PROLOGE –

Helena comes out to talk to the audience. Audience cannot see her face. Behind her is this Video:

<https://youtu.be/fNw3NCvXS5U>

HELENA

I am a ghost. It has been over a 100 years since my children were born.   
They are ghosts as well. You might find me wandering about the novels   
of Henry James, Wallace Stegner & Mary Hallock Foote. And through the   
poems of my Richard and Helen Hunt Jackson. You might find me in art   
museums, in works by Winslow Homer, August Saint-Gardens, and Cecilia   
Beaux. There are others. My artwork has almost vanished from the earth.   
Richard’s first book of poetry was mine to design and decorate. I wander   
through everyone’s biographies. I kept all their letters. And I took their   
hands and comforted every one of them.

Stage goes dark.

ACT ONE: Open dark stage:

Spotlight. Henry James enters, he is middle-aged, pot-bellied, clean shaven, in a dark suit, very proper looking English gentleman with an American accent.

HENRY

Hello, I’m Henry James. You might have heard of me. I wrote   
a lot of famous novels. You’ve probably seen the movie versions.   
Stories of well-to-do Americans in Europe and America in the   
late 19th century. Lots of pretty heroines in nice dresses. Always  
innocent. Scoundrels always lurking about. This is about one of  
my childhood friends, Helena and a little about my cousin Minnie.  
We were all in Newport as teenagers. They knew who I was, even  
then.

Lights go up. Setting is park, with grass and trees and bushes (or something to represent that on a minimal level.) Opening song the girls perform “Huckleberry Hunting” with Helena and Minnie chasing  
each other around the stage, singing and acting out the lyrics. There is a teenage boy following after   
them, lurking.

HELENA & MINNIE  
 sing “Huckleberry Hunting”

DUET  
Oh, them girls and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
Oh them girls and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 MINNIE  
Then a little girl ran off, and a little girl ran after,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
 HELENA  
And the little girl fell down and she saw her little garter.  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 MINNIE  
She said, I'll be your beau if you'll let me be your lover,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
 HELENA  
But the little girl said "No, for my sweetheart's Jilly Miller."  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 MINNIE  
And she put her on her knee and kissed her good and proper  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
  
 HELENA  
She kissed her back again and she didn’t try to stop her  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 MINNIE  
And then she put her arm all about her waspy waist  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
 HELENA  
And she said young lady you are in a great haste  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 MINNIE  
And she put her hand upon her knee  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
 HELENA  
And she said young lady you’re a bit too free  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 MINNIE  
And she put her hand yet higher still  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
 HELENA  
And she said young lady that is really quite a thrill  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 DUET  
Oh, them girls and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
Oh them girls and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
  
<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/huckleberry-hunting/>

After the song, they rest on a blanket. Young Henry lying with his head in Helena’s lap.

HELENA  
 You need my bonnet to shade your face from the sun.

HENRY  
 I couldn’t. I wouldn’t dare.

HELENA  
(To Minnie) So I would get to study art and you can come visit   
 whenever you want.

MINNIE  
 Uncle Henry is talking about moving us all to Boston.  
   
 HELENA  
 Damn! (To Henry.) Is this true?

HENRY  
 The entire family.

HELENA  
 We are probably too young to get married. I can’t possibly be separated from you.

MINNIE  
 If it was even legal. And neither of us have a dime. We can’t even run off   
 and change our names.

HELENA  
 Shall we meet in Paris afterward? I’m sure it would all be just fine there.

MINNIE  
 Yes, an artist’s garret near Notre Dame. The crème glacée is the best there.

The scene freezes. Old Henry returns as narrator.

HENRY  
 Both families were intent on separating them. They were brought home from  
 boarding school because of their “new” marriage. Minnie had cut off all of her  
 hair to be the boy. She had such gorgeous hair!

Helena went off the New York City to start Art School. Minnie went with us to   
 Boston and developed consumption. The rest of her short life was spent in   
 coughing up blood. They tried to write, but Minnie’s sister intercepted all of   
 the letters and destroyed them.

Image of Minnie lying in sick bed appears.

HENRY & HELENA  
 Sing “She Died Today”

HENRY  
She died today  
I’m sorry but she just went away.  
There was nothing we could do.   
Her sister said, she blessed us all and wished us well  
I wanted to tell her to go to hell  
She had cut us off from the best of the best  
 DUET  
We were joyous for a bit  
Us two girls and our half girl  
We were all in a whirl  
So happy to be free and young.  
  
 HELENA  
Thanks for telling me  
You know we were the best of the best  
You were always one of us   
Though you blushed more and rolled your eyes more  
We were what we wanted to be  
Despite all the rest that never understood   
 DUET  
We were joyous for a bit  
Us two girls and our half girl  
We were all in a whirl  
So happy to be free and young.  
 DUET  
We weren’t allowed in  
We weren’t even friends at the end  
We were the ones that had to be kept away   
We were to blame, we weren’t ever gonna be the same  
We were the strange ones   
That had given her the consumption.  
 DUET  
We were joyous for a bit  
Us two girls and our half girl  
We were all in a whirl  
So happy to be free and young.

<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/she-died-today/>

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO: Helena and Molly enter as art students and hug when they meet and then walk together arm in arm with their satchels through a NYC street.

MOLLY  
 And then Helena dawned on my nineteenth year like a rose pink   
 winter sunrise, in the bare halls of Cooper, sweet and cold after   
 her walk up from the ferry. Staten Island was her home; an aunt had   
 taken me in on Long Island and I crossed by an uptown ferry and walked   
 down. Her people belonged to the aristocracy of New York. Her father  
 was Commodore De Kay, who sailed to feed the starving Irish.  
 My people belonged to nothing except the Society of Friends.   
 She had spent her childhood abroad and spoke three languages.   
 I misspoke only one.

Helena and Molly enter The Tenth Street Studio Building and go to a wooden bench in a hallway. Helena looks at her watch.

HELENA  
 Mr. La Farge was living in Newport. His wife and children are still there,   
 I think. Henry James and his older brother took lessons with him. I wasn’t  
 old enough then. He has a studio here and in Boston now.

MOLLY  
 Thank you for including me.

Helena pecks her cheek. Winslow Homer approaches them. He is slightly older, with a bushy moustache and wears a straw hat and carries a cane.

WINSLOW  
 Ladies, how are you? Here for La Farge?

MOLLY  
 We are students at Cooper Union, Mr. Homer. We’re here for lessons.

WINSLOW  
 I understand he’s an excellent teacher.

MOLLY  
 I’m Mary Hallock and this is Helena De Kay. We both know who you are.

Winslow shakes hands with both girls and lingers with Helena’s hand. Helena pulls away.

HELENA  
 I have to go.

She turns and knocks on the nearby door and La Farge answers and escorts her in.

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE – La Farge’s Studio

He hovers over her as she sits before an easel with charcoal

LA FARGE & HELENA  
 Sing “La Farge’s Studio”

LA FARGE  
 You need to begin anew   
 You are just a child  
 Draw your own drawing again  
 Fluidity is the true course   
 Grace and a dainty touch   
 After all you are female   
 Your fertility is the key  
 HELENA   
 Take your hands off me  
 LA FARGE  
 You should draw pretty flowers   
 HELENA   
 How dare you touch me  
 LA FARGE  
 You should draw pretty children   
 HELENA  
 I came here to learn something  
 LA FARGE  
 About warm and fuzzy things.   
 HELENA   
 You are creepy beyond words  
 LA FARGE  
 Up and down the city  
 To catch the dimming lights   
 Of winter and summer air   
 Finishing the afternoon  
 Refinement of modelling  
 Descends from the skies   
 HELENA  
 What does that even mean?   
 LA FARGE  
 You won’t know till you give birth  
 You can’t know till you nurse  
 Until you are consumed  
 By motherhood and love  
 By slaving away at your role  
 After all you are female  
 HELENA  
 Oh go fuck yourself silly!

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/3-lafarge-classv1>

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR - Back in the hallway. Helena exits the studio and Molly goes in. Helena is shaken, doesn’t know if she should warn her friend or not. Homer is still there in the hallway.

HELENA  
 You are still here.

WINSLOW  
 I went and came back. I’m on my way out again. My studio   
 is upstairs. I know your brother, Charlie. If you would like   
 to stop by for a lesson, you’d be more than welcome.

HELENA  
 Thank you, but I may be done with private lessons.

WINSLOW  
 You mustn’t judge any of us by him. I hope to see you again.

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE - Helena and Molly are leaving a farmhouse behind with art supplies for sketching. And a picnic basket. It’s a bright summer day.

MOLLY  
 Your mother and mine are getting along.

HELENA  
 This has been fun! You don’t mind going out for a faraway spot?  
   
 MOLLY  
 I’m tired of being quiet as a mouse. I know a spot that my father   
 and his hands barely ever get to.

The two girls lay out a blanket and immediately start making love. Their blouses are unbuttoning, skirts hiked up and hair falling down.

WINSLOW  
 (From far away.) Hello!

HELENA  
 Oh my god!

They pull apart and immediately start getting their clothing together.

MOLLY  
 I invited him. I didn’t really think he would come. My mother  
 must have sent him up to look for us.

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX - Winslow is painting a portrait of Helena as she lies in a hammock reading a book. Mrs. De Kay, Helena’s mother, is painting a watercolor of Winslow as he paints.

ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN - Winslow with his satchel leaving the farmhouse. Waving goodbye to Helena and Molly and Mrs. De Kay on the front porch.

MRS. DE KAY  
 Well, he is such a remarkable man. This is such a feather  
 in your cap!  
 HELENA  
 He doesn’t talk. I could barely get an entire sentence out of him.  
  
 MOLLY  
 But he is brilliant!

HELENA   
 You two can marry Winslow Homer!  
   
 MRS. DE KAY  
 He is not interested in us, dear.  
   
 MOLLY  
 He is a member of the Academy. The hanging committee for  
 the Exposition all know him and who his friends are.  
   
 HELENA  
 And if I reject him and he gets mad at me? Then what?

ACT ONE, SCENE EIGHT - The farmhouse is dark. Helena comes in with a lantern to look at Winslow’s studies of her.

HELENA  
 Sings “Is This Me?”

Is this me?  
Is this really me?Why have you stolen me?Why have you made me yours?

He followed us  
 Came with polite manners  
 Came with nothing to say  
 Followed us to the White Mountains  
 He was a genius, we all knew  
 His eyes shining like gold in the light  
 He saw everything  
 He saw me

Is this me?  
 Is this really me?  
 Why have you stolen me?  
 Why have you made me yours?

He was a teacher  
 With a brush he’d stroke the sun  
 Say, did you see that?  
 Yes, but I can’t do what you do  
 He was a genius, we all knew  
 He was in love but never spoke of it  
 His moustache hid his lips  
 Did he even smile?

Is this me?  
 Is this really me?  
 Why have you stolen me?  
 Why have you made me yours?

<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/is-this-me/>

Resources for Homer’s Paintings of Helena

<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/helenarichard/pictures-of-helena/>

ACT ONE, SCENE NINE - Helena and Molly and Emma Beach with her parents Mr. & Mrs. Beach enter and sit down in the pew close to the church pulpit. Mrs. Beach is pregnant. This is Rev. Beecher’s church in Brooklyn. Helena has Molly’s ear but not Emma’s.

HELENA  
 Emma and her mother used to summer in Newport  
 I was happy when I found her at Cooper Union in our class.   
 You’ll love the house.

MOLLY  
 She’s great fun.  
   
 HELENA  
 Reverend Beecher is an almost a permanent guest every   
 evening. He uses Mr. Beach’s library. He’s close to Emma’s   
 parents. But! He will drink and be obnoxious around the  
 girls at night.

MOLLY  
 Oh dear. With Emma as well?   
   
 HELENA  
 She may the only one in the world that’s immune. She  
 calls him Grandpa. I’ve heard it said that there is always  
 at least one of his mistresses at every sermon he gives.

Rev. Beecher takes the pulpit.

REV. BEECHER  
 Sings “Happy To Be Here”  
  
 My heart is full of what it’s seen  
 These woman, these kids  
 And all the dogs that have come and gone  
 There’s no thought left to be mean  
  
 So tell me about sad and sorrow  
 Tell me all of your pain and bother  
 I can give an ear and a smile  
 I won’t have to beg or borrow

Can I show you my treasures  
 Here in my little velvet wallet  
 Semi-precious gems that glitter in the sun  
 All to make the pretty young girls smile

All these jealous husbands  
 Whom have bored their wives to death  
 How do they think they can blame me  
 I will be kind to my last breath

So come and see me preach  
 I do it oh so well and with oomph  
 I’ll save your soul and entertain you  
 Trials about my morality are such a pain

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/happy-to-be-here>

REV. BEECHER  
 (Acting interrupted.) Can someone show Mrs. Woodhull  
 to the door? Use some force if need be. Go home to your  
 convict husband!   
  
A woman from the pews gets up and goes back to the Mrs. Woodhull and welcomes her, shaking her hand.

MOLLY  
 Who is that?   
  
 EMMA  
 A lady that Grandpa had arrested and sent to jail for  
 writing about some affair he had.

ACT ONE, SCENE TEN – Molly and Helena are in bed together at the Beach house. They are interrupted by a knock on the door. Helena gathers herself together and goes to answer it, looking back to make sure Molly is composed.

EMMA  
 I’m sorry, but I saw that your light was still on. I wanted  
 to ask your opinion. Would you read this?

Helena sits down with the handwritten pages. She looks at Emma.

EMMA  
It’s written by my father. It seems to be a letter. I found it in   
his desk drawer when I went to get him some papers to look   
at while he was sick in bed. I don’t think it was mailed or   
given to anybody.  
  
 HELENA  
 It’s not addressed to anyone.  
  
 EMMA  
 I’m sure it was for Rev. Beecher.  
  
 HELENA  
 About your mother?

EMMA  
 Yes. Do you think it’s true?  
   
 HELENA  
 I would put it back where you found it and not say anything  
 to anyone. Do you think it’s true?  
   
 EMMA  
Probably.

ACT ONE, SCENE ELEVEN – We hear and hardly see Helena and Molly with Emma and others at the Beach house through a bright open doorway. The darkened room in front of us has a giant window overlooking the East River at sunset. Molly enters the room alone. Rev. Beecher follows her in. He is very drunk. He tries to grab her around the waist and she shoves him down on a couch where he passes out.

MOLLY  
 Sings “The Window”

They had the window to the world  
 Looking over, looking down  
 At the piers of the East River  
 At The Brooklyn Bridge still waiting to be done  
 At Manhattan shining like a diamond in the sun

Papa Beach ran the newspaper, The Sun  
 The Mama decorated their lives with flowers  
 Smothering the late night fun  
 Rev Beecher chased and harassed all the girls  
 And absolved their gullible mothers one by one.

I met my man there late one night  
 At the end of a new year’s eve  
 And left poor Helena lonesome  
 Just more memories so sadly unraveling  
 Like Manhattan glistening and fading at sunset  
  
 The last baby born there was Beechers  
 Not the Papa’s family homespun  
 The house emptied in a few years  
 I followed my husband to far California  
 And dreamt of cities when I missed my only one.

They had the window to the world  
 Looking over, looking down  
 At the piers of the East River  
 At The Brooklyn Bridge still waiting to be done  
 At Manhattan shining like a diamond in the sun

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/the-window>

Rev Beecher stirs and tries to stand. Molly runs out of the room.

ACT TWO - Annual Exposition of the National Academy of Design. Helena and her mother are looking at the paintings. They find Winslow Homer’s painting of the girl on horseback in the White Mountains “Bridle Path.”

Resources for Homer’s Paintings of Helena

<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/helenarichard/pictures-of-helena/>

The random viewers near them look at the painting and look at Helena, until it begins to make her nervous. She checks to see if she has a spot on her dress.

MRS. DE KAY  
 Why, it’s you!

HELENA  
 That’s why everyone is staring.

MRS. DE KAY  
 How wonderful!

HELENA  
 Mother, I didn’t sit for it! I wasn’t there.

MRS. DE KAY  
 He invited you.

HELENA  
 Just stop!

Helena moves away from the painting. She then sees herself again, this time a real person, turned away, same hair, similar dress, same size and build. She follows and taps the woman on the shoulder. Agnes turns. She could be Helena’s sister, but for the freckles on her face.

AGNES  
 Hello there!

MRS. DE KAY  
 Oh, you’ve found her!

Helena is confused.

MRS. DE KAY  
 Helena, This is your cousin from Ireland. Agnes Roberts.  
 Her mother was your father’s sister. I told you she was  
 coming to New York.

HELENA  
 You didn’t.

Helena shakes her hand.

HELENA  
 Welcome to America!

AGNES  
 I remember you! You were the little fresh babe when  
 your family arrived in the wonderful ship that was  
 filled with food! I was seven!

Winslow Homer appears. He comes over to say hello.

WINSLOW   
 (To Helena) How have you been? (Then without an answer)   
 No more long faces. Please come for more lessons whenever  
 you would like. I’ve finished your portrait to give to you or   
 your mother.

HELENA  
 Thank you Mr. Homer.

WINSLOW  
 And who is this?

HELENA  
 My cousin, Agnes.

Homer takes Agnes’ hand and holds on to it a moment more than he should.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO – Agnes and Molly and Helena are in Helena’s kitchen with big vats of boiling water on her stove. This is the 1874 way women would wash their clothing if they couldn’t afford a laundry service. It would take them all day. They would boil their clothing, soap and rinse and iron it. They are taking a break to have lunch at the kitchen table.

AGNES  
 These are very fancy. (Holding up Helena’s petticoat.)  
 Quite the thing.

MOLLY  
 This is Helena’s major fault and major secret.

AGNES  
 I can more than likely make a few things that are even better.

HELENA  
 Enough about my undies! How is Mr. Homer?

AGNES  
 He’s just fine thank you. He’s really quite the gentleman.  
 He just doesn’t have much to say.

HELENA  
 He was just as you describe. It drove me to distraction that  
 he would just sit there and look at you to say something   
 to him.

AGNES  
 The lads in the pubs back home never had anything to say.  
 And they weren’t making much of a living. And not a one of  
 them were gentlemen. Oh, can I show you something?

# She leaves the room. Molly takes Helena’s hand.

# MOLLY Arthur has asked me to marry him. I said yes.

# Helena squeezes her hand and looks away. A tear runs down her cheek.

# HELENA It’s gone, isn’t it? Gone?

# Agnes returns with a large fashion magazine.

# HELENA Molly is getting married!

# Agnes hugs Molly.

# AGNES Congratulations!

# HELENA What is this?

# Agnes hands her the fashion magazine.

# AGNES I’ve been making a little extra working with the fashion magazines. They want them all colored, so a couple of places have big rooms where they hired the girls to hand paint the pictures. I do yellow mostly, and then pass each page on to the next girl to color her color. We do every issue that way.

# Helena gets up to get something from her lampstand.

# HELENA Can I show you something?

# Agnes and Molly look at her expectantly. Helena holds up a copy of Scribner’s Magazine.

# HELENA A sonnet for the whole world to see! Richard steps out from wing to face Helena.

# RICHARD Sings “I Know Not”

# I know not if I love her overmuch: But this I know, that when unto her face she lifts her hand, Which rests there, still, a space, then slowly falls- ‘t is I who feel that touch. I know not if I love her more than those who long her light have known But for the rose she covers in her hair, I’d give my heart

# And when she sudden shakes her head, with such a look, I soon her secret meaning trace. So when she runs I think ‘t is I who race. Like a poor cripple who has lost his crutch I know not if I love her more than those who long her light have known But for the rose she covers in her hair, I’d give my heart

# I am if she is gone: And when she goes, I know not why, for that is a very strange art- As if myself should from myself depart. I know not if I love her more

# I know not if I love her more than those who long her light have known But for the rose she covers in her hair, I’d give my heart

# HELENA Sings “Is This Me?” (Two lines only) Is this me? Is this really me? (Then answers herself) Yes!

# <https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/391-2/>

# ACT TWO, SCENE THREE – Henry James enters dark stage.

# HENRY JAMES Helena and Molly wrote letters regularly from opposite ends of the country for the next fifty years. Molly even wrote a novel about her friend. Who would do something like that? Henry James laughs and claps his hands at his joke.He exits. Molly and Helena on a NYC street.

# MOLLY & HELENA Sing Duet “I Will Whisper”

MOLLY  
I will whisper in your ear, my darling  
For the rest of your life  
In our bed, in a blanket we have woven  
With only the mountains and the prairies between  
 HELENA  
I’ll put my arms around my girl of all girls  
And grow you roses for your hair  
I’ll love you as a wife loves her husband  
As a lonely widow at the ocean, never free  
 MOLLY & HELENA  
We walked to the steps to the Cooper Union  
In Eighteen Sixty-three  
To learn to draw and make a living  
Only to learn that Art had her very own tricks  
 MOLLY  
You were poor and I was rich  
 HELENA  
No, it was the other way around  
 MOLLY  
You were gorgeous and I was plain  
 HELENA  
No, we were the beauties never found  
 MOLLY & HELENA  
But we were!  
Those men!  
How gentle and wonderful they could be!  
 HELENA  
I will whisper in your ear, my darling  
For the rest of your life  
In our bed, in a blanket we have woven  
With only the mountains and the prairies between  
 MOLLY  
I will whisper in your ear, my darling  
For the rest of your life  
In our bed, in a blanket we have woven  
With only the mountains and the prairies between

<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/fifty-years-of-letters/>

# ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR- before the statue of George Washington on horseback in Union Square NYC. Helena and Richard are strolling arm in arm in evening.

# RICHARD I don’t think you should go. It’s going to be dangerous. It’s already been cancelled once.

# HELENA It’s just a parade to celebrate Orange Day. Agnes and her friends that came with her from Ireland are all going to march. I’ll be surrounded by friendly faces.

# RICHARD The Catholics are going be out there to heckle all of you.

# HELENA None of Agnes and her friends were out to bother the people celebrating St. Patrick’s Day.

# RICHARD The Greens are the angry rebels! They bomb people. Shoot people.

# HELENA Let’s not argue. I’ll be fine.

# RICHARD & HELENA Sing “My Songs Are All of Thee”

RICHARD  
My songs are all of thee,   
What I sing of morning when the stars are yet in sight  
What I sing of evening, or the melancholy night  
What I sing of birds that o’er the reddening waters wing

HELENA  
My songs are all of thee,   
What I sing of song, of fire, of winds, or mists that cling  
What I sing of rivers that toward ocean take their flight  
What I sing of summer when the rose is blossoming

I think no thought that is not thine, no breath  
Of life I breathe beyond your perfection  
Thou art the voice that my soul whispers  
 RICHARD   
And of all sound thou art the sense. From thee  
The music of my song, and what it says  
Is but the beat of thy heart, throbbing through me.  
 RICHARD & HELENA  
I think no thought that is not thine, no breath  
Of life I breathe beyond your perfection  
Thou art the voice that my soul whispers  
   
And of all sound thou art the sense. From thee  
The music of my song, and what it says  
Is but the beat of thy heart, throbbing through me.

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/my-songs-are-all-of-thee>

# ACT TWO, SCENE FIVE – Agnes and Helena are out on NYC Street with Orange Day Parade Marchers. Most have orange suspenders on. There are some flags and banners. The Green Irish appear and hang around the edges. They have green neckties and green hats. Some have rifles and clubs.

# Henry James walks out to start parade

# HENRY JAMES & AGNES & HELENA & ODD GREEN IRISH MAN Sing “Agnes’ Medley”

HENRY JAMES  
In Dublin's fair city,

Where the girls are so pretty,

I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone,

As she wheeled her wheel-barrow,

Through streets broad and narrow,

Crying, cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh!

AGNES

Alive, alive, oh,

Alive, alive, oh,

Crying cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh  
 Alive, alive, oh,

Alive, alive, oh,

Crying cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh

Look at my face  
What do you see?  
Do you see freckles, do you see Mic? Scud? Irish?  
At home, where I go hungry, I am beautiful  
The boys all want me  
The old men slobber in their ale

I came looking for work  
I came to sew, to clean  
To carry your buckets, throw out your slop  
There’s five of us looking for work  
I live in a tenement  
We share and share alike

Look at my face?  
What do you see?  
You see ginger hair. Do you see Mic? Scud? Irish?  
At home my thin parents love only me  
I would marry easily  
And my babies would die early  
 HELENA  
Look at me?  
My blood’s like hers  
Do you see freckles, do you see Mic? Scud? Irish?  
Of course not, you are as blind as you are stupid  
My Daddy was the Commodore  
We sailed to feed the starving Irish  
 AGNES & HELENA  
Look at my face  
What do you see?  
Do you see freckles, do you see Mic? Scud? Irish?  
At home, where I go hungry, I am beautiful  
The boys all want me  
The old men slobber in their ale.  
 AGNES  
In the County Tyrone, near the town of Dungannon,  
Where many the ructions that meself had a hand in.  
Bob Williamson lived, a weaver by trade,  
And all of us thought him a stout Orange blade,  
On the Twelfth of July as around it did come,  
Bob played with his flute to the sound of a drum.  
You may talk of your harp, your piano or lute,  
 ODD IRISH GUY  
 (On top of Agnes)  
Oh, Paddy, dear, and did you  
 AGNES  
But none can compare with the Old Orange Flute.

Crowd starts erupting.

ODD IRISH GUY   
Hear the news that’s going round,  
The Shamrock is forbid by law  
To grow on Irish ground.  
No more St. Patrick’s day no more we’ll keep,   
His colours can’t be seen,

Gunshots, glass breaking.

For there’s a cruel law against   
The wearing of the green.  
I met with Napper Tandy and   
He took me by the hand,  
He said, “How’s poor old Ireland,   
and how does she stand?”  
She`s the most distressful country,   
That ever yet was seen  
 AGNES  
 (On top of Odd Irish Guy)  
In the County Tyrone, near the town of Dungannon,

Yells. Violence.

ODD IRISH GUY  
For they`re hanging men and women   
For the wearing of the green  
 AGNES  
Where many the ructions that meself had a hand in

Over each other. (The two songs are one # apart) Sounds of fights, explosions

AGNES ODD IRISH GUY  
Bob Williamson lived, a weaver by trade, Oh, Paddy, dear, and did you hear  
And all of us thought him a stout Orange blade, The news that’s going round,  
On the Twelfth of July as around it did come, The Shamrock is forbid by law  
Bob played with his flute to the sound of a drum. To grow on Irish ground.  
You may talk of your harp, your piano or lute, No more St. Patrick’s day no more we’ll keep

But none can compare with the Old Orange Flute.His colours can’t be seen,

For there’s a cruel law against

The wearing of the green.

# I met with Napper Tandy and He took me by the hand,

# Stage goes black with flashes and explosions and a riot in progress.

# <https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/agnes-medley-v1>

# ACT TWO, SCENE SIX – Richard and Helena enter their “Studio.” They are dressed in wedding garb. They have just come from the marriage. Helena has a bandage on her forehead. Helena plops down in a chair in exhaustion.

# RICHARD Are you all right?

# HELENA Wonderfully all right! Just exhausted.

# RICHARD My sister is bringing the Wedding gifts tomorrow, she said.

# HELENA We shall be so happy here!

# Helena starts to get up and acts dizzy. Richard grabs her.

# RICHARD No more Irish marches for you!

# HELENA We’ll have our honeymoon now, thank you.

# RICHARD I can’t wait to see the looks on our friends faces. Since we can’t afford to go anywhere.

# HELENA Where shall we imagine we are first? London?

# RICHARD I’ll write Henry James tonight that we hope we see him there.

# HELENA He’s here this year you know. He will be confused.

# RICHARD He wasn’t at the wedding. I’ll tell him we want tea with Whistler and his mother.

# HELENA He never answered the invitation.

# RICHARD You like our neighbor? The gentleman barber?

# HELENA His flower garden is wonderful. We get to look at it all day and have no duty to maintain it.

# RICHARD & HELENA Sing “The Barber Takes Care of the Flowers”

HELENA  
Two people once lived in a loft,  
Whose names were Confucius and Kitty  
And their friends with anxiety, oft,  
Shook their head and exclaimed, ‘What a pity!’  
And they asked them such questions as   
‘Can You keep dry in your loft when it showers?’  
The reply to which constantly ran:  
“The barber takes care of the flowers!”  
 RICHARD  
Then their friends became sad and perplexed  
And declared it was really alarming;  
But they smiled and they said, ‘Why, we’re next  
To the moon and the stars, and it’s charming.  
For although when the weather is hot  
We pass a few tropical hours,  
The toasting is quickly forgot,   
While the barber takes care of the flowers!  
 RICHARD & HELENA  
Though we breakfast on marmalade tea,  
And dine on whatever is handy,  
Keeping house is no trouble, for we  
Can live nicely on lemons and candy,  
Though we boast neither camel’s-hair shawls,  
Nor coaches, nor turrets, not towers,  
‘Neath our loft are five beautiful stalls,  
And the barber takes care of the flowers!”  
  
<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/189-2/>

# ACT TWO, SCENE SEVEN – Helena in studio, painting. Richard enters.

# RICHARD (Looking about.) Shall we go to the hotel for dinner?

# HELENA I can’t imagine eating. I’ve been sick all day.

# RICHARD Shall I send for the doctor?

# HELENA No need. I was sick this morning after you left. (Throwing down her brush.) I don’t think I will paint flowers any longer and will instead do portraits of my ancestors.

# RICHARD This is really is quite good. I will keep it for you until you want it again. Or when you might discard it.

He takes it away and turns toward a wall in the corner. She lights every lamp in the room and moves them around her easel. And puts up a new blank canvas.

HELENA  
 I’m going to paint a self-portrait to give to Molly for   
 her birthday.

She starts slapping paint on the new canvas. She makes an angry mess on the canvas and throws down her brush and palette and breaks into tears.

HELENA  
 (Shouting at him.) I’m pregnant!

Richard moves toward her to touch her. She angrily swipes his arm away.

HELENA  
 (Still shouting.) I don’t want it!

RICHARD  
 Helena.

HELENA  
 We have enough! I want you. I want to paint!

RICHARD  
 We’ll get through it together. We are capable people.

HELENA  
 (Still shouting.) I don’t want to be a capable person!

She runs out of the room.

Later – She returns to the empty dark room with a lamp.

HELENA  
 The dreadful woman-curse – it does not seem that – the   
 cruel relentless not to be escaped fate. Who knows what will  
 be the end. This is what no one can understand – The whole  
 picture depends on this. Youth, Art, Freedom, even life (though  
 that seems less to me than it did a week ago) all are risked – for  
 something I don’t even wish for – something which has no   
 attraction for me – and against my wish – although through my  
 own act – I have all I want in Richard.

ACT TWO, SCENE EIGHT – Richard is alone in their studio. There are moans off stage.

# RICHARD Sings “My Songs Are All of Thee” (Just the first verse acapella.) My songs are all of thee, What I sing of morning when the stars are yet in sight What I sing of evening, or the melancholy night What I sing of birds that o’er the reddening waters wing.

# A baby cries off stage.

# RICHARD My songs are all of thee, What I sing of song, of fire, of winds, or mists that cling What I sing of rivers that toward ocean take their flight What I sing of summer when the rose is blossoming.

# The Doctor enters.

# DOCTOR You have a bright healthy new daughter. Congratulations!

# RICHARD Can I?

# The doctor nods and Richard runs out.

# ACT TWO, SCENE NINE - Helena and baby and Richard are in the Studio. There is a knock on the door. Richard answers.

# HEAD WAITER Hello! We heard the baby came! Congratulations! We’ve come to weigh her!

# RICHARD What?

# HEAD WAITER You’ve been kind to us! And we’ve watched Mrs. Gilder grow!

# Waiters roll in giant scale on a wagon. And during the song the baby is weighed.

WAITERS  
 Sing “We Are the Weighty Waiters”  
We are the weighty waiters  
The busboys, and the kitchen clowns  
We’re the ones that work behind the windows  
We are the hotel men about town  
We go home to bambinos bouncing on our knees  
We know how to please  
We’re here to weigh your beautiful baby   
For free!  
  
The only scale we have is here  
It’s for measuring sides of beef  
It’s only easy because the cart has wheels  
It’s nothing we would steal  
We watched the baby grow huge in her belly  
With each night you supped  
You were very kind for the tips you left  
For those meals.  
  
We brought a fifty pound piece  
But that is probably way too much  
We’ll start with a twenty and work our way down  
Here baby-- a five pound piece  
Don’t throw it at us or gobble it down  
Have another toy or three  
And then we subtract what the baby has  
We’re not silly.

# We are the weighty waiters The busboys, and the kitchen clowns We’re the ones that work behind the windows We are the hotel men about town We go home to bambinos bouncing on our knees We know how to please We’re here to weigh your beautiful baby For free!

# <https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/weighty-waiters-v1>

# 

ACT TWO, SCENE TEN – Helena with baby in baby buggy and Richard at the art exhibit for the 1876 Philadelphia Grand Exposition. Gus Saint-Gaudens and Thomas Moran and their 2 young mistresses are with them. Richard and Helena trail behind them.

HELENA  
 I know their wives! What do they think they  
 are doing?

RICHARD  
 They introduced them as their students. Am I  
 supposed to confront them?

HELENA  
 What am I supposed to say next time I see their wives?

Baby wakes up and cries. Helena picks her up.

HELENA  
 She is hungry. I need to feed her. The lavatory.

Richard pushes the baby buggy and leaves it beside the women’s restroom door.

HELENA  
 Go on if you must.

RICHARD  
 We will wait. I will wait.

Helena enters with the baby and sits in a stall to breastfeed

GUS & THOMAS & HELENA   
 & REV BEECHER  
 Sing “Huckleberry Montage”

GUS & THOMAS  
Oh, them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
Oh them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!

Then a little girl ran off, and a little boy ran after,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
And the little girl fell down and he saw her little garter.  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!

He said, I'll be your beau if you'll let me be your lover,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
But the little girl said "No, for my sweetheart's Billy Miller."  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 HELENA  
I wanted to be an artist just like those girls  
I was supposed to be free and clear  
Not beholding to any man, teacher or lover  
Now just look at me sitting here

(The mistresses are laughing and flirting with the two men.)

Those girls are just chattel, its plain to see  
Their teachers are married men and fathers  
They hang out in public like students or whores  
Who am I to tell on or bother

(A couple of women passing through the restroom, wag their fingers at her.)

The women coming and going here hate me  
How dare me not be in confinement  
Staying home until the baby is toddling  
Putting my life on hold a year

Sitting in a public toilet like a homeless girl  
What could I be thinking about  
Like learning from all the great painters hanging here  
I must be just another tart  
 GUS & THOMAS  
And he put her on her knee and kissed her good and proper  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
She kissed him back again and she didn’t try to stop him  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!

(Rev Beecher comes bouncing across the stage from right to left)

REV BEECHER  
Oh, them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
Oh them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 GUS & THOMAS  
And then he put his arm all about her waspy waist  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
And she said young man you are in a great haste  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!

And he put his hand upon her knee  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
And she said young man you’re a bit too free  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!

(Rev Beecher bounces back across the stage, disappearing off stage left.)

REV BEECHER  
Oh, them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
Oh them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!  
 GUS & THOMAS  
And he put his hand yet higher still  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
And she said young man that is really quite a thrill  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!

Oh, them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
To me way aye aye aye yay!  
Oh them boys and the girls went a-huckleberry hunting,  
And sing high-low, my Ranzo Ray!

Helena and baby come back out. The two mistresses go to her to admire the baby.

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/huckleberry-montage-v1>

# 

# ACT THREE – Mrs. De Kay is let into Agnes’ apartment by the landlady. Agnes is bundled up on the sofa, very sick.

# LANDLADY Oh my God. I’ll go get the doctor down the street! MRS. DE KAY Oh, child! (Going to her, helping to sit up.) Your roommate came to get me. You have Diphtheria!

# AGNES (Whispering.) Tell Winslow I’m so sorry.

# MRS. DE KAY You can tell him yourself when you are better.

# Mrs. De Kay covers her mouth and goes to open a window. She opens a door on a horrible bathroom full of overflow. She brings back a basin of water and a wet towel and begins to wipe Agnes’ face and neck. She tries to get her to drink water, but Agnes chokes. Her breathing is labored. Finally helps her to lay on her side.

# MRS. DE KAY The doctor is coming. Try to hold on! (Beat) I was thinking of you and your mother on the dock to greet us that day we arrived in Ireland with the ship of food. You smelled of lavender soap and had a lilac spray in your hair. Such a beautiful little girl. And you stroked Helena as if she was your own baby sister. And your mother…

# Agnes stops breathing. Mrs. De Kay pulls her up to her shoulder to burb her like a baby. Agnes dies in her arms.

# MRS. DE KAY Oh my God. Agnes!

# ACT THREE, SCENE TWO – Mrs. De Kay barges in on Helena in her Studio. Helena is painting. Mrs. Da Kay plops on a chair, exhausted.

# HELENA Mother! Are you all right?

# MRS. DE KAY Agnes! She’s gone. Dead!

# HELENA Oh my god, what happened?

# MRS. DE KAY Diphtheria. I’ve only just come from her apartment. There was nothing to do.

# HELENA You must go home right now! Do you have money for a carriage? You can catch one in front of the hotel.”

# Mrs. De Kay looks at her, confused.

# MRS. DE KAY Where’s the baby?

# HELENA Down for a nap. You can be contagious! Go home! Tell my sister to burn your dress, your clothing! Wash as completely as you can! Go! Mother go now!

# MRS. DE KAY You are right. I will go. I’m sure it will be all right. I’ll send you a note.

# Mrs. De Kay gets up and leaves. Helena gets cleaning supplies to clean the chair her mother was sitting in and the doorknob of the door.

# ACT THREE, SCENE THREE – Richard brings the baby to Helena in the Studio.

# RICHARD Marion is sick. I have to get the doctor.

# He runs out. She stands with the baby, tries to wrap them both in the shawl she was wearing and walks back and forth. Marion isn’t crying, but she was swollen and her breathing was hoarse. Helena didn’t know what she should do. She puts the baby in her crib and holds her little hand. And then picks her up to hold her again. She puts the baby down again.

# She comes to stage front.

# 

# HELENA (Desperate.) What am I to do?

# Beat. Doctor enters. Richard joins Helena as the Doctor looks at the baby.

# DOCTOR It’s not dangerous yet. Feed her if you can. See if she can take some tea or broth in a bottle. Keep cool moist cloths to wipe her face and hands to keep her cool. I will come back this evening to check on her.”

# Doctor leaves. They try to give her a bottle. The baby has stopped breathing.

# HELENA Oh my God!

# Richard tries blowing air into the baby’s nose and mouth. He tries shaking her and holding her upside down. Marion grows white and cold, Helena wraps her carefully in her the shawl and puts her in her crib.

# RICHARD I can run for the Doctor again. He can do something!

# HELENA Come sit with me by the open window and hold my hand.

# They sit together. Richard begins to cry.

# ACT THREE, SCENE FOUR – Richard is on a railroad platform with the baby’s casket next to him. The Station sign says Bordentown N.J.

# RICHARD Sings “For My Lost Daughter”

I would write a song about dust  
 The dry clay autumn dust  
 That runs through your fingers   
 Like silk but adheres to the touch  
 A clap of hands sends a cloud  
 Swirling in sunlight  
 And settling on the grass and weeds  
 And brittle leaves scattered about

I carried her down the stairs  
 With her asleep in her casket  
 Handed her over to be slid into  
 The cart that went away forever  
  
 I would write a song about dust  
 Because the scar on my heart remains  
 And aches each day I think of you  
 Though you dissolve in the glare  
 Leaving empty air as still as death  
 Words once said are as silent as sand  
 And I want for a young girl  
 That dust and sand are a way home  
 I carried her down the stairs  
 With her asleep in her casket  
 Handed her over to be slid into  
 The cart that went away forever  
  
 A mound becomes a grave, leaves for a wreath  
 A dark spot, a place to grieve  
 All can be managed here  
 Dust can be easily carried away  
 In the bottoms of big pockets  
 Or in shoes emptied before going in  
 I would pray she dreams always  
 Of warmth and fingers held  
  
 I carried her down the stairs  
 With her asleep in her casket  
 Handed her over to be slid into  
 The cart that went away forever

# <https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/for-my-lost-daughter-v1>

# ACT THREE, SCENE FIVE – Helena in the Studio

# HELENA Sings “There’s Emptiness Here”

There’s an empty cradle here  
 And baby clothes to be burned  
 And baby toys that can be boiled I suppose  
 And bits of poems he wrote for her  
 And sad sad eyes

There’s a toy drum lying here  
 Which Richard would play for her  
 With sticks too small for grown up hands  
 And bits of nursery rhymes half recalled  
 And sad sad smiles

There’s now empty bottles here  
 And formula mixes I made  
 Because I couldn’t make enough for her  
 And bits of milk still coming in  
 With a sad sad ache

It’s my fault she died  
 I didn’t want her  
 She was interrupting out lives  
 I tried to do the right thing  
 But I wasn’t good enough  
 I didn’t deserve her

It’s my fault she died  
 I didn’t want her  
 She was interrupting out lives  
 I tried to do the right thing  
 But I wasn’t good enough  
 I didn’t deserve her

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/theres-emptiness-here>

# ACT THREE, SCENE SIX - Richard on Train Platform above without the casket, Helena at the window in the Studio. Later evening lighting.

# RICHARD & HELENA Sing “Sunset From A Train” RICHARD But then the sunset smiled Smiled once and turned toward dark Above the distant wavering line of trees that filed along the horizon’s edge Like hooded monks that hark Through evening air The call to prayer Smiled once and faded slow slow slow away Like a changing dream the long cloud wedge Brown gray that darkened, threatening night RICHARD & HELENA Then Grew saffron underneath and ere I knew The space between turned green blue The whole illimitable western skyey shore The tender human silent sunset smiled once more HELENA Thee absent loved one did I think on now Wondering if thy deep brow In dreams of me were lifted to the skies Where by our far sea home the sunlight dies If thou didst stand alone Watching the day pass slowly, slow, as here but closer and more dear beyond the meadow and the long familiar line of blackening pine When lo that second smile dear heart it was thine RICHARD & HELENA Then Grew saffron underneath and ere I knew The space between turned green blue The whole illimitable western skyey shore The tender human silent sunset smiled once more

<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/sunset-from-a-train/>

ACT THREE, SCENE SEVEN – Helena painting a portrait of her mother in the Studio. Helena is pregnant again.

HELENA  
 You must hold still. No fidgeting.

MRS. DE KAY   
 What did the Doctor say?

HELENA  
 That all is well. I was afraid the new baby would come   
 on Marion’s birthday, but I still have some time.

HELENA & MRS. DE KAY  
 Sing “Helena Painting”

MRS. DE KAY  
I was nine  
Mother was dying from consumption  
My aunt was nursing her  
There was a fireplace spark that caught her dress  
My uncle tried to help  
They both died of their burns two days later  
Mother was dead in a month  
And Grandfather didn’t come home any more  
 HELENA  
I’m sorry  
I cannot live in your grief  
I cannot live in your pain, your loneliness  
I cannot live in your disappointment  
I don’t want your life  
 MRS. DE KAY  
I was fourteen  
Everyone was dead but the Commodore  
He wanted to marry me, I said yes  
We sailed to help the starving Irish with food  
And lost a lot of our fortune  
Washington wouldn’t pay us back  
Papa died, you were three  
Your brothers Drake and George, raised you, not I  
 HELENA  
I’m sorry  
I cannot live in your grief  
I cannot live in your pain, your loneliness  
I cannot live in your disappointment  
I don’t want your life  
 MRS. DE KAY  
I was forty  
I am disappointed my daughter  
Why would you forget  
Your Christian education and behave  
With Minnie as you have this term  
You are doing a wrong and dangerous thing  
In your passion for this girl  
Bring everything home because you’ll not return  
 HELENA  
Mother  
That was twenty years ago  
I cannot live in your pain, your loneliness  
I cannot live in your disappointment  
I don’t want your life

<https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/helena-painting/>

HELENA  
 Mother! Wake up!

MRS. DE KAY  
 (Stirring.) Oh my. Did I fall asleep again?

ACT THREE, SCENE SEVEN – Helena in the country, walking in a pasture. She is very pregnant.

LA FARGE  
 (From afar.) Helena!

Helena realizes who it is and turns away to keeping walking. La Farge, running, out of breath, catches up with her.

HELENA  
 Go away!

LA FARGE  
 Your mother invited me up. She heard I was nearby.   
 Your brother will interview me tonight for The New York Times.

HELENA  
 Then go visit with them. I don’t want you.

LA FARGE  
 I think you are avoiding me.And Imay be in love with you.

HELENA  
 You are teasing me.

LA FARGE  
 I’m sorry, that just slipped out.  
   
 HELENA  
 Dear man, I am married and pregnant with my husband’s baby.   
 You have very odd ideas about things. You have a wise  
 and beautiful wife.

LA FARGE  
 She is as smart as you, but not as beautiful.   
   
 HELENA   
 So you are shallow. It is all appearance?

# He takes her hands. He raises them to his mouth to kiss them.

# LA FARGE You are exquisite.

# HELENA Stop! Enough!

# LA FARGE I’m sorry. Shall we go back?

# HELENA You go back!

# After he leaves.

# HELENA Sings “Oh Father’s Gone”

O father’s gone to market town: he was up before the day  
And Jamie’s after robins and the man is making hay  
And whistling down the hollow goes the boy that minds the mill  
While mother from the farm-house door is calling with a will

Molly O Molly  
The cows are in the corn  
Oh where is Molly?

From all the misty morning air there comes a summer sound  
A murmur as from waters from skies and trees and ground  
The birds they sing upon the wing the pigeons bill and coo  
And over hill and hollow rings again the loud helloo

Richard O Richard  
The cows are in the corn  
Oh where is Richard?

Above the trees the nonet bees swarm with buzz and boom  
And in the field and garden a hundred flowers bloom  
Within the farmer’s meadow a brown eyed daisy blows  
And down at the edge of the hollow a red and thorny rose

But Richard o Richard  
The cows are in the corn  
Oh where’s Richard?

How strange at such a time of day the mill should cease its clatter  
The farmers wife is listening now and wonders whats the matter  
While singing up the hollow goes the dusty mill boy rover  
And in his jacket button hole he wears a four leaf clover

Molly O Molly  
The cows are in the corn  
Oh where’s Molly?

# <https://www.the-best-of-friends.com/oh-fathers-gone/>

ACT THREE, SCENE EIGHT – The Studio, Helena is nursing the new baby. Richard is reading. There is a knock on the door. Richard answers.

THE HEAD WAITER  
 We’ve heard the new baby is here! We’ve  
 brought the scale back. What is it? Is everyone  
 fine and happy?

RICHARD  
 We have a boy! Rodman Gilder!

Off Helena’s look.  
 I’ll bring him out!

Helena wraps the baby up and hands it to Richard. Helena follows him, but stays in the doorway to watch.

THE WEIGHTY WAITERS  
 (outside)  
 Sing “We Are the Weighty Waiters”  
 (Just the first verse.)  
 We are the weighty waiters  
 The busboys, and the kitchen clowns  
 We’re the ones that work behind the windows  
 We are the hotel men about town  
 We go home to bambinos bouncing on our knees  
 We know how to please  
 We’re here to weigh your beautiful baby   
 For free!

(They all shout from outside.)  
 Six pounds!

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/19-weighty-waiters-short>

ACT THREE, SCENE NINE – Henry James comes out to the dark stage. Minnie appears as a ghost like she looked in the opening of the musical.   
  
 HENRY JAMES  
 So I thought about Minnie for a long long time. I had watched   
 her grow up, although confined to a bed much of the time.   
 I was so sad when she died. So I made up a life for her, gave her   
 consumption to me, gave her an adventurous and romantic life,  
 and included all of her friends in the book. You might heard of the   
 book “A Portrait of a Lady” I sent the first draft To Helena to read.

Lights come up. Helena is holding a manuscript, a stack of paper, which she is throwing page by page   
into the fire in the fireplace.

HELENA

Sings “This Is Not Me”

This is not me  
This will never be me  
Why have you stolen her?  
Why have you made her yours?

You wrote a book.  
Brought her back from the dead  
Raised her rotting flesh  
Made me part of the obscenity  
You are a genius we all know  
Words flow like blood in the night  
You stole everything  
You stole me.

This is not me  
This will never be me  
Why have you stolen her?  
Why have you made her yours?  
  
You wrote a book  
Drew life where there was none  
She was mine not yours  
You have no right to her  
You are a genius we all know  
You didn’t love her like I did  
You have no right to her  
How dare you?

This is not me  
This will never be me  
Why have you stolen her?  
Why have you made her yours?  
  
<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/20-this-is-not-me-v1>

ACT THREE, SCENE TEN – Helena and Richard with baby Rodman on blanket near beach on a breezy summer day. Helena nursing. Richard is editing manuscripts.

HELENA  
 Gus was so angry.

RICHARD  
 At our door?

HELENA  
 They’ve fucked me! – he said.

RICHARD  
 We should rewrite that for the general public.

HELENA  
 You will. The Society of American Artists. We get our own show!   
 Thank goodness the Academy rejected Gus for their show. All of this  
 came about because they mistreated him and some of his friends!

RICHARD  
 I’m glad we’ve got this break. Next week and you will be working your   
 head off and I’ll be slave labor. Putting on your own show and organizing   
 a new group of artists will be maddening.

HELENA  
 What else have I got to do?

RICHARD  
 Everything else!

Helena puts the sleeping baby down in a basket for a nap. Richard stretches out and falls asleep. Helena puts a rock on his pile of papers so they don’t fly away. An image of the baby Osprey in flight appears. She picks up her pad to try to sketch it.  
  
 HELENA  
 Sings “The Baby Osprey”  
 The breeze erupts around our blanket  
 While Father and baby dream the sunny dreams  
 Richard’s edits, others’ words, threaten to take wing  
 I jump to save them and tuck them safely away

And there hanging in the air above me, wings out,  
She nods her young face at mine  
She is a child, snowy breast of the baby osprey  
Wings as white as snow  
And she floats in the wind there, before me  
  
Should there come a sign, would you see it?  
Would a touch at your shoulder make you shutter?  
Can a soul dance in your dreams and flutter?  
Are goosebumps anything at all?

I need to draw her, capture her,  
Before the wind changes and she’s gone  
The white of the paper is the most of her  
The pad itself wants to take wing

Should there come a sign, would you see it?  
Would a touch at your shoulder make you shutter?  
Can a soul dance in your dreams and flutter?  
Are goosebumps anything at all?

And I find her unfinished, an impression  
As the old teachers scold us not to find   
But I will have her to hold in my hand  
The sign that is not a sign is mine.

Should there come a sign, would you see it?  
Would a touch at your shoulder make you shutter?  
Can a soul dance in your dreams and flutter?  
Are goosebumps anything at all?

<https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/21-the-baby-osprey-v1>

ACT THREE, SCENE ELEVEN – Artists, all male except for Helena, gathered in The Studio. Gus, Richard, La Farge, some others.

HELENA  
 Champagne for Varnishing Day?

GUS  
 Where will the money come from?

HELENA  
 Everyone that has their art there can buy bottles for their guests.   
 Or better, have the guests each bring a bottle.

LA FARGE  
 We will be drunk. How can we finish our paintings with varnish if we are drunk?

GUS  
 So don’t drink. All right, what about resigning from the Academy?

# HELENA I think we should be as gracious as we can possibly be. We that are accepted, most of us, though begrudgingly, should take our spot in the Academy Show. We must show everyone we have a rightful place there!

# LA FARGE The French Impressions did that in Paris and it was quite expensive. I think Helena is the wisest one here. There is silence. The men look at each other.

# HELENA What about adding members. Maria? Mary Cassatt? Laura Hill?

# LA FARGE Like women? They are hanging at the show. Are we supposed to invite them into our group as well? HELENA (Looking at the men surrounding her.) Tom Moran and his wife?

# LA FARGE You mean his brother?

# HELENA They pretend she is his brother.

# LA FARGE We should wait.

# ACT THREE, SCENE TWELVE – The Art Show of The Society of American Artists. Artists varnishing their paintings. Special guests standing around. Helena comes in with varnish pot and brush.

# LA FARGE Where’s Richard?

# HELENA Watching Rodman.

# HELENA Sings “Varnishing Day”

Varnishing Day, Oh Varnishing Day,  
What could we possibly say  
We will be on ladders with our pots and brushes  
Putting on the final touches.  
  
Men and women alike,   
Please don’t look up our skirts,  
There won’t be much to see really,  
We are artists and we have dignity  
And bloomers, so don’t bother  
We are your sisters and your mothers  
  
Varnishing Day, Oh Varnishing Day,  
What could we possibly say  
We will be on ladders with our pots and brushes  
Putting on the final touches.  
  
Society of American Artists,  
By invite only, others and old men  
Are welcome if they are demure  
And not bossy, not brazen, not boring  
We might even kiss your cheek   
To make you blush pretending to be saucy.  
  
Varnishing Day, Oh Varnishing Day,  
What could we possibly say  
We will be on ladders with our pots and brushes  
Putting on the final touches.  
  
Kurtz Gallery on Twenty Third  
Cassatt, Laura and Maria and me   
I was hoping for all my friends  
Olivia, and my Molly, but it wasn’t to be  
We’ll try again next year  
We’re good enough to hold our own

# <https://soundcloud.com/dan-mcnay-463398620/varnishing-day> Helena steps out to speak to the audience.

# HELENA That’s it. My friend, Maria Oakey, and I got great reviews by all the New York critics. And we were made fun of in Punch magazine, which was maybe even better. And we were in the Academy Show. (Beat) Onward!

# This was supposed to be a happy ending. Right after the Academy show, Richard and the baby and I went for the grand tour of Europe. But I’m afraid I can’t show you my work – there’s no trace of my oil paintings anywhere in the world. I was pretty good too. Either they are mildewing in some family attic or they went in a fire at our summer house in my Grandson’s time. Despite your dreams, you too can be an old biddy that once painted. All that are left of them are these two sketches from when I was going to start them.

# Show to audience.

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