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 morethan those who long her light have knownBut 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 crutchI know not if I love her morethan those who long her light have knownBut 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 morethan those who long her light have knownBut 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 sightWhat I sing of evening, or the melancholy nightWhat I sing of birds that o’er the reddening waters wing.

# A baby cries off stage.

#  RICHARDMy songs are all of thee, What I sing of song, of fire, of winds, or mists that clingWhat I sing of rivers that toward ocean take their flightWhat 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 waitersThe busboys, and the kitchen clownsWe’re the ones that work behind the windowsWe are the hotel men about townWe go home to bambinos bouncing on our kneesWe know how to pleaseWe’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 KAYThe 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”   RICHARDBut then the sunset smiledSmiled 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 airThe call to prayerSmiled once and faded slow slow slow away Like a changing dream the long cloud wedgeBrown gray that darkened, threatening night RICHARD & HELENA Then Grew saffron underneath and ere I knewThe space between turned green blueThe whole illimitable western skyey shoreThe tender human silent sunset smiled once more HELENAThee absent loved one did I think on now Wondering if thy deep browIn dreams of me were lifted to the skiesWhere by our far sea home the sunlight dies If thou didst stand aloneWatching the day pass slowly,slow, as here but closerand 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 knewThe space between turned green blueThe whole illimitable western skyey shoreThe 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.

#  FINIS 1st draft 5-14-2020 – Touch up draft 9-16-2020