is that flow to attain the necessary volition without regular and sustained exercise.
(She gets WHITE, protesting, to her feet, and starts walking her up and down the room.)
- BLUE I want you to be the first to know. I've received a call.
- WHITE Well don't let me stop you dear. I know you're very busy. I'll just slip back between the sheets.
- BLUE My work lies in our hospitals.
- WHITE Best run along then.
- BLUE For fifteen years I've waited. I knew HE had work for me. My uncertainty is ended. I now know what I must do.

(WHITE seizes her moment while BLUE's thoughts are temporarily elsewhere, and scurries back to bed.

BED-DANCE

TAPE: the Lagoon Waltz begins as GREY enters, and she and BLUE position themselves on either side of the bed.

The dance consists of re-making WHITE's bed, with her in it. WHITE meanwhile attempts to hang on to the heap of papers she was working on.

Elegantly, and in time with the music, BLUE and GREY move around the bed, pulling and shaking the covers, and in the process scattering WHITE's papers all over the floor, knocking her over, and pinning her to the bed with well-tucked bedding.

At the conclusion, they tidy her hair and bonnet, and place her hands delicately on the coverlet. All forgiven, she blows them each a kiss, they smile, turn, and exit as the TAPE fades out.



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SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

As GREY and BLUE exit, the LIGHTS go down on the general area leaving a cold light on the bed. WHITE, with an air of resignation plumps her pillows.)

WHITE Up the hill of difficulty, and down the valley of humiliation - alone.
Solitary confinement! Should we be afraid of it? What are we all in but solitary confinement? To be alone is nothing, but to be without sympathy in a crowd, this is to be confined in solitude.
(General LIGHTS up. She jumps out of bed, and scurries down stage centre to tell the audience with some relish -)
I've been told, I have only six months left to live, for the last seven years!
(She smiles triumphant, and scurries back to bed.)

FEVER

GREY (She enters, and plonks herself on the end of the bed.)
Hello.

WHITE Hello. What do you want?

GREY Just to see how you are.

WHITE You're sitting on my bed.

GREY Yes.

WHITE What's the matter with you? It's not like you to sit about.

GREY I'll be fine when I've sat down for a moment.

WHITE You're a dreadful colour.

GREY I'm fine.

WHITE You're not fine. Don't waste my time! What are you fiddle faddling with my bedclothes for?

GREY Just lie down for five minutes.

WHITE Have you been up all night? You're yellow....you've got a fever!

GREY Five minutes, then I'll get back to the wards.
(Laying her head down on the end of the bed.)

WHITE A fever! Have my bed - I'll work at the table...
(She doesn't want her work interrupted.)

GREY A catnap.

WHITE IF you've got the strength to help me up - I've
got back pain.

(GREY totters to her feet and helps WHITE to get
up. Then WHITE pushes GREY back into bed and
tucks her in.)

GREY Put your dressing-gown on!

WHITE Yees!

GREY Put that rug around you please!

WHITE Lie down! Five minutes, and you'll be right as
rain. Have you seen a doctor?

GREY Don't believe in them. I'm perfectly alright.
Has the meat been ordered? (Trying to get up.)

WHITE (Restraining her.) Other people are perfectly
capable of ordering the meat.

GREY I ought to get back. Why aren't you in bed?

WHITE Because you're in it! Would you like some water?

GREY Yes. A large glass please...and don't forget the
meat.

WHITE Will you forget the damn meat!! They can order
it, M - E - A - T, Meat!
(Handing her a glass of water.) Now lie down.
(GREY does so.) When you're better I can have my
bed back. (She crosses to the table with the work
she was in the middle of.)

GREY (Suddenly siting up) I can't lie here!

WHITE I can't work when you keep...

GREY What's more, I will NOT work in such conditions!
Where's the floor?
The floor's on the wall and the walls on the
ceiling....and that window up there is SHUT!
(Suspecting a plot) I can smell 10,000 shirts..

hidden in a box..under your table! Just trying my patience! I will NOT have my patience tried!

WHITE Oh! (completely exasperated)

GREY Is my tooth going to flare up again do you think?

WHITE (She gives in, and leaves her work.) I may as well get in, move over.
(She gets into the bed beside GREY - who is calmer now.)
I only hope I don't catch the fever.

GREY Fever? Who's got fever?

WHITE You have.

GREY I'm a nurse!

WHITE So am I.

GREY Nurses don't catch fever. I'm special.

WHITE Everyone catches fever. Even special people.

GREY I don't mind if I catch it from a soldier.

WHITE You probably did.

GREY They're not cats or dogs you know!

WHITE There's a little child coming to visit me later...

GREY How charming. (She snuggles closer to WHITE.)

WHITE Yes.

GREY Not sick is it?

WHITE NO - YOU are. You're having eggs for breakfast.

GREY Good. With the crusts cut off please.
Time for your medicine. (She struggles to sit up, WHITE tries to make her lie back.)

WHITE I don't want it - YOU do!

GREY Be quiet! I will not have people contradicting me.
Sidney Herbert's coming to dinner. Is everything ready?

WHITE What are we giving him?

GREY (Flopping back) I saw a leg lying round somewhere.
Oh, that poor horse, all alone in the tank without even an owl for music and interest.
I'll tell you a secret: I don't think that horse likes me. He knows I like riding.
I've got to rein those doctors in.
Do you think I'm too strict?

WHITE Ssssh.

GREY I'll ride that Dr. Jackson! (She's sitting up in bed using the bedclothes as reins) Yaah! Yaah!

WHITE Oh SHUT UP!

GREY (Quiet again) I think I'll have my egg now.

WHITE Medicine first. (She gets up, and goes for the medicine.)

GREY Do I have a vote in the matter?
Tell Dr. Jackson ...I don't always look so dirty... my hair can be nice..(she drinks her medicine)..tell him about my blue dress for the ball... I CAN be normal if I want to be...

WHITE I think you're very clever, and very normal. (She stroke's GREY's hair.)

GREY A horse has to love it's trainer you see...tell Jackson that.

WHITE Ssssh.

(BLUE has been standing quietly near the bed - a visitor to the sick-room. At this point she motions WHITE to go, and she takes over care of GREY. She sits down on the bed, puts her arm round GREY, and starts reading.
LIGHTS: General light down. A top light on bed, Practical + spot on table.
WHITE starts back to her work, but as soon as she catches sight of it she is propelled into the following solo speech.)

INDIA

She stands by the side of the table and addresses the audience as though they are a public meeting / the House of Commons.

WHITE

The Royal Commission on the sanitary state of the army in India has shown that unless the health of British troops in India can be improved, and the enormous death rate reduced, this country will never be able to hold India with a British army - and bestow upon it's vast population the benefit of a higher civilisation.

I have it on good authority (she picks up her completed questionnaires from the table) there is no drainage either in town or in country, and not a single barrack is supplied - in our sense of the word - with water. So simple a piece of mechanism as a pump is unknown. Water is drawn in skins, carried on the backs of men or bullocks, and poured into any sort of vessel available in the barracks for use. The quantity if the water is utterly insufficient for health. And as to the quality - the less said about that the better. In holding India, we must be able to show the moral right of our tenure. How does education progress without means of cleanliness, or health? (Sitting at the table) The question is no less a one than this: How to create a public health department for India - how to bring a higher civilisation into India. What a work. What a noble task for a government. That would be creating India anew.

(LIGHTS: cross-fade from the table to the bed.)

THE BREAK

(She is still sitting on the bed, cradling the sleeping GREY.)

BLUE

I have not taken this step without years of anxious consideration. It is the result of the deepest thought and advice. I mean to leave home. I do not wish to talk about it, and this is the last time I shall ever do so. It is a fait accompli.

I am to become Superintendent of the Institute for

the Care of Distressed Gentlewomen in Harley Street.(She goes back to her book.)

MOTHERS AND FATHERS

WHITE meanwhile has started to make high, drawn-out, unearthly sounds on her musical saw. In response to it GREY rises from the bed, and moves sluggishly in a parody of a slow waltz over to the doorway. Her hair has been unpinned and it hangs around her. LIGHTS: As she reaches the doorway a side light - the setting sun - comes up from upstage of the door.

She hangs on the frame looking out (upstage), and then leans back, against one side, her face catching the light. The musical saw continues.

GREY

The real mothers and fathers of the human race are not the fathers and mothers of the flesh....For every one of my 18,000 children I have expended more motherly feeling and action in a week than my mother has expended on me in 37 years.

Oh, my poor men, I am a bad mother to come home and leave you in your Crimean graves.

In six months all these sufferings will be forgotten.

I can never forget.

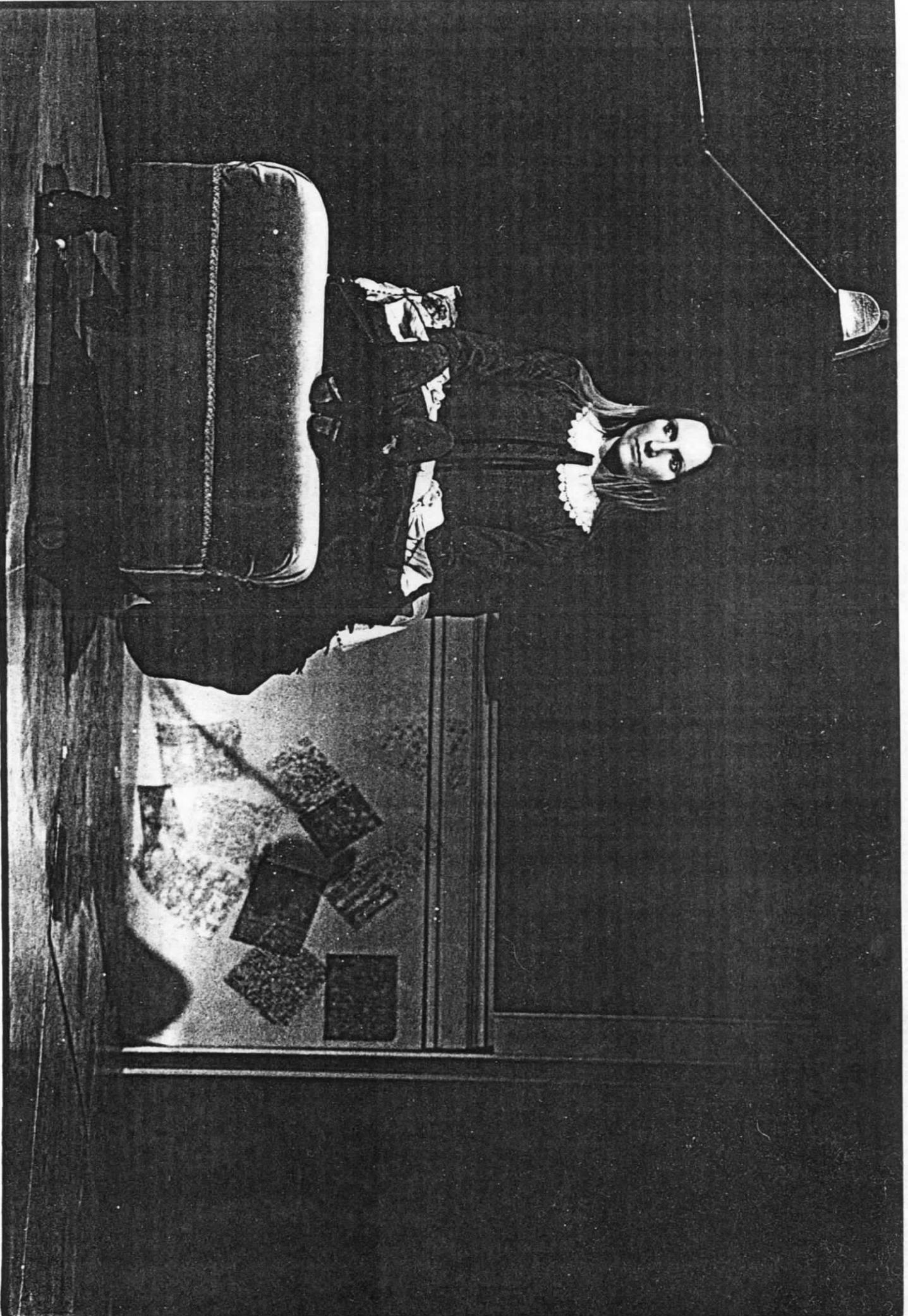
(She waltzes sluggishly again away from the doorway. She stops. LIGHTS: room lights begin to fade up. She waltzes again, more quickly and purposefully, to side of chaise. The musical saw stops abruptly.)

(Decisively) I can never forget.

(She sits on the chaise. Her fever is past. She is sad but resolute.)

AFTER

GREY has just come back from the Crimea, she sits in a state of shock on the chaise. WHITE's chief political ally and work-mate has just died, and she is at the table reading letters of condolence. Her hair is down, she looks upset. BLUE sits on the bed reading - and keeping an eye on they other two.



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WHITE (She sits morosely at the table reading a card she has just received.

'Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall,
All the Queens' horses,
And all the Queen's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.'

Written in Greek! One of the Jieux d'esprit in which Sir George excels I suppose! PRAT!

Oh Sidney!

I am a bereaved woman! I have lost my beloved colleague.

Did you hear what I said? (To GREY and BLUE)
He's gone.

Ezekiel went running around naked for a sign. I cannot run around naked. It is not the custom of the Country. But I would mount a widow's cap on my head, and I would cry - 'This is for Sidney Herbert! I am his TRUE widow!'

(BLUE has moved towards her, and at this point touches her on the shoulder, in sympathy.)

Women have no sympathy. (Meaning GREY and BLUE)
Not one has altered her life by one iota for me or my opinions. Not one has read one of my books. They don't know the names of Cabinet Ministers. They don't know who of the men of today is alive or dead.

(BLUE has found GREY's old shawl. She puts it around GREY's shoulders. - as she sits on the chaise.)

BLUE (To GREY) How do you feel?

GREY I have seen ... hell.

BLUE It's alright now, you're home.

GREY Buzz fuzz.

BLUE Nobody else could have done what you did. You're a national heroine. They're even making tea-cups with your portrait on them.

GREY My name is Miss Smith.

BLUE Everyone is proud of you. All you need is a good rest, and then you can put all those memories behind you.

WHITE Cramp! (Clutching her leg, she leaps off the chair, and comes to rest on the end of the bed.)
(BLUE turns her attention to WHITE, she kneels down by her side, and rubs her leg gently.)
I'm a vampire.

BLUE Ssssh.

WHITE Did I work him too hard?

BLUE You worked together. It's important work.

WHITE But he's gone, before we finished.

BLUE You must do it alone. You can't let go now.

WHITE But the horrible loneliness.

BLUE Who will do it if you don't?

GREY There's a lot to be done. (She takes off her shawl.)

HARLEY STREET

WHITE and GREY cross to the table, and sit in the Up and Stage Right chairs. BLUE gets two brushes from the night table, she hands WHITE one. WHITE starts to brush GREY's hair. Standing in front of the table, BLUE tells the audience about her work. By the end of the speech she has taken the third chair, Stage Left, and is brushing WHITE's hair. She is very pleased with herself.

BLUE I am now in the heyday of my power. When I entered into service here at Harley Street I determined that happen what would I NEVER would intrigue among the Committee. Now I perceive that I do all my business by intrigue. Last General Committee I executed a series of resolutions and presented them as coming from the Medical Men, these I proposed and carried in committee - an then, and not till then, I showed them to the Medical Men; without telling them that they were already passed in committee. It was a bold stroke. The Medical Men have had two meetings on them, and approved them all, and thought they were their own.

DREAMING ALWAYS

TAPE: A piano and clarinet introduction to the Victorian Song 'Rock Me to Sleep' - which the three Florences later sing. It begins low, underneath WHITE's speech.

WHITE is still sitting at the table, her hair being brushed from behind by BLUE.

WHITE Dreaming always - never accomplishing; thus women live - too much ashamed of their dreams to tell them where they will be laughed at .
Give us back our suffering we cry to Heaven in our hearts, for out of nothing comes nothing, but out of suffering may come the cure. Better pain than paralysis. Better to die in the surf heralding the way to a new world than stand idly on the shore.

(As WHITE finishes, the introduction also comes to an end - fading as it does so. The three Florences, still sitting at the table, turn to face the audience. They begin singing.)

ROCK ME TO SLEEP

A 19C song, sung unaccompanied, and in three part harmony.

Backward, turn backward oh Time in your flight,
Make me a child again just for tonight.
Mother come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore,
Take me again, again to your heart as of yore.

Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth all the silver threads out of my hair.
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep,
Over my slumbers my loving watch keep.
Rock me to sleep, rock me to sleep,
Mother, mother, rock me to sleep.

Rock me to sleep, rock me to sleep,
Mother, rock me to sleep.

END SEQUENCE

(The end sequence consists of taped music and movement.)

TAPE: The Lagoon Waltz :

LIGHTS: Large centre spot:

BLUE gets up from the table and crosses to centre stage, where she rocks backward and forward in waltz timing. She is joined first by WHITE, and then by GREY.

They dance together in a circle - which then opens to make a diagonal line across the stage.

TAPE: Bulgarian Bagpipe Music:

LIGHTS: Three down spots on the THREE Florences.

The music is rhythmic, but slow and stately. The THREE turn slowly in their spots, holding their arms: out from their sides; behind their heads; or out in front.

As the music doubles its speed, the THREE pick up speed, arms stretched out above their heads.

The diagonal line breaks, they move to the centre.

TAPE: A collage of the Bulgarian Bagpipes + modern drum music

LIGHTS: Large centre spot, and furniture lights.

As the music becomes faster, and wilder, the THREE somersault over the furniture kicking their legs in the air, and pick up and whirl the chairs in the air.

They collapse on top of each other in a central heap.

They roll backward out of the heap. Jump up, clasp hands together in the centre, and whirl as fast as they can round in a circle - hair and garments flying.

TAPE: fades out slowly.

LIGHTS: the central spot goes down with the TAPE.

The THREE Florences don't stop until the Lights have gone.