

James MacDonald

# FREAKS OF HISTORY

Two Performance Texts

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To Martin, Erin and the companies, with my love  
and gratitude



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## Acknowledgements

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Martin Harvey and I have worked together for more than 25 years and for more than ten years on this module – probably a record length of time between director and writer. And while not without its anxious moments, our relationship has been as near ideal as artistic collaborations can be. It is not within my province, perhaps, to speculate on my contribution to Martin's creative life. In my view, based on our experience, a director's contribution to a production deserves all the plaudits accorded it. Directors combine spectacular judgement with dramaturgical wisdom and the consummate ability to communicate with performers. Martin's expertise in all three is virtually *nonpareil*.

Jessica O'Hara contributed a wonderfully incisive essay to *Carnival Texts*, my previous collection for Intellect. Superseding our adversarial sporting alliances, we share an abiding passion for post-colonial cultural discourse, evident here in Jessica's wonderful essay, *Crisis, Cruelty, and Curation: Staging Freakish History*.

As Julian Meyrick notes in his essay, our collaboration dates from the mid-1980s, when he directed productions of three of my plays, including a revival of *Too Many Monkeys*, my first full production. Julian virtually filled the Northcott Theatre with a lunchtime audience that was far more receptive than were any of Edinburgh Fringe audiences in 1980, a tribute to his perspicacity and creativity in taking the play beyond its 'kitchen sink' confines into the farther reaches of grotesque Degenerate Art. It would be a gross disservice to both Martin and Julian to speculate how Julian might handle these two plays, for they are equally gifted dramaturgs. And Julian has gone on to distinguish himself as a respected theatre academic as well as an award-winning director. His contribution here, in any case, resumes our partnership in splendid fashion.

Erin Walcon contributed these vivid production photos of *Unsex Me Here* as well as assisting greatly in the direction of an outsize cast. The performers themselves were assessed as being among the best in the department's history, certainly in terms of their commitment to the texts and to me. My association with Intellect, over close to a decade now, has been of the most commendable order, not to be taken for granted in this era when publishing anything is at such a premium and when publishing playtexts is even more precarious. When one factors in the untimely passing of founder Masoud Yazdani, the staff's ability and determination to carry on are truly inspirational, and I am accordingly indebted to Jessica Mitchell, Patrick Duggan and Richard Kerr for their patient and consummate guidance, especially since this is, in many ways, the pinnacle of my career.



## Author's Introduction

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Tobin Siebers, taking his lead from two disability theorists (Snyder and Mitchell 2005), develops the notion that ‘disability is the master trope of human disqualification’ into what he calls ‘the aesthetics of human disqualification’, identifying systemic and virtually absolute discrimination against people with disabilities (Siebers 2010: 37ff). Siebers is much to be commended, first for targeting this discrimination explicitly and then for writing as a disabled person.

A key aspect of this discrimination is that too few disabled people have been empowered to speak for themselves about disability. For example, Trevor Phillips was named spokesperson for the disabled at the launching of the British Equalities Bill (2008), though he is not disabled. This is a phenomenon that was not permitted to exist for women and for ethnic minorities in the feminist and racial equality movements. Robert McRuer acknowledges that disabled groups take the lead in activism against disability discrimination (McRuer 2006: 39ff) and adopts a Structuralist approach in developing what he calls ‘Crip Theory’, an extension of ‘Queer Theory’, critiquing heterosexual dominance of the status quo. This should encourage disabled people themselves to take a more active role in disability affairs.

Siebers expresses the Structuralist link between the different anti-Establishment groups thus:

Beneath the troping of blackness as inbuilt inferiority, for example, lies the troping of disability as inferior. Beneath the troping of femininity as biological deficiency lies the troping of disability as deficiency. The mental and physical properties of bodies become the natural symbols of inferiority via a process of disqualification that seems biological, not cultural – which is why disability discrimination seems to be a medical rather than a social problem. If we consider how difficult it is at this moment to disqualify people as inferior on the basis of their racial, sexual, gender, or class characteristics, we may come to recognize the ground that we must cover in the future before we experience the same difficulty disqualifying people as inferior on the basis of disability. We might also recognize the work that disability performs at present in situations where race, sexuality, gender, and class are used to disqualify people as physically or mentally inferior.

(2010: 25)

I do not denounce such representation any more than I refuse to accept the idea that disability is the master trope of disqualification because it originates with two non-disabled

commentators. But it is better that disabled people speak for themselves, and the two plays that comprise *Freaks of History* honour this belief.

As Martin Harvey explains in 'Director's Notes,' the plays were performed as a major part of a popular undergraduate module in Interpretive Acting at the University of Exeter, a significant advance if not a precedent in disability awareness in mainstream culture. Effectively, disability became a regular feature of a popular undergraduate module, not simply a one-off feature of an applied drama module. Equally significant, the plays were written by a congenitally disabled person and permanent member of staff with suitably advanced academic qualifications. (People with disabilities remain under-represented in universities and on university staffs.)

Disability has featured in a few popular plays. The eponymous *Porgy* in both the play *Porgy* by Dorothy and Dubose Heyward (1929) and the opera *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin (1934) is an amputee who gets about only by means of a primitive skateboard. *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance (1977) and *Children of a Lesser God* by Mark Medoff (1980) are more recent examples of plays whose theme is disability. But these were written by non-disabled authors, a frequent criticism by disability pressures groups. As a point of comparison, it is instructive to note that Pulitzer Prizes were awarded to *In Abraham's Bosom* (1926) and to *Scarlet Sister Mary* (1928) for their detailed depiction of African American life, though their authors, Paul Green and Julia Peterkin, were white. The works fell from favour in very short order once African Americans like Richard Wright and Zora Neal Hurston began speaking for themselves. Toni Morrison's winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993 was a sign that African American authors had at last achieved mainstream recognition.

Disabled authors, by stark contrast, are still struggling for the most modest degree of representation. Ramón del Valle-Inclán, the *fin de siècle* Spanish playwright, prototypically promoted the disability perspective by claiming disability as a status symbol. Already disabled, he deliberately maimed himself further to enhance his 'celebrity status' (Delgado 1993: xvii). Disabled characters feature in his work, especially in *Bohemian Lights* (1924), with its blind poet protagonist, and disability is a driving trope in Inclán's general statement about the dispossessed. My plays have much in common with Inclán's in this respect. But he is not viewed by the critical establishment as a 'disabled playwright'.

The BBC occasionally launches drives to promote disability drama, and they do have the online programme *Ouch* led by people with disabilities. But too often disabled people remain engaged in a consultative capacity, reinforcing Siebers's notion of disqualification. My own parents were guilty of this in believing that Martin Harvey wrote these plays under advisement from me. There have been modest moves to redress this situation. The publication of my plays by Intellect and by Routledge is part of this trend. Victoria Ann Lewis, a groundbreaking disabled performer, director and theatre academic edited *Beyond Victims and Villains* (2006), a large anthology of plays by disabled playwrights. More recently, Lewis has published 'In praise of plays' (2015), an essay about current plays by disabled playwrights including a discussion of *Unsex Me Here*. Such essays, covering many more plays, should

have been part of the critical canon long ago. In my more than 50 years of writing plays, this is the first time my work has been featured in a general discussion of drama.

In the introduction to *Russia, Freaks and Foreigners*, I reference a distinguished agent's objection to disability as a subject for drama (MacDonald 2008: 6). Although she regularly encouraged writers to write from personal experience, she described my depiction of disabled life as 'hideous' and uncommercial, and the rest of the theatre establishment seems to share this view.

Consequently, I duly stopped writing about disability until Martin Harvey offered in 2000 to direct my disability plays; but this also meant that my non-disability plays, lacking depth, were not taken up for the most part.

The work of Jill Dolan and other leading feminists provides a useful barometer for gauging the progress of disability activism in the arts. Dolan's *Feminist Spectator as Critic* (1988) provides a thorough analysis of the feminist perspective in opposition to the pre-eminent model (white, middle class and male). This analysis establishes 'the feminist gaze' as a permanently viable extension of the status quo in cultural discourse. And, ideally, disabled artists could hope for the same positive inclusion in adding their experiences to the cultural discourse. But Dolan and others exclude 'able-bodied' from their definition of the constituents of status quo authority, as though this did not require explicit identification. Such 'Able-ism' (the discrimination against disability and the disabled) has been in existence for as long as disability has existed, and it is only now, with the advent of general anti-Establishment activism, that 'the disabled gaze' has sought similar recognition. This disabled perspective has been the leading component of the academic discipline Disability Studies, introduced in a select number of universities, pre-eminently at the University of Illinois (Chicago), Michigan University and Vermont University in the United States and Leeds University in Britain. Detailed discussion of the discourse is perhaps out of place in an introduction to a volume of plays. But artistic application of the gaze, in keeping with Dolan's discussion, is certainly in order.

Disabled academic and performer Carrie Sandahl has raised doubts about disability being used metaphorically (Sandahl 2005: 344). She even takes issue with *The Glass Menagerie's* depiction of disability because it is mainly symbolic (345).<sup>1</sup> Even if we concede a certain amount of verisimilitude in *Menagerie's* portrayal of Laura Wingfield, the disabled gaze will perceive her differently from the standard gaze of mainstream culture, including the feminist gaze. Placing value on every aspect of disabled life (Siebers 2006: 48) validates disabled experience like Laura's by rendering a positive verdict on her encounter with Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller who, according to orthodox criticism, breaks Laura's heart as he disables her glass unicorn. While able-bodied Amanda Wingfield may regard her daughter's encounter as a debacle, the woman herself does not, and the disabled perspective insists that we respect her feelings.

Accordingly, this may well amount to the happy ending insisted on by Hollywood producers for the film version of the play (Lahr 2014: 165). In my essay, 'The virtue of living a lie', I advocate validating disabled experience by measuring it by equivalents (2010). This gauge would recognize Laura's date with Jim as the fulfilment of her dreams and the

mainstay of her memories. (She gives Jim the broken unicorn as a romantic memento.) Such a reading may be viewed as perverse by an able-bodied community whose expectations are larger. Within a disabled community accustomed to less but encouraged to privilege their experience, however, their celebration is not only justified, it is *de rigueur*. And the charge that a sympathetic response from the able-bodied community is somehow patronizing is, in itself, a patronizing failure to acknowledge the needs of disabled people. Robert McRuer gives proper weight to the inherent differences between able-bodied and disabled experience when he identifies the latter as 'a new form of Existentialism' (letter to the author, 29 June 2015).

In any case, 'The Aesthetics of Human Disqualification' concludes with a discussion of the anti-Nazi artistic movement Degenerate Art, featuring badly deformed people as artistic models. We might also mention the photography of Diane Arbus with its focus on 'freaks'. Lest these artists be accused of exploiting an already-oppressed minority, it is worth pointing out it is far better to celebrate disability than to ridicule or even to ban it. Playwright David C. Freeman includes a cerebral palsied artist in his ground-breaking play about disability, *Creeps*. The character, much in the manner del Valle-Inclán, celebrates the grotesque in his own version of Degenerate Art (Lewis 2008: 33).

A guiding aim of the two plays in *Freaks of History* is to represent disabled characters according to their own values and experiences within a context of general marginalization. In *Wellclose Square*, a trio of young disabled men are shown interacting with young women in what might be termed 'pre-sexual activity'. Perhaps basing their responses on able-bodied heterosexual behaviour, the women are revealed to be apprehensive, at least initially. My intention, however, was to demonstrate the limited, perhaps sublimated desires of each of the men, giving value, nonetheless, to this contact by suggesting that it is welcomed, eventually, by the women.

In *Unsex Me Here*, the focus is on disabled women in captivity facing immanent euthanasia. The aim here is to reveal the rationale behind such treatment, including the suggestion that the Nazi nurses and prison staff were, themselves, disabled by their circumstances. The game-show interlude, in Act One, is intended to show that the American attitude towards disability was ambiguous to say the least. Siebers cites the example of Princeton philosopher Peter Singer who, today, advocates euthanasia for people with the most severe disabilities (Siebers 2006: 23). It seems disabled people have yet to be fully 'qualified' as human beings. This is very much part of the agenda of these plays, and their first productions on an undergraduate theatre syllabus have been a genuine movement towards qualification.

It would be welcome if political issues replaced romantic ones in theatre as a whole. But it is reassuring to suppose, in any case, that Theatre Studies could not be considered sufficiently rigorous unless they focused on political debate. And it is equally reassuring to note that disability as a subject has transcended the confines of medical science and grown to become a culturally significant phenomenon. Notions of cure and correction have yielded their pride of place to engagement and understanding.

A half century ago, when I was contemplating my first national exams, I attended a school for disabled boys in Berkshire. Perhaps the boys at another time were more successful. But

during my year at the school, only a few boys attained even the lowest pass marks. The emphasis was on social interaction, worthy in itself because the boys needed the contact of others like themselves, and there was a model absence of friction bespeaking tolerance of the rarest kind. But it is alarming to recognize how little was expected of these boys, most of whom left after several years without a single qualification.

A sea change has taken place since then, and disabled people not only matriculate in higher education but hold down professional posts. But this needs to be the norm rather than the exception worthy of surprised comment.

It is a testament to both the defeat of Ableism and the concomitant success of integration that *Freaks of History* emerges as a sturdy artefact worthy of the widest dissemination and the longest life. Its proudest boast, engaging the participation of a host of interested contributors, is that it speaks to lives that are pre-eminently *qualified*. Its proudest boast, in any case, is that it speaks to a segment of society that can no longer be viewed as disqualified.

*Note:* These plays are a fictional reflection on historical events. The characters, although abstracted from history, are still products of the author's imagination.

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## Note

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- 1 Carrie Sandahl praised a play of mine for its realistic depiction of disability beyond mere symbolism (Sandahl 2002).



## **Part I**

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Critical Essays



## **My First Playwright**

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Julian Meyrick



**M**y first school. My first love. My first loss. Life is a barrage of explosive firsts intercalated by phases of regular flow, or ones assumed to be so. What happens in signal moments shapes our view of what happens thereafter. As in a play, the measure of human experience is determined in Act One, which provides, in Aristotelian fashion, the crucial inciting incidents. This is how existence works. We lurch around at one level of understanding until interrupted by something that does not fit into it. We crash headlong and the drama begins. What happens afterwards is up to us.

In 1982, I was a 20-year old undergraduate and would-be theatre director at the same university to which James MacDonald had absconded, he told me, from an incomplete doctoral thesis on the semi-colons in the novels of Henry James. I was thin, callow, narrow, untested. He was ten years older, smart as a whip and supremely affable. He kept boxes of dog-eared books in wooden crates around his room and worked on a typewriter that looked like one of Hemmingway's discards. My father's death the year before had opened up for me the world of pain, and I knew a little of what time has in store for everyone, sooner or later. James exemplified as a recipient of the gift of physical deficit. We both chain-smoked. And, of course, we both loved theatre. We spent hours analysing the intricacies of plays, performances and theatre companies; tons of fag ash. I don't remember any beer. And I have wiped from my memory the instant coffee I now regret we ever consumed. Perhaps we drank tea. Mainly we talked. Our drug of choice was conversation, and in the realm of shared ideas there was no puerile youth and no cerebral palsy. There was search and discovery and a great deal of fun to be had.

Towards the end of the academic year James asked me to direct his play *Too Many Monkeys*. Set in London's East End, then ungentrified, as inaccessible as any pit town off the rail map, it tells the story of a hapless working class family and their wheel-chaired-bound disabled son. I suppose I would call it now a 'slice of life naturalism'. Back then I didn't have any genre categories so it was just 'a play', as mysterious as any Heath-Robinson contraption arriving through the post without instructions. I gathered a group of college actors as green and keen as me, and we read it serially, hoping its meaning would spontaneously reveal itself.

Over the summer we did our research and rehearsed. We met up in deep-shadowed London church halls to engage in the religious rite of character improvisation. And we spent a bright, memorable day at Bermondsey market, amidst a sea of then-fashionable pastel-coloured shirts and jumpers. I got lost in a mazy square of low-rise flats, stacked like tins of tuna, buzzing with muscular, shouted life – it was a Saturday; vans coming and going; me, ignored, drinking in the atmosphere. *Working class life! This was it!* I can't remember if

James came up to London, or if that was another time, another play, a few years later, one I screwed up. I think we were on our own, getting by. James trusted us. And he was right to do so. Our only thought was to do well by him and by the play. Thus was the pattern set in my soul: the playwright as collaborator, confessor, prime creative, friend. It is hard to recover from disaster. But if you are a theatre director you learn the knack or get out of the game. It is impossible to recover from success, the sense of inner assurance you have not only done good but done right. My relationship with James was successful, and 30 years later I am what it made me: a playwright's director.

I never thought about James' disability in a critical way. I never used the word 'disability' around him or about him. He said to me 'if I fall over, pick me up; don't hesitate, just do it'. So I did, at the supermarket, man-handling him like a sack of onions. In *Stigma* (1963) Erving Goffman meticulously details the social reality that those judged less-than-normal must face, the daily appraisals they must wade through like a bank of mud. Its kindest face – by which I mean the least immediately objectionable – is civil inattention, the means whereby the 'less' in the less-than is filtered out of consciousness by the 'normals' around them. Thus the height of the dwarf, the status of the divorcee, the sexuality of the homosexual is ignored by way of a consensual temporary amnesia, a collective looking away. Since the 1960s Goffman's list of stigmas has changed, but I doubt it has gotten any shorter. The number of 'less thans' is a structural constant, something a world elevating difference to transcendental significance seems to need. Against this – and born from naivety, not maturity, I readily admit – I decided to treat James as equivalent to myself. I saw no other way. As with *Too Many Monkeys* I lacked categories of discrimination. And I was spiritually lazy. It seemed the easiest course to take.

Exeter University has a pocket-battleship of a repertory theatre, the Northcott, where for a few lunchtimes we were permitted to stage the play. For reasons of expediency rather than acting ambition, I took the role of the disabled son. He had no dialogue to speak of, just one long speech at the start of the second scene, which I did not trouble to learn, thinking I would pick it up along the way. Rehearsals continued smoothly. James seemed pleased. Posters were mimeographed and stuck up around campus. Our short season got under way.

Then the signal moment arrived, preceded and followed by a procession of smaller illuminations like attendant bridesmaids. It happened like this. I was in the wheelchair, waiting for my soliloquy to begin. Come opening, I still had not memorized my speech – too busy telling other people what to do; not really an actor anyway; thinking of the scene as a bridge to the rest of the play etc. So I wrote it out and put it between my legs, the old dodge. My thinking was to cast my eyes downward, where the audience could not see, and read my lines from the crib. But I had miscalculated the intensity of the stage lights which blinded me and kept me from seeing anything myself. I was stuck like a glued fly. I could not move from the wheelchair without blowing the part. I could not read my lines. And I did not know them. A full auditorium waited. Time loomed, like a stalker. For a moment, I knew what it was like to want to do something but be totally incapable of doing it. For a moment, I knew what it was like to be disabled.

For the neo-Platonic Marxist philosopher, Alain Badiou, the great ontologist of our age, and a playwright himself, playtexts exist in the future anterior. They are objects that *will have been played* (2008: 211). When they are first written their natures are undisclosed, awaiting completion. They are less texts than pretexts. Performed, they are then revealed for what they are, if not fully – different interpretations always remain possible – then substantively. How many times since 1982 have I waited on this moment, heart in mouth, career in hands, waiting for a playtext to be born, its body in print but its spirit arriving only when the actors are cued to move and speak on its behalf? In drama, nature is everything. Clumsy dialogue, poor structure, clichéd storytelling: none of this matters if the living principle, as the critic Stark Young called it, is clear and extant, ‘the supreme soul and test [of a play], first and last’ (quoted Cardullo 2008: 129). So it was with *Too Many Monkeys*. Page and stage cohered. A true dramatic experience was had. Only then, like a man walking backwards to a cliff and trying to stop on the edge, did I properly understand the play James had written.

Back in the wheelchair, forcing down panic, I fribbled, as Elizabethan actors termed it, regurgitating half-remembered phrases and stringing them together with cries, grunts and howls. The scene passed. The show was well received, and I hid my shame and vowed to terminate my acting career forthwith. Ever gracious, James said nothing. We had the show to talk about anyway. We picked through our achievement repeatedly but, again, the word ‘disability’ never occurred in any context. How is it possible to stage a play in which disability is the main focus of the action and yet not mention it by name? *Too Many Monkeys* was a well-written play; a well-acted play; a well-directed play; an interesting, moving, thoughtful, challenging play. Yet the thing that lent meaning and sense to these judgements was never openly broached. Weird; and, in retrospect, profoundly depressing.

Fast-forward three decades and the situation is different yet not so different. The world has little difficulty mentioning the word ‘disability’ now. Indeed, it is profuse in verbal acknowledgements, with this issue as with so many others, as if words by themselves could address the problems they are presumed to identify. And no doubt they do, up to a point. No doubt it is *not* helpful to civilly inattend as I once did. But talking the talk isn’t walking the walk. The issue is, to what is this acknowledgement conjoined? To use a distinction of Montaigne’s, are we improving our soul’s motion, our wisdom, or are we throwing up a screen of learning that takes us away from the very object we should be labouring to understand?

This quandary foregrounds the epistemological difference between drama and discursive scholarship, a difference not simply in structure method but in value and purpose. It is an old dispute that goes back to Plato’s *The Republic* where he icily asks – the memory of Aristophanes’ poisonous caricature of Socrates still rankling – whether ‘[playwrights] really know the things that people think they say so well’ (Book X: 375). Aristotle’s *Poetics* was in part a rebuttal to Platonic scepticism of drama’s worth, but the face-off is a real one and should not be lightly set aside. If plays like *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Her* claim to tell us something true, something we did not know before, then the question arises, is this more than an effect in language? And if it is, if these plays, and by extension drama of a like kind

(let us not give it a label quite yet), present something we cannot find in another form – in statistics, case studies, surveys, encyclopedias – then how do they do it? In what way are *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here* ‘about’ disability, and how does this transform into new knowledge?

To answer this question, we must hone-in on the moment when a play discloses itself – when pretext becomes text – and observe the two sets of forces operating: those beholden to live performance and those beholden to literary drama. It is in the encounter between these separate worlds, the sum of which is larger than all the contributing factors, that something real is born. The encounter may not be successful. But it is invariably fundamental. Live performance and literary drama are not just different elements, different structures. They are separate ways of being, separate ontologies. In theatre, the attempt to map one type of being onto another *may* be fruitful but it is *always* confronting – one reason we take it personally when plays fail, and hunt out the writer and director for accusing looks and resentful comments (of which I have copped my share).

For all the thousands of books we have on acting – going back to the avalanche of manuals that started appearing in the eighteenth century – the job of the live performer remains a deeply mysterious one. It is something easier to understand than fully explain. Whatever adaptive advantage we ascribe to our ability to performatively enter the cognitive space of another human being, the impetus to do so comes from our deepest, non-utilitarian instincts. We do it. We act. *Ex post facto* we look back on the dark cloud of what we have done, giving reason and shape to our efforts. When we come across terms like ‘Stanislvskian’ or ‘Brechtian’, therefore, we must not imagine a clear-cut taxonomy of theatrical creativity akin to a bus timetable. Anyone who reads Halliwell’s translation of *Poetics* – and sees that it is less a book than a collection of lecture notes – will appreciate the ambiguity of *κάθαρσις* (katharsis) as Aristotle presents it (Halliwell 1986). Anyone who then reads Brecht will grasp that his use of the term is instrumental, if not tendentious. Whatever else Brecht may have been, he was no ancient Greek scholar. Nor was his knowledge of twentieth-century realism deep or complete. He was a man in a context, and this context was if not narrow then certainly bounded. We must not fall into the trap of flipping the adjective ‘Brechtian’ around as if it were self-illuminating, foreclosing examination of what it might be referring to. Likewise with ‘Stanislvskian’, that other consummately woolly adjective used to badge efforts across the theatrical gamut from nineteenth-century Moscow to twenty-first-century Hollywood. Without rejecting the terms as meaningless – for they make sense to those who use them and find them of conceptual value – we should look at the reality behind the labels.

In his ‘Director’s Notes’ Martin Harvey says the student actors of *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here* were ‘asked to understand disability from within as well as without’ (27). Without loading this insight with meta-theoretical interpretation, we might imagine a ‘within’ *aka* Stanislvskian performance dimension that focuses on the emotional terrain of the individual characters, and a ‘without’ *aka* Brechtian dimension that frames the broader context in which their interiority arises. The first provides what might be called truth-to-moments, the second truth-to-situations, and while they are not as antithetical as

common use of the Stanislavskian/Brechtian dyad suggests, they nevertheless operate in different ways, in the rehearsal room and in performance. Both dimensions are on display in *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here*. In fact, it is the braiding of these two approaches that gives the plays their elasticity and shape. A good example of truth-to-moment is Tsilla's frantic attempt, in *Wellclose Square*, to find her relatives and some kind of safety after having arrived in London in flight from the Kiev pogroms. Her inability to do so, the rejection she experiences from everyone she meets – save at the hands of the deformed Grisha, a man she cannot bring herself to trust – kick-starts a downward spiral of desperation that runs through the first half of the play like an electric current, culminating in her gruesome murder. Here the performance arc is linear and of a piece. It requires from the actor playing Tsilla a good faith 'as if' exploration of the feelings and thoughts of a young Russian girl as she struggles with an inability to speak English, and her own inchoate fear of disability. A similar arc can be found in *Unsex Me Here* in the character of Andy Mueller, the young male nurse, who, co-opted into a regime of authorized medical killings at Hadamar Psychiatric Hospital, finds himself both victim and victimizer, before opting for an act of revolt ambivalent in its moral valency and impact.

By contrast, the truth-to-situation dimension of the plays emerges when the truth-to-moment one break down and there is disagreement about what is going on. This is most evident in the direct-address commentary provided by Gentleman in *Wellclose Square* and the trio of narrators, Johanna, Barbara and Claudia, in *Unsex Me Here*. These commentaries do not neatly fit the drama happening around them, thus creating bubbles of doubt in the narrative flow. Different kinds of evidence are 'triangulated', in the jargon of Chicago School sociology, rather than synthesized into a single, panoptic point of view. This catapults the spectator out of the immediate action and creates a choice – who to believe and to what extent. Figure and ground as reversed. What we get, in contrast to the Stanislavskian truth-to-moment, is a sense of the whole, of context and broader situation.

As every director knows, consciously or unconsciously, not only are these dimensions not opposed, they inform each other at every point, albeit the struggle between them for dominance is endlessly waged. A situation cannot exist without some kind of interiority filling it out, some kind of psychic journey, however fractured. An emotional moment does not appear out of a void, but is precipitated by the wider social forces around it. Like the crosshairs of a rifle sight, the two dimensions work to frame, fix and penetrate the true target of James's two dramas: 'disability'.

The world of the literary playtext is quite different, being a matter of print, pauses and patterns. Words on a page are linguistic marks that exist independently of the performance consciousness that acts them out, at least in part. How is disability captured here? There are three basic modes available to the playwright: denotation, connotation and background understanding. The first is a matter of direct statement, of what is said and heard, either by way of explicit remark or via extended argument. We can add to this what may be strongly implied, to the degree that spectator consensus about what is meant is highly probable. The second is a matter of image, of what is shown and seen. Unlike explicit statements, images have

a range of different, sometimes competing meanings. Spectator consensus about their precise interpretation is harder to achieve as their relationship to context is necessarily non-verbal. At further remove is the kind of understanding a playtext promotes without explicitly saying or showing anything at all. The philosopher John Searle would call this 'the background', and his term is to a large extent a diagnosis of exclusion (Searle 1983). Every understanding that arises from a playtext that may be ascribed to the playtext and not to some other source is necessarily part of 'the background'. Tone; style; rhythm; mood; atmosphere: these are more than para-linguistic qualities, but form the quiddity of a drama, of what a play 'is'. Thus arises from its being – though no point of origin may be directly observable – a discernibility, a capacity, an *idea*. Such ideas are more than increments of information, more than plot twists. They are insights, and, in their highest and most majestic form, truths.

Again, these different modes can be seen in effective combination in the two playtexts presented here. Their most conspicuous denotative aspects are the eugenic theories offered by William Yarborough in *Wellclose Square*, and the 'useless eaters' arguments put forward by Hermann Pfannmuller in *Unsex Me Here* (chillingly, both characters are doctors). The speeches are worth quoting because they show the semantic directness a playwright can use to pull the theme of disability into focus for his audience. Yarborough is speaking to his Royal charge, the Duke of Clarence, for whom he has medical responsibility, and Pfannmuller to the nurses assisting in the mass killings of disabled Germans under the Nazi's T4 programme.

YARBOROUGH: This is all in the interest of medical science ... a new branch of research. Called Eugenics – Francis Galton's theory of social biology. Its purpose is to discover how far removed we humans are from our animal cousins. In some cases, not very at all. I wonder if I might impose on your Highness .... To hunker down on your haunches a short while ... I tell you the resemblance is uncanny ... Between Your Highness and our canine cousins. I had thought there was something crippled in your development. Now I'm led to believe it's simply a missing stage. You've yet to reach the point of bipedalism, and the inordinate size of your head – as though Your Highness's back wasn't made to support a normal-size head.

(88)

HERMANN: (*Holding up the corpse of an infant*) For me as a National Socialist, these creatures represent a burden on the health of the nation. We do not terminate them with poison or injections. This would only provide new slanderous campaign material for the foreign press and certain Swiss humanitarians with nonsensical views of what constitutes human sovereignty. (*Holding up corpse*) I ask you in all rational thought – is this human?

(109)

Pfannmuller's question is one that haunts both plays and is manifested visually as well as verbally: in the sight of the disabled Grisha, Ezekiel Sue and Clare in *Wellclose Square*, and

Mitzi, Anike and Babette in cages in *Unsex Me Here*. It may be hard for able-bodied performers to capture, and feel it is right to capture, the movements of disabled characters. But it is vital for the power of the images the plays rely on that they do so skilfully and without unwanted irony. Imitation is both moral homage and method of work. It invites able-bodied performers to contemplate the bounded world of disability, and it asks for active replication of disability's physical features as a valid outcome of that contemplation. Through the effort of mind this requires, a bridge of equivalence is temporarily constructed by the actors and, through them, by spectators as well. Thus, in hearing the arguments of Yarborough and Pfannmuller and *thinking* about disability, and observing the casts of *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here* and *seeing* disability, we approach what James calls 'viable connections between two worlds' (np). The exact nature of such connections is impossible to formularize. It is as harmful to romanticize disability as it is to demonize it. But in its performative recreation we have a basis for sampling it as a category of experience. Like my signal moment in the wheelchair, voluntary rejection of a degree of freedom brings with it access to another kind of reality.

In view of the fact that *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here* are by origin student plays and, given their size, are unlikely to be performed by any other kind of cast, it is worth noting that this is not a lesser form of drama. The 'learning play' (another thing Brecht did not invent) has a long history going back to the Tudor Interludes and the dramatic exercises undertaken by Renaissance students at the behest of their Latin and Greek tutors. 'This should properly be the chief purpose of those who work for the public; this is what the ancients kept constantly in mind', wrote Racine in the Preface to *Phedre*. 'Their plays were a veritable school where virtue was of no less importance than with the philosophers' (Racine 1962). The point here is that instruction and entertainment are more closely allied than perhaps current performance theorists like to admit, and that the pedagogical aspects of drama are a rich part of its potential, not stones in its saddlebag weighing it down. Some things, we might say, can only take the form of a learning play, since only this format allows the playwright to bring to a sharp edge our need to discover something about the world with our need to escape from it. Therefore, we should treat *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here* as exemplary of a particular playwriting method, and not imagine that there is a 'professional' version of them lurking somewhere, if only James had opportunity and resources to follow this through. The opposite is the case. The act of learning (by the actors, by the audience) is central to what makes these plays tick. It is entirely right that student casts should be the ones to realize their onstage possibilities.

It is much harder to define the general understanding of disability in *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here*. In one sense, the fact that the plays exist at all frames the fact that the theme is now socially admissible, that it can provide the basis for a shared dramatic encounter. Then there is the form of the plays, their use of rapid-fire scenes, parallel storylines and diverse characters. Their narratives are made up of snippets of other narratives, giving their internal structure a capacious air, a sense of being larger on the emotional inside than the informational outside, like *Dr. Who's* Tardis. Audiences are required to fill out with their

own understanding the fragments they see and hear – the anti-Semitic slogans daubed on the walls of the ghetto houses in *Wellclose Square*, or the segment from a reality TV quiz show in *Unsex Me Here*. This kind of lexical supplementation is certainly active, and builds on what the plays can show directly in the brief time allotted to them. But it probably does not decisively alter anyone's views. The fact that we know more 'about' disability is the result of mobilizing our own internal resources rather than any shift in the drama per se. We are more informed. We are not necessarily changed.

But in plays that aspire to capture something real about the world – an ambition quite different from wanting to write a 'realistic' play – such shifts do occur, or are at least attempted, and bring with them an irruptive force that *is* transforming. The precise natures of these shifts are bespoke to particular plays. They are where dramas keep their most individual features. However, they are always a *risk*, a hazard to the play as it has until then unfolded and been understood. Thus they represent moments when a play either flies or falls, reaches another level of creative possibility or crashes to the stage floor in the endeavour. Very often they involve a breach of convention, plausibility or received opinion. 'Veridical' truth (truth of fact) is set aside in pursuit of 'ontological' truth (truth of being), an attempt to grasp the meaning of the big picture of which a play can necessarily present only a small segment (Meyrick 2011).

One scene in each play demonstrates how 'the background' is used as a resource by James to open up the mind of his audience: in *Wellclose Square* the killing of Annie Crook by Yarborough, which invokes the Jack the Ripper murderer, and in *Unsex Me Here*, the escape of Minna from Hadamar her rescue by Bodo and Sister Mathilde. These event sequences occur right at the end of each play – a style of revelation reminiscent of mid-twentieth-century US drama, of Miller and Williams, with which James is particularly conversant. Each sequence is 'unreal', in that it breaks with a typical understanding of what might have taken place historically and offers an alternative vision, an imaginative transgression. In doing this, the sequences are careful to present events that are *possible* but not *necessarily so*, thus prompting a difficult question for the spectator: do we believe them to be true or not? Did they take place as presented? Did something like that take place? Could these events ever have taken place? Is it possible for someone like Minna to *ever* escape somewhere like Hadamar? Positioning the sequences at the end of the plays, as James does, means we approach these questions informed by everything that we have heard, seen and thought beforehand. Woven around this, an invisible fluidic consciousness, is 'the background'. In traversing the last moments of the plays we find ourselves in open water, epistemologically. Freed from the need to adhere to generally accepted information (though earlier in the dramas this has been an important task), James takes his audience to the edge of the possible and gives them a glimpse of the truth, not just the fact, of disability.

These moments of arrest in theatre – uncomfortable, fraught, controversial – are undoubtedly what Badiou is referring to when he talks about 'universal singularities' (2005). As we emerge out of the cul-de-sacs of a loquacious but sterile postmodernism, doing our

best not to fall back into the arrogances and aporias of past critical approaches, Badiou's resuscitation of a subject-based ontology offers a way forward both critically and politically. And it doesn't hurt that he is a playwright too. My latest playwright.

The great text of theatre, because it is open and incomplete, because it will be played through the ages and by human beings who are indifferent to the whole context of this text, human beings to have changed gods, whose city no longer has the same form, and whose loves no longer have the same law, this text must possess the powerful simplicity of the atemporal, it must bespeak a *generic* humanity, capable of passing from actor to actor, from body to body, from State to State, all the while preserving its fundamental meaning [...] There is thus – first strand in the knot of theatre – an eternity in the text and in that which singularizes it among other texts.

(2008: 227–228, original emphasis)

If Badiou is right and theatre has, as part of its being, access to truth, and if plays can assay it, albeit with peril and difficulty, then disability is more than an intellectual leitmotif in *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here*. It is a world to be entered and understood on a plane of our common – generic – humanity. And why not? Disability is no respecter of times, places or persons. It is a supremely democratic condition. Not *everyone* is disabled, but *anyone* may be. To grasp its contingency is to grasp its reality and head off from there. In this way, James' plays do not tell us what to think. They say to us: 'think'.

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## Biography

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Julian is Strategic Professor of Creative Arts at Flinders University, South Australia, the Artistic Counsel for the State Theatre Company and an Honorary Associate at La Trobe University. He was Associate Director and Literary Advisor at Melbourne Theatre Company 2002–2007 and Artistic Director of Kickhouse Theatre 1989–1998. As an academic, he has published histories of Sydney's Nimrod Theatre and the MTC, and numerous articles on Australian theatre, cultural policy and contemporary dramaturgy. He is currently Chief Investigator for both the AusStage database and Laboratory Adelaide, a Flinders University research project studying the problem of culture's value. *The Retreat of Our National Drama*, his second Currency House Platform Paper was launched last year. He is also the director of many award-winning theatre productions, including *Neighbourhood Watch* for the State Theatre Company of South Australia in 2014 and *Angela's Kitchen*, which attracted the 2012 Helpmann for Best Australian Work. He was a founder member and Deputy Chair of PlayWriting Australia 2004–2009 and a member of the federal government's Creative Australia Advisory Group 2008–2010. He was the director of the inaugural production of *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* and winner of the 1998 Green Room Award for Best Director on the Fringe. His latest book *After the New Wave: Australian Alternative Theatre in the Post-Whitlam Period* will be published by Brill later this year.

## Director's Notes

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Martin Harvey



**M**y collaboration with James and his work began over 25 years ago and in that time has developed into something of a symbiotic relationship. We have been working together on an acting course at Exeter University since 2005 and the two plays in this volume are the latest to be written specifically for that course. It had occurred to me, from all the script development work I had done in the past with professional actors, that working on a new play with a writer present required a certain skill set and that some actors were better at it than others. It therefore seemed to me to be appropriate to examine this process with the students.

Moreover, with a writer present throughout the course, it is possible to have a play that is written to suit the course, in structure and style. So it has been that the production of these plays has formed the culmination of the course and not just an extra exercise bolted on to the end. They require a style of performance that is a progression from the kind of work the students have been doing and that takes their understanding of what it means to act to a different level.

During the course, the students move from performing a monologue to performing a naturalistic duologue and only then to working on these new pieces. Alongside those performances and the rehearsal for them, they attend workshops that aim to give them some of the skills they will need to cope with the texts and the styles required. They have workshops on voice, on working together, on a critical examination of Stanislavkian systems, on the basic ideas behind Michael Chekhov's work on imagination and physicality, moving on to thoughts about performing Brechtian texts and understanding actor/audience relationships. This last is the workshop that precedes the beginning of work on a James MacDonald play, where they are asked not to forget about naturalism and the creation of believable characters, but rather to expand it into something more complex.

It is clearly also quite a step from performing a duologue, which is a section of a well-known piece of writing, to working as a whole group, with something new. The ensemble aspect of the work on these plays is central to the progression the students are being asked to make as it becomes more than an exercise in acting, rather something they can own.

There is always a buzz of excitement in the rehearsal room when I remind the students that in any publication of the play they are about to work on, their names will appear in the cast list at the front of the piece. I suggest that this carries with it a responsibility, as a play is never complete until performed and that they will have a hand in the shaping of that performance and so the play. There is no record of a prior performance they can look at, no

review and no essay that will tell them how to play it; how they work together, individually and as a group will put a stamp on the text.

The first step in the evolution of these texts is for James and me to agree on a version with which we are happy to start rehearsals. This is a complex process in itself; it starts with knowledge of the size of the group and the subject matter that James wants to explore. He then writes a first draft; a rare skill in delivering a work that serves the purposes of the course, giving a fair share to all students and that makes sense dramatically. Perhaps one of the features of these works that is so out of the ordinary is the even distribution of text for a company of actors (I recently directed a production of *Romeo and Juliet* with students where the distribution is, of course, much more uneven, as it is in most extant plays, with the result that one is always aware that some students will feel less well served than others).

I will then respond to that first draft, first and foremost as a play rather than as an exercise and we will discuss it as such. Sometimes, as with *Wellclose Square*, it will lead to minor revisions and at other times, as with *Unsex Me Here*, it will lead to a major shift in focus. The latter changed as we discussed the process of staging it from being a courtroom drama to the exhibition format. Central to the ideas behind the staging is the question of what the actor-audience relationship should be and how the audience will occupy the space. In the courtroom version of *Unsex Me Here*, we moved from the testimony given by the nurses to seeing the reality of their situations in the hospital played out. It was clear to us that the playing out of the situations needed to be the focus of attention rather than anything else and so the courtroom was dropped in favour of leading the audience from one situation to another. The prosecutors from the court then changed into the guides we see in the play as it now exists, who are able to have much more direct contact with the audience. We toyed with the idea of having simultaneous exhibitions taking place in different locations with audience members visiting them in different orders, depending on which guide they were led by, but this was shelved as a stronger narrative thread began to emerge, needing all the audience to view it in the same sequence.

*Wellclose Square* was much more straightforward in that the staging was simpler, allowing the audience to remain within once space, shifting their focus within it to the various door fronts and insets as the scenes progressed. Here the revisions were much more to do with characters and their interactions, a process that continued well into the rehearsal stage. Here it is worth noting that there is usually a period of adjustment for some characters to fit the drama; what is remarkable about these two texts is that pretty much all characters have made themselves necessary to the narrative drive of the plays, rather than being there as material for the students to work on. Most of the revisional work that happens in rehearsals is to do with serving the production as it evolves, for example, writing text that will cover a scene shift or shift of focus, giving extra text to cover the length of a journey within a promenade (as happened in *Unsex Me Here*) or finding clear moments when direct communication with the audience is desirable. In *Wellclose Square*, the relationship between the Marcattas needed some clarification for the actors and the audience and this was done by being a little more specific about their history to this point.

Once the text arrives in front of students, the business of building the ensemble begins. We have usually been working with the students for about five weeks to this point and have some ideas of their individual strengths and weaknesses, characteristics and playing range. From this knowledge we cast the plays in a way, we hope, that will offer each student a challenge they can rise to and enjoy. When the students receive the play, their names are already on the dramatis personae. During the read-through we allow time to stop, explain, discuss and start the process of understanding the intention of the piece and how the students can contribute to it. We then move on to a lengthy discussion, debate even, about the issues involved and what it is we, as a group, want to say with it. With *Wellclose Square* we had a debate about current immigration to this country and the scapegoating of foreigners; with *Unsex Me Here*, we talked not only about disability within the Third Reich but also what is going on in Britain today, including ATOS assessments of bedroom tax and benefits and how much they cost society, linking this last to Schulz's statement at the beginning of the second act: 'Each one costs the People's Community 60,000 Reichsmark over the course of a lifetime, and we ask whether it's right for any one of them to make such a claim on their fellows when they bring back nothing in return.'

Of course, attitudes to disability are central to both these works and indeed much of the work written for these projects over the years. Whereas in earlier works the references may have been more oblique and used the idea of *outsiders* as a metaphor, the later works have foregrounded disability more strongly. The groups of students that we work with are largely able-bodied and may well not have given disability much thought before. Here they have no choice but to deal with it, not only as subject matter but also within the room in the person of James, and some of them are going to have to embody disability in front of him. This is a most important aspect of the work, as the actors are being asked to understand disability from within as well as without. In our next project we are going to ask the same, to some extent, of the audience.

We have done much during the preceding weeks of the course to engender an atmosphere in the rehearsal studios of openness, honesty and courage to try things out. This atmosphere is important to any creative endeavour, but is particularly important to us as we know that what we are going to ask of the students is very hard and will fight against their instincts of decency and decorum; it will, for some of them, demand the kind of transformation with which they will feel very uncomfortable as they make attempts to distress their bodies and their voices.

During the workshop on Michael Chekhov's work we concentrate, for much of the time, on physical experimentation without judgement or censorship, in an attempt to loosen self-conscious body images and allow a freedom to explore. We refer back to this on the rehearsal floor and ask the students to experiment freely with physicalization of disability. We hope that the presence of James in the room gives them the permission to do this. It feels very incorrect to many, as it would to most able-bodied people, but it is a barrier that needs to be broken through if the plays are to be fully embraced and owned by the cast. Students often research the disability they are working with in depth and arrive at something

that is clinically accurate. At other times we require the embodiment to be exaggerated for dramatic purpose, even comic effect, as with Joseph in *Wellclose Square*, or deliberately offensive as with the scene in the bath in *Unsex Me Here*. At these moments the plays need to embrace a sense of the Carnavalesque. To achieve this, a sense of freedom is necessary; normal self-censorship must be suspended and with that, we hope, prejudice is dealt a blow as a kind of understanding is reached. No able-bodied actor will be able to fully understand what it means to be disabled, any more than most actors can fully understand what it means to be Macbeth, but, if part of what acting is about is to reach a kind of understanding of what it means to be another, then including disability within that other is, I suggest, legitimate.

It is not my purpose (nor I think my place) to engage in the general field of disabled politics or theory here. I feel more confident in leaving that to James, in his essays and in his plays. I do acknowledge however that as an able-bodied male, I may draw criticism for even attempting to direct these dramas. Students are also aware of the contentiousness of this work, although I prefer to think of it more as a privilege. Both the students and I are privileged to work with James; we are privileged, in that he is prepared to share his world with us (sometimes with more than usual openness and often in arresting detail); we are privileged in working with a writer at the height of his power; and we are privileged in the license he gives us by his presence. What we can deal with more confidently is the understanding of how disability is viewed by contemporary establishments. So our conversations around the play and in rehearsals seek to explore our attitudes to the political landscape as we see it and as viewed through the prism of these plays.

Experimenting with the relationships between actors, characters and audience members is very much part of what these plays are intended to foster, both in the spacial relationship between them and in the psychological contact. We start, before rehearsal begins, by playing around with ways of acting Brechtian text. Many students arrive from school with a notion that to play Brechtian texts means not to act. They are often unaware that it is possible to embody a character and communicate a political message at the same time; that it is possible to exaggerate a character while making their emotions carry recognizable truth; that it is possible to allow an audience to feel pity for a character while getting angry about the situation. In other words, they often see Stanislavski and Brecht as binary opposites. What we concentrate on is in taking what they have learnt from naturalistic work, in building character and believable relationships, and using that as a basis from which to expand, project and actively further the overall agreed message of the piece.

Our first step in this process is to remove any kind of separation between cast and audience. There is no stage or auditorium, only a space that is occupied by all. Very often when actors are not required in a scene, they join the audience as spectators, stepping into a scene as required. We are all sharing the experience at the same time, with little or no time out for the actors. This means that the cast have very little time to get into character but rather they assume the character as they step into the scene. There is no darkened room where the mystical process takes place before stepping into the light of the stage: there is no stage, the light is shared and the assumption of character happens before our eyes, sometimes as close

as touching distance. This requires absolute concentration from all throughout the duration of the piece and contributes significantly to the sense of ensemble and shared objectives. Moreover each actor is aware of the atmosphere in the space throughout and can contribute to it both as spectator and performer.

Sometimes direct address is indicated in the script as, for example, with the museum guides in *Unsex Me Here* and with Gentleman in *Wellclose Square*. We try to encourage a style for this that is conversational, inclusive and that works to draw the audience in – to the space, to the situation and to the ideas. They often set the scene and, in so doing, ask the audience to engage their imaginations with ours. This does not mean that actors and characters who do not have clear direct address do not in some way contact the audience; we ask all actors to *include* the audience whenever possible. We are not asking for theatrical asides, where a character imparts information to an audience that other characters are not party too, rather to include the audience in the conversations as if they were another character or number of characters. The difference could be explained by likening it to the difference between two doctors talking across a patient without acknowledging their presence and the same conversation making an effort to include the patient.

We are fortunate to have large studios in which to present these pieces. They are flexible to our needs and the organization of the space constitutes the main *mise en scène* for our productions. The studios are separated into three by removable walls with connecting doors and each with doors into a corridor/foyer. Each studio has an alcove that can be used as a separate space divided by curtaining. When the walls are removed, we have one long space (approximately 30 metres) with three insets along one side and doors into the corridor along the other.

For *Wellclose Square* we used the middle of the three spaces as the square, with the interior of Sue's space set up in the alcove, the interior of Yarborough's rented house set up in the studio to the left behind curtains and the Marcatta's front door in the wall dividing the studio to the right. That wall was used to write the anti-Semitic slogans on. The audience was free to move about the space as they wished.

*Unsex Me Here* used much more of the building. The audience was greeted in the foyer by the guides and moved along to the first exhibit and then into the studio which was open to its full length. The main body of the studio was lined with hospital beds with a nurses' station centrally placed. The three alcoves were used for inset scenes; one for the bathroom, one as Heyde's living quarters and one for the American game show. The audience was led back out to the foyer for the scene in the convent. During the interval the walls between the studios were replaced and in the second half the audience was led through them, through the small connecting doors, the first studio being the place of indoctrination, the second the ward where much of the action took place and the last a blacked out room where Anike, Babette and Mitzi were kept in a cage. As the audience was led into this third room, the door was closed behind them and they were left in the dark to listen to the scene. When they were led back into the central space, they were finally allowed to sit in chairs and watch the rest of the piece.

Clearly in this piece we needed to help the audience move to where the action was at any time. Some of these movements were overseen by the guides and in this they were encouraged to improvise as needed, even write their own text. The responsibility was not entirely theirs however; the whole cast was encouraged to help, particularly when they were present as spectators; they could lead the way, indicate that the audience might like to sit down to watch a scene and even talk to the audience to help them. It also requires, on occasion, actors to be ready to improvise in where a scene takes place, as the audience may not behave exactly as predicted or desired.

There is only so much one can do in preparing a cast to deal with this kind of relationship with the audience, much of it is learnt in performance. It requires total concentration, clarity of focus and an openness to include the audience in the process. Each performance is a learning experience and between performances we can develop strategies to help the next performance run more smoothly. All the cast has a responsibility in this and their taking that responsibility, collectively, also feeds into the sense of ensemble.

Annie Tyson, in an interview recorded in Rob Swain's book *Directing* (2011), describes actors as those who 'make themselves into other people [...] take on the personalities, the thoughts and the life of somebody other' (Swain 2011: 84).

If we add to that, taking on the body of another, we get close to what is being asked of the student actors of these plays. And to what end? I think towards an understanding of what it might be like to be patronized, marginalized and victimized, to be thought of as a lesser human being. For it is what most theatre tries to do; to understand the Other through our self and then our self through the Other.

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## Biography

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Martin Harvey, formerly Associate Artistic Director of the Northcott Theatre, Exeter, has had a varied and distinguished career as director, actor and writer, with such notable productions as *King Lear*, *Of Mice and Men* and, for the Buxton Music Festival, the one-act opera *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*. He is currently Lecturer in Drama at the University of Exeter.

## **Crisis, Cruelty, and Curation: Staging ‘Freakish’ History in James MacDonald’s *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here***

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Jessica O’Hara



The trio of plays in James MacDonald's previous collection, *Carnival Texts*, are consciously contemporary interpretations of the Bakhtinian Theory of Carnival. As such, they create worlds in which 'the unfamiliar is featured as standard' as they explore the status of disabled and immigrant communities in present-day Britain (MacDonald 2011: 7). In this present volume, MacDonald locates similar themes of disability, ethnicity, immigration and marginalization in two historic settings not known for their tolerance of the Other. Indeed just as MacDonald's *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here* are about difference, identity and intolerance, they are also about history itself – and our telling of it.

The title of this collection, *Freaks of History*, is wonderfully slippery, hinting at both pieces' fascination with how history happens. On the surface, the volume title seems merely to be referencing the differently bodied who were once deemed physical 'freaks', such as The Elephant Man, The Black Venus or any other person considered freakish in their day. Yes, this notion can be expanded beyond the physical to include other persecuted parties represented in the texts (and in history), such as immigrants, mystics, Jews and even Jewish aristocrats. We can also understand the term to swing the other way. Just as freakish are the victimizers who represent their time's prevailing ethos of cruelty, such as the Nazi doctors and nurses in *Unsex Me Here*, or go beyond it, such as the Jack the Ripper figure in *Wellclose Square*.

The meaning of *Freaks of History* can shift in valance yet again if we consider it to mean the 'freak accidents' of history, or the confluences of discourse, happenstance, personality and crisis that make for these spasms of cruelty: the particular moments when the tides turn and history seems to move backwards. Both pieces dissect these moments, putting into play various theories of history along the way. While *Wellclose Square* is set in a recognizable time and place to explore the interplay of discourse, shifting sociopolitical circumstance and accident in a particular historical moment, *Unsex Me Here* unhinges time by presenting itself as an unnerving 'living' museum exhibit. As such, the play asks its characters and audience to confront the challenges of history and curation, especially when the 'story' to be told is such a ghastly one.

The eponymous setting of *Wellclose Square* is a respectable, well-kept Jewish neighbourhood in the East End of London in the late nineteenth century. The Georgian square is alarmingly near the notoriously crime-ridden Commercial Road and Whitechapel area, where Jack the Ripper brutally murdered at least five women in 1888, events so sensational that, more than a century later, we are still intrigued and horrified by them. By drawing on historic figures and inventing new ones, MacDonald traces the various lineaments of this historic 'freak out', which witnessed a rise in anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant sentiment. Yet, despite its historical setting, its issues hardly seem dated, and, thus, the play argues for a cyclic view of history.

Late-Victorian London was concerned about itself. The city had seen enormous growth in the nineteenth century, quadrupling in size and swelling to over four million denizens, by far the largest city in the world. Many of its new residents came from the reaches of the Empire, collapsing centre and periphery and prompting fears of reverse colonization, which figured heavily in the literature. London's East End was particularly squalid and home to an influx of eastern Europeans, many of them Jewish refugees escaping the Russian pogroms, like the characters in *Wellclose Square*. Politicians and social commentators became increasingly concerned with the conditions, sounding dark warnings about the East End's moral turpitude and potential for revolution, and scolding the stolid middle classes and decadent upper classes for ignoring the plight of the poor. In 1883, Reverend Andrew Mearns published (at first, anonymously) the influential pamphlet, *The Bitter Outcry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor*, rife with graphic descriptions such as these:

In one cellar a sanitary inspector reports finding a father, mother, three children and four pigs! In another room a missionary found a man ill with small pox, his wife just recovering from her eighth confinement, and the children running around half naked and covered with dirt. Here are seven people living in one underground kitchen, and a little dead child lying in the same room. Elsewhere is a poor widow, her three children, and a child who has been dead thirteen days. ... Here lives a widow with her six children, including one daughter of 29, another of 21, and a son of 27. Another apartment contains father, mother and six children, two of whom are ill with scarlet fever. In another nine brothers and sisters, from 29 years of age downwards, live, eat, and sleep together. Here is a mother who turns her children into the street in the early evening because she lets her room for immoral purposes until long after midnight.... Here the smell of paste and of drying match-boxes, mingling with other sickly odours, overpowers you.

(Mearns 1970: 59–60; in Leckie 2015)

Numerous government agents also reported on conditions in the East End, represented in *Wellclose Square* by the bureaucratic Christopher Gentleman, who opens the action with the lurid rhetoric of the press and interprets East End 'otherness' with great condescension (and wrongness).

The work of these government agents and 'social explorers', while mostly well intended, did much to reinforce imperial dichotomies of darkness and light, savagery and civilization, East and West. General William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, draws upon Henry Morton Stanley's contemporary account of the African Congo to make an extended analogy in his 1890 treatise, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*:

But while brooding over the awful presentation of life as it exists in the vast African forest, it seemed to me only too vivid a picture of many parts of our own land. As there is a darkest Africa is there not also a darkest England? Civilisation, which can breed its own barbarians, does it not also breed its own pygmies? May we not find a parallel at our own

doors, and discover within a stone's throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great Equatorial forest?

(Booth 1890: 9)

Thus, Victorian Orientalist discourse mapped onto London itself, as the East End became the site of sin, sensuousness and barbarism, a place of the unknown.

Particularly telling is that the Gothic literature of this period sets up shop right in London – not in some mouldering Italian castle. Then, too, the theme of the divided or secret, monstrous self dominates the horror scene, as the split psyche becomes a metaphor for London's split geography. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is the most obvious literary example of the monstrous self within, but other examples abound. For instance, Dorian Gray, the perennially beautiful protagonist of Oscar Wilde's 1890 novel, goes slumming in London's East End, while his portrait in the attic visibly manifests his soul's hideousness. Dorian's original interest in the East End was charitable and altruistic, until he comes under the sway of Lord Henry, who deems Dorian 'too charming to go in for philanthropy' and who exposes Dorian to his philosophies of vice and pleasure-seeking (Wilde 2005: 18). Indeed, Lord Henry even mocks the hypocrisy of the well-to-do do-gooders:

He pictured to himself with silent amusement the tedious luncheon that he missed by staying so long with Basil Hallward. Had he gone to his aunt's, he would be sure to have met Lord Goodbody there, and the whole conversation would have been about the feeding of the poor, and the necessity for model lodging houses. Each class would have preached the importance of those virtues, for whose exercise there was no necessity in their own lives. The rich would have spoken about the value of thrift, and the idle grown eloquent over the dignity of labour. It was charming to have escaped all that!

(Wilde 2005: 16)

Thus, the East End figures as both a playground of iniquity and a much discussed social problem in Wilde's work. Similarly, in his Sherlock Holmes stories, Arthur Conan Doyle draws upon commonplace notions of the heterogeneity, exoticism and unknowability of the teeming East End, as his title character frequently disguises himself as unsavoury East End types to unravel the nearly invisible yet vast criminal web of his arch-nemesis, Dr Moriarty. Perhaps the most unnerving literary figure, though, is Bram Stoker's Count Dracula, an eastern-European aristocrat who relocates from his own mouldering castle, the typical site of the Gothic, to London's East End and encroaches westward, literally preying upon its denizens (one of whom is Lucy Westenra). Stoker's narrative thus registers the growing fears of reverse colonization and the contagion from the East, functioning as a political allegory about the threat of immigration and infiltration.

Like Stoker's famous fictional vampire, the real-life Jack the Ripper played a similar role in the public imagination. His notorious 1888 murder spree in already crime-ridden Whitechapel indicated that the city itself had become so vast, so unknowable, so iniquitous

that a monster can walk among them undetected and commit the unspeakable. MacDonald's Jack the Ripper figure, much like the original, functions as a shadowy catalyst, the culminating advent of circumstance and sentiment, which turns the tide against the scapegoated eastern-European Jewish population. Despite its name, which suggests enclosure and insulation, *Wellclose Square* can no longer bear up respectably amongst destitution and growing resentment: it can no longer weather this 'freak' of history.

But it's not just the circumstances of poverty, migration or an at-large killer working against the denizens of the square. MacDonald is careful to register several pseudo-scientific discourses of the period that also gave rise to the impossible conditions and tragedies of the play, especially dooming both the Jewish and disabled characters. Perhaps as an outgrowth of imperial endeavour and Darwinism, theories of human typology proliferated in the late nineteenth century. For example, in his many publications, Italian physician Cesare Lombroso theorized that the 'born criminal' bore physical stigmata of his condition and could thus be decoded. According to critic Susan Navarette, '[t]o Lombroso and others, the "born criminal" seemed a *lusus naturae*, freakish in the sense that a devolutionary urge over which he has no control manifested itself anatomically in atavistic, generally simian traits distinguishing him as a throwback to a primitive evolutionary type' (Navarette 1998: 142). Such notions of physical difference place Grisha and Joseph immediately under suspicion for Tsilla's murder, and both must flee the square for self-protection and the safety of the community. Another social theorist, Max Nordau, posited that 'both degeneration and hysteria are the consequences of excessive wear and tear suffered by nations through immense demands on their activity, and through the rank and growth of large towns' (Nordau 1895: 5). As such, the madness and vice of the East End – and even the decadence of the West End – could be seen as hallmark of western decline. Furthermore, Yarborough cites Francis Galton's work in eugenics as he studies Clare's body, ludicrously concluding to assassinate him to preserve the integrity of the royal blood line.

Despite the power of these discourses, it should be noted that, together, or, even within each work, they made little sense. Instead, as Daniel Pick notes in *Faces of Degeneration*,

[...] there was no one stable referent to which degeneration applied; instead, a fantastic kaleidoscope of concerns and objects through the second half of the century, from cretinism to alcoholism to syphilis, from peasantry to urban working class, madness to theft, individual to crowd, anarchism to feminism, population decline to population decrease.

(Pick 1989: 15)

These feverish notions, plus an array of race theories and arguments about the need for a coherent national character and cultural traditions, spelled trouble for ethnic and disabled populations, as physical and cultural difference gathered sinister import.

*Wellclose Square* reveals how circumstance, discourse and crisis collide to create moments of intolerance, these terrible 'freaks' or anomalies in a Whiggish narrative of progressive

history. Yet, these freak moments happen too frequently to discount. MacDonald's play instead posits a cyclic theory of history, where the scenery and characters may be shuffled a bit, but the cycles will always come: poet W.B. Yeats's famous gyres of history will inevitably widen. Indeed, MacDonald employs dramatic irony when Lord Marcatta optimistically counters Christopher Gentleman's warnings about rising anti-Semitism:

MARCATTA: We've had a Jewish prime minister, don't forget. Folk are a deal more accepting than they were.

The audience knows that 'folk' will become a great deal *less* accepting, which makes Rabbi Adler's supplication at the play's end all the more poignant:

ADLER: According to legend, a Jew in the crowd spat at Christ on his way to Calvary, and as a punishment, Jews are condemned to wander the earth. As a warning we mustn't try to settle, we're blamed for crime after crime. We tried to settle here, and this happened. How much more will we be blamed for? How much longer will we have to wander?

The second piece in this collection, *Unsex Me Here*, offers a grim response to Rabbi Adler's closing queries, as MacDonald examines yet another of these historic 'freaks' in which the Jews and disabled suffer unimaginably. While in *Wellclose Square* we witness the rise of tension and the unfolding of circumstance, *Unsex Me Here* is about the aftermath of a spasm of intolerance and inhumanity. As Martin Harvey mentions in his director's notes, the play, originally set up as a courtroom drama, was re-imagined as a museum exhibit about the Third Reich's T4 program. The audience is on a 'tour' of this exhibit, a brilliant conceit that seamlessly allows for breaking the fourth wall and includes us all in the important questions surrounding history, memory and responsibility.

The play begins with three tour guides who can't figure out how to begin:

BARBARA: We're at risk of confusing people if we're all going to overlap. And this is your history more than it's ours.

CLAUDIA: You continue, darling, please.

JOHANNA: My name is Johanna Zastroy. I am Swiss German from just outside Zurich, and the exhibition (which deals with the mass extermination of people with disabilities by the Nazi regime) concerns the extermination centres that operated from August, 1941 until liberation in May, 1945. We'll be providing contextual information, as well, of course. The pertinent facts about German nurses can be traced to the Great War. And the mistreatment of the disabled goes back centuries. One exhibit we'll show you is of a woman who was locked up for life in the 1800s. Perhaps we'll consider her case first.

CLAUDIA: Oh, don't talk about her! You're thinking of Clothilde Elfriede, aren't you.

JOHANNA: She's important historically.

CLAUDIA: You must talk about her, of course. But perhaps not at the very beginning. (*To the audience*) An especially gruesome case. We don't want to put you off straight away.

JOHANNA: They're going to be shown some of the worst crimes in history – what are you talking about? That's why they're here.

BARBARA: Shouldn't we begin with the best-known facts? T4 was Hitler's largely secret plan to eliminate all disabled –

JOHANNA: You told me to introduce the exhibits, and I want to start with Clothilde because she was the first inmate ... the earliest recorded inmate. We'll find her holograph in here.

Right from the start, our guides struggle with the problem of whose history this is to tell. Do the atrocities of the T4 program primarily belong in the history of disability, and are, thus, the province of Johanna, a disabled person? Should Claudia, a German, present this ugly chapter as the (guilty) history of her nation? Or should we drop the identity politics and allow Barbara, a scholar from America, to situate this in a broader socio-cultural perspective?

In addition to the fraught question of who can tell this story, *Unsex Me Here* also asks *how* we might tell this story. Its kaleidoscope of vignettes reveals the myriad ways we approach contemporary curation and history itself. Do we start at the beginning, as Johanna suggests, with the very first patient, and end with the very last patient, the *alpha* and *omega* of suffering? Do we study a typical inmate's experience or make one specific person's trajectory an emblem of the entire happening, as we have done with Anne Frank or the girl in the red coat in *Schindler's List*? Do we fashion a story about heroes and speak of Father Galen's brave resistance or Nurse Mathilde's mercy? Do we focus on the local villains, such as the cruel administrator, Schulz, or 'great men,' like Hitler? Might we look at the circumstances of war and the rhetoric of the time to understand how the people of Germany, and the nurses, in particular, could participate in such atrocities? Should we approach the events at Hadamar as a story of crime and punishment and study the war-crime trials of hospital personnel? Could we reveal the meaning of the event through its artefacts (like the overpowering display of Holocaust victim's shoes in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum)?

*Unsex Me Here* attempts many of these modes of curation in its exhibition scenes as it critiques them, each strategy of storytelling providing insight but ultimately proving inadequate, much like the theories of history to which they correspond. And, yet, we might ask *why* we try to understand the T4 program in all its cruelty. Presumably, it would be to stop the cycle, to take responsibility and to stay in touch with our humanity. Despite all we know about the Holocaust, we *still* seem unable to stop the cycle. As mentioned earlier, Rabbi Adler asks at the close of *Wellclose Square* how long the Jews will be left to wander – and we are still asking this question. At the time of this writing, we are experiencing

another wave of anti-Semitism in Europe, with recent deadly attacks in Brussels, Paris and Copenhagen. Israel is witness to a huge spike in immigration from Europe, particularly France, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu encourages a mass exodus: ‘To all the Jews of France, all the Jews of Europe, I would like to say that Israel is not just the place in whose direction you pray; the state of Israel is your home’ (quoted in Booth and English 2015). In early 2016, *Mein Kampf* will be printed for the first time in Germany since the end of World War II (Faiola 2015). Investors are redeveloping a gigantic Nazi-built vacation complex on the Baltic Sea nicknamed the Colossus of Prora, fuelling ‘a growing debate in modern Germany that pits commercialism against Vergangenheitsbewältigung – or the German word for how the country should come to terms with its dark past’ (Faiola 2014). Is this the beginning of our forgetting and the start of the next ‘freak’ of history? To what extent will the Eurozone’s financial crisis and governmental austerity programmes escalate the rhetoric of contagion and authenticate our cruelty to ‘useless eaters’ once again? How long will Rabbi Adler’s closing lines be a historical refrain?

MacDonald’s work in this collection asks us to learn the lessons of history and keep our humanity such that we neither ask, like Lady Macbeth, to be ‘unsexed’ for the purposes of brutality or to do the ‘unsexing’ of others. *Unsex Me Here* ends with the escaped Minna gamely asserting “I’ll make it on my own” rather than becoming a skivvy to her reluctant abettors. This strikes a note of triumph, a bright spot among all the dark, yet it is dimmed immediately by Andy’s closing line:

ANDY (*voice over*): I don’t think she lived very much longer, for all that.

Ezekiel Sue in *Wellclose Square* says as much about Grisha’s escape:

SUE: And out he went, into the night ... never again to be seen in these parts. If he’s no longer alive, I expect he met a similar fate to poor Tsilla, down Commercial Road. He couldn’t have lived very long anyway, a semi-vagrant at best, his body riddled with the pox.

This grim refrain in both texts reflects an unsatisfying ethics of care, a bowing down to circumstance, an admission of the culture of brutality, and an excuse for inaction. With great poignancy, MacDonald’s plays ask us to take better care of one another than this.

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## Biography

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Jessica O'Hara earned her Ph.D. in English from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is currently Lecturer in English at Pennsylvania State University, where she directs a first-year honours rhetoric course and teaches courses in rhetoric and Irish literature.



1. 'One of the first inmates at Hadamar', Jone Kociunaite in the Exeter University production of *Unsex Me Here*, March 2014. © Erin Walcon.



2. Tomas Bellin torments benighted sister Emmi (Aaron Bell, Armonie Melville). © Erin Walcon.



3. Emmi Bellin considers how she has been duped by the Nazi nurses (Armonie Melville). © Erin Walcon.



4. SS men in rare relaxed mode (Sebastian Posner, William Benyon, Darren Siah). © Erin Walcon.



5. Nazi nurse taking down applicants' particulars (Zoe Ozwell). © Erin Walcon.



6. Early 'patient' given therapeutic cleansing (Caroline Boyce, Carmen Cousens). © Erin Walcon.



7. Prison ward at Hadamar, 1942. © Erin Walcon.



8. Nazi journalist on the trail of the hidden truth (Adam Dolan). © Erin Walcon.



9. Zealous Nazi nurse Lena Holstein faces less committed colleagues (Emily Patrick, Lara Hamilton, Carmen Paddock, Carmen Cousens). © Erin Walcon.



10. Compassionate Mathilde Frey comforts disabled prisoner (Cecilia Crossland, Joanna Ward). © Erin Walcon.

## Part II

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Playtexts



## ***Wellclose Square***

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A Performance Text



## Cast

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Performed by second-year Interpretive Acting students at Exeter University's Roborough Studio under the direction of Martin Harvey on 27 March 2013.

CHRISTOPHER GENTLEMAN	Jack Wrighton
WOMAN	Rosie White
SONYA	Heidi Lawry
BERTH	Disney Burke
TSILLA ZINGERMAN	Anya Williams
GRISHA	Gruffydd Evans
ABRAM	Andrew Trzcinski
CAMILLA LADY MARCATTÀ	Lucy Hirst
EZEKIEL SUE	Jake Francis
JOSEPH SHREDA	Tom Myles
LORD MARCATTÀ	Oliver Wheatley
RABBI ADLER	Harry Kingscott
DINA RUBINA	Rosie White
WILLIAM YARBOROUGH	James Manton
CLARE	Gruffydd Evans
ANNIE CROOK	Georgia Leigh

[Jack the Ripper] had the advantage not only of disembowelling prostitutes but of probably being related to Queen Victoria, bringing together the monstrosity of the people and the monstrosity of the king in this one blurred figure.

Michel Foucault, *Abnormal*

*Late Victorian London: The main action takes place in an East End square that serves as a microcosm of the East European immigrant community. Self-contained, it combines an artisan culture at one end with a more middle-class, exotic culture at the other. Sweatshop and town house commingle in a European atmosphere that is foreign to native East Londoners, who view these inhabitants with distrust or with open hostility. CHRISTOPHER GENTLEMAN looks out at the audience.*

GENTLEMAN: (*Addressing the audience*) There! Out there. That's where England's fetid multitude hovel and spew their disgust at the lot they were handed as free-born citizens. And they look on this lot as the cause of it all. (*Wanders across to two young women hawking simple dresses from a makeshift street stall*) Are you aware of the hostility you arouse? Young woman? The *Pall Mall Gazette* calls you a pest and a menace. (*To the other woman*) You're a cancer as far as the *Standard's* concerned. And the tragedy is you don't know it. Haven't a sentence of English between you, have you?

SONYA: (*Intended to be speaking Russian*) He doesn't think we speak English.

BERTH: Well, don't prove him wrong, you dolt. He's obviously a policeman.

GENTLEMAN: That way is Tillbury Docks, is it ... where you vermin come into the kingdom.

SONYA: (*Small voice, in English*) Yes, sir. It's that way.

GENTLEMAN: What's that? So you do understand? Don't worry, I'm not going to hurt you. I'm not John Law.

BERTH: That's right. That's Tillbury. It's no odds to us. We came to the square as babies ... as *babies*.

GENTLEMAN: (*With irony*) I'm sure you were.  
(*This introduces a prologue in the area alluded to. TSILLA, a young woman, bewildered, is accosted by two dockside sharps.*)

ONE: Are you alone? Is somebody with you? Are you going off somewhere else? America maybe? The US of A?

TWO: Reckon we ought to find out her name first.

ONE: (*To TSILLA*) Your name? What they call you?

Freaks of History

TWO: What ... is ... your ... name?  
TSILLA: (*Pointing to herself*) M-m-m?  
ONE: That's right. The handle you go by. Name ... name ... God almighty.  
TWO: We're using the wrong approach.  
ONE: Right – *you* have a go then ... Christ God almighty.  
TSILLA: Tsilla.  
TWO: I only said ...  
ONE: Shut up. (*To TSILLA*) What was that, darlin'?  
TSILLA: Tsilla ... Tsilla  
TWO: Cilla – marvellous! Her name's Priscilla.  
ONE: Where exactly does that get us?  
TWO: We'll take you where you want to go, Cilla. Put yourself in our hands. (*Two starts to lift her bag.*)  
TSILLA: (*Intended to be speaking Russian*) What are you doing there? Bandits! Let go!  
ONE: We told you you don't need to worry.  
TWO: What's that she's speaking?  
TSILLA: (*In Russian*) You leave me alone.  
WOMAN: (*Approaching them*) Leave the poor poppet alone, can't you. Plenty others here you can meddle with.  
ONE: If you'll pardon us, madam. Her people engaged us to meet her off the boat. (*To TSILLA*) Your father and me are bosom pals, we are. We're like that. Two peas in a pod.  
WOMAN: (*In Russian*) You weren't expecting anybody, were you, my dear?  
TSILLA: You speak Russian! Oh, thanks to God. These villains tried to steal my baggage!  
WOMAN: Did they offer to sell you a ticket to America?  
TSILLA: I think they did, yes.  
TWO: We thought she was all on her lonesome.  
WOMAN: I know you did. Why do you think I intervened?  
ONE: Well, now don't mistake us as part of the criminal element. It's like I said –  
TWO: You should have been here on time. Poor lass was at her wits' end.  
WOMAN: And you helped put her there. (*To TSILLA in Russian*) Come with me, dear.  
ONE: (*Already going after someone else*) What's the matter, darling? Lost your best friend?

Wellclose Square

TSILLA: (To the WOMAN) Thanks to God you arrived when you did. We had a terrible crossing from Libau ... five days we were tossed on the deck like dead fish ... no space between us at all. The ponies they kept in the hold had it better – fed and watered. We had nothing, almost.

WOMAN: Not so quick. My knowledge of Russian isn't that good.

TSILLA: Sorry.

WOMAN: Nothing to eat, you say?

TSILLA: Very little, I swear.  
(GRISHA, undersized and deformed, hovers round them.)

WOMAN: You'll be wanting a bite and a bath then, I dare say.

TSILLA: I'm sorry?

WOMAN: You'll need food then. (Looks at GRISHA) Did you come here alone?

TSILLA: Absolutely.

WOMAN: That's what I thought. (She tosses GRISHA a coin) There is a Russian bathhouse, not far from here. They also check to see if you caught any diseases. How long were you aboard ship?

TSILLA: I don't know. It was called *Kursk*. Who are you, exactly?

WOMAN: A member of the local Board of Guardians. We look after people off the boats. The local shelter houses residents free of charge. They even provide meals. But it's only temporary. You have to leave after two weeks. And they make it a rule you attend worship. But the synagogue is next door. Come with me ... Are you really as young as you look?

TSILLA: Do you know an address ... Well-close? (Tries to show her a piece of paper.)

WOMAN: We mustn't loiter – two lone women in a district like this.

TSILLA: Do you know this address?

WOMAN: Which address? (Looks) Wellclose Square? Who told you about that? One of the ones that accosted you?

TSILLA: Is it far from here?

WOMAN: Farther than we're going. Forgot all about that.

TSILLA: But I have relations there.

WOMAN: What relations? Somebody's ancestors?

TSILLA: Family. Mine. Klara Zingerman's brother and his wife.

WOMAN: Wait a minute. You said you were alone.

TSILLA: I was alone when those men spoke to me. Can you help me find this address?

GRISHA: (In Russian) I can show her ... I know where it is.

Freaks of History

WOMAN: The shelter is only for those without families. You can't stay there otherwise.

TSILLA: Can you help me to find Wellclose Square?

WOMAN: You don't need anyone's help if you live there.

TSILLA: I've never been outside Russia.

GRISHA: Let me take her. I know where it is.  
(*Man passes by, eyeing TSILLA.*)

MAN: Got a fresh honeypot, Jacko? (*To TSILLA*) I'll meet you out back later on.

GRISHA: Go on, you miserable skipper. (*To TSILLA*) Take no notice.

WOMAN: I'm only meant to take girls to the shelter.

TSILLA: (*To GRISHA*) Are you sure you know Wellclose?

WOMAN: He might want to take you to Flower and Dean Street!

TSILLA: Thank you very ...

WOMAN: Perhaps I should have left you where you were! (*She goes off*)

TSILLA: Why does she look at me like that? There's nothing wrong with that address, is there?

GRISHA: It's a walk, that's all. Don't worry. I'll see you're all right.  
(*Back in the square.*)

GENTLEMAN: And where did you come from, Palestine ... Jerusalem ... Little Jewry? Poland! You're from Warsaw? There's as many Poles here as there is in War –

SONYA: Rus ...

GENTLEMAN: What's that, Rus? (*Beat*) You're from Russia? Then what do they call this, Little Odessa? It looks too fit somehow. Well-kept English hedges ... window boxes. These aren't tenements at all. They tell me a baronet lives here ... and nearby some sort of Shaman? (*Pointing to a villa at one end of the square*) And what are you, part of the Rag Fair? You're a bit off the beaten path, aren't you? (*He looks at their row of dresses*) It's all right, I'm nobody you need worry about. I'm making a factual survey, that's all. On behalf of your Jewish Board of Guardians, you might say. They were consulted. The East End's attracted national concern, what with the squalor, the crime and the spread of disease. *Darkest England*, one scribbler called it. Doesn't look like that here, as I say. If these weren't a bit of the old-clo' trade, I'd fancy I was somewhere up West. Marble Arch way, somewhere like that.  
(*Handles the garment*)

BERTH: Leave that!

GENTLEMAN: What's that?

Wellclose Square

BERTH: I said leave it. You think anybody will buy that after you've put your dirty paws all over it?

GENTLEMAN: There's no need to get shirty, young woman. We're not like the thieves you were happy to leave behind. No one's going to rob you in broad daylight.

SONYA: Please, don't be angry, sir. It's only we haven't made a sale all day ... and we don't work more than three days a week.

BERTH: (*In Russian*) Don't bother to grovel. He's only making fun of us.

GENTLEMAN: If you stopped cheeking me, you could go about making a sale. (*Of WOMAN approaching*) What about this fine lady? Can they help you?

WOMAN: I don't think so. I'd like to lodge a complaint.

BERTH: Whatever it is, you never bought it from us. (*To GENTLEMAN*) We never saw this lady before ... (*To SONYA*) Did we?

WOMAN: Before you came wandering in. That's exactly my point. (*To GENTLEMAN*) They're lowering the whole tone of the square – attempting to flog shoddy items like this.

SONYA: No one's forcing you to buy it.

WOMAN: That isn't the point, and you know it. You're attempting to pass off rag-and-bone as though it was ...

BERTH: ... genuine merchandize.

WOMAN: Residents here pay precisely for keeping the likes of you out. There are places for people like you. (*To GENTLEMAN*) They bring the sewage with them wherever they go.

BERTH: The garment you hold in your hand was made on the premises, right over there. All the dresses were.

WOMAN: I doubt that intensely. (*To GENTLEMAN*) I was threatened by one of her consorts only yesterday forenoon.

BERTH: She's lying – she doesn't live here.

WOMAN: I'm not going to have it, nevertheless! Decent folk have their rights. With them here, it's almost Whitechapel.

GENTLEMAN: I was ruminating on this very point only a few minutes ago. The area's a veritable cesspool, and the whole place is bubbling up, like a cauldron.

WOMAN: Spare us your rumination – I want action. There must be a civil ordinance against their traffic. Apply it – arrest them on the spot.

GENTLEMAN: I can't do that.

WOMAN: Why not? I've cited the statute.

BERTH: He's not a policeman.

WOMAN: You hold your tongue.

GENTLEMAN: That's correct, I'm afraid.

WOMAN: What! Well, what in thunder are you?  
BERTH: Another dossier, like us!  
GENTLEMAN: Christopher Gentleman – part of a Royal Commission into East London poverty. I’m charged with making the most comprehensive report.  
WOMAN: I didn’t ask for reports. I want you to charge *them* with vagrancy ... with lewd and licentious conduct. You’re familiar with the word licentious, aren’t you? Her ponce importuned me this morning.  
BERTH: You shouldn’t have given him cause. She looks like she comes from Cock Alley herself.  
(*ABRAM appears from one of the dwellings round the corner.*)  
ABRAM: I see you’re interested in our collection, madam.  
WOMAN: What? No, not in the slightest. I don’t suppose *you’re* a policeman?  
ABRAM: I’m these girls’ employer. Is there a problem?  
SONYA: (*Sotto voce, in Russian*) She called you a dirty name, I think. (*To the WOMAN*) This isn’t the man that insulted you, is it?  
ABRAM: *Atsor.* (*To WOMAN*) Let me apologize for them straight away. They’ve no business outside the workshop.  
WOMAN: It’s close to committing affray – blocking the thoroughfare, haranguing the private citizen where she sleeps.  
ABRAM: And I take it you saw nothing here that caught your eye.  
WOMAN: Well, I never really looked. That’s not the point.  
ABRAM: They never gave you the chance. (*To the WOMAN*) You should be ashamed.  
WOMAN: That, again, is exactly my point. They look more like types from Commercial Road.  
ABRAM: They’re assistants, and ours is a family concern. They’ve scarcely been out of the workshop. (*Of GENTLEMAN*) This is your husband, I take it?  
WOMAN: Certainly not.  
GENTLEMAN: I’m only here to observe.  
ABRAM: (*To WOMAN*) I’m humbly sorry. Allow me to compensate by escorting you to our *atelier*. This is merely our work-a-day line.  
WOMAN: No, it’s quite obvious none of you has the least idea what I’m talking about. (*She goes off*)  
ABRAM: (*Sotto voce*) How could you let a thing like that happen?  
SONYA: It wasn’t us!  
ABRAM: Quiet. (*Sotto voce*) I told you to stir up some trade.  
BERTH: Exactly. What do you suppose we were doing?

ABRAM: Exactly what she accused you of – making a public nuisance of yourselves. (*Looks at a garment*) Wait a minute. This isn't right.

BERTH: It's the one she was holding. She's torn it. I tried to stop her.

ABRAM: I'm talking about the hem. Is it meant to be Damask?

SONYA: Yeah?

ABRAM: Well, it's rubbish.

BERTH: What do you mean?

ABRAM: The pleats are too wide ... and the stitching's far too deep. It'll come undone before the first washing.

BERTH: They're not all like that, are they?

ABRAM: Bad enough there's even one. Unique to the customer. That's our boast ... and to people like her. Give a dog a bad name ... this is exactly how it's done. She'll be telling everyone she knows.

GENTLEMAN: (*Looking out*) Over this way is Cable Street?

ABRAM: (*To SONYA*) You told me she knew how to baste.

BERTH: How do you know I did it?

SONYA: It's probably mine.

ABRAM: How could it be yours? You can sew in your sleep. I took her on under your warrantee. And what happens? She argues with customers ... turns in shoddy work.

BERTH: So you're dismissing me, are you?

SONYA: No, don't do that. (*To ABRAM*) It's only one dress ... and it's only the hem. I'll fix it later. And there's no pleasing some people. You tell me that. (*Of the WOMAN*) There's the proof.

ABRAM: This would never happen with Ilona. She'd make the dress and the sale, and we'd have orders up to here ... from every house in the street. I never wanted a third girl. *You* talked me into it.

SONYA: Because I can't cope. I'm *doing* it in my sleep. And you don't pay us nearly enough.

ABRAM: You never hear Ilona complaining. That's a really good girl. Eager to learn ... eager to make a go of it. I started her out as a baster, then a feller. When she tells me she's ready for full tailoring, I'll let her do that. I know I can trust her.

BERTH: What would you like us to do?

ABRAM: You may as well push off home. Save me having to pay you for nothing.

BERTH: You want us to sell your dresses, is that right?

ABRAM: What do you have in mind?

BERTH: I passed Lady Marcatta walking her setter the other day. She looked very approachable. Come on, Son.

ABRAM: Lady Mar – Are you *meshugina*? The other one wanted to have you arrested. Marcatta would be that much worse.

BERTH: Ah, but she'd never met us. Lady M is a different stripe of zebra altogether. (*To GENTLEMAN*) You'll speak for us, won't you, sir – honest members of the labouring poor. (*To ABRAM*) He's spent the morning observing us.

GENTLEMAN: You're not seriously asking for my endorsement? I agree with the irate madam – you're a public menace. You ought to be in the workhouse or worse.

ABRAM: That ought to be clear enough to you. (*He starts to leave.*)

GENTLEMAN: Sir? I've been trying to locate Ezekiel Sue. Is he anywhere in the square?

ABRAM: He's in that one there. (*To SONYA*) What do you plan to do? And what about the dresses? That strumpet was perfectly right – they're tat.

(*GENTLEMAN approaches one address, SONYA and BERTH another nearby. GENTLEMAN disappears inside.*)

BERTH: Leave them.

SONYA: I can't do that. You heard what he said.

BERTH: Stay with them then. I'll have better luck without you anyway. Excuse me, Lady Marcatta?

CAMILLA: I've been watching you both for some time.

BERTH: We're not bothering you, I hope.

CAMILLA: Not at all. I admire your perseverance. Why don't you come in?

BERTH: Thank you. (*Motions SONYA forward.*)

SONYA: I'll stay here.

CAMILLA: How dedicated of you.

BERTH: He doesn't deserve it ... the hours we work for the pittance he gives us.

CAMILLA: That's very much to my point. I'd like to help you if I can. We can talk out here just as well, if you're anxious, and we can all join in. Your employer expects you to sell those here, does he?

BERTH: Some hope, I'd say.

SONYA: I think he thought they'd be suitable for servants.

CAMILLA: Indeed, yes. Or I might have a better suggestion. The Orphan Asylum at Norwood. They're more likely to buy in bulk ... I suppose that's what he wants.

SONYA: We could just go to Petticoat Lane.

CAMILLA: You mistake me, my dear. I'm pledging this to you. I'm one of the governors, you see? I'll have my Annie collect from you and then deliver them within the week. He has a bulk price, doesn't he?

SONYA: I think so, yes. Shall I get him to call?  
CAMILLA: Oh, dear, no. I can't be doing with tradesmen at the door. You find out the price for, say, a dozen shifts, and I'll have Annie fetch and carry. I wouldn't imagine you ran to anything more elaborate? Ball gowns or things of that sort?  
SONYA: Made to measure, you mean? Oh, we do.  
CAMILLA: I know, yes, *The Song of the Shirt*.  
SONYA: What did you have in mind?  
CAMILLA: Something grander than the Jews' Infant School outing anyway. I'm one of their patrons as well.  
SONYA: We completed an order for an Empire tea gown only this morning.  
CAMILLA: And I was lucky enough to attend the wedding of Leonora de Rothschild on Saturday. The bride's robe was described as 'a *chef d'oeuvre* in taste and appointments – white satin resplendent in real Brussels point'. The bridesmaids' dresses were of white tulle looped with blue ribbon and velvets over very full slips of white glacé.  
SONYA: Yes, well, I'm sure there's nothing like that in our shop. So sorry to trouble you. Are you coming, Berth?  
CAMILLA: Don't go. Can't you see I'm trying to place temptation in your path? Your employer is obviously a swine. I'm offering you a way out.  
SONYA: I don't follow you.  
CAMILLA: Berth does, though, don't you, my dear?  
BERTH: I'm beginning to.  
CAMILLA: I was certain you didn't come over here *par hasard*. Ah, Saturday's ceremony put me very much in mind of my own treasured nuptials. Every maiden deserves an equivalent. Lord Marcatta plighted his troth to me in the most devoted fashion. Any girl couldn't help but feel exalted. The Chief Rabbi began by offering a prayer to the poor of the Land of Promise, then his Lordship lifted my veil and promised me utter fidelity and love, and I felt on the instant that these were not mere words of ceremony but the vow by which we would regiment our lives and the lives of our people here and abroad. In fact he was confiding to me that wherever we went for the rest of our lives would be parish to us. You see what I mean by 'exalted', don't you? The moment was quite, quite divine.  
SONYA: Sounds ...  
CAMILLA: Idyllic? It was.  
BERTH: You said you had something for us?

SONYA: Berth!

CAMILLA: She's quite right. I want you to work for me.

BERTH: As housemaids?

CAMILLA: My words, at times, fail me. I don't mean that literally, of course. But you tell me your employer is nasty to you, I say, why bother if there's no need? And there isn't, I promise you. Wouldn't you prefer somewhere far from the sweatshop, *The Song of the Shirt*? 'Work – work – work!  
My labour never flags;  
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,  
A crust of bread – and rags ...'

SONYA: That's not exactly how it is.

BERTH: Who says it's not?

CAMILLA: Even if it's a distant resemblance. Wouldn't you prefer something altogether removed ... as far from it as the East End is from Grafton Street. Don't you realize? I offer you Grafton Street.

SONYA: That's not possible.

CAMILLA: (*To BERTH*) Does she doubt that I know such people? (*To SONYA*) I was at the wedding, you know. I was married from there myself.

SONYA: No, I'm sorry, I don't mean that. I mean ... how could we move there? *I* couldn't move.

CAMILLA: Nonsense, you just make up your mind to it. You think other young women, exactly like you, with a skill and a respectable trade ... a profession for girls in your position ... you think they don't have lodgings where they work? Better lodgings for better employment. It's as simple as that.

SONYA: English lasses, you're talking about.

CAMILLA: Mmm ... Like the ones that helped design the wedding gowns on Saturday. If I was there, don't you think I claim acquaintance with such people? Better than. My husband's a baronet. It's part of our mission from God to introduce the immigrant element into society as we ourselves were introduced ... to make us all not merely Anglo-something or other ... but simply Anglo. I ask you, what about that?

BERTH: You convinced me – when do we start?

SONYA: It's impossible for me. I'm sensible of your kindness, but ...

CAMILLA: If you were sensible, you'd accept.

SONYA: It's not that. Tell her Ladyship why, Berth.

BERTH: She means her father would never allow it.

CAMILLA: Not allow you to better yourself? I never heard the like.

BERTH: *He's* the dreaded employer.

Wellclose Square

CAMILLA: Oh, but that's dreadful ... that's –  
BERTH: It's worse than that.  
SONYA: No, it's not.  
CAMILLA: But what could be worse? That's exactly what we've been fighting against ... what I want to deliver you from.  
SONYA: My mother died early, you see ... consumption.  
CAMILLA: I understand perfectly, pet.  
SONYA: I've taken her place in his life.  
CAMILLA: They use that, you see, as a ploy ... as their vicious hold.  
BERTH: It's worse even than that.  
CAMILLA: Well, now what could be worse?  
SONYA: Nothing. Shut it, Berth. That's all there is.  
CAMILLA: And more than enough, I should say. Sparing your feelings, the man deserves the law down on him.  
SONYA: No, don't. Don't do anything.  
CAMILLA: I shan't, never fear. He'd only make it worse for you.  
SONYA: Exactly. Get Berth out. That'll do. It's better with two girls than three anyway. He was hinting that this morning.  
CAMILLA: *Three* of you? Who's the third? Ought I to talk to her, too?  
SONYA: No, I tell you to leave it – please!  
CAMILLA: Right you are, my dear. I understand. (*To BERTH*) But, you know, that's typical chauvinism. Lord Marcatta was even guilty of it on our wedding trip, would you believe. He talked about installing me as the High Governess of some outer hinterland or other ... as though my life's work was to be a wretched despot. I told him flat, 'You'll be lucky not to find yourself abandoned, at that rate ... altogether annulled'.  
(*As she strolls into her house with BERTH. SONYA begins taking the dresses back to their shop.*)  
Let me explain to you what we have in mind.  
(*In the emporium of EZEKIEL SUE. The mystic is together with LORD MARCATTÀ before a small altar. JOSEPH, athetoid, in a wheelchair, offers up an invocation.*)  
JOSEPH: Elijah the prophet, Elijah the friend, come and help us, lawful judge. Save my life, for you defend those who have suffered unduly, Bring harmony and peace to me, and balm to my afflicted body.  
MARCATTÀ: And that usually does the trick, does it?  
(*There is a knock at the door.*)  
GENTLEMAN: Have I got the right house – Ezekiel Sue?  
SUE: The prophet Elijah appears in many forms. (*To GENTLEMAN*) Which are you?

Freaks of History

GENTLEMAN: I'm here to make a report.  
SUE: Census taker ... tax collector ...!  
MARCATTA: Inspector of drains!  
GENTLEMAN: My God but that's close. Most of the East End is infested with filthy sewage ... but not here, I venture to say. (*To SUE*) I've been led to believe you're a spiritual leader in the parish.  
SUE: You're sure you're not confusing me with Chief Rabbi Adler?  
GENTLEMAN: No, I'm not sure. I might well be. No, I'm sure I'm not.  
MARCATTA: Now *we're* not sure.  
GENTLEMAN: Forgive me. Lord Salisbury's government is preparing a Royal Commission on poverty in the East End, and that, necessarily, includes better off areas like this one. It's a bit of a freak, as I'm sure you're aware. A stone's throw from Cable Street and Commercial Road and yet resembling parts of St James ... or Mayfair.  
MARCATTA: We have our sweatshops, too.  
GENTLEMAN: I've seen them ... and the sweated labour. And you would be ...  
MARCATTA: Marcatta. My wife and I chose to live among the brethren. We're members of the Board of Guardians, dedicated to, among other things, the relief of destitute immigrants.  
SUE: And he's come on that very mission, haven't you, my friend?  
GENTLEMAN: Would you permit me to oversee you for a time? I don't necessarily partake.  
JOSEPH: Elijah's presence is always welcome ... always felt. Besides, I summoned you.  
SUE: The afflicted in body are often childlike in their faith and openness.  
GENTLEMAN: I'm not sure I follow entirely.  
MARCATTA: He believes you were sent from God.  
GENTLEMAN: Well, from Lambeth Palace anyway. (*To SUE*) The Archbishop of Canterbury is also a Commissioner.  
SUE: (*To MARCATTA*): You wanted advice about something. Unburden yourself, sire.  
MARCATTA: 'Sire?' There's no need to defer. Marcatta will do. But, er, another time might be more appropriate.  
SUE: Don't be frightened. Open your heart.  
GENTLEMAN: Perhaps if I left ...  
SUE: You can't leave now – Elijah has taken up residence within you. Don't you feel his presence?  
GENTLEMAN: Doesn't feel any different.  
SUE: Try to leave then.  
JOSEPH: He can't!

GENTLEMAN: That's right – I don't seem able to ...  
MARCATTA: He's not Elijah, though, is he? You've got him mesmerized ...  
hypnotic suggestion.  
SUE: He's fully awake. (To GENTLEMAN) Aren't you? (To MARCATTA) It's  
a form of prayer ... as we might easily say God is within us.  
JOSEPH: And, like God, Elijah lives on forever – the only prophet to have  
entered heaven in mortal form.  
MARCATTA: Don't they say the same thing about you – that you've never died?  
They say you advised Casanova.  
SUE: Is that what's troubling you?  
MARCATTA: Troubling me? No, nothing's –  
SUE: The husband who hates his wife. That's what troubled Giacomo.  
MARCATTA: Of course not, it's nothing like –  
SUE: Or the wife hates the husband!  
JOSEPH: For the restoration of peace after marital discord, Elijah advises  
the wronged party to spit in the eye of the offender.  
SUE: (To GENTLEMAN) Is that right? Is that what you advise?  
GENTLEMAN: I can't understand it. Something's telling me, advise him to spit in  
his eye.  
SUE: We're speaking in Holy parables now. Put the case that I caused  
your wife to be disrespectful. Go on and spit in my eye.  
MARCATTA: What did you say?  
SUE: Or worse – that I offended her. Spit ... spit.  
JOSEPH: The prophet commands you.  
MARCATTA: It's ridiculous.  
SUE: You'll continue to merit contempt. I *assaulted* her – put the case.  
Spit on me!  
MARCATTA: No! You misunderstand. There's no discord between us. I returned  
from three months in the Hold Land. We're unused to  
each other, that's all.  
SUE: Ah, now I get it – the reference to 'Signor' Casanova. He wanted  
advice about that, too.  
MARCATTA: Eh? About what?  
SUE: Proper sexual conduct – according to the Shabbat.  
JOSEPH: According to Divine Law, midnight is the ideal moment for  
marital intercourse, formally known as cognition ...  
MARCATTA: Not me, I'm afraid. I came about a business matter.  
SUE: First things first.  
JOSEPH: The proper initiates perform their duties every Shabbat night!  
MARCATTA: Good Lord. But not Camilla, I'm afraid.  
SUE: Ah! She locks you out? The husband despised by the wife.

MARCATTA: No! It's nothing like that at all. If you will permit me to tell you, in my own way ... beginning with my business in the Holy Land.

SUE: Was this business for personal profit?

MARCATTA: Yes ... *no*.

SUE: I am forbidden from using white magic for personal profit.

GENTLEMAN: Excuse me – white magic?

SUE: Divine Intervention according to Kabbalistic Law. There are a host of things we're permitted to pray for, but only in the cause of good. If our enemies smite us, for instance, we may seek His assistance, but only in respect of acting as He would have it.

MARCATTA: And, as it happens, this is for the general good ... the good of my people ... our people.

SUE: Much like your lady wife then ... her work with the immigrant poor.

MARCATTA: If my shares increase in value, that's good for the region, you see? I'll ... *we'll* be able to help the economy ... stimulate growth. I mean in the Middle East ... with the Suez Canal Company, the so-called *cordon sanitaire*, giving Britain control of the area, especially against the heathen Turk and his ally, the dreaded Persian.

SUE: Then, by all means, may they increase and multiply.

JOSEPH: And do not neglect your marital duty! May your issue increase as well.

MARCATTA: Is it right he should be so hysterical?

SUE: Always wise to have Joseph on your side.

MARCATTA: I suppose a little white magic wouldn't improve his condition?

SUE: Joseph is like issue to me.

MARCATTA: I see, yes.

SUE: I mean by that my disciple. We entered the community together, having been cast on the waters of misfortune. We have both lived through turbulent times ...

MARCATTA: Our ultimate end would be to establish a Zionist homeland in Israel, especially for those immigrants who found themselves unsettled elsewhere, like the ones that fetched up on these shores.

SUE: And you're sure now, that's all you want?

MARCATTA: Is it permitted to ask for good health?

SUE: Is that all? What about being your prospective local candidate?

MARCATTA: For Parliament?

SUE: It's in the public weal ... and precisely in my gift.

MARCATTA: I'm afraid that's more in my wife's line ... or this gentleman's perhaps.

SUE: ... when he doesn't suffer visitations.

MARCATTA: I'd be happy enough if my shares continued to rise.

SUE: It shall be done.

MARCATTA: As easy as that? Er ... many thanks.

JOSEPH: But he mustn't neglect his conjugal duties, tell him!

MARCATTA: Can't you leave well enough alone?

SUE: It's a form of blessing. Don't spurn him, I beg you.

MARCATTA: Oh, yes, I see. I'm touched ... deeply grateful, in fact. (*To SUE*) Are you saying he could curse us as well?

SUE: Not exactly. He's not bitter, if that's what you mean. His affliction isn't a curse. He's just concerned about your good lady wife.

MARCATTA: Would you allow Camilla to visit him ... take him out in the fresh air perhaps?

SUE: There's no need to placate either one of us.

MARCATTA: Yes, I'm sorry. I've been away, as I say.

SUE: Doing business, no doubt some of it against holy ordinance, on the Sabbath.

MARCATTA: I confess my faults. The Anglo-Jewish community isn't as devout as it might be.

SUE: I'm not the Chief Rabbi. You don't have to confess your sins.

MARCATTA: I'm not a Christian convert. We need the support of the British only to enhance our standing. You appeared here while I've been away.

SUE: I was summoned.

MARCATTA: And you've made your mark. People say you're like a miracle worker ... Well, I suppose you'd know all about that.

JOSEPH: And Alkenah knew Hannah, his wife. Genesis 4: 11.

SUE: My protégé is quite concerned for your welfare, maritally speaking.

MARCATTA: I'm ... sensible of that fact, thank you.

SUE: That *is* what you're worried about most, isn't it?

MARCATTA: Well, all right, since you ask ...

SUE: I never touched her!

MARCATTA: I never thought you did!

SUE: Go on and look to your wife .... and your coffers will increase!

JOSEPH: So sayeth Elijah!

*(In the square there is a disturbance. A group of youths daub a Star of David with blood. TSILLA screams. GRISHA follows. They are heard making various anti-Semitic chants such as:*

*'Send them home in leaky boats!'*

*'Nail to a cross like Christ!'*

*'Let 'em eat pork!'*

*When they leave, SONYA appears. They are assumed to be speaking Russian.)*

SONYA: What happened?

TSILLA: They stole my case.

GRISHA: Toughs from Cable Street ... they followed us here.

SONYA: Friends of yours, were they?

GRISHA: Don't talk rubbish. They were goyim.

TSILLA: Can somebody help me, please? I'm so frightened.

SONYA: You're Russian?

TSILLA: From Kiev, yes. We were victims of the latest pogrom ... moved to the Settle ... my mother and father were killed. I escaped.

SONYA: How do you happen to know Grisha? (*Gestures*) Him?

TSILLA: I don't know him – he just appeared. And then those boys set upon us. I thought I was back in Kiev! Can you tell me, please? Is this Wellclose?

SONYA: Wellclose Square? Yes, this is it.

TSILLA: My mother's brother lives at Ship Alley, 41 Wellclose.

SONYA: Wellclose Square.

TSILLA: Yes ... Ship Alley 41.

SONYA: There is no 41 ... It stops at 39.

TSILLA: Ship Alley 41! Don't joke with me!

SONYA: I'm not joking. It stops at 39. What should be 41 is really Number 1 Ship Alley.

TSILLA: That's it ... that's it – 41 Ship Alley.

SONYA: You must mean *number* one ...

GRISHA: Which is where I live.

SONYA: Everything's fine then. (*She starts to move*)

TSILLA: Please help me!

SONYA: Help you how? He lives there. He must be your uncle.

TSILLA: My mother's brother.

SONYA: All right, your mother's brother. What's the matter?

TSILLA: (*To GRISHA*) You *can't* be him.

SONYA: You've never seen each other before. He met you off the boat, didn't he?

TSILLA: By accident.

SONYA: An accident that he was there?

TSILLA: (*To GRISHA*) Tell her you're not my relation. You know nothing at all about my family.

Wellclose Square

GRISHA: Why should I tell her what isn't true? Your mother told you to go to this address ... my flat. I met you off the boat. What isn't true?

TSILLA: She'd have told me about you if it was true.

GRISHA: We separated at birth. She wouldn't know about my condition.

TSILLA: You don't even know her name.

GRISHA: Of course, I do – Klara.

SONYA: I don't want to be involved in a family dispute.

TSILLA: Where are you going?

SONYA: Leaving you to your own business.

TSILLA: But you can't.

SONYA: I've got to – there's my friend. (*Calling*) Berth! I need to talk to you!

(*The pairs talk across one another.*)

GRISHA: I'll look after you, don't worry.

TSILLA: You couldn't look after my case.

GRISHA: Where else can you go?

TSILLA: That shelter the woman talked about.

GRISHA: You want to go back through that jungle? They might kill you next time.

TSILLA: Somebody's got to help me. That can't be the right address.

GRISHA: Are you going to knock on every door in the square?

TSILLA: They're nice people. They'll help me.

GRISHA: I'll help you.

TSILLA: You know you're not related to me!

GRISHA: Is it my fault you named my address ... my fault you accepted my help? I got you here safely ... At least see the room ... It's warm ... You'll be safe there ... The least you can do is look at it.

BERTH: (*Approaching*) What's happening there?

SONYA: Family quarrel, I think. She doesn't like it that he's her uncle.

BERTH: Her uncle?

SONYA: That's what he says.

BERTH: He looks more like her pimp. That's what she doesn't like. Who could blame her?

SONYA: Are you going to leave?

BERTH: I'm going home right now to pack. Why don't we leave together? Lady M says there are dozens of jobs.

SONYA: I couldn't leave.

BERTH: I don't see why not.

SONYA: I don't see how you feel you can.

BERTH: The prospect of three times more money, that's how.

SONYA: But outside the area. That's dangerous for people like us.

BERTH: We're English ... as English as she is. We deserve it. I'm not going to wait for your father to work me to death – years before my time.

SONYA: You might end up right back here ... or else like that girl and her crippled ponce.

BERTH: You make me sound like the girls that that hag described to us.

SONYA: That's exactly what I'm talking about.

BERTH: You don't think I'm smarter than that? Thanks very much. Have a nice life with Ilona.

SONYA: Please don't leave me alone with them.  
*(BERTH goes off in the direction of Ensign Street; SONYA trails behind.)*

GENTLEMAN: *GENTLEMAN comes out with LORD MARCATTÀ trailing after him.)*  
Did you happen to see who they were?

MARCATTÀ: Who who were? Where?

GENTLEMAN: Those toughs ... anti-Semites ... a few minutes ago.

MARCATTÀ: I wasn't aware of anything.

GENTLEMAN: *(Pointing to the Star of David)* There's the evidence. And a woman's scream. A woman here earlier said she'd been attacked.

MARCATTÀ: I've just returned from abroad. I'm not up on local developments. My wife keeps the townhouse here for her projects. But our family estate is in Buckinghamshire.

GENTLEMAN: So you're not that concerned that Anglo-Jewish relations have worsened with the violence? *(Pointing)* *That* never happened before. Did it?

MARCATTÀ: What are you saying? It's gone on since Chaucer: 'Satan within whose Jewish heart resides a wasp's nest ...'

GENTLEMAN: But in this square? The first thing I noticed was its sedate charm. With *that* on the door, it begins looking like everywhere else.

MARCATTÀ: What are you, a trouble-maker?

GENTLEMAN: I just think you should be aware of people's resentment.

MARCATTÀ: We're doing whatever we can! Her Ladyship's a Jewish Guardian, you know? Trying to keep our lot out of the slums. *My* long-term aim is to lead people back if they want to go. To the Holy Land.

GENTLEMAN: Like Moses. I see. So conditions in England don't concern you.

MARCATTÀ: Concern me very much. Look at my baronetcy. Our family have been here for all but a century. We helped forge the Industrial Revolution.

GENTLEMAN: All this is very commendable, of course.

MARCATTÀ: We've had a Jewish prime minister, don't forget. Folk are a deal more accepting than they were.

GENTLEMAN: But what do you make of this soothsayer? There's a card for you!  
MARCATTA: What do you mean, what do I make of him? Community leader, that's all.

GENTLEMAN: So there's no reason to think he's a charlatan?  
MARCATTA: Why ask me? *You're* the one he had under a spell.  
GENTLEMAN: He's the author of several tall boasts – living forever, for one. To some that's the way of the demagogue.

MARCATTA: You don't think folk take that seriously, do you?  
GENTLEMAN: The question is, do you?  
MARCATTA: Religio – that's what he is, for the most part. And Jews abroad tend to take their devotion fairly As and When, if you follow me. Oh, they do their best to observe the main things, like Passover. But the Jewish *hebrot* in London isn't even what it is in the provinces much less Palestine or Jerusalem. Everybody says they observe the Sabbath. But the Jewish market sometimes interferes, and how can we ask people to lose their main trading day, especially when we also ask every parishioner £3 10s for the synagogue's upkeep?

GENTLEMAN: So people like Sue have no impact, you're saying?  
MARCATTA: On the women, I dare say ... yes, some. But now hold on. I don't want you thinking ... what he said about my wife, about Her Ladyship ... It was a joke, all right? A figure of speech – no more.

GENTLEMAN: He never advised Casanova?  
MARCATTA: He never even visited my wife – alone, in his chambers ... or hers. If he did, it was only to counsel her, about female matters. Like a medico. The man's celibate ... a eunuch. Like that sprite he's got staying with him.

GENTLEMAN: Who, Joseph?  
MARCATTA: The golem ... *you* know.  
GENTLEMAN: What did you call him – a golem?  
MARCATTA: Their mascots, I suppose you could say. Would they carry on with him in the room? Milly wouldn't, I'll tell you right now. Thing like that would send her straight to Bedlam. But now hold on. That whole nonsense at Sue's – you're not going to write it up. Are you? You leave it alone, you damned hobbledehoy. (*To himself as he goes away*) Brothel keeper!  
(*He starts off in the direction of his house – the house from which BERTH emerged. But he stops, thinks better of it, and goes off in another direction. GENTLEMAN addresses the audience.*)

GENTLEMAN: I can't say I liked getting under his skin. But he's mistaken to make light of that. (*Pointing to the Star of David slur*) Perhaps he's afraid

to admit his concern. And I'll wager Ezekiel Sue has a deal to answer for.

*(GRISHA and TSILLA return, catching GENTLEMAN's attention.)*

TSILLA: I want you to take me back where you found me.  
GRISHA: It's too late. At this hour, we'd never get there in one piece.  
TSILLA: But you owe it to me.  
GRISHA: How do you reckon that?  
TSILLA: You tricked me. You know you're not my mother's brother.  
GRISHA: I didn't know you wanted my address.  
TSILLA: I wanted my aunt and my uncle, not you!  
GRISHA: That is not my fault.  
TSILLA: Where are they?  
GRISHA: I don't know! *(Beat)* It's warm in my room. I'll take you to the shelter in the morning.  
TSILLA: It's not decent.  
GRISHA: Because I'm a cripple.  
TSILLA: You're an unmarried man ... Where is that girl who was here before? I'm sure I could stay with her.  
GRISHA: You can stay with me!  
TSILLA: Stay away from me!  
*(She makes a beeline for GENTLEMAN.  
Please help me. This man is frightening me!)*  
GENTLEMAN: I'm sorry. I don't speak your lingo. And I'm anxious to cross over the river ... after what those toughs did here tonight. Take your life in your hands just crossing Cable Street! *(As he leaves)* Fair ye well.  
GRISHA: You see? You're better off here than anywhere else in the area. It's warm ... I'll give you your own coal fire. You won't even know I'm in the room.  
TSILLA: Where did that girl go?  
GRISHA: She's not here. They wouldn't have her, her and her father. That's the point – they're not rich enough. I don't know where they live, exactly. I believe it's beyond Cable Street ... where we were accosted.  
TSILLA: What about you? You can't be rich enough. You're no better than a beggar.  
GRISHA: A beggar that lives in a corner of Wellclose. Ah-huh. You'd be lucky to know such beggars in your time. I might be as wealthy as they are, for all you know. My address attests to it.  
TSILLA: I don't care. *(Looks towards the MARCATT house)* She came out of that house, didn't she?

GRISHA: I don't think so for a second. A titled couple stay there when they're in London. Most of the time they live in the country. A country mansion with many rooms to it. Chances are they're not even home. (*LADY MARCATTÀ's servant ANNIE steps out of their front door.*)

CAMILLA: (*Only her voice*) Do you see anybody?

ANNIE: I don't think so, Your Ladyship.

TSILLA: (*Assumed to be speaking Russian*) Excuse me, please. No, don't shut the door.

CAMILLA: (*Only her voice*) Who's there?

ANNIE: Only a servant girl.

TSILLA: I'm in trouble. Please help me.

ANNIE: She doesn't even speak English. (*LADY MARCATTÀ appears.*)

TSILLA: Please help me.

CAMILLA: Does your mistress know you're abroad at this hour?

TSILLA: I can't understand you. I'm sorry.

CAMILLA: Speak in English if you want to be understood. I *said* –

GRISHA: She's just come from Kiev, Your Ladyship.

CAMILLA: Oh, she's yours, is she?

GRISHA: She's my niece, ma'am.

CAMILLA: Don't suppose me ignorant of the tales they tell about you.

GRISHA: No, ma'am.

CAMILLA: And don't delude yourself I think they're all false. I hope for your sake she manages to find honest work. I'm not beyond sending you both to the workhouse. Far as I know, you're true to your bad reputation – a menace, social outcast, an affront to our whole way of life. Vermin, that's what they call us. And that's just what I think you are.

TSILLA: He's trying to hold me hostage!

CAMILLA: Please tell her not to create in the street. Makes us seem bad as everywhere else. (*SUE appears.*)

SUE: Are you having some sort of difficulty?

CAMILLA: No difficulty, Your Eminence. I was having a word with these people.

SUE: (*In Russian*) Perhaps I can help?

TSILLA: Oh, you speak Russian! And you're a Holy one? Oh, thanks to God! (*She fairly falls at his feet.*)

SUE: She'll be all right now, Lady Camilla. (*To TSILLA*) Up from there, daughter. Get up at once.

Freaks of History

CAMILLA: You haven't seen my Louis tonight, have you?  
SUE: Indeed, yes, I sent him home with a flea and two hornets in his ear.

CAMILLA: You don't mean you frightened him away?  
SUE: Frightened him into submission, more like. You look to have no more problems on the domestic front.

CAMILLA: I don't want him under my foot. Don't say you made him enslaved to me. If he must have his amusements, by all means, let him, I say. Don't let him forget where he lives. That's all.  
SUE: He stands to make a handsome profit from his Canal shares anyway.

CAMILLA: I'm sure that's important. Well, good night, Eminence.  
SUE: *Masel tov*, my dear.  
(*She goes in.*)  
And now what's your problem, daughter? What's your name?

TSILLA: Tsilla Zingerman, sir.  
SUE: Tsilla Zingerman! Fresh from the Pale of Settlement. From abject poverty. Straight from one cesspit to another.

TSILLA: And I'm no relation to him whatever!  
GRISHA: I never said she was.  
SUE: You've been less than truthful about her – admit it. And let's converse in the language she understands.  
GRISHA: (*In Russian, to TSILLA*) I never abducted you. Tell him that.  
TSILLA: You won't take me where I want to go.  
GRISHA: It's the middle of the night, for God's sake.  
TSILLA: Tell him not to use bad words at least.  
SUE: Let's see what we can do about calming this poor woman's nerves. (*To GRISHA*) I don't think we'll need you the rest of the night.  
GRISHA: I only took her where she asked.  
SUE: Where you wanted to take her as well. That's the crux. Rather important, too, don't you think? Kinder to have left her to herself. (*In Hebrew*) Ahfen Ganef Brent Dos Hittel. (*Jewish aphorism: Auf ein Gunaf brentz Hittle - engl.: A thief feels his hat is on fire, meaning 'You have a guilty conscience'. To TSILLA, in Russian*) I'm on the board of the housing shelter where you're likely to be staying.  
(*They move indoors.*)

TSILLA: Thanks to God. That's exactly where I want to go. You can take me back there. Thanks to God the Almighty.  
SUE: Thanks to Him indeed. We'll see about bringing you first thing in the morning. (*She gasps*) What's wrong? You don't expect us to go there tonight?

TSILLA: That's exactly what *he* said ... the fiend.  
SUE: Fiend? He's a bit of what we might call *shlemiel*, less than absolute honest perhaps, but *fiend*?

TSILLA: (*Spotting JOSEPH*): Dear God – another one!  
SUE: Joseph? (*Laughs*) Oh, no, my dear, you're quite mistaken. Joseph hails from your part of the world, in fact.

TSILLA: Is that the truth? You're not trying to fool me? From Kiev?  
SUE: That's right exactly, from Kiev. And, much like you, I imagine, he escaped what his family tragically could not.

TSILLA: My parents died in the pogroms. Tsarist troops razed our village and dragged and ravaged the women where they lay. The men – like my father and brothers – I don't want to think of it even.

JOSEPH: (*In Russian*) The same soldiers offered my sister a pact. My twin sister. They told her one of us might live, if we made the decision quickly enough. She chose me, and they laughed and said this was the choice they hoped she'd make. Because it was no choice at all. I'd never survive on my own, do you see?

SUE: (*In Russian*) They didn't count on my Divine intervention.  
JOSEPH: I don't want to think about it either.  
SUE: You both suffered the same fate. The Almighty divined you to meet. This is almost *Shamayyim*! You shouldn't be sad at all either of you. (*To TSILLA*) Can't you see that he looks on you as the sister he lost, who was sacrificed for his sake? You bring him a wonderful gift!

JOSEPH: Oh Lord my God, in Thee do I take refuge ...  
TSILLA: What's he saying now?  
SUE: Psalm number seven. He's praying for your deliverance.  
TSILLA: Thank you, Joseph. (*She rests her head near him*)  
JOSEPH: ... save me from all my pursuers and deliver me ... lest like a lion they rend me, dragging me away, with none to rescue ...  
(*There is a blackout, followed by a woman's scream, then a gradual rising of the lights to the prosaic voice of CHRISTOPHER GENTLEMAN.*)

GENTLEMAN: The mutilated body of a young woman was found in the early hours of 25 August in the Cable Street area of East London. She was later identified as Celia Zingerman of no fixed abode, though believed to be an estranged member of the immigrant community newly arrived from eastern Europe, possibly the Pale of Settlement.  
(*Lights up full now. GENTLEMAN addresses the audience.*)  
Can anyone recall seeing anyone answering to that description? Her name wasn't Celia, I'll be bound.  
(*HERMANN ADLER approaches from the audience.*)

ADLER: Have you any idea the effect you're having? This has started a panic. Who do you think you are, a town crier? I insist that you desist at once.

GENTLEMAN: And you are, I take it, a religious leader?

ADLER: Rabbi Adler. And folk have enough to worry about without you stirring them up even more. You're not a police magistrate, are you?

GENTLEMAN: Duly authorized to investigate, yes, your worship.

ADLER: Why look here? Why not go to the English communities?

GENTLEMAN: The poor girl was last seen here.

ADLER: She was 'last seen' where she fell ... out there somewhere ... Flower and Dean Street, somewhere like that. It wouldn't be here, I assure you. Mutilation is strictly against Talmudic Law.

GENTLEMAN: With the greatest respect, worship ...

ADLER: ... he said with a sneer ...

GENTLEMAN: The Crown forbids murder, you know? It still happens. I'm just trying to go through her movements.

ADLER: But do it quietly, you know? I seem to spend my life as a go-between from our community to theirs and back again. If I side with us, I'm accused of agitation likely to foment even further unrest. Side with them and I'm branded a traitor. It's worse than discouraging. It's ... barely possible. Leave us in peace, can't you?

(*LORD MARCATTÀ comes on from the audience.*)

MARCATTÀ: Hallo there, Reb. (*To GENTLEMAN*) You're still here, are you? (*To ADLER*) He's making a thorough report.

ADLER: I advise you have nothing to do with him, Your Lordship. The man's a menace. (*He leaves*)

MARCATTÀ: You've gone a comment too far again, I see. Doesn't do to annoy him. He's the Rabbi. Much more of a figure than Sue. His family here go back as far as mine.

GENTLEMAN: You must not have heard the news.

MARCATTÀ: News about Adler? It can't have been much. He's not very social.

GENTLEMAN: A young girl was murdered last night.

MARCATTÀ: Murdered here? I don't believe it.

GENTLEMAN: Found dead between Cable and Dorset Street. But traced to the square here, yes. Many sightings. I might have seen her myself. So might you.

MARCATTÀ: Good God. I don't recall anyone.

GENTLEMAN: Most likely looking for rooms, people said. East European, most likely.

Wellclose Square

MARCATTA: So she couldn't have been on the game? Have you interviewed Lady Marcatta? She often finds rooms for young girls.

GENTLEMAN: She may well have encountered a gentleman of the night. Her throat was most brutally cut.

MARCATTA: I hope you're not thinking that *I* was with her? I'm not above visiting women, I admit. But Piccadilly. Altogether different class of girl.

GENTLEMAN: I'm not saying they'll even follow this up very vigorously. But I do say it conforms to a pattern.

MARCATTA: And I know what that is – your pattern of venomous meddling.

GENTLEMAN: I haven't accused anyone.

MARCATTA: That's right, you've just meddled your way through to racialist attack. I fancy you're the one that's burned us in effigy, Mr Gentleman.

GENTLEMAN: Little or nothing bubbled to the surface in the days that followed, though what lay just beneath was vibrant. And then one day it all seemed to explode. The Marcattas sounded the keynote. A burnished Star of David suddenly appeared on the wall of their villa, and then ...

CAMILLA: I can't see how you can think leaving will help.

MARCATTA: Why can't I get you to understand I'm not leaving ... not abroad anyway.

CAMILLA: You're off to Bucks.

MARCATTA: I'll send for you later.

CAMILLA: *I'm* not leaving.

MARCATTA: That doesn't make an impression on you? It has me. It isn't safe. Adler made that perfectly clear to me. We can't run with the fox and hunt with the hounds.

CAMILLA: What on earth are you talking about?

MARCATTA: Anglo-Jewishness. It's not safe to stay in the area. We're titled people – we ought to live up to it.

CAMILLA: Why, you snob, Marky. You horrible, parvenu snob.

MARCATTA: I didn't want to speak of it. It might not be true even. Just more guff from this blasted census taker. Have you seen him? He hasn't interviewed you, has he?

CAMILLA: Christopher Gentleman?

MARCATTA: He has seen you? What's he said?

CAMILLA: Nothing! I *haven't* seen him.

MARCATTA: A young girl was murdered from this precinct, he says. Not literally here, of course. But from here. He claims she came here looking for lodgings, found none, and just drifted off into the night.

CAMILLA: And then she was murdered?  
MARCATTA: Throat cut from ear to ear. True penny-dreadful tearjerker. But he made his mark. This was all part of the Anti-Jew conspiracy because she wasn't your commonplace English doxy. She'd arrived from the Pale of Settlement, do you see? Fresh from the latest pogrom.

CAMILLA: And I turned her away.  
MARCATTA: That's what he'd have us believe. No one would speak to her.  
CAMILLA: No one did. *I* didn't speak to her anyway. I couldn't understand.  
MARCATTA: Couldn't understand what? You mean it's true? Good God, this is awful!

CAMILLA: She came crying and I made a jest of her almost ... treated her like some miscreant in-between maid ... not servile enough to know her place.  
MARCATTA: Stop it. You're making yourself ill. Now I think it's even more urgent that we leave. Good works are all very well in their way. But in the proper place, too. We can help best by living up to our name ... our family example. I think it's time we sold up and left for good ... back to the family seat.

CAMILLA: What are you talking about, you foppish man? I think I'd sooner leave *you*.  
MARCATTA: Milly!  
CAMILLA: Doesn't what's happened have any effect? A girl we both know was murdered. A young Jewish girl ... And you tell me to turn my back? How can you!  
*(LADY MARCATTA spies SONYA across the square.)*

CAMILLA: Hi, you! Good to see you again.  
SONYA: *(Embarrassed)* Hallo.  
CAMILLA: I say, don't go for a minute. Do you mind?  
SONYA: I haven't got any dresses today.  
CAMILLA: Have you heard from your friend? *(SONYA moves closer)* Yes, it's vulgar to shout out of doors, like a fish market. *(They are face-to-face now)* Your friend's doing very well, I hear. What's her name again?

SONYA: You mean Berth? We were never friends. She lived above us in the flats.  
CAMILLA: I know that, of course. And I thought you'd like to know that she's well liked. Her employer, I hear, says she's so much more capable than the average English girl. That shows us all in a favourable light, don't you agree?  
SONYA: What difference does that make to anyone here?

CAMILLA: I know what you mean – no difference at all, in one sense. And yet –

SONYA: No difference to me anyway.

CAMILLA: Ah, but it could make a very big difference, don't you see? There's no reason you couldn't have the same kind of job. It's a hatter's, you see? A factory job, and your friend –

SONYA: – not my friend –

CAMILLA: – is in charge of a section. Can you picture it? One Jewish girl overseeing a dozen English. That could be you as well.

SONYA: I don't fancy it.

CAMILLA: But why?

SONYA: A dozen English and another Jewish girl. She'd make my life hell. *(She sees her father and starts back towards him. LADY MARCATTÀ goes back to her house.)*

ABRAM: You didn't try to flog her anything?

SONYA: I didn't do anything.

ABRAM: You were talking to her ... What about?

SONYA: Nothing!

ABRAM: She talked to you about leaving here, didn't she ... about working in a factory. With English girls. Well?

SONYA: What if she did? I told her no.

ABRAM: You better hope that's what you told her.

SONYA: Don't threaten me.

ABRAM: This isn't a threat, it's a warning. You start working with English girls, soon you become exactly what they are – *sharmuti*. You mark my warning.

SONYA: I'm not going to be working with them.

ABRAM: But she offered that to you. I dare you – deny it.

SONYA: I'm not going to.

ABRAM: Ah huh!

SONYA: She said I could get four times what you pay.

ABRAM: ... as a *sharmata*.

SONYA: A hatter's ... women's hats.

ABRAM: I don't believe it. Selling women's hats?

SONYA: No, helping to make them ... in the factory.

ABRAM: Ah ha – I told you. That's like saying an abattoir. Girls that are willing to work there –

SONYA: I know, they're *sharmati*. Funny that you've never met one.

ABRAM: What's funny about it? I only knew girls like your mama.

SONYA: What I mean is, you don't know from experience, do you.

ABRAM: Don't get clever with me.

Freaks of History

SONYA: *Do you!*  
ABRAM: I do, as it happens. So do you. You heard about that girl that was strangled? *She* worked there.  
SONYA: She what?  
ABRAM: Not for very long, I grant you. It didn't take very long. That's my point.  
SONYA: How do you know she worked there?  
ABRAM: Don't argue with me, please, I'm trying to save your life.  
SONYA: I've already said I'm not working there.  
ABRAM: You said you were offered a job. I'm warning you against it with very real consequences. Ilona agrees with me.  
SONYA: Lady M never offered *her* a job. I don't believe it.  
ABRAM: I recognize that tone, my girl.  
SONYA: Do you mind if I give *you* a warning?  
ABRAM: I know. You want to tell me it's either you or Ilona. I'm telling you –  
SONYA: I think you should marry Ilona. (*Beat*) I'm serious. People gossip, don't they? They're beginning to gossip about –  
ABRAM: It's not true! There's no need for you to be jealous. It's a lie.  
SONYA: I'm not talking about me. I *believe* you; they *don't*. And when a thing reaches that point, it might as well be true. So you should marry her.  
ABRAM: People should mind their own business.  
(*They move off, and GENTLEMAN goes to SUE's villa.*)  
SUE: Ah, Inspector! I was wondering when you'd get round to me. (*To JOSEPH*) He's come as himself today, Joseph. We must treat him differently.  
GENTLEMAN: You sound like you know why I'm here.  
SUE: The young lady? It's natural. She's known to have visited us late at night. Joseph took a shine to her. (*To JOSEPH*) And she to you, I know.  
GENTLEMAN: It doesn't look all that good for you. It's best to be honest.  
SUE: Oh, I quite understand. We're most definitely 'in the frame'. Isn't that what they say?  
GENTLEMAN: I don't see it myself, if that's any comfort to you. You're too well known, for one thing. And there's a more likely suspect ... a lamester. Not Joseph. Someone close to a beggar. You may know who I mean.  
SUE: I do. He was here as well.  
GENTLEMAN: Wha-at!  
SUE: Joseph talked to him.  
(*GRISHA appears. This is in flashback.*)

GRISHA: You've got to help me, master. Something terrible happened, and I'm going to be blamed for it, I know.

SUE: Tsilla's murder.

GRISHA: I didn't do it, I swear.

SUE: You may as well have done, to judge from public opinion. You make a better culprit than the real killer. It should be you.

GRISHA: That's why I'm asking your help.

SUE: Shall I get the bowl, Joseph?

GRISHA: But I need *your* help.

SUE: You deny the powers of the golem?

GRISHA: Not exactly, but ...

SUE: Quiet!

JOSEPH: In Thy name do I act. Sealed and counter-sealed shall be the son and daughter of the Holy prophets, guarding against evil spirit and devils and plagues and afflictions, abortions, tormentors ...

GRISHA: I never touched her!

SUE: Shush!

JOSEPH: (*Louder*) ... Accusations of infamy ... rape ... deliver the sinner from evil!

GRISHA: Oh, for God's sake!

SUE: Precisely.

GRISHA: I've got to escape! (*He runs out*)

SUE: And out he went, into the night ... never again to be seen in these parts. If he's no longer alive, I expect he met a similar fate to poor Tsilla, down Commercial Road. He couldn't have lived very long anyway, a semi-vagrant at best, his body riddled with the pox. (*RABBI ADLER appears.*)

Eminence!

ADLER: Do you mind? I believe we need to consult ... (*Looking at GENTLEMAN*) ... officially.

GENTLEMAN: You should welcome the interest that people are taking ... officially. Civic leaders should act in consort. (*He wanders off.*)

ADLER: He should speak to his journalist friends about that. You don't follow the newspapers, do you.

SUE: You should be above such things.

ADLER: I wish we could both share the burden. 'Civic leaders' we both are.

SUE: I've never sought to usurp your authority.

ADLER: I badly need your assistance. Things were bad when we were seen as dreaded outsiders, taking jobs and resources away from the English. Now we're likened to vermin. Human pests, we're described in the papers. Human pests spreading pestilence ... and

you know what comes next. (*Beat*) You, er, heard about that poor girl from Kiev, I suppose. You're not so isolated.

SUE: More than heard, I'm afraid. She was *here*.

ADLER: That's what *I* heard. How unfortunate.

SUE: Yes, if only she'd stayed, as we asked her. Joseph particularly wanted her to stay.

JOSEPH: We have the same pedigree. Her family perished by pogrom, like mine, exactly like ...

ADLER: I mean unfortunate she was here at all. Sought you out, I suppose, did she?

SUE: No, as I remember it, *we* rescued *her*. I spied her distraught in the street ... and approached her.

ADLER: You should have left well enough alone!

SUE: But how could I, in conscience? I'm a governor of the Jewish shelter for the homeless. I was taking her there the next morning.

ADLER: But, Lord Almighty, man, what have I just been saying to you? It doesn't do to be helpful in this environment. No one thanks you – you're placed under surveillance. I should know – I've been dodging the limelight long enough ... and for good reason, my friend. I can help best by keeping my head down. This girl, above all, was conspicuous. Everybody noticed her ... all the more because of her link with deformity.

SUE: I know what you mean.

ADLER: Yes, but what are you doing about it?

SUE: I think we don't have to worry about that. I saw him shortly thereafter. He's sure to have left the area by now. He may even be dead.

ADLER: What are you talking about? I'm looking at him!

SUE: Joseph?

ADLER: Who'd you think I mean? You told me he urged her to stay. I'm telling you he shouldn't have ... because now everybody's talking about it.

SUE: But they're not talking about *Joseph*.

ADLER: Put your head outside the front door.

SUE: That's someone entirely different! Someone she met at the docks!

ADLER: 'Sue's monster' I heard someone say.

SUE: That's quite mistaken.

ADLER: How could it be? You're Ezekiel Sue, are you not? And Joseph might reasonably be called ...

SUE: But they've no basis for saying it ... no basis at all. Just what are they saying anyway?

ADLER: That the girl was last seen coming in here.  
SUE: So link her to me ... why bring Joseph into it?  
ADLER: You must be aware of the rumours about him ...  
SUE: They say he's a *golem*, so what?  
ADLER: So, somehow, he cast a mystical spell over the girl ...  
SUE: ... and she disappeared in a fit of self-mutilation? That's ridiculous!  
ADLER: I know.  
SUE: That's not at all what a *golem* does.  
ADLER: I know!  
SUE: Well, if you know, why on earth are you talking –  
ADLER: I'm not talking about what's true, only what people *believe*. And what they believe is important – agreed?  
SUE: I don't believe it.  
ADLER: Wait a minute.  
SUE: I don't believe there are God-fearing brethren out there that would honestly spread that ... (*Turning to JOSEPH*) Did you hear that, my dear? Did you hear what His Worship says about you?  
ADLER: Not I, my dear fellow. I'm only repeating ...  
SUE: You're only spreading manure. But you should know better than anybody what a sin it is to do such manual labour this close to Shabbat. You know that, don't you? It's an absolute sin to till the soil or spread the manure.  
ADLER: I'm trying to help you, *schlemiel*. It so happens I have a plan.  
SUE: It seems His Worship's in need of enlightenment. Enlighten His Worship about yourself, Joseph. The first *golem* ... Go on.  
JOSEPH: In the town of Worms?  
SUE: That's right, in the town of Worms.  
ADLER: I know all about Betzalel and the town of Worms.  
JOSEPH: His people were facing a pogrom, like now. They were accused of killing Christian babies and putting their blood in the Passover bread.  
ADLER: I know all about that.  
SUE: Do you deny him his defence? You're as bad as the Christians, Your Worship.  
JOSEPH: In the night the rabbi's wife was seized by labour pains, and two servants went out in search of a midwife. These servants then intercepted two others who were going to kidnap the mother and child. The child's birth was thus seen as a miracle, redeeming the Jews from the charge of being Christ killers.  
ADLER: I want to take Joseph away.  
SUE: Exactly like the foiled kidnapers!

ADLER: Listen to me! (*Beat*) We'll do it in the dead of night, so that no one will notice ... and I'll take him to the Jewish seminary in St Alban's ... for a few weeks only ... long enough for this fuss to die down.

SUE: What fuss are we talking about?

ADLER: The scapegoating of the Jews.

SUE: That's been going on since Chaucer.

JOSEPH: There was in Asia in a great city,  
Amongst Christian folk, a Jewery,  
Sustain'd by a lord of that country  
For foul usúre and lucre of villainy  
Hateful to Christ and to his company.  
And through the street men might ride and wend,  
For was free and open at either end.

SUE: He knows his Chaucer as well.

ADLER: I'm not talking about Chaucer, for God's sake. You want them burning Stars of David on *your* front door? I'll take him out for a few weeks. What could be simpler?

SUE: I suspect you of wanting to sacrifice him.

ADLER: That's a blasphemous accusation!

SUE: You've allowed yourself to fall into the English trap. The halt and the lame must be punished as social deviants. Off to the workhouse with them!

ADLER: That's exactly where he's going if we don't head them off. You must know who I'm talking about. He was here when I came.

SUE: Name of Gentleman, he said.

ADLER: He was everything but. The lion mocked up like the lamb. What did he say he was here for?

SUE: Local survey. Not true?

ADLER: Those close-set eyes and curled mouth? He'd have your Joseph off to the workhouse sooner than he'd hail a hansom.

SUE: Then why hasn't he done it already? He had his chance when he was here before.

ADLER: He must have been sizing you up. The girl was alive then as well. (*Beat*) Don't you get it? She's just a pretext. He's been looking for something to pin on the community, and now he's found it in her murder. He'll be looking to close the synagogues next. Already I've had people in the square announcing they're shutting their doors. I came here partly to advise you to close up yours.

SUE: Where does hiding Joseph come into it? If I close up, who's to know any different? He can stay here.

ADLER: It's your neighbours that have asked me to speak to you. They believe he's responsible for their run of misfortune.

SUE: That's absurd.

ADLER: But it's partly your fault. The air of mystery you exude ... the fact that few people ever see you ... and you keep a cripple in the house. And then lately there's this English stranger going about conducting a survey, of all things. And to top it off now there's a *murder*.

SUE: But they didn't even know her. And most people have never seen *him*.

ADLER: Exactly. It's too much mystery for people. More than flesh and blood can stand. And there's a view gaining popular currency that you owe it to the community to comply with their wishes ... as a community leader, in fact.

SUE: And if it turns out they're wrong? If misfortune continues despite his sacrifice ...?

ADLER: No one's talking about sacrifice.

SUE: Why aren't they? What else is it?

ADLER: A *compromise*. Get this fellow off our back. Then things can return to normal, and Joseph returns ... unharmed.

SUE: If he dies, there may well be reprisals.

ADLER: I'm aware of that. Believe me, everybody's sensible of your powers.

SUE: I think we both know it goes further than that.  
(*ADLER wheels JOSEPH out. GENTLEMAN appears from the audience to bear witness to the next scenes.*  
*BERTH signals to ANNIE, who is removing the Star of David slur from the villa's wall.*)

ANNIE: If you give me a moment, madam, I'll show you inside.

BERTH: But it's you I want to see.

ANNIE: Lady Marcatta doesn't like me to receive callers in working hours.

BERTH: I can't wait for your half day. (*Beat*) You don't recognize me, do you?

ANNIE: I'm sure we never met. I think it's her ladyship you really want.

BERTH: Her ladyship found me my present situation.

ANNIE: (*Recognizing her*) You're the lass with the dress stall! She found you work with the hatters. (*Looking at her hat*) I ought to have guessed.

BERTH: Boaters are the latest thing this season. We sell three dozen a week in our Oxford Street shop. Shall I leave this for you?

ANNIE: Are you glocky? She'd flay me alive if she ever caught me in something like that.

BERTH: Why? She doesn't make you don a cap. You're free to do what you want.

ANNIE: So free she'd give me the hook. *(Beat)* You haven't been hooked, have ya?

BERTH: What makes you say that?

ANNIE: You coming back here.

BERTH: You think I'm coming to preen, is that it?

ANNIE: Now I meant no disrespect, I'm sure.

BERTH: Don't distress yourself. I thought you might have seen something of my mate Sonya, that's all.

ANNIE: Well, she hasn't been here. Why don't you go by the shop?

BERTH: They'd really accuse me of swelling it. I told you it's you that I wanted.

ANNIE: But I don't know you.

BERTH: I'm not here to do you harm. *(Beat)* You didn't find it the least bit queer her ladyship chose us to help and not you? You're English, after all.

ANNIE: Lady Camilla has been very kind ...

BERTH: *(Overlapping)* ... is kindness itself, I know. Still, you could better yourself, like she likes to boast that I've done.

ANNIE: But I was born for service, not trade.

BERTH: No one was 'born for' any particular place in life. That may be the one thing us foreigners have had to learn. Lady M learned it. She wasn't born Lady M, was she. Well, was she?

ANNIE: It so happens I like service. And her ladyship has promised to help me whenever she can. It so happens I believe her. She helped you, didn't she?

BERTH: That's right, she did.

ANNIE: She's given me every reason to have confidence in her.

BERTH: Aren't you the fortunate one?  
*(In the midst of this, at the MARCATTASUE end of the square, WILLIAM YARBOROUGH approaches ANNIE.)*

YARBOROUGH: I wonder if you might render me some assistance.

ANNIE: I think it's Lady Marcatta you want.  
*(As if on cue, LADY MARCATTASUE appears.)*

CAMILLA: No, no, I've told you before ... *(To ANNIE)* The longer you take, dear, the more you attract unwelcome comment.

YARBOROUGH: I think perhaps you both misunderstand.

CAMILLA: You were here just an hour ago.

YARBOROUGH: Look more closely, madam. An hour ago, I was sauntering through the Mall.

Wellclose Square

CAMILLA: I see, yes. So we've never actually met?  
YARBOROUGH: Oh, undoubtedly ... at some Royal Garden Party or other.  
CAMILLA: Oh, you're connected with Royalty. So are we. His Lordship is the Third Baronet of Marcatta. Erm, you're not a bank examiner of some sort?  
YARBOROUGH: Royal Society of Surgeons. Is that a bank?  
CAMILLA: Now you're jesting with me.  
YARBOROUGH: We're solvent like a bank. There's that similarity. And we've never been plundered.  
CAMILLA: Please excuse my presumptions a moment ago.  
YARBOROUGH: (*Small laugh*) What presumptions, pray?  
CAMILLA: You spoke of some urgent service I could render?  
YARBOROUGH: Oh, not urgent. I've taken the villa in the square, as it happens, for some short time ... perhaps a month.  
CAMILLA: A short holiday.  
YARBOROUGH: Here, among the unwashed masses? Hardly. I'm conducting clandestine experiments, for which purpose this square is ideal. (*Looks back at the small gathering.*)  
CAMILLA: Oh, you needn't worry about them. They're not typical, I assure you. The square is ... sedate.  
YARBOROUGH: I'll require domestic help while I'm here. I thought you might know of some young woman ...  
CAMILLA: General housekeeping duties, is this?  
YARBOROUGH: Yes ... and perhaps some governessing. I have a charge, you see?  
CAMILLA: I'm afraid I don't, altogether.  
YARBOROUGH: A young man is with me ... somewhat infirm. He's an invalid, in fact. I'm conducting a series of experiments into his condition!  
CAMILLA: Yes, I *see*. How young is the young ...?  
YARBOROUGH: Oh, full grown ... he's an adult, and he isn't contagious or anything like that. His condition is what one might call *chronic*. In this sense he is quite ... incurable.  
CAMILLA: But, in any case, passive.  
YARBOROUGH: I'm sorry?  
CAMILLA: Non-aggressive ... non-violent?  
YARBOROUGH: Indeed, yes, *docile*, in fact ... a *child*.  
CAMILLA: I have him now perfectly. And I have a feeling my girl Annie here might be just the person you're looking for.  
YARBOROUGH: She'd be willing, d'you think?  
CAMILLA: Four or five hours?  
ANNIE: I'd be ever so willing to try.  
CAMILLA: What, exactly, would the work entail?

YARBOROUGH: Meals, mainly.  
 CAMILLA: I'm sure she'd be delighted. Never enough work with little me ... now that His Lordship has ... gone abroad again.

YARBOROUGH: And she's reliable? (*Perhaps winking at her*)  
 CAMILLA: What do you mean, trustworthy?  
 YARBOROUGH: Discreet. This field work is of a highly sensitive nature.  
 CAMILLA: I'm sure she understands. Few people know who *we* are ... Is that discreet enough?

YARBOROUGH: I see we understand one another.  
 CAMILLA: I'm sure we do. Marcatta counted on secrecy when we chose this place. Annie's been with us the whole time.

YARBOROUGH: Fine. (*To ANNIE*) If you'd care to come across at her ladyship's earliest convenience?  
 (*SUE appears.*)

SUE: If I might have a word with you, Lady Marcatta?  
 CAMILLA: Oh, lord. With me? Are you sure?  
 SUE: It won't take more than a few minutes.  
 CAMILLA: Righto, erm. I didn't get your name ... Sir?  
 YARBOROUGH: Yarborough ... William.  
 CAMILLA: Our somewhat mysterious neighbour, Ezekiel Sue. Not always the most decorous of men but worth knowing, I believe.

YARBOROUGH: I'll make careful note ... if you could keep our discussion between ourselves for the moment.  
 CAMILLA: Ourselves and dear Annie.  
 YARBOROUGH: Yes, exactly. (*Goes inside*) I'll be expecting her.  
 SUE: I thought it wise to warn you earliest, Your Ladyship.  
 CAMILLA: You're sure it's me you want?  
 SUE: Please come inside. You're quite safe.  
 CAMILLA: I didn't think you permitted women to enter.  
 SUE: Why? It's not a brothel. (*Small laugh*)  
 (*LADY MARCATTa looks round once inside.*)  
 You're not frightened, are you? What is it?  
 CAMILLA: I was told there was another ...  
 SUE: Joseph Shreda, you mean?  
 CAMILLA: An invalid?  
 SUE: You've seen him, I believe. Your husband informed me you even offered to take him for a walk. Very decent of you, I'm sure ... and something Joseph himself would delight in ... when he returns. Our good and glorious Chief Rabbi has taken the lad on retreat. That's what he promised to do anyway. Quite frankly, I have my doubts. I think he plans to spirit him off to the workhouse. But he isn't fully aware of Joseph's preventative powers.

CAMILLA: But why are you telling *me*?

SUE: I don't want you to be at all frightened, do you see? His powers, whatever they are, are benign. And that poor unfortunate that was slain a few nights ago was the victim of some deranged *lunatic*, do you see?

CAMILLA: I've already told His Lordship I won't abrogate my duties. Do you note my choice of word? It is quite like a Royal Pledge. The 'victim' might still be alive now if I'd fully honoured my pledge. It shan't happen again if I can help it.

SUE: I take note, ma'am. I don't want you to think we cast some sort of curse on the poor child. And may I repeat my warning to take proper care?  
(*From the direction of Ensign Street, DINA RUBINA, a Russian radical, speaks through a loud hailer.*)

DINA: It's time for the working women of the East End to take action against their miserable lot. Stand up and be counted, I beseech you!

GENTLEMAN: Excuse me. Are you a Sally Ann? Salvation Sister?

DINA: I'm direct from the latest Russian pogrom ... where most of the immigrant workforce comes from.

GENTLEMAN: I've been hoping to meet your sort since I came. You're directly from Kiev, you say?

DINA: And how many sweatshops do *you* control?

SONYA: He doesn't work here.

DINA: But *you do*? You're just the sort *I* came here to meet.

SONYA: All right, but this is a *quiet* area. He'll tell you – we've had complaints.

GENTLEMAN: And there was a murder a few nights ago.

SONYA: That's right. People are nervous.

DINA: How are you paid, comrade? By the hour ... the week? And how many days in the week do you work – two, three, as many as four in a good week? You're not paid for the hours, though, are you ... only for what you sell.

SONYA: It's a family ... I work for my father.

DINA: Ah, so you're not paid at all? Have you heard of the term child-labour? That could apply just as well to you.

SONYA: What are you talking about? You're Russian, like the rest of us.

DINA: Ninety per cent of us anyway.

SONYA: What are you talking about then? It's four times worse there. No one uses a term like 'child-labour' because it's not seen as wrong.

DINA: You were promised a better life here, and you haven't got it.

SONYA: We were promised nothing.

DINA: He has you working as what, a machinist ... at what ... four shillings a day? How much does he pay himself ... twice, three times as much? That's what most men make.

SONYA: I don't know ... I don't care.

DINA: And where has he got you living, in back of the shop?

SONYA: He's my father, I told you. We live in a flat upstairs.

BERTH: (*Stepping out of the shadows*) That's scarcely the whole story, though, is it?

SONYA: What are you doing back here?

BERTH: Keeping you honest, by the look of it. (*To DINA*) It was even worse than child labour. She doesn't want to admit it.

SONYA: Your work wasn't good enough. Why don't *you* admit *that*?

DINA: But you both can agree conditions are less than good.

SONYA: What are you trying to get me to do? (*To BERTH, in Russian*) Shut up, Bertha. You left us, so leave us alone. It's none of your business any more.

DINA: (*In Russian*) Don't forget. I understand everything you just said.

SONYA: What difference does that make? You'll tell me about the pogroms you faced ... groups of Cossacks breaking your heads and cutting your family down in the street. I never knew any of that. I was three when my mother and father brought me here. My mother died of consumption. That's the hardest thing *I've* ever known. (*DINA with SONYA, group accompanying them.*)

DINA: You need to join our protest, comrade. The whole of the East End is in revolt. Annie Besant is leading the Bryant and May match girls. Most of them are suffering the effects of phossy jaw. Over-exposure to white phosphorus – it eats away at your jaw. Then it enters your brain, and the lucky ones die of the palsy. The rest go off their heads. (*ABRAM approaches them.*)

ABRAM: What are you doing here? (*To SONYA*) Get back to work. Are you stupid? This woman's a political assassin!

SONYA: She was talking about the poor match girls.

ABRAM: She helped try to kill the Tsar. Let her deny it to you.

SONYA: Is it true? You're a known political agitator?

DINA: What's true is your father doesn't pay you enough. He treats all his workers the same ... doesn't pay them enough. Is it any wonder when they leave you to work in English factories? It's the worst form of worker exploitation, comrades. (*At ABRAM*) We wanted to kill the Tsar for exactly this kind of wage slavery. Don't tell us it only happens in Russia. It happens everywhere.

BERTH: And he's not above having his way with young girls.  
SONYA: My father never laid a finger on you. That's not why you left, and you know it.

BERTH: Oh, I'm not meaning myself.  
SONYA: Or Ilona either.  
BERTH: How do we know? Have you asked her? That girl that was murdered a few nights ago. (*To GENTLEMAN*) Were you aware that she tried to find work here?

GENTLEMAN: God in heaven, is that true?  
ABRAM: No, of course, it's not true! (*To GENTLEMAN, then to DINA*) It's not true, I tell you.

SONYA: Why in God's name are you doing this, Berth?  
BERTH: His way is to make girls dependent, you know? Unable to leave. Then he can do what he wants ... and that's barely human at the very least.

ABRAM: Are you going to listen to her? She's a whore.  
BERTH: You see that? He's depraved, so of course, I'm a whore.  
SONYA: It's not true, it's not true. She's not telling the actual –  
GENTLEMAN: I've been here, don't forget. I can vouchsafe a degree of this.  
ABRAM: She never did an honest day's work in her life.  
BERTH: That's right. I caught him trying it on with a 14-year-old. So I was dismissed on the spot.

SONYA: You quit!  
BERTH: I saw too much. That's the truth of the matter.  
(*RABBI ADLER emerges from the crowd.*)

GENTLEMAN: Something's definitely not up to the mark here.  
DINA: In Russia, the workers themselves punish people like him. Club them to death in the street.

ABRAM: Rabbi Adler, you've known me for years. You can speak for me.  
ADLER: I've never known you to attend Shabbat worship.  
ABRAM: I've been working. It's our busiest day.  
ADLER: And now you expect me to lie for you. You put us all under suspicion.  
GENTLEMAN: I propose we move directly onto his sweatshop.  
ABRAM: What do you hope to find there, a corpse?  
(*They begin to shove him towards Ensign Street, their voices overlapping and louder in volume. Once the noise subsides, LADY MARCATA emerges from SUE's villa, and ANNIE emerges from the MARCATA villa.*)

ANNIE: I don't think it could have been very much, Lady Marcatta.  
SUE: (*With reference to the Star of David slur*) Not another racist attack anyway.

CAMILLA: For which we're especially relieved, eh, Annie dear? But I've just been advised of something very important. The Ba'shem Ezekiel Sue has issued me with a warning ... friendly warning. He thinks no lone woman is safe. I think his warning has merit. I think perhaps if we relocated elsewhere for a certain period. Relocated in London. I've vowed never again to return to the family seat.

ANNIE: We're not both going, are we, Your Ladyship?

CAMILLA: Of course. Why? You seem almost disappointed! It's for our mutual safety, you know.

ANNIE: Haven't you forgotten your promise to the gentleman? Looking after the invalid.

CAMILLA: I had, you know. (*To ANNIE*) And you're quite looking forward to it, aren't you.

ANNIE: If you'd rather not trust me in the house alone ...

CAMILLA: Heavens, you know that's not true. It's only for your own protection.

ANNIE: If he's Royal, that's safety enough. Don't you think?

CAMILLA: Oh, yes. I'm sure you're quite safe, in one sense.

ANNIE: He's bound not to take any liberties with three in the room ... six hours a day, then I come back here. Begging your Ladyship's pardon, I know how to look after meself after hours, if you can remember my history.

CAMILLA: You put the sheltered life to shame!

ANNIE: As I remember, the gentleman said he'd be here one month.

CAMILLA: A month is what I'd planned to stay away. It seems all but indicated, doesn't it – a sign!

ANNIE: I want to thank Your Ladyship for this opportunity, working for someone so distinguished.

CAMILLA: Heavens, you look as though you're about to weep. It's only a temporary engagement. Unless you'd care to leave me?

ANNIE: No, indeed, marm, I'm sure. I'd never willingly leave. You been far too generous and kind.

CAMILLA: Let's say that it's settled then, shall we? If you should find yourself in any difficulty ...

ANNIE: I've got two strapping legs and lungs you can hear clear to Bow. The Ba'shem, of course, lives next door. I'm sure he'd look after me. I'll hail you a hansom as soon as you're ready, Lady Camilla.  
(*In a nearby maisonette, WILLIAM YARBOROUGH is conversing with his ward CLARE. Both CLARE's speech and gait are halting, not unlike a stroke victim's.*)

CLARE: When can we start work?

YARBOROUGH: We've already started, Your Highness. We are now, officially, working under laboratory conditions – total privacy, absolute concentration. 'Say not the struggle nought availeth/The labour and the wounds are vain ... Westward, look, the land is bright!'

CLARE: And we are going to make m-m-medical history!

YARBOROUGH: With diligence and application, Your Highness ... true collaborators.

CLARE: In that case, can't we d-d-drop the for-formalities? M-m-my name's Clare.

YARBOROUGH: Mine's Yarborough.

CLARE: Yarby and Clare. That fits!

YARBOROUGH: Like a turn at the music hall.

CLARE: There's a m-m-music hall round the corner.

YARBOROUGH: I don't think we'll be attending, Your Highness, not this visit at least.

CLARE: But you're not going to take me to Cowes.

YARBOROUGH: Nor there.

CLARE: If you did, I'm afraid Mamma or one of the others wouldn't let me out again.

YARBOROUGH: Precisely why I insisted on secrecy, Your –

CLARE: Clare! If we're going to be secret col-col ...

YARBOROUGH: ... collaborators. All right. Shall we get down to it, sir? If you could just stand as straight as you can for me ...

CLARE: Is there a connection between the artistic and the divine?

YARBOROUGH: I'm sure there must be. If we could focus on the task at hand ...

CLARE: Somerset says he'd take me to his apartments in Cleveland Street, if I wish it. They're always trying to b-b-bundle me off somewhere. Somerset s-s-says –

YARBOROUGH: Who is Somerset?

CLARE: The E-e-equerry Arthur Somerset.

YARBOROUGH: You didn't tell him about this place!

CLARE: I didn't know, d-d-did I.

YARBOROUGH: Because this has to be our secret. I cannot stress this strongly enough.

CLARE: S-s-somerset says the same thing about Cleveland Street.

YARBOROUGH: Try to walk for me, please. Just a few paces to start.

CLARE: Where is – ?

YARBOROUGH: No talking, mind. I'll let you know when it's safe to speak.  
(CLARE begins to walk.)  
Remarkable. Elongated spine ... under-developed shin and calf muscles ... If it isn't too forward a question, Your –

Freaks of History

CLARE: Clare!  
YARBOROUGH: How long have you been walking?  
CLARE: You mean when I started? They tell me I was a late bloomer – five, maybe six ...  
YARBOROUGH: Maybe seven or eight? And halting at best, would you say? If one were to *push* you ... like that –  
(*He pushes CLARE, who has trouble recovering his balance.*)  
CLARE: That's not fair!  
YARBOROUGH: I beg your Royal pardon.  
CLARE: No, but I just wasn't ready.  
YARBOROUGH: It wasn't at all forceful.  
CLARE: You're that much stronger than me. You don't know your own strength.  
YARBOROUGH: This is all in the interest of medical science ... a new branch of research. Called Eugenics – Francis Galton's theory of social biology. Its purpose is to discover how far removed we humans are from our animal cousins. In some cases, not very far at all. I wonder if I might impose on Your Highness –  
CLARE: ... in the interest of science ...  
YARBOROUGH: ... to hunker down on your haunches a short while. Can I assist you?  
CLARE: By explaining exactly what you mean.  
YARBOROUGH: No, I think it's actually better on your knees, moving your forelegs in place ... that's right.  
CLARE: This is how Somerset wanted me as well.  
YARBOROUGH: I tell you the resemblance's uncanny.  
CLARE: I wouldn't do it for him. Something told me I mustn't.  
YARBOROUGH: Between Your Highness and our canine cousins. I had thought there was something crippled in your development. Now I'm led to believe it's simply a missing stage. You've yet to reach the point of bipedalism, and the inordinate size of your head – as though Your Highness's back wasn't made to support a normal-size head.  
(*ANNIE knocks at the door.*)  
For the love of ... Who's there? (*Crosses to the door*) What are you doing? Who are you, for God's sake?  
ANNIE: Annie Crook, sir ... Lady Marcatta's maidservant.  
YARBOROUGH: How much did you hear?  
ANNIE: What?  
YARBOROUGH: We were conferring in private. How much did you –?  
ANNIE: Oh, not a thing, I promise.

YARBOROUGH: You expect me to leave it at that, do you?  
ANNIE: I meant no harm, sir, honest. Lady M just told me you'd need looking after.

YARBOROUGH: What?  
ANNIE: Cooking your meals and *looking after*.  
YARBOROUGH: We're perfectly able to do for ourselves.  
ANNIE: So you didn't tell Her Ladyship you wanted looking after. I gotta know, see. She'll ask me.

YARBOROUGH: You work for Lady Thing-a-me full time, do you?  
ANNIE: Yes, sir. I've worked for Her Ladyship for years. But she's away at her house in the country right now.

YARBOROUGH: And you're not Jewish, are you.  
ANNIE: No, sir. From Radcliffe Road.  
YARBOROUGH: But we've seen each other already, haven't we? Not here ... somewhere the other side of the river.  
ANNIE: I don't think so, begging your pardon. Is there anything I can get you ... any dishes you fancy?  
CLARE: Ask her if she can prepare tipsy rabbit.  
ANNIE: Topsy ... rabbit, is it?  
YARBOROUGH: My young friend Mr Clare is partial to rabbit ...  
CLARE: ... rabbit in cider!  
ANNIE: Has he fallen down?  
YARBOROUGH: Not at all. We've been playing a game ...  
CLARE: ... conducting experiments. That's what you said.  
YARBOROUGH: And you're sure you heard nothing of what we were saying.  
ANNIE: Well, yes, I heard voices. I didn't make out what you said. If you don't want me to call again ...  
CLARE: I want it. I want to taste your tipsy rabbit.  
ANNIE: Anything at all, love.  
YARBOROUGH: Yes, I did ask your mistress for help, as it happens. But we count on your sense of discretion. About what goes on within these walls, you know nothing. Is that understood? Not even your mistress must know.  
ANNIE: I'll remember that, sir.  
YARBOROUGH: No! You must *forget*. Is that clear? Put everything you witness here out of your mind.  
ANNIE: Shouldn't we help him up off the floor?  
(*In semi-darkness, YARBOROUGH addresses someone in the audience.*)  
YARBOROUGH: Potentially devastating for the nation! Can you imagine it? A flaw in the Royal bloodline. Our enemies could wreak havoc.

Republicans would call for the creation of a workers' state. This would make Chartism look like a Friendly Society. We'd rival the French for internecine conflict. My immediate thought was sterilization along lines advocated by Galton. Then it occurred to me, 'It doesn't go far enough. The only possible answer might be regicide ... quick, painless, barely heard above a whisper.'

*(He approaches EZEKIEL SUE.)*

I've been informed of your mystical powers ... that you can perform a variety of wonders.

SUE: They mislead you. I can predict but I cannot –

YARBOROUGH: I have also been told you are a Brother Mason. As I look round this room I see numerous signs – the sceptre, a square, you work in a leather apron.

SUE: That may be nearer the mark. How may I help a Brother?

YARBOROUGH: I've been put in the way of a particular problem ...

*(Attention is now split between SUE's villa and CLARE's. There ANNIE tries the door. It is locked.)*

ANNIE: Excuse me, sir. The two of you have had nothing all day. *(Tries to open the door)* Please open up, sir, for your own sake.

CLARE: I can't. Yarby went out and took the key with him.

ANNIE: Hang on a tick. *(She proceeds to pick the lock with a hairpin)* What on earth has he been doing?

CLARE: You shouldn't have broken the lock!

ANNIE: Only criminals are ever locked up. Don't say he makes you sleep in a dog box! Is he mad?

CLARE: Exactly. We're a pair of mad scientists.

ANNIE: He's giving new meaning to the term One Man and His Dog. Gone to get you a collar, has he?

CLARE: We're working in secret.

ANNIE: You're more than you pretend to be, aren't you. You can admit it – he's holding you against your will.

CLARE: He is not.

ANNIE: He's not? Absolutely free, are you? Then why does he place you under lock and key? More than you pretend, aren't you, my love. That's what he's doing it for. He's after your something-or-other.

CLARE: I d-d-don't know what y-y-you mean. He treats me better than S-s-somerset. M-m-much better.

ANNIE: Who's that when he's out for a walk?

CLARE: S-s-sir Arthur Somerset. E-e-equerry.

ANNIE: How is it you know people like that? *(Beat)* You need to get out of here, quick.

*(In SUE's villa.)*

SUE: I believe that's your only solution.  
YARBOROUGH: For the sake of the nation, of course.  
SUE: The Royal bloodline.  
YARBOROUGH: It's been the same throughout history. How we altered destiny. Napoleon ... Alexander ... The murder of various Irish subversives has been arranged by lodge brothers.  
SUE: You have to act quickly, you understand.  
YARBOROUGH: There's no pressing need. His parents believe I took him grouse shooting in Scotland. We're 'spending a fortnight at Balmoral'.  
SUE: No, no, you must bring him here with the utmost dispatch. Get the girl to bring him.  
YARBOROUGH: The girl?  
SUE: There is a girl looking after him, isn't there?  
YARBOROUGH: I'd forgot about her.  
SUE: She's a witness!  
YARBOROUGH: Damn and blast.  
SUE: You can say they fell down a railway embankment after she took him for a walk.  
YARBOROUGH: And how will you ... ?  
SUE: Are you certain you want to know? *Actae pachypoda*. Also known as Doll's Eyes or White Baneberry. All parts are poisonous, but especially the berries, the consumption of which has a sedative effect on cardiac muscle tissue and is likely to cause cardiac arrest.  
YARBOROUGH: Perfect.  
SUE: Were well 'twere done quickly, mind.  
YARBOROUGH: Absolutely. They'll be over directly. (*He goes out*)  
(*In CLARE's villa.*)  
CLARE: I-i-if he catches you here, t-t-there'll be trouble for us.  
ANNIE: I'm not afraid of him. I don't think you need be either, if you're careful. What do they call you?  
CLARE: Clare.  
ANNIE: I know, but I mean –  
CLARE: Please call me that! I don't want to be known as –  
ANNIE: – Your Highness? And they treat you no better than ...  
CLARE: Quiet!  
(*The sound of YARBOROUGH.*)  
That's torn it.  
ANNIE: You jest leave him to me, Your Royal Highness.  
YARBOROUGH: (*Entering*) You broke in.  
ANNIE: That's right. We thought His Highness could do with some air.  
CLARE: We're very sorry, Yarby.

YARBOROUGH: That's all right. It so happens I agree with you. I see you've discovered our identity. That's all right, as well. You said I could count on your discretion ... and I believe you.

ANNIE: Thanks.

YARBOROUGH: Why don't you go for a turn round the square?

ANNIE: You won't go with us?

YARBOROUGH: I have more notes to take on our latest experiment. You'll both have a better time without me, I'm sure.

ANNIE: We'll be back before you know it. What do you fancy for your tea?

YARBOROUGH: Tipsy rabbit, of course.  
*(EZEKIEL SUE meets them in the square.)*

SUE: You know who I am, don't you? You've seen me before?

ANNIE: You're that mystic everybody's in awe of, aren't you? Friends with Lady Marcatta.

SUE: With his Lordship as well. So you've reason to trust me.

ANNIE: I trust you, all right. And what harm can you do us here in the square? This is ...

SUE: I'm well aware of his Royal identity.

ANNIE: Suppose you must be. It was news to me.

SUE: You must listen to me. You're both in some real danger.

ANNIE: I thought he was. But I don't know about myself.

CLARE: Can't you both call me C-c-clare?

ANNIE: This isn't a game, love.

SUE: Exactly. What do you suppose he's after?

ANNIE: Who, Sir Surgeon? Money ... influence. Favour at Court.

SUE: He's aiming to do away with His Highness.

ANNIE: Get on with you. Mr Clare is Royalty, ain't he?

SUE: And?

ANNIE: And he's sure to be missed.

SUE: So you believe this Yarborough character to be completely sane, do you?

ANNIE: Well, no, I wouldn't say completely normal, but ...

SUE: Careful. If he's looking out at us, he'll grow suspicious. Let's go inside.  
*(They enter SUE's villa.)*

ANNIE: Watch it, though. You're frightening the boy.

SUE: I mean to frighten you both, if that's possible ... for your own sakes and for the sake of the nation. Do you believe me?

ANNIE: All right, but ... slow down, will you? This is all a bit ...

SUE: Let me put it to you then. If Sir William's entirely sane ...

ANNIE: He's Sir William, is he?

Wellclose Square

SUE: Sir William Yarborough, Surgeon Royal to Her Majesty and all the Royal Family. He's firmly of the belief that the bloodline has been broken ... tainted if you will ... by the unfortunate circumstances of Clarence's deformity. He means to rid the world of this blemish, my dears. I'm to be his instrument.

ANNIE: His instrum – You're going to kill us?

SUE: So he believes. (*Beat*) If that were true, would I be speaking like this? Warning you?

ANNIE: What are you saying, exactly?

SUE: You must marry each other immediately, and you must –

ANNIE: Wait, wait, wait ... What do you mean, marry each other?

SUE: If you marry each other, today, then your relationship becomes a matter of public record, public weal, if you like. You're safe then.

ANNIE: But Clare's people – the Royals – are going to go for that a lot – I don't think – me, a commoner ... virtually –

SUE: What does that matter?

CLARE: Yeah, what does that matter? *I* want it. I want you to be my wife – seventh in line to the –

ANNIE: Shut up a minute ... Your –

CLARE: – Your Majesty! Doesn't that have a ... g-g-glorious sound?

SUE: (*Softer, specifically to ANNIE*) Even if they get it annulled, you'll still be safe. You'll be *alive*, won't you? Who on earth's going to murder you then? You're public figures ... there'd be an international scandal!

ANNIE: How do we go about it?

SUE: There's a chapel right back here. I'll perform the ceremony myself.

ANNIE: Today?

SUE: As soon as possible. The two of you could claim sanctuary here until the ceremony ... in front of as many bridesmaids as you like ... the more the better!

ANNIE: Bridesmaids?

SUE: The more the better, I promise you! (*Beat*) Witnesses, you see? Safety in numbers.  
(*Light begins to fade. ANNIE moves centre, to be joined by YARBOROUGH. SUE speaks to mark a transition.*)

SUE: O, Lord, my God, in Thee do I take refuge;  
Save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me.  
Lest like the lion they rend me, dragging me away  
With none to rescue.  
(*YARBOROUGH closes in on ANNIE.*)

Freaks of History

YARBOROUGH: You should have left well enough alone, Annie Crook. I tried to frighten you off, remember?

ANNIE: There's nothing you can do to us now. We're married, legally. The rabbi married us. Before witnesses, too – five bridesmaids.

YARBOROUGH: Foolish girl. Don't you know? You've committed a criminal act. You, Annie Crook, are a criminal.

ANNIE: You mean because he's a rabbi? A Jew wedding?

YARBOROUGH: Because your bridegroom, the duke, is an animal.

ANNIE: He's a poor, unfortunate –

YARBOROUGH: – cross breed ... a dogboy. You're a committed zoophile. I'm duly authorized, by law, to punish ...  
*(He swiftly strangles her. ADLER edges forward to speak a benediction.)*

ADLER: According to legend, a Jew in the crowd spat at Christ on his way to Calvary, and as a punishment, Jews are condemned to wander the earth. As a warning we mustn't try to settle, we're blamed for crime after crime. We tried to settle here, and this happened. How much more will we be blamed for? How much longer will we have to wander?  
*(Final fade.)*

## ***Unsex Me Here***

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A Performance Text

Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty.

Lady Macbeth

First performed on 26 March 2014 under the direction of Martin Harvey and Erin Walcon with the following cast:

JOHANNA ZASTROY	Anna North
CLAUDIA KOONTZ	Emily Lawes
DR BARBARA CARTHAGE	Laura Stones
CLOTHILDE ELFRIEDE	Jone Kociunaite
EMMI BELLIN	Armonie Melville
GRETAL BORKOWSKI	Carmen Cousens
MARIA A	Caroline Boyce
DR HERMANN PFANNMULLER	William Benyon
KATHE GUMBMAN	Lucy White
GEORGE GRACIE	Darren Siah
PIPPA QUARRY	Carmen Paddock
SISTER HEDWIG	Claire Crawford
CLEMENS AUGUST GRAF VON GALEN	Adam Dolan
WERNER HEYDE	Aaron Bell
DAGMAR HEYDE	Joanna Ward
FRITZ SCHULZ	Sebastian Posner
ANDY MUELLER	Thomas Giles
ASTRID HALLOCK	Natasha Fardell
MONIQUE WITTIG	Armonie Melville
ANIKE	Jone Kociunaite
BABETTE	Gabriella Freeman
MITZI	Phoebe Harris
MARGARETE BORKOWSKI	Grace Low
IRMGARD HUBER	Lara Hamilton
CUNDRY ENGEL	Emily Patrick

Freaks of History

MATHILDE FREY	Cecilia Crossland
MINNA ZACHOW	Georgia Leach
CHRISTEL ZIELKE	Carmen Paddock
BODO MOOS	Darren Siah
GERTRUD MOOS	Zoe Ozwell
(Other Parts)	
EMMI'S BROTHER	Aaron Bell
CHIEF NURSE	Zoe Ozwell
ATTENDANT ONE	Grace Low
ATTENDANT TWO	Joanna Ward
WOMAN	Cecilia Crossland
JOURNALIST (MAN)	Adam Dolan
WOMAN	Claire Crawford
SS MAN	Sebastian Posner
WOMAN	Georgia Leach
DISABLED GIRL ONE	Lara Hamilton
DISABLED GIRL TWO	Phoebe Harris
NURSE ONE	Natasha Fardell
NURSE TWO	Gabriella Freeman

Hadamar, a small town in the Limburg district of Hesse, Germany, in the years between 1933 and 1947.

## Act One

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*A large exhibition hall – traverse in shape and dimension – that is a cross between an art gallery and a museum. There are various alcoves for the specific exhibits. (The exhibits may be performed as though they are on a loop.) There are three tour guides: JOHANNA ZASTROY (disabled though independently mobile), CLAUDIA KOONTZ and BARBARA CARTHAGE, an American.*

JOHANNA: (To CLAUDIA) Shall I start?  
CLAUDIA: Of course. You're the logical person.  
JOHANNA: No, but that's just the point. We're all equal. None of us are the group leader.  
BARBARA: I don't feel it's my place. I'm an American ... and this is mainly about disability.  
CLAUDIA: It is only about disability; it has to be you, darling.  
JOHANNA: All right, I'll introduce things. But you'll both have to play your part.  
CLAUDIA: We'll do everything together, darling. Don't worry.  
JOHANNA: Okay. (To the audience) This is different to the Holocaust exhibitions in Frankfurt and Washington DC. Many people referred to these as 'the good deaths' as though they were morally justified.  
CLAUDIA: And many of the killers were never properly punished.  
JOHANNA: Those in charge *were* executed.  
CLAUDIA: The nurses weren't. Most of the nurses served only a few years.  
JOHANNA: Are you sure you wouldn't like to make the opening remarks?  
CLAUDIA: No, indeed, darling.  
BARBARA: We're at risk of confusing people if we're all going to overlap. And this is your history more than it's ours.  
CLAUDIA: You continue, darling, please.  
JOHANNA: My name is Johanna Zastroy. I am Swiss German from just outside Zurich, and the exhibition (which deals with the mass extermination of people with disabilities by the Nazi regime) concerns the extermination centres that operated from August 1941 until liberation in May 1945. We'll be providing contextual information, as well, of course. The pertinent facts about German

nurses can be traced to the Great War. And the mistreatment of the disabled goes back centuries. One exhibit we'll show you is of a woman who was locked up for life in the 1800s. Perhaps we'll consider her case first.

CLAUDIA: Oh, don't talk about her! You're thinking of Clothilde Elfriede, aren't you?

JOHANNA: She's important historically.

CLAUDIA: You must talk about her, of course. But perhaps not at the very beginning. (*To the audience*) An especially gruesome case. We don't want to put you off straight away.

JOHANNA: They're going to be shown some of the worst crimes in history – what are you talking about? That's why they're here.

BARBARA: Shouldn't we begin with the best-known facts? T4 was Hitler's largely secret plan to eliminate all disabled –

JOHANNA: You told me to introduce the exhibits, and I want to start with Clothilde because she was the first inmate ... the earliest recorded inmate. We'll find her holograph in here.  
(*She leads the audience to the first alcove where CLOTHILDE ELFRIEDE is caged.*)

Clothilde's case is significant for a number of reasons. She was disabled, and she was ordered to come to Hadamar in 1835 after being found guilty of the murder of her three-year-old daughter Chloë. It's particularly significant that she came here for treatment, not to be punished, at least formally.

CLAUDIA: But you haven't told them the important bit, how the poor mite died.

JOHANNA: You said you found it too gruesome.

CLAUDIA: But now that you've overridden my objection ... (*To the audience*) She was a distant relation of Hannibal Lecter – convicted of cutting her daughter up into little pieces and –

JOHANNA: She goes back farther than that – the old witch in *Hansel and Gretel*.

CLAUDIA: I was citing a contemporary reference. If we're speaking historically, there's the Black Death and Famine of 1315, enshrined forever in stone not far from here. Cannibalism was its signature characteristic.

BARBARA: That's way off the point now.

CLAUDIA: Many call the Nazi era the Black Death redux.

BARBARA: I think we should do this one at a time, perhaps even separately, each of us leading individual groups.

JOHANNA: In here, in any case, you'll see a representation of Clothilde Elfriede, convicted, as Claudia says, of killing and eating her infant daughter.

- CLOTHILDE: *(From the cage)* I never did what they accused of doing. *(Pointing to JOHANNA)* You can see she's all right. She's grown to be bigger than I am. *(To JOHANNA)* Tell them, why don't you. Tell them all. I never cut you. I never even clipped you round the ear hole. They could as easily have accused *you* of eating *me*. I kept you at my breast long enough. But they wanted rid of me because they said I was cursed on account of my palsy ... on account of my mother didn't drown me at birth, the recommended course for girls in my condition. She wouldn't do it, so they dubbed her a witch and said I had an illegitimate waif which I ate. Which is a deliberate falsehood. *(Pointing to CLAUDIA)* She was told to look after me. And she did a right job of it. She raised welts by beating me senseless, and then she unlocked the door so that *he* could have his will of me. *(She points to BARBARA)* And him supposed to be my private physician.
- JOHANNA: The institution was opened as a psychiatric clinic presided over by Dr Wilhelm Greisinger. And there's strong evidence to suggest that Clothilde must have been seen by Greisinger, or by one of his disciples. Cases remarkably like hers are analysed in depth in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, the principal work of the ground-breaking Richard Krafft-Ebing.
- CLOTHILDE: *He* ordered them to have my organs removed, and *she* held me down while they done it.
- CLAUDIA: She's hysterical.
- JOHANNA: But isn't that precisely why her example is valuable to us?
- CLOTHILDE: *(To JOHANNA)* You've got to see to it that justice is done to your mother. *(To the audience)* I'm completely innocent.
- JOHANNA: That's exactly what we're trying to show. *(To the audience)* Krafft-Ebing believed that sexual activity was a natural expression of Christian fulfilment, sanctified in women through motherhood. Since Clothilde was crippled, sexual desire in her was judged to be abnormal, even if motherhood made it all right. Infanticide would prove she was abnormal. Especially if it involved cannibalism.
- BARBARA: What are we trying to do, deify her? I think we ought to take one group each. You show them your exhibits, I'll show them –
- CLAUDIA: You're not leaving me alone with these people. They want to crucify me.
- JOHANNA: Don't be ridiculous, darling.
- CLAUDIA: This one accuses me of helping to violate her. The others will say I helped pull the switch.

- JOHANNA: Nobody here thinks you're guilty ... *(To the audience)* Do you? *(Back to claudia)* We're just tour guides. Didn't you want to demonstrate once for all that Germans – German women especially – are able to look at their infamous past?
- CLAUDIA: *(Addressing the audience)* I want it established, beyond doubt, I had nothing to do with any of these women. They're no relations of mine.
- BARBARA: It wouldn't matter if they were. Nobody's saying *you're* guilty.
- CLAUDIA: Excuse me, that's what they *all* say. Jewish activists going on about war crimes ... and I take it you all heard what *she* said. *(Pointing to clothilde)*
- JOHANNA: She's a holograph. I'm disabled, and *I* don't hold you responsible. *(Some physical contact)* I think you're very brave, and what we're doing here is extremely important. We'll continue to do this together. Come on. We'll pass from this one to ... Where shall we go next?
- CLAUDIA: I don't think we should move from here directly to the origins of T4.
- JOHANNA: I wasn't going to. *(To the audience)* We have a series of exhibits that deal with Germany before the war ... before the First War, in fact.
- CLAUDIA: I want to show them how the general conditions for nurses contributed to the ethos that made Hadamar possible.
- JOHANNA: Exactly. Hadamar Institute, where Clothilde Elfriede was kept, became the main centre for euthanasia in Nazi Germany. *(To the audience)* But the first thing to note is that Hadamar, originally, was a hospital, intended to treat patients, not to punish them. Dr Greisinger emphasized cure, not –
- CLAUDIA: The first thing to note is that nurses, in olden times, were seen as little more than common prostitutes.
- JOHANNA: Yes, that's true.
- CLAUDIA: They were judged to have intimate contact with men's bodies, like prostitutes, to be the servile instruments of men's wishes, like prostitutes ...
- JOHANNA: The sisters who worked in motherhouses were viewed as different, of course, they were ministering angels.
- CLAUDIA: The nurses working at Hadamar during the war felt they were honouring the German tradition of obeying their lords and masters.
- JOHANNA: But, before then, before the First War even, women would enter the nursing profession as a way of *escaping* male dominance.

CLAUDIA: They were responsible for their actions – is that what you're saying?

JOHANNA: I'm just trying to introduce our next exhibit, Emmi Bellin.

CLAUDIA: Emmi Bellin was not a qualified nurse.

JOHANNA: But she wanted to be, that's the point. And she freely confessed ...

EMMI: ... to killing kiddies. I am Emmi Bellin, in Hadamar from '41 to '42 August. I done it.  
*(From another alcove, the pathetic figure of EMMI BELLIN is heard.)*

BARBARA: *(Hushed tone)* That's not true, is it? She was an inmate here, like –

JOHANNA: No, she was a member of staff, like she said.

CLAUDIA: But she wasn't a nurse.

JOHANNA: That's true. She wasn't employed as a nurse, not at first. But she was the first to confess.

CLAUDIA: There's no way of knowing the truth.

JOHANNA: Shall we go in?  
*(The second inset scene has EMMI BELLIN on her knees mopping the floor. BROTHER and a NURSE stand over her.)*

CLAUDIA: Emmi Bellin, born 4/11/08 in Dortmund, Westphalia, daughter of Hans, signalman with the city railway, sister of Tomas, three years older, sister of Odin, four years younger. Mother deceased.

BROTHER: All right, you convinced us the floor's clean enough to eat from. Where's the food? You said you were cooking me blutwurst – where is it?

EMMI: At the Hansaplatz Café.

BROTHER: You're always asking for trouble – why is that? Because you're stupid, is that it? You don't have a job, a husband, so your family has to look after you. Do you want us to do it for free? All Pa and me ask is a few basic meals a week. Is that too much, even for you?

EMMI: I will get a job, I will, sooner than you think.

BROTHER: Good for you. I'm amazed, but I'm also delighted.

EMMI: I'm seeing to it in the morning. I'll train for six months, if approved, then I'll begin a lifelong career. My career as a nurse.

BROTHER: Wonderful.

EMMI: You don't believe me?

BROTHER: I think that's just what you should do. I'd have suggested it myself, but I thought you'd reject the idea. I hope you get it, Em.

EMMI: Do you want your dinner now?

BROTHER: Do you know what? I think I'll take a stroll as far as the Hansaplatz. But you'll come to my room later, eh? To celebrate your

advancement in the world. (*He is more familiar with her than a brother is*)

- EMMI: Please, Tomas, no more.
- BROTHER: What do you mean, no more? That's your true profession.
- EMMI: I'll tell Pa.
- BROTHER: I'll tell him myself. See where that gets you. (*She drifts upstage*)  
Nurses are next door to whores, aren't they?
- CLAUDIA: That's why her case is important to us. True to her word, Emmi applied for a job at the local hospital and was told she would need to pass an examination before she could be admitted onto the nurses' training programme. Before that, she was asked to supply transcripts of her school records. That's when her problems began.  
(*CHIEF NURSE looks over EMMI's records.*)
- NURSE: This can't be right. It says you stayed at elementary school for 12 years.
- EMMI: My mother died. Her death hurt me terrible. There was no one else to look after my father and brothers ... t-two brothers.
- NURSE: Our preliminary test shows you couldn't even be considered for admittance. Short-handed as we are, we couldn't possibly use –
- EMMI: *I need to escape.*
- NURSE: We're not a holiday resort.
- EMMI: *Please.*
- NURSE: Well ... can you wash the floor?
- EMMI: Oh, yes, clean enough to eat from. Oh, *thank* –
- NURSE: You'll save us on tablecloths then. (*Gives her a copy of Mein Kampf*)
- EMMI: What's this?
- NURSE: Copy of *Mein Kampf*. They want us to know not only who pays our salaries but how we're even able to exist. Domestic workers are also dues paying members of the new Reich Association of Nurses. Don't look so pained. None of us believes in it.
- EMMI: I never learned to read.
- NURSE: Of course not.
- JOHANNA: On this evidence, it's clear that poor Emmi was every bit a victim.
- CLAUDIA: I agree. And yet she's adamant, isn't she?
- BARBARA: You're not trying to make this a general case, are you – that they were all victims?
- CLAUDIA: I trust the facts to speak for themselves. We're talking about nurses' conditions before the war, and we're saying – are we

not – that Emmi Bellin was typical of the kind of lower class, ill-educated girl who wanted to become a nurse.

Others, of course, were far better educated.

JOHANNA: And she was brutalized, wasn't she?

CLAUDIA: What does that matter?

JOHANNA: Well, if she was guilty of murder, we see how she was *conditioned* to it from childhood.

CLAUDIA: But who besides Bellin is saying she's guilty? I use her to illustrate how the lowest type of female wanted to enter the profession because of its dubious reputation. The Nazis were the ones who made it more respectable – thereby attracting a different class of female. They established a nurses' union as part of their reorganized civil service. Nurses were given statutory working hours as well as rates of pay based on levels of services. They were accorded a level of autonomy, too, unknown in previous times.

(*GRETEL BORKOWSKI stands up.*)

GRETEL: Emmi Bellin wasn't a nurse. She was only a charwoman.

CLAUDIA: We know that.

JOHANNA: (*To CLAUDIA*) Is she part of the exhibition?

GRETEL: My name is Gretel Borkowski, and I knew Emmi Bellin at Hadamar. She only scrubbed floors during my time there.

JOANNA: And you never saw her with children?

GRETEL: She was there, yeah, but *I* was the nurse.

BARBARA: And what did *you* do?

(*The beginning of the third inset: GRETEL BORKOWSKI is joined by MARIA A and, latterly, by HERMANN PFANNMULLER. MARIA is in the bath.*)

GRETEL: First let me finish about Bellin, all right? She didn't give fatal dosages. That's what you mean, isn't it? None of that happened in my time. She cleaned the floors, and maybe later she helped with the food. (*To CLAUDIA*) I heard you ask about conditions – they were well below an acceptable standard ... long before they became unspeakably bad. Bellin couldn't have got a job if they hadn't been.

CLAUDIA: (*To the audience*) If you'd care to follow in here, this exhibit features the origins of sterilization. Gretel Borkowski was one of the first nurses assigned the task of sterilizing selected patients, and Maria A was typical. Of sub-normal intelligence, suffering acute melancholia, it was deemed advisable, for her own good, that she be rendered infertile. As the exhibit makes clear, she had an adolescent son who was relocated with a well-to-do family.

JOHANNA: May I make one small comment? (*CLAUDIA nods yes*) Sterilization for selected mental patients was made legal in Vaud, Switzerland in 1928. It's a well-known event in Swiss medical history. And Hitler was supposedly thinking of this when he ordered its implementation in German hospitals. (*To CLAUDIA*) That's right, isn't it?

CLAUDIA: And nurses like Borkowski were judged to have the right medical background to carry out the procedure.

GRETEL: I developed a taste for mercy killing ... no, that's not right. I was fully exposed to the practice as a nurse for the Order of St John in 1917. Afterwards I went to Wittenau. I have seen the worst that war can produce. Countless mutilated bodies wheeled in for surgery when there was none to be had – no supplies and no need of treatment. Corpse after living corpse and you thought, 'Why are you doing this to all of us?' Of course, I'd never seen anything like it. You don't. In peacetime. You just don't. And you learn to harden yourself against shock, against further pain. It's not real after a while. Even the unforgettable stench of death is unreal, though you see clearly, this is the end of life.  
(*By now she has reached the inset playing area. Joining her is MARIA A, sub-normal and crazed.*)  
In olden times they'd have fed you through a hole in some steel meshing.

MARIA: Are you going to kiss me, nurse?

GRETEL: No, I'm not, Maria. Bad girls like you don't deserve it.

MARIA: You do think I'm bad, don't you?

GRETEL: I know you are. You're dirty in your thoughts, in your speech, in your actions. You look disgusting.

MARIA: You could help me to look really pretty if you wanted, but you don't, and don't I know why. Because, deep inside, you feel as dirty as I do, and that simply terrifies you.

GRETEL: That's right.

MARIA: See? I know your littlest secret, and you see me as a threat, though I'm even more terrified than you.

GRETEL: Stop rubbing yourself.

MARIA: Get you excited, does it?

GRETEL: It's disgusting. Stop it.

MARIA: All right, my dear. I don't want you any more worked up than you feel you can stand. But then you have to do something for me. Are we agreed? Can you arrange for me to see my baby? That's fair, isn't it? I stop trying to get you excited –

GRETEL: Suppose I could get you released. You could go to see him.  
MARIA: You're not teasing me? You know where he is?  
GRETEL: Wiesbaden ... with a family of civil engineers. They're entering him for the gymnasium in September.  
MARIA: Really! He's only 11. But they'll want to keep him. They'll insist on it. They paid for his education; they'll claim him as theirs.  
GRETEL: Not if you're fully recovered ... he's your accomplishment. But only if you behave. If he sees you like you are now ... touching yourself. Can you imagine his shame?  
MARIA: Oh, yes. He wouldn't look at me. He'd think I was absolutely off my head.  
GRETEL: And wouldn't you feel just terrible?  
(*DR HERMANN PFANNMULLER appears.*)  
CLAUDIA: Here we meet one of the Reich's notorious killer doctors. Pfannmuller was the director of the institution, Eglfing-Haar, for children. He developed a special starvation diet as a method of killing 'useless eaters', especially children. In 1939, he paid a visit to this particular institution to explain how the mercy killing was to be conducted.  
HERMANN: Can I have a word with you, Nurse Borkowski?  
MARIA: Dr Hermann! Did you hear the news? I'm being released in a fortnight, if I behave.  
HERMANN: (*hushed*) What have you been telling her?  
GRETEL: Nothing. (*Hushed*) Just trying to keep her quiet, doctor.  
HERMANN: That's what I'm trying to do.  
MARIA: I know that you're talking about me ... It makes me nervous ... I'm going to start touching myself again. Won't you be sorry? I might remind you of when you approached me last. I'm sure you don't want to remember that.  
HERMANN: We'll never release her.  
GRETEL: Not at the moment. I realize.  
HERMANN: Not ever. She's past it. Listen to her. I think she's right for locking up permanently. (*Refers to a document*) This latest Reich directive refers specifically to those in her category: 'All persons of unstable mind and emotions must be treated so that they are no further danger to themselves or to others, particularly in the case of their reproductive organs.'  
GRETEL: What in God's name does that mean?  
HERMANN: Sterilization, of course.  
GRETEL: Maria's no danger to anyone.  
HERMANN: She's in our mental ward, is she not? Her only child has been fostered out to responsible civil servants. Who signed the loyalty

statement and took the test confirming their competence. Did she pass the test?

GRETEL: I don't think she took it.

HERMANN: Exactly.

GRETEL: Neither did I. It's a recent thing, isn't it? (*Beat*) All I am saying is we are beginning to lose sight of the founding principles laid down by Dr Greisinger – that we cure where we can, we rehabilitate ... patients exactly like Maria Angstrom.

HERMANN: You mentioned her family name!

GRETEL: Why not?

HERMANN: She is not a proper person, as far as this institution's concerned. She's a patient to undergo treatment – Maria A. And the prescribed treatment for all in her category is sterilization. That's what the latest directive says.

GRETEL: Seems gratuitously brutal.

HERMANN: Are you saying you're unable to carry out such treatment?

GRETEL: Of course not. I'm only saying in her case –

HERMANN: Your dossier says you have experience of dealing with the nation's worst wartime casualties ... that you're capable of performing the most difficult acts known to your profession.

GRETEL: I performed countless mercy killings, it's true.

HERMANN: So what's the problem here? You're not being asked to kill Maria A.

GRETEL: No question of cure either.

HERMANN: Very well, we'll find someone who is capable of carrying out requisite tasks.

GRETEL: You're firing me?

HERMANN: Giving you time to learn the new discipline. The concept of 'cure' belongs to a different era, as different now as we were from the Romantic era. Ours is the Age of Realism ... enlightened realism. We're not barbarians, after all.

GRETEL: You're saying she needs to be sterilized? I can do that.

HERMANN: It goes against your scruples.

GRETEL: I'll do it. I'm battle-hardened. Does she know?

HERMANN: You said she thinks she's being released.

GRETEL: She does. I'll try telling her she needs to be vaccinated. (*Crossing to MARIA*) Maria darling?

HERMANN: Just coax her into Treatment Room C – everything's ready for her.

GRETEL: Would you like to come with me for a minute?

MARIA: No – you're not taking me anywhere nice.

GRETEL: It's time for your medication, dear.

MARIA: I don't need it if I'm going to see my son. I don't need it any more.  
GRETEL: You're not completely well yet.  
(*TWO WOMEN with wet towels grab hold of MARIA from behind. She screams hysterically.*)

GRETEL: What on earth are you doing?  
HERMANN: Applying a cold pack. Wrap her in cold towels wringing wet.  
GRETEL: She'll die of pneumonia. (*MARIA screams, off*) Stop them!  
HERMANN: (*Restraining her*) Don't be a fool.  
(*He holds her until the screams subside.*)  
You see? All over now. She'll sleep peacefully now. (*ONE WOMAN returns*) Asleep now, right?

ONE: Dead. Heart attack.  
JOHANNA: I would hope it was better handled in Vaud. What was it called again, ice-packing?  
CLAUDIA: Cold packing.  
JOHANNA: Utter barbarity. And what of the doctor responsible?  
BARBARA: I heard the Russians got hold of him.  
JOHANNA: They deserve each other.  
CLAUDIA: I'm afraid, to everyone's chagrin, he was sentenced to only a few years' imprisonment and died in his own bed, in 1961.  
JOHANNA: And something else you said ... about child-killing.  
CLAUDIA: That didn't happen immediately.  
JOHANNA: And it had nothing to do with the Vaud Statute. That applied only to sterilization.  
CLAUDIA: I'm aware of that. The child-killing happened later, and we may reasonably surmise it happened covertly. But Pfannmuller features prominently in the following exhibits.  
(*DR HERMANN addresses a crowd, holding up the corpse of an infant.*)  
He introduced the topic at a now-famous address to junior doctors at which nurses were also present. Here we see an apparently casual exchange between the doctor and a newly qualified nurse, much brighter than Emmi Bellin ... brighter than Gretel Borkowski.

HERMANN: For me, as a National Socialist, these creatures represent a burden on the health of the nation. We do not terminate them with poison or injections. This would only provide new slanderous campaign material for the foreign press and certain Swiss humanitarians with nonsensical views of what constitutes human sovereignty. (*Holding up corpse*) I ask you in all rational thought – is this human?

CLAUDIA: As you watch, pay particular attention to how reasonable Pfannmuller sounds ... and how right-seeming the nurse appears. (*KATHE GUMBANN approaches him.*)

HERMANN: You have a question, kind miss?

KATHE: I think I have. Is this Hadamar Hospital?

HERMANN: You have a relative resident here?

KATHE: Kathe Gumbmann – I’ve come to work. I’ve just been accepted by the Reich Association of Nurses.

HERMANN: You’re just in time.

KATHE: I’m sure I’m late. I had major difficulties with my connections from Mainz.

HERMANN: Don’t give it another thought. Are you tired?

KATHE: Not very, but that goose reminds me how hungry I am – famished!!

HERMANN: Goose? (*Laughs*) So you think this is our supper?

KATHE: The game in these parts, I’ve heard, is wonderful.

HERMANN: It certainly is! (*Laughs*) Want me to cut you a slice?

KATHE: I’m not sure I deserve such fine treatment.

HERMANN: Because you were late a few hours?

KATHE: Because I’m only a nurse.

HERMANN: ‘Only a nurse!’ That’s exactly the attitude we National Socialists want to correct. And with women exactly like you as our models.

KATHE: I’ve only been working a year and a half. Before then, I worked in a hat shop. Now if I tell folk, you know what they say?

HERMANN: You were better off in the shop.

KATHE: I don’t think they’re just talking about money either.

HERMANN: I know they’re not.  
(*WOMAN accosts her rudely. This figure will play various roles within the scene.*)

WOMAN: Did you think we were going to fall to our knees in gratitude to you? Treat you like St Mathilde of Ringelheim?

KATHE: I don’t understand.

WOMAN: No, you thought you were dealing with fools. Girls like you don’t become nurses from selfless devotion. If you were like that, you’d already be in a motherhouse. But they wouldn’t take you, would they. We’ve already had a complaint about you.

KATHE: No one knows me here. I just came here from Giessen.

WOMAN: You belong to the communist union. (*She spits, then retreats to one side*)

HERMANN: We’ve heard it all before.

KATHE: I wondered at first whether to take you seriously. But it seemed I had little to lose. It was clear the people in Mainz were not going to make it easy for me. Then I met this nursing sister.

WOMAN: They're looking for recruits at Hadamar.

KATHE: What's Hadamar?

WOMAN: Psychiatric clinic in Hesse. The Nazis will sponsor you if you're selected.

KATHE: I'm already a member of the union.

WOMAN: Which union? Only the Reich one has any teeth. (*Retreats*)

HERMANN: Your friend was right. We don't compel women to join us. They just know if they do, they'll receive a level of respect they never had before. Because we see nurses and nursing as essential to the health of the nation.

KATHE: In Mainz I was spat at, reviled. They wanted to shave my head.

HERMANN: You're revered here. We give all the support you need. Doctor and nurse, we work as a team. I rely on your expertise, your intelligence, your intelligence to tell me if something's not right. If someone's condition is worse, you must tell me. There's no room for hesitation, understand? We're in the midst of a war Germany must dominate. We must be resolute.

KATHE: I understand perfectly, doctor. I'm deeply moved.  
(*JOURNALIST approaches.*)

JOURNALIST: I represent the popular daily *Zeitspiegel*. Do you have time for an interview?

KATHE: Not really – we have many new admissions this morning.

JOURNALIST: You've caught the public's imagination. Nurses at one time were regarded as little more than prostitutes.

KATHE: I have no comment.

JOURNALIST: Oh, but you must. You're in the process of transforming the image ... of becoming modern-day Brunhildes.  
(*Perhaps a PHOTOGRAPHER snaps her.*)

KATHE: Well ... what do you want to know?

JOURNALIST: Is it true Hadamar now takes crippled children?

KATHE: We treat many of those unfortunate angels, yes.

JOURNALIST: And what is their usual fate?

KATHE: I don't understand.

JOURNALIST: What is your rate of success? What percentage are cured?

KATHE: Chronic handicap isn't like illness, you know. Even ideal treatment falls short of absolute recovery.

JOURNALIST: So are there ever occasions when a child's condition is so severe that termination is preferable to life?

KATHE: (*Unsettled*) What?  
JOURNALIST: Are there ever occasions when a life is not worthy of life?  
HERMANN: (*Lifting corpse*) Is this human?  
(*WOMAN steps forward.*)  
KATHE: (*Addressing a mother*) We're not monsters, you know. No one's talking of keeping your Bodo here permanently. But we're in the midst of world conflict, you know, when resources need to be targeted properly. In peacetime, of course, your energies are directed towards the child who needs you the most, the unfit child. The others are able to cope by themselves. In wartime, however, our emphases shift. We rely on our healthy young people. They carry our national destiny with their strength. And suppose your community is unexpectedly besieged? Your mother's instinct is to protect the weakest, naturally. Reason will tell you the healthy child is the more important ... because he is the one on whom the whole nation depends. Do you understand?  
WOMAN: Oh, yes, perfectly.  
KATHE: No one's talking of keeping him here permanently.  
WOMAN: I can't see the point.  
KATHE: We're all specially trained. He'll be with others exactly like him. He'll be safe.  
WOMAN: As soon as they let me see him, I took one look and started to pray for a place like this. It's a blessing you're here.  
KATHE: Thank you, my dear.  
WOMAN: How soon do you do it?  
KATHE: How soon ...?  
WOMAN: Yes, how soon do you get rid of them?  
KATHE: You misunderstood me completely ...  
WOMAN: And how do you do it, injection?  
KATHE: We don't get rid of them at all.  
WOMAN: What do you do with them then?  
KATHE: Keep them safe.  
WOMAN: Safe for what? They're not human.  
KATHE: How can you say that? You're his mother. You named him.  
WOMAN: X! That's its name. And I don't want reminding it ever came out of me. People might think I'm a monster.  
KATHE: We'll put him up for adoption then.  
WOMAN: Do what you like. I'm not having him back.  
KATHE: We'll try to ensure he goes to a good home. Thank the Lord, every woman isn't like you.  
WOMAN: Every woman that isn't is committing a criminal act.

- KATHE: I'm not talking to you – you're completely insane.  
WOMAN: Yeah? (*Producing memorandum*) Take a gander at that, and then we'll decide who's insane.
- KATHE: Get that away from me!  
WOMAN: (*Reading*) Edict 3680. I thought I was doing you a favour. 'All medical personnel – doctors, nurses and midwives – are hereby required to report any abnormalities in children of any age or degree of impairment. Failure to do so may constitute criminal negligence. Compliance will merit rewards of various kinds'. You even get paid for it, hypocrite.
- KATHE: (*Hands over ears*) I'm not listening!  
JOURNALIST: (*Proffering money*) She's right, though. Here's your bonus.  
WOMAN: (*Snatching it*) By rights that should go to me.  
BARBARA: I think this may well be where I can contribute my bit. If you'd like to come with me now ...  
(*They proceed to the next exhibit.*)  
I have concrete evidence of the same thing happening in liberal, God-fearing America. After the war, in the baby-booming era, the idea of disability was anathema to many right-thinking Americans. And though it was never officially acknowledged, this was reinforced by many paediatrics. What I want to show you now is one of the nation's flagship entertainment programmes, popular during the war and taken up immediately afterwards by the burgeoning medium of television.
- CLAUDIA: You're going to show us the origins of television?  
BARBARA: Only the example of one of the most popular programmes ... to demonstrate how this attitude towards disability gained currency.
- CLAUDIA: Popular entertainment – is it a soap opera?  
BARBARA: A quiz programme – started on radio and taken by television due to overwhelming popular demand. I have a transcript right here. It's called *Your Lucky Day*. Four female contestants take it in turn to tell their most heart-rending tales of woe, and the audience vote on the one they find the most moving. Then said woman is told it's her Lucky Day, after which she is given the 24-hour happiness makeover, courtesy of the show's sponsors, who, incidentally, grant the celebrant her ultimate wish.  
(*GEORGE GRACIE and PIPPA QUARRY appear.*)
- GEORGE: This is your old friend and couch mate Gorgeous George Gracie welcoming you to another edition of the show that wants to make every woman in America can have her own Lucky Day. Let us now meet our next contestant. What is your name, my dear?

PIPPA: Pippa Quarry.  
GEORGE: Pip-pa Quar-ry.  
PIPPA: That's right. It's short for –  
GEORGE: Where on earth did you get a moniker like that, dear? Is your pa or your husband responsible?  
PIPPA: What?  
GEORGE: Only joking, sweetheart. Are you married or single?  
PIPPA: I'm a widow.  
GEORGE: Are you kidding me? She honestly doesn't look old enough, does she, folks! (*Canned applause*)  
PIPPA: That's part of my story.  
GEORGE: And we're all very anxious to hear it just as soon as we have this message from our sponsor on America's Cinderella broadcast, brought to you coast-to-coast by the makers of Peach Blossom beauty soap.  
(*Cod television advert. Then GEORGE resumes.*)  
Now tell me, my dear Mrs Quarry. Is your husband ...  
PIPPA: ... Dan ...  
GEORGE: Is he recently departed?  
PIPPA: Six months ago .... in a road accident everyone says was not his fault.  
GEORGE: Well, the insurers paid up, didn't they?  
PIPPA: What did that do? It didn't bring him back.  
GEORGE: No, indeedy. When Our Maker sounds the final bell ...  
PIPPA: He was only 45.  
GEORGE: And you look young enough to be his daughter. Did he leave a family?  
PIPPA: Sharon, ten and a half and Daniel Jr., 18.  
GEORGE: And I'll bet little Sharon is missing her daddy, isn't she?  
PIPPA: She has cerebral palsy.  
GEORGE: That's real ... what? She's a what? Mongoloid, did you say?  
PIPPA: Cerebral palsy!  
GEORGE: That's a shame ... why, that's tragic. Still, the other one's all right, isn't he?  
PIPPA: He's fine. He's on the track team at school.  
GEORGE: That's the spirit. Gonna do the mile-run for his father. That's just swell.  
PIPPA: He wants to do the March of Dimes for his sister.  
GEORGE: Gee, I don't think we're cleared to advertise a rival's product.  
PIPPA: The March of Dimes is a product?  
GEORGE: But I tell you what we're going to do for you. If you're crowned our Queen for Today, we're going to see to it that your son is awarded

a sports scholarship to the college of his choice and little Sharon is placed in the best institution of its kind in America.

PIPPA: What do you mean, institution?

GEORGE: Well, you don't want her stuck at home vegetating, do you?

PIPPA: She's not doing that.

GEORGE: We all admire your spirit, sweetheart ... your refusal to give into despair. But if you didn't want help with your unfortunate family, why did you come on the show?

PIPPA: I lost my job at the button factory.

GEORGE: Oh, my gosh.

PIPPA: I pressed the wrong lever on number one drum, and a thousand ... buttons began firing like bullets.

GEORGE: Oh, my gosh.

PIPPA: At least three employees are threatening to sue me for loss of earnings. They claim I'm guilty of criminal negligence, resulting in their partial blindness. I need the prize money for legal expenses.

GEORGE: But that could run into millions, in a case that go on for years. All we're offering is a paid holiday. You need a hot line to Clarence Darrow.

BARBARA: I'll leave it at that for the moment.

JOHANNA: Did she win the case?

BARBARA: I don't think she won the contest! My point in raising this is only to show that Americans, too, are reluctant to face what the Nazis clearly refused to acknowledge.

CLAUDIA: But euthanasia is clearly proscribed by American law, is it not? Did you show us this just to mitigate what the Nazis did?

BARBARA: I'm citing this, yes, as an illustration of the general ethos of the time. In the 1930s and '40s, some American eugenicists were every bit as brutal as Pfannmuller and the others. You were talking about the general social context. I think this is highly relevant.

PIPPA: (*Standing*) May I say something ... please?

JOHANNA: Yes? You're not going to tell us we tricked you, are you?

PIPPA: That tape is all wrong.

BARBARA: It was obtained through completely legitimate means. (*To PIPPA*) I have a legal right to make it public.

PIPPA: I know. But the show itself was wrong.

BARBARA: You went on it of your own free will.

PIPPA: I know, but –

CLAUDIA: We may have to re-think how we display these exhibits.

BARBARA: Not if you'll let me finish the point.

JOHANNA: I'm afraid she's right.

PIPPA: Will you let me speak ... please? My daughter is perfectly fine!  
CLAUDIA: You mean she's not disabled?  
BARBARA: Then you lied.  
PIPPA: I didn't lie. She has cerebral palsy, just like I said. Only that Mr Greasy made out like Sharon was worthless, and she's not.  
BARBARA: It's not just Gracie, it's the whole American Establishment. Physical handicap is alien to our whole notion of the American success ethic. Nothing must tarnish that image. That's the parallel with Nazi –  
CLAUDIA: But Americans don't put their children to death.  
BARBARA: They don't help them much. They're hidden away, exactly like Gracie wanted to do in this case.  
PIPPA: That's why I said no. I'm happy I lost the damned contest if it means that Sharon's safe.  
BARBARA: That, also, is part of my point.  
PIPPA: Are any of your kids disabled?  
BARBARA: That's beside the point.  
PIPPA: You don't really know what you're talking about. That's my point. That celebrity, Gorgeous George, wanted everybody to think Sharon was irrelevant, that she almost didn't exist. She's my reason for getting up every morning! Dan's the one that gives me heartache! Kicked off the track team for cheating, they say. In and out of juvenile court five times in the last two years. He's only avoided reform school because we need the money he brings in with his after school job. If he loses that, and they send him to adult prison, like they threatened to do, Sharon may end up an orphan. As it is, they're threatening to take her into care. The school board's giving me a probationary period, they tell me. If my circumstances don't improve, they say they'll place her with better parents. Who's better than her own mother, I'd like to know?  
BARBARA: Does she go to special school?  
PIPPA: She's first in her class ... and she skipped a grade. She's with kids a year and a half older than she is. Yes, it's a special school, but she's already taking French at the local junior high. Her teachers are talking about her going to regular high school when she's old enough. I almost laughed out loud when he talked about a scholarship for Dan! I took for granted he meant Sharon! And you'd never know it to look at her. Poor little thing can barely hold her head up. And she dribbles. She has to wear a bib.  
BARBARA: And just because of that, she'll never get anywhere. They'll never consider her for a scholarship ... anywhere!

PIPPA: As long as they don't take her from me, I don't care. I'm not what they called me – a dilatory mother.

BARBARA: They must mean they think you're in her way.

PIPPA: They'll have to move me bodily first.

CLAUDIA: You should have won the contest, my dear.

JOHANNA: And, with that, should we proceed to the next exhibit?  
*(The next alcove shows a section of a motherhouse.)*

HEDWIG: This gracious lady's story moves me greatly.

JOHANNA: Shouldn't we introduce this?

CLAUDIA: You don't think I'm talking too much?

JOHANNA: This is relevant, isn't it?

CLAUDIA: Yes, of course.

HEDWIG: What I have to say next may well have ... if you'll spare me a few moments, please.

CLAUDIA: You remember how we said the nurses in motherhouses were looked on better than others?

JOHANNA: We called them ministering angels.

CLAUDIA: Here's one who thinks herself different.

HEDWIG: Different? I sent at least one infant boy to his death there.

JOHANNA: Wait a minute. Is she one of the inmates here?

HEDWIG: Believe me, I know what I'm saying.

JOHANNA: In that case, we're all very interested. Continue.  
*(This inset features proceedings in a monastery.)*

HEDWIG: My name is Hedwig Schuster. Sister Hedwig Schuster. I was senior nursing sister at the Karlsbad Motherhouse, in Austria, a few months after the Anschluss in 1938. *(She moves across to the playing area)* As you may well know, religious nurses were always accorded higher status than ordinary nurses, perhaps because we were seen first as nuns and our ministering role was somewhat overlooked. People tend to regard the term 'motherhouse' as being synonymous with monastery, which is completely inaccurate, though it played into our ministering hands beautifully. They mistook us for an order of women. In the normal way, no one would ever have guessed our real purpose ... if I hadn't been so cruelly thoughtless.  
*(BISHOP CLEMENS AUGUST GRAF VON GALEN appears alongside her. Dr Hermann Pfannmuller's disability speech is heard underneath her words as part of a radio transmission.)*  
'For me, as a National Socialist, these creatures represent a burden on the health of the nation. We do not terminate them with injections ...'

FATHER GALEN: Don't delude yourselves into thinking our conquerors are benign statesmen working for the good of mankind. They are ravening wolves in sheep's clothing, and, in this instance, Hitler and his henchmen – the iniquitous Hermanns Goering and Pfannmuller – are the modern-day descendants of Herod, seeking to slaughter all the innocents in pursuit of one helpless saviour. We must see every crippled child as the incarnation of the Christ child now taking flight into Egypt to escape Herod's wrath ...  
(*WOMAN approaches HEDWIG with a bundle.*)

HEDWIG: God be with you, my dear.

WOMAN: I don't want to see you or it again. Understand?

HEDWIG: Of course.

WOMAN: I could have washed my hand of the whole business, you know. Not only that. The paper said they pay money to anyone who informs the authorities about any kids with abnormalities.

HEDWIG: But you chose the Christian way instead.

WOMAN: I don't want to give any SS man an excuse to come calling on me. My daughter Frieda and me are alone in the house. We make the first move, they'll never leave us alone. We'll end up shot or entertaining a whole battalion. You sisters are lucky in that respect.

HEDWIG: Can I get you anything?

WOMAN: You mean you want to pay me.

HEDWIG: I meant tea or coffee.

WOMAN: You must be mad. I was taking a chance even coming here. Sisters you may be, but I'm sure they're watching this place.

HEDWIG: I understand.

WOMAN: It's no concern of mine, but that Father Galen of yours must be a fool, sounding off like he does.

HEDWIG: Thank you very much.

WOMAN: Don't thank me, I'm not being noble. I just thought the poor mite was better off here. Well, no. It's probably better off dead, like they said. But I'm not the one to kill it. I got that much humanity in me anyway. If anyone asks, though, we never saw one another.

HEDWIG: You'd better go now, my child.  
(*WOMAN leaves. FATHER GALEN approaches HEDWIG.*)

FATHER GALEN: That poor soul sounded wretched.

HEDWIG: She's incredible. Did you hear her, Father? She only did it to keep from being raped.

FATHER GALEN: Don't be shocked if he was even her own or her daughter's. Never mind. Look to the deed, not the motive behind it. She saved a life – that's what counts. You think you can handle him?

HEDWIG: Oh, yes. Eighteen months ... looks like a case of Infantile Paralysis.  
FATHER GALEN: Like the American president, did you know? They never mention it, but that was his affliction.

HEDWIG: Is there any chance this one could find his way to America?  
FATHER GALEN: There's always hope ... and prayer. If they make it as far as the orphanage in Bern, America's a likely destination. Americans have the money to travel. They're rescuing Jews all the time.

HEDWIG: There's a rumour that Hitler has rescinded the order. *(Beat)* You don't believe it.  
FATHER GALEN: Not at all. Look to the deed. There was never an edict, officially. But people like Pfannmuller make it common practice. They'd like nothing better than to make it part of moral law.  
*(MAN (SS OFFICER) appears.)*

MAN: Clemens Galen?  
HEDWIG: *(Gasps)* Oh, good Lord.  
FATHER GALEN: It's all right, my child.  
HEDWIG: That ... woman!  
FATHER GALEN: It wasn't her fault. *(To OFFICER)* Can you tell me what this is about?  
MAN: You made another anti-fascist speech.  
FATHER GALEN: *(To HEDWIG)* You see? *(To OFFICER)* It was on behalf of all our future children ... Have you not heard? Herr Hitler himself has suspended the programme of rounding up all deformed children. *(He gestures to HEDWIG to take her infant charge away)*

MAN: I hadn't heard that, no ... only your speech, sounding very much like you were finding fault with National Socialist policy. In time of world conflict, such talk is treasonable.  
FATHER GALEN: That's a matter of interpretation. Most people would find what I said unobjectionable.  
MAN: You can discuss it with the local commandant, can't you? And, while you're at it, ask if he's heard the Fuhrer's speech.  
FATHER GALEN: Gladly. *(To HEDWIG)* You'd better see to the children, Sister Hedwig. *(To OFFICER)* We do what we can to look after Hitler's youth. *(They go off. HEDWIG hesitates, then goes off in another direction. Moments later, there is a rude series of knocks at the door.)*

WOMAN: I'm sure they're in there. I was watching all the time from the corner.  
HEDWIG: *(Off)* Sister Margarete? Can you see who it is?  
WOMAN: She can hardly deny it. I put it in her arms myself.  
WOMAN TWO: I'll do the talking. *(To HEDWIG)* We're authorized by the new Anschluss Government to make a tour of all registered mother houses.

Freaks of History

HEDWIG: Without warning?  
WOMAN TWO: Tours of inspection are conducted on a completely random basis to ensure that standards are maintained.  
HEDWIG: You'd better come this way then.  
WOMAN TWO: Just a minute. Bishop Clemens Galen is in charge of this mother house, is he not?  
HEDWIG: I'm in charge – Sister Hedwig Schuster.  
WOMAN TWO: ... but closely advised by Clemens Galen.  
HEDWIG: He advises on spiritual matters. Dr Willig is our resident physician.  
WOMAN TWO: He's being replaced.  
HEDWIG: No, he's not. How do you know that?  
WOMAN TWO: It's not your place to ask questions ... Willig is needed elsewhere. Dr Wurth is taking his place.  
HEDWIG: Wurth?  
WOMAN TWO: Dr Walter Wurth.  
HEDWIG: You're sure? Walter ... not Christian?  
WOMAN: She told you not to ask questions.  
HEDWIG: It's only we heard that Christian Wurth is a military man ... somewhat severe ... not really the one for sickening children.  
WOMAN TWO: We've had reports that Karlsbad Motherhouse is a front for another kind of place altogether.  
HEDWIG: We take care of sick children ... have done for a decade or more. I've been in charge for the past 18 months. But I was always aware of its history. It's nationally renowned. As a child I dreamed about working here.  
WOMAN TWO: And when did you become enthralled by Clemens Galen?  
HEDWIG: I met Father Galen a year and a –  
WOMAN TWO: And for at least one year and a half Clemens Galen has been operating an underground railway for the illegal trafficking of deformed babies from Austria to Bern and from Bern westward possibly as far as the United States.  
HEDWIG: Are you mad or just unspeakably cruel? These are poor crippled kids you're talking about.  
WOMAN TWO: And they're meant to be reported by every doctor, nurse and midwife within the Reich.  
HEDWIG: Motherhouses are exempt.  
WOMAN: She as much as admits it. Where's the fiend I delivered into your arms?  
HEDWIG: I'm admitting nothing. You've no earthly right to come in here.  
WOMAN TWO: How many patients do you treat at any one time?

HEDWIG: We have facilities to treat 35, perhaps 40 at a time, provided we have the staff. Many of our sisters are mere novices.

WOMAN TWO: And how many of the patients were in any way deformed?  
(*HEDWIG does not answer.*)  
You're obliged by law to tell me.

HEDWIG: I never heard of such a law. As far as I'm aware it's just some evil sadist's fancy.

WOMAN TWO: Clemens Galen is answering charges relating to this crime as we speak.  
(*The sound of infant crying.*)

WOMAN: There's the mulling monster right there.

HEDWIG: You're the monsters! (*To the audience*) That was my final day of working at Karlsbad.

JOHANNA: And after that you were – what, interned, tortured?

HEDWIG: I wish I'd been executed.

CLAUDIA: I'm inclined to agree with you.

BARBARA: How many children were taken?

HEDWIG: We had four you could reasonably call disabled when they called. I suppose they were all 'taken'. I know two were taken to Hadamar .... I assume they were ... (*She cannot bring herself to say '... put to death'*)

CLAUDIA: And what of poor Father Galen – executed, too, I suppose.

BARBARA: Oh, no, he survived.

CLAUDIA: That's not possible

HEDWIG: (*Overlapping*) How do you know? How?

BARBARA: Don't ask me how. But I'm convinced I heard of him denouncing adult euthanasia.

HEDWIG: Thank the Lord.  
(*DAGMAR HEYDE stands.*)

DAGMAR: And I can confirm the kids' fate after they reached us at Hadamar.  
(*She moves across to the playing area, where she is joined by WERNER.*)

CLAUDIA: (*To JOHANNA*) This is your province, my dear.

JOHANNA: Oh. Because of the connection with disability? You're not going to leave me here, are you?

CLAUDIA: I don't think I can face any more.

JOANNA: I think you've done splendidly.

CLAUDIA: Please forgive me. (*She retreats*)

JOHANNA: I'm battle-hard, but I know just what Claudia means. This is our first glimpse of what we're talking about – killing of the innocents.

They're my forebears, aren't they? This is the sort of thing nightmares are made of. (*To the audience*) If you'd all like to come this way.

(*The next inset features DAGMAR and WERNER HEYDE.*)

I'll let the principals speak for themselves as much as possible. Dr Heyde and his wife Dagmar came to Hadamar in late 1940 to take charge of the programme, though I really don't think she had any idea ...

DAGMAR: We arrived from the Ruhr valley, and I was ever so relieved Werner was posted here, where we'd be relatively safe, and not somewhere near the front. I couldn't believe our luck, in fact, that this wasn't for combat treatment at all but a children's hospital. My young husband was put in charge of treating sick children ... perhaps even an orthopaedics ward. It seemed providential – we'd been hoping so hard for a family of our own. I felt this most keenly the first time I visited the wards.

(*In a section of one of the wards, TWO GIRLS converse. They are on cots. Several feet away, there is a communal commode.*)

ONE: Lotte ...? Are you awake? I'm going to pee on the floor.

TWO: Don't do that, Heidi. They'll get terribly angry.

ONE: Don't worry, I'll say it was me that did it.

TWO: I'm not worried about that. But they'll cut down your food as a punishment. Maybe they'll put you on potato soup permanently. Can you hold on? I'll help you.

(*They make it to the commode, with some difficulty.*)

They ought to empty it more often – it stinks!

ONE: Don't tell them – they'd only make us do it.

TWO: We can't do it, can we? We'd only make it worse. (*Beat*) Are you all right now?

ONE: I'm fine.

(*DAGMAR appears.*)

DAGMAR: Hallo, there. Oh, I'm sorry.

TWO: Yes, you should have come 20 minutes ago.

ONE: Lotte, no! I'm fine.

DAGMAR: (*Taking hold of her*) Here, let me help you, darling.

ONE: Just over there. You're new here, aren't you?

DAGMAR: That's right, I just arrived this week.

TWO: You ought to get them to empty the pot more often.

DAGMAR: Yes, I'll do it as soon as you're both safely back in bed. Have you been here very long?

TWO: Too long.

DAGMAR: I can imagine how you must feel.  
ONE: Thank you for helping me.  
DAGMAR: I look forward to us being friends.  
TWO: What did you say? Friends?  
(*GIRLS retreat.*)

DAGMAR: There's an expression that people use to describe young women like me – *susses madel*. 'Sweet maiden' gives you the literal meaning, but like all literal translation, this is so misleading it's almost ridiculous. I was certainly *susses madel* – but the best way to define it is to give you concrete examples of usage. For instance, I worked as a nurse, but I had no idea of what was going on, and I completely believed what the other nurses told me. I didn't even see that they were mocking me as a boss who didn't know the first thing about behaving like one. I just thought they were being very nice.  
(*TWO NURSES appear.*)

NURSE ONE: If there's anything we can help you with, dear, don't hesitate to ask.

DAGMAR: Well, since you mention it, the emergency chamber pots ...  
NURSE ONE: Chamber pots where, dear?  
DAGMAR: In the children's wards ... at the foot of the beds. Shouldn't they be emptied more regularly?  
NURSE ONE: We'll take care of it. Thank you.  
DAGMAR: I don't want to tell you your jobs.  
NURSE ONE: Not at all. Thank you.  
NURSE TWO: This is your first posting, isn't it?  
DAGMAR: Not the first, but we've only been married a few months, so it feels like the first. Er ... please call me Dagmar.

NURSE TWO: You must be very dedicated, Dagmar.  
NURSE TWO: Yes, all of us are still single.  
NURSE ONE: Yes, if I got married, I'd want to stop work ... even with the war.  
DAGMAR: I feel privileged our jobs are so nearly related.  
NURSE TWO: And you don't want children?  
DAGMAR: Oh, yes, we want children very much.  
NURSE ONE: I think you're very wise, my dear, to wait for a family until after war. So many want to rush in without thinking ahead only to be confronted later with problems they never dreamed of.

DAGMAR: We're already faced with a problem. (*Beat*) Please don't tell Werner I talked about this with you. One or other us may be incapable of producing. We're not sure. We're waiting for more tests to be done.

NURSE ONE: What a shame!

NURSE TWO: You can think about adoption. War, they say, is made for orphans. You'll have your pick of the litter.

DAGMAR: Are many of these children orphans?

NURSE ONE: *(After pausing to look at NURSE TWO)* No, not many.

DAGMAR: I suppose not. I suppose the parents must love them very much if they go to such lengths to assist their recovery. And most of them do recover, don't they?

NURSE TWO: What did you say? *(Suppressing a smirk)* Recover?

NURSE ONE: Shut up. That's certainly what we hope and pray for, Mrs Heyde. That's what your husband the good doctor is trying to ensure. *(The NURSES step back. DAGMAR addresses WERNER, who steps forward.)*

DAGMAR: I've been getting to know your nursing staff, darling, two in particular.

WERNER: They were courteous to you, weren't they?

DAGMAR: More than that. They treated me like their sister. I told them to call me Dagmar.

WERNER: It doesn't do to be too familiar, you know. That's no way to run an efficient unit.

DAGMAR: Oh, but please don't ask me to be their boss. I'd be no good at it, and they'd hate me, and I couldn't stand that. I can only be as I am. You wouldn't like me to be different.

WERNER: That's right, dear. I wouldn't like it at all.

DAGMAR: *(After a moment)* Do many of the children here recover?

WERNER: They all recover to some degree. We don't release them until they do.

DAGMAR: That's what I thought. That's why I was happy you got this assignment. But aren't there any that don't recover?

WERNER: Very few indeed. It's always a personal tragedy when that happens. That's what most doctors fear the most.

DAGMAR: And most nurses, too, I'm sure. That's what makes our calling so noble, our struggle such a valiant one ... especially in the case of crippled children. Helping them is most rewarding of all.

WERNER: There are no crippled here, my dear. We admit only those with a reasonable chance of recovery. We don't accept the chronic incurables.

DAGMAR: What happens to those, I wonder? *(She steps back. WERNER addresses the NURSES.)*

WERNER: Just what have you been telling my wife?

NURSE TWO: Nothing. We've told her nothing, haven't we?

NURSE ONE: What has she said to you?  
WERNER: You're sure you've said nothing about the operations?  
NURSE TWO: Nothing, honest. We don't know much ourselves.  
NURSE ONE: Has she asked you about them directly?  
WERNER: Something about them, yes. She talked about disabled children.  
NURSE TWO: Well, she didn't get that from us. We've said nothing.  
WERNER: She must have got it from somewhere. Just keep your mouth shut, both of you. Gossiping hens.  
*(He steps back.)*  
NURSE TWO: Do you think he'll sack us? I don't know where I'll find another job. We were just trying to be nice to her. Silly chit.  
NURSE ONE: I don't know how he expects to keep her in the dark.  
NURSE TWO: No, exactly.  
NURSE ONE: Why bring her here of all places?  
*(They step back. WERNER and DAGMAR converse.)*  
WERNER: I've decided to remove you from the wards.  
DAGMAR: But what have I done wrong?  
WERNER: Nothing. You're just not ready for them. This requires specialist training. In fact I'm not sure if you shouldn't leave here altogether ... go back to your family for a while.  
DAGMAR: Oh, please don't send me away. We just got married.  
WERNER: I know. But this is wartime. Think of all the couples that are separated, that may be separated for many years to come. They may never be reunited.  
DAGMAR: That's just what I'm thinking about. Why do you think I'm so desperate to stay?  
WERNER: All right, but you must do everything I say. You have to forget that we're newlyweds, that we're even related. This is exactly why they discourage family members from working together.  
DAGMAR: You're so right, Dr Heyde. You see how easily I adapt? What would you like me to do? Apart from leaving.  
WERNER: You could keep our quarters neat and tidy.  
DAGMAR: Clean! I'll clean the wards. I wouldn't mind a bit, I'd be honoured.  
WERNER: I'm afraid I'd mind. How do you think it would look for the wife of the institute's director to be a charwoman?  
DAGMAR: I'll be the housekeeper!  
WERNER: What?  
DAGMAR: You said I should clean up our quarters. I'll supervise the hospital's cleaners ... make sure they have everything they need.  
WERNER: As long as you never get down on your knees.

(*He steps back. EMMI BELLIN steps forward. DAGMAR addresses her.*)

DAGMAR: What are you doing in here? This isn't your place, is it? The floors are filthy.

EMMI: I know. But they pulled me off that and told me to come in here. They always give me the jobs nobody wants. I wanted to train as a nurse, but oh, no, they said. I wasn't good enough. Floors and toilets – that's all I was good for. Now they got me at this ... because nobody wants it. Who'd blame them? I'm the mug.

DAGMAR: Cooking? Who'd object to –?

EMMI: It's not just any cooking though, is it?

DAGMAR: What you mean?

EMMI: You want a taste? Here.  
(*DAGMAR samples the soup.*)

DAGMAR: It's vegetable soup.

EMMI: Exactly.

DAGMAR: There's something wrong with it. Something's missing.

EMMI: Exactly. Why they don't just do it quickly, give them poison in one bowl ...

DAGMAR: Stop babbling a minute. There are no carbohydrates at all in this soup.

EMMI: That's right.

DAGMAR: Who told you to make soup like that? There's not nourishment there to keep anybody going for more than –

EMMI: But that's the whole point, ennit?

DAGMAR: Why, what do you mean?

EMMI: Forty grams a day ... and they'll be dead in a fortnight at most.

DAGMAR: Who'll be dead?

EMMI: The kids ... the crippled kids.

DAGMAR: But there are no crippled kids here. Only ill ones ... ones that are bound to recover.

EMMI: Is that what they told you? They must think you're as stupid as me.  
(*Beat*) Do you want me to do the floors now ... or can I carry on with this?  
(*DAGMAR confronts WERNER.*)

DAGMAR: Why didn't you tell me?

WERNER: Because you're a child. You personify what Schopenhauer says about women: they're best able to look after children because they are, themselves, children.

DAGMAR: We're not looking after them, though, are we? We're killing them.

WERNER: We're ensuring Germany's future.

DAGMAR: How ... by committing mass murder?  
(*Blackout.*)

## **Act Two**

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*In half darkness, three voices overlap:*

FRITZ SCHULZ: Look at the subjects of these slides ... their wretched forms. Last century their forebears were caged, like wild beasts ... of use to no one except as harmless diversions. In wartime, however, diversions of any description become dangerous luxuries that threaten our future. Creatures like these are equally dangerous. They serve no purpose, and must be culled, as one would cull vermin.

ANDY MUELLER: We were shown the slides over and over and asked, 'Are they human? Do they deserve life? Are they not, in fact, useless eaters serving no purpose whatever: life that's unworthy of life.' At the end of this rolling slide show, how were we to think they weren't criminal?

GALEN: If you establish and apply the principle that you can kill unproductive human beings, then woe betide us all when we become old and frail. If you can kill unproductive people, then woe betide the invalids who have used up, sacrificed their health and strength in the productive process. Woe betide the soldiers who become permanently disabled for the sake of our future. Woe betide the German nation of God's holy commandment 'Thou shall not kill', proclaimed on Mount Sinai amidst thunder and lightning ...

(*Lights up full on the exhibition, now fronted by ASTRID HALLOCK.*)  
ASTRID: Allow me to welcome you back. My name is Astrid Hallock – American with Germanic ancestry. And I shall be taking up the baton from Johanna and her team. They were somewhat overwhelmed by the vividness of the exhibits, and we are entering the critical phase. Those of you with tender sensibilities need to take note: what we are about to show you relates to the most serious excesses of the Holocaust. These are dramatized scenes, not displays of Holocaust artefacts, extracted teeth, severed limbs and the like. Our aim is rather to provide the living context, as far as possible. We shall be showing you representations of mainly Hadamar staff, attempting as far as possible to explain the ethos of their heinous regime.

The name T4 was an abbreviation of Tiergartenstrasse 4, the address of a villa in the Berlin borough of Tiergarten which was the headquarters of the department, euphemistically called the 'Charitable Foundation for Curative and Institutional Care', under the combined directorship of Drs Karl Brandt and Philippe Bouhler, Adolph Hitler's private physician and the head of his chancery.

The T4 programme (implementing the systematic extermination of all disabled adults) was ordered by Hitler in October 1939. The methods were to be a combination of gassing, lethal injection and, in rare exceptions, starvation or the ingesting of poisonous tablets. These executions were carried out at six different centres throughout the Reich and amount in number to an estimated quarter million. We confine ourselves to the executions reported to have taken place at Hadamar Institution.

*(MONIQUE WITTIG steps forward.)*

MONIQUE: Monique Wittig, Counsel specializing in Nazi war crimes related to the euthanasia programme. The Hadamar nurses were brought to trial in November 1947, but they were largely exonerated of mass murder. Brandt and Bouhler were both executed for their parts in the programme. The scenes we're about to show you are an attempt to explain the ethos of the programme ... how the nurses were somehow coerced. I'm not squeamish. Like Johanna, I come from Zurich. But some of my descendants most certainly were Nazis. I'm concerned to face my infamous past.

ASTRID: For much of the time, the killings were carried out in secret.

MONIQUE: Hitler even suspended the programme in August 1941.

ASTRID: – as the result of anti-euthanasia propaganda from people like Father Galen, who miraculously escaped persecution and died on his way to be canonized in 1946. *(To MONIQUE)* Is that right? He wasn't executed?

MONIQUE: His death during wartime would have been far too controversial. But perhaps we're becoming abstract. *(To the audience)* You may have noticed on your way past an alcove and a young man watching a prototype video and heard the soundscape of recorded speeches, Father Galen's among them ...

*(ANDY MUELLER, a nervous young man of 18, now faces the audience.)*

ASTRID: Your name is Andy Mueller ... and you worked at Hadamar? How is that possible? You don't look old enough.

MONIQUE: No doubt he worked in the kitchens.

ANDY: I was a male nurse. I think I must have been one of the few male nurses they had. My employment wasn't straightforward. I was ordered into this dark room by myself and then told to watch many short films of the halt and the lame.  
(*Fritz Schulz stands over him.*)

SCHULZ: Can you say honestly that such creatures are worthy of life? Each one costs the People's Community 60,000 Reichsmark over the course of a lifetime, and we ask whether it's right for any one of them to make such a claim on their fellows when they bring back nothing in return.

MONIQUE: This is the central message of propaganda first circulated in 1938.

ASTRID: Do you think we might ask them a question or two?

MONIQUE: As though they're on trial?

ASTRID: This part of the history is so little known. (*To Andy*) Were you a member of the Hitler Youth? We know he recruited for the army. How could you have committed mass murder? You're still wet behind the ears.

ANDY: Please. If you'll only let me explain ...  
(*Fritz Schulz steps up behind him.*)

I was transferred here from Eichberg ... Eichberg Psychiatric Institute ... with Fritz Schulz. It was his revenge.

SCHULZ: Somebody's lodged an official complaint against me. What do you know about it?

ANDY: Not a thing.

SCHULZ: Can't even guess who it is?

ANDY: Not that hysterical girl with the matches.

SCHULZ: Alida Grafbinder, that's right. Claims I knocked her unconscious and then raped her.

ANDY: But they shouldn't pay any attention to her. All you did was take those matches away from her. She'd have set the place on fire if you hadn't.

SCHULZ: And guess what? I've been summoned to Berlin for my pains.

ANDY: And then transferred to Hadamar. And because he was convinced I'd put her up to it, he somehow managed to have me transferred as well. I think he thought he could exact revenge.

SCHULZ: (*To Andy and then to everyone*) Apparently I was the subject of a diatribe against institutional abuse at a secret medical conference in Berchtesgarden.  
The keynote speaker said we could all be eternally I wasn't a doctor.

ASTRID: What was he then?

ANDY: An administrator.

SCHULZ: And all your back-stabbing lies aren't going to do you one gram of good because Berlin chose to take my word for it. Reckoned on getting me sacked, did you? Hadamar was my promotion!

ANDY: That's exactly right. Berlin thought he was just right for the times and that Hadamar was his ideal field of operation.

SCHULZ: (*Addressing ASTRID*) No doubt you've heard I'm a Tartar. Well, let me tell you, it's the absolute truth. There's no way back for these inmates. Nor their captors either. Fail to treat any one of them like a leper and you're a leper yourself.

ANDY: He was the one that devised this series of patricians, so that everything happened in secret, and no one was ever sure where anyone else was.

SCHULZ: I'll teach them to treat their civil servants so dismissively. Civil service is the new order. We'll run the world!

MONIQUE: And there's no record of his ever going to trial.

ASTRID: I had no idea he was even here. There's plenty of evidence about others.

ANDY: He created one room he called The Sanctuary ... accessible through a maze of narrow passageways.  
(*SCHULZ re-enters the action at this point.*)

SCHULZ: He spoke to me as though he was putting me in charge. They're no more difficult than the ones you handled at Eichberg. That's why I brought you here.  
(*On the other side of the door, ANDY is confronted by a darkened room, with three distinct voices to greet him.*)

ANIKE: Who is it?

BABETTE: I can't see.

MITZI: Is it Fritz the Fiend? We heard he was taking over.

ANDY: Do you mean Schulz? Yes, he is.

ANIKE: You don't sound all that fiendish.

ANDY: I'm not –

BABETTE: Are you joking? He doesn't sound fiendish at all.

MITZI: His voice hasn't even broken.

ANIKE: That's it ... it's a joke.

BABETTE: Is that right – you're really very timid and shy?

MITZI: Maybe 'he' is a 'she' – that's the joke!

ANDY: I'm not Fritz Schulz!  
(*They roar with laughter.*)

MITZI: Who are you then, his sister?

ANDY: Andre Mueller ... I'm a male nurse.

ANIKE: Ooh, we never had one of those before.

BABETTE: Yes, we did – don't you remember Hansi Moonbooter?  
ANIKE: You're making that up.  
BABETTE: Little Hansi Moonbooter? He was stooped and he tried to grow a goatee.  
ANIKE: That was the rubbish collector you fantasized about from the window!  
MITZI: (*To ANDY*) What are you doing here, sweetface?  
ANDY: I'm assigned to look after you. But I can't see you. Is it always this dark?  
MITZI: We can see you. We're Strauss's flying mice!  
ANIKE: No, we're not. We're three witches, and we captured Rapunzel.  
BABETTE: And his hair isn't long enough. No one will ever be able to rescue you.  
ANIKE: You'll be ours till we die.  
BABETTE: We may not have long to wait.  
ANIKE: Don't tell him that! (*To ANDY*) We have magic powers. We can keep you here till you die.  
ANDY: You don't sound like you're going to die soon. I was told you were very weak.  
ANIKE: Come over here – I'll show you how weak we are.  
ANDY: Can't you come to me? You say you can see me.  
MITZI: Come here and I'll give you a big sloppy kiss.  
BABETTE: I'll give you much more than that.  
MITZI: I can see you're a nice kid. Can you bring me an extra bowl of soup and maybe a stale crust?  
(*Extra light flickers for a few seconds, then goes down again.*)  
ANDY: My God – you're in cages, like animals!  
ANIKE: Of course, we're in cages.  
BABETTE: What did you think?  
ANDY: You're not violent ... are you?  
ANIKE: Of course, we're violent. Who wouldn't be?  
BABETTE: After this place, yeah, who wouldn't be?  
ANDY: I'm sorry – but he said people were put in here when they became ... I don't know...hard to manage?  
BABETTE: Oh, we're hard to manage, all right.  
MITZI: How would he know? He's never seen us.  
ANDY: He showed me slides ... over and over again. Not of you, but of people like you. They were in cages, so they must have been in here as well. They're probably dead now.  
ANIKE: Thanks a lot, sonny.  
ANDY: How long have you been here?

Freaks of History

BABETTE: How can we tell?  
ANIKE: We came at different times. I was here before they were. My name is Anike.  
BABETTE: I'm Babette.  
MITZI: Mitzi.  
ANDY: Call me Andy. I'm 18. This is only my second job.  
ANIKE: So what about it, Andy? Do you think you can get us some more soup?  
ANDY: I suppose I can ask. Each of you has a deformity, is that right?  
ANIKE: Like we said, we're witches.  
MITZI: You said they showed you slides.  
ANIKE: You're a bit on the stupid side, aren't you, Mueller?  
BABETTE: How else could he have ended up here?  
ANDY: The slides were of people far worse than you.  
BABETTE: How could you tell?  
ANIKE: I promise, I'm hideous looking. I'll have you screaming out loud in your sleep.  
ANDY: I don't think I'll be sleeping here as well.  
ANIKE: Lucky you.  
ANDY: All I meant was that at Eichberg, where I worked before, the patients were mentally sick, not deformed.  
ANIKE: Oh, we're far worse than that. We're not even human.  
ANDY: I don't mind cleaning out your cages, as long as you behave yourselves.  
(ANIKE and BABETTE make sub-human noises in order to mock ANDY's naïve cruelty.)  
MITZI: Shut up a minute, you two. Andy. Can you see my hand? Come closer, sweetheart.  
ANDY: You don't have to kiss me.  
MITZI: All right, but can you do something for me?  
ANDY: I know. You want more soup. I'll ask, that's all I can do. I'll also ask for some disinfectant. This place smells putrid.  
ANIKE: And he's only just come.  
BABETTE: We think it smells like a rose garden, don't we, An.  
MITZI: Pay no attention to them. And don't ask anyone for anything – all right? Just try to find someone called Mathilde, can you do that? And when you find her, tell her her friend Mitzi says hallo. You think you can do that?  
ANDY: If I don't see Schulz first.  
MITZI: What's he got to do with it?  
ANDY: Didn't you know he's in charge? Trust me, you don't want to run into him if you can avoid it. He'd come down and beat you

unconscious if he had the chance. You'll be lucky if you never meet him. I think I can just about see in this light. And I'm sure I'll be back. (*Knocking on the door*) I'm ready to come out now. Can't you hear me? I need to come out!

ASTRID: Don't say you were never allowed out.

ANDY: Only at night ... and only for a few hours. They weren't violent, it's true. But after only a few weeks, I looked forward to them being killed. It was awful.

(*MARGARETE BORKOWSKI comes forward.*)

MARGARETE: He thinks he had it bad.

ASTRID: Wait till he's finished. We don't want the exhibits to overlap.

ANDY: No, that gives you all a definite sense of what it was like.

ASTRID: You were there at the same time?

MARGARETE: I had personal dealings with Schulz.

ASTRID: What did he make you do?

MARGARETE: Well, I did what I was told.

ASTRID: Did you know each other?

ANDY: I spent most of the time in that cell ... with the women. I wouldn't have been with the other nurses anyway.

MARGARETE: Few of us knew each other. Or if we did, we didn't know it. It wasn't the kind of place that encouraged 'friendships' on purpose, if you know what I mean.

ASTRID: What's your name?

MARGARETE: Borkowski, Margarete.

ASTRID: Didn't we hear from you already?

MARGARETE: That was my aunt Gretel. She came earlier ... and she was only involved in sterilization.

ASTRID: Whereas with you it was murder.

MARGARETE: Euthanasia. I thought you established that.

ASTRID: And there's no question in your mind it was anything else?

MONIQUE: And she's one of the ones that served virtually no time in prison.

MARGARETE: Don't speak as though there was no hardship for us.

ASTRID: How dare you call murder a hardship?

MONIQUE: Aren't we here to find out how it happened?

ASTRID: No, but really – how dare she?

MARGARETE: You want to know about Schulz. I can tell you better than most. They kept us isolated, like he said. Maybe he had his reasons for hating Schulz. I certainly did ... if you want to hear about it. (*To ANDY*) I tell you, he treated you easy.

(*She leads the way into another alcove.*)

ASTRID: Are you still speaking about Schulz?

MARGARETE: Uncle Fritz, Director of Operations, yeah.  
(SCHULZ follows them.)  
He arrived soon after they resumed T4. I came six months earlier, but I hadn't had to do any killings yet, not even injections. I thought he might make me. That's why I decided to head him off.

SCHULZ: You object on religious grounds, naturally.

MARGARETE: Stronger than that.

SCHULZ: Stronger than belief in God? That's very intriguing. You'll have to enlighten me.

MARGARETE: My mother's disabled, you see.

SCHULZ: Ah. Chronically? Severely?

MARGARETE: She's partially paralysed ... has to use sticks when she walks. Sometimes she's in a wheelchair.

SCHULZ: And she's been rounded up. And she's here? Is that why you came here? And now you've come to plead for her life? I wouldn't worry.

MARGARETE: No, she's not. I don't know if she's been taken or not. But I'm afraid she will be.

SCHULZ: That's a reasonable fear.

MARGARETE: I'd do anything to make sure she's safe. She's my mother.

SCHULZ: I know what you mean. And I sympathize, more than you might think. A beloved uncle has been blind since adolescence. Yet he's as skilled a repairer of roofs as a sighted worker, and I don't think of him at all when I hear the phrase 'useless eaters'.

MARGARETE: My mother's the village seamstress – that's exactly what I mean.

SCHULZ: And where does she live?

MARGARETE: Just outside Wittenberge.

SCHULZ: Near Berlin. I've passed through it.

MARGARETE: I've heard that they never take skilled workers, whatever their deformity.

SCHULZ: And you'd like me to write a testimonial on your mother's behalf.

MARGARETE: I'd do anything to keep her safe ... anything.

SCHULZ: We're very lucky in this respect. Your mother is so near Berlin. I know Karl Brandt personally ... (*Answering her blank look*) Dr Karl Brandt, one of the directors of T4.

MARGARETE: He's a doctor?

SCHULZ: And his office is in Tiergartenstrasse. He supports me, too. That's the main thing. When Hinsen and the others held me to public ridicule, Brandt took my part. And even though events have thoroughly vindicated me, it was largely through Brandt that I was never formally sacked.

MARGARETE: He'd listen to you about my mother, you mean?  
SCHULZ: He'd always remember her name.  
MARGARETE: And he's one of the directors?  
SCHULZ: Answers directly to the Fuhrer.  
MARGARETE: Oh, that eases my mind!  
SCHULZ: Not at all, darling.  
MARGARETE: One is always aware of rumours, of course. They never stop. And when I heard I was being posted here – the human oven – I immediately thought of my mother. I did think she might be here. I thought, maybe they've already killed her. They don't always tell the families.  
SCHULZ: But it turns out she's all right?  
MARGARETE: Yes, she wrote me ten days ago. She's fine.  
SCHULZ: Let us make sure she stays that way. (*Answering her worried look*) No, I'm sure you're right – like Uncle Max, your mother's a skilled worker. But this is wartime, and people are desperate. They'll do almost anything for an edge. They'd inform on anyone, for any reason, if it meant extra money, or rations, or influence. It's best to leave nothing to chance. (*Demonstrating*) I pick up my pen, you see? Now I begin to write.  
MARGARETE: Needless to say, I'll do anything.  
SCHULZ: (*As he continues to write*) It's quite evident – you work in order to serve.  
MARGARETE: I'm prepared to do anything. And I'm all too aware of Hadamar's reputation – the human oven. I don't care. I'm only doing what any loving daughter would do – injections, starvation diet ... gas. I'm acquainted with everything that goes on here.  
SCHULZ: And are you comfortable?  
MARGARETE: (*After a beat*) Yes, I'm all right with it all.  
SCHULZ: I meant are your quarters all right?  
MARGARETE: Oh! Yes, they're fine, thank you.  
SCHULZ: We can see about getting you a private room.  
MARGARETE: I don't want to cause resentment.  
SCHULZ: If you're working directly with me, what's the difference?  
MARGARETE: What about the patients?  
SCHULZ: They won't be alive long enough to resent anything.  
MARGARETE: Oh, yes.  
SCHULZ: Unless you're squeamish. Alcohol usually works wonders for that.  
MARGARETE: I know that, yes, I'll be fine. I don't want a private room, though, that's not necessary.

SCHULZ: It will give you a place to relax, away from prying eyes and wagging tongues. *(Beat)* I have several bottles of Black Forest whiskey. Each day, before you go on duty, we can fortify your nerve. Soon you won't know the difference between leading your patients to a gas shower and taking a shower yourself. That gives me a brilliant idea. Come.  
*(He begins to lead her as he led ANDY MUELLER, though MARGARETE is more compliant.)*

MARGARETE: Where are you taking me?

SCHULZ: Our own private sanctuary. No one will be able to hear us.

MARGARETE: What's your idea?

SCHULZ: First into the bedroom ... now the bathroom ... Now strip. I'm going to give you a whiskey shower. You like that? Eh? Eh? You can have every morning before going on duty!  
*(Off-stage. His laughter becomes demonic and her laughter turns into screams. There is a blackout. In darkness, ASTRID's voice is heard, perhaps as a recording.)*

ASTRID: He got you drunk and then forced himself on you, is that it?  
*(MARGARETE is silent.)*

MARGARETE: You asked to be heard. Now you won't speak.

MARGARETE: I know, but it's difficult for me. Can you understand that a Catholic girl ...?

ASTRID: Can *you* understand? The Nazis are among the most infamous war criminals in history. Their crimes against the disabled are finally coming to light. How can you claim to be innocent?

MARGARETE: I didn't know what I was doing!

ASTRID: That's no longer an excuse.

MONIQUE: It's what most of them said at their trials, however. Here comes another participant.  
*(IRMGARD HUBER leads the way to another alcove.)*

IRMGARD: Irmgard Huber was perhaps the best known of the nurses. Her photo is featured in the published documentation. She took over from Schulz and was responsible for most of the gassing that took place here. She was found guilty, too, though, significantly, she served only eight years.

IRMGARD: I questioned Fraulein Borkowski myself shortly after assuming control.  
*(IRMGARD is joined by MARGARETE.)*

IRMGARD: You can speak freely to me. I'm a nurse ... and I'm also a woman, of course, and this isn't the first time he's been in trouble, if that helps.

MARGARETE: I just ... I can't. I need to speak to a priest.  
IRMGARD: I'm not religious, but I'm in charge now, so there will be no repeat, ever, of what you and the other nurses experienced. Doctors are needed for casualties, bureaucrats take advantage. Nurses should have been in charge from the beginning.

MARGARETE: I'd like a leave of absence.  
IRMGARD: That's understandable. You won't speak of this to anyone, will you? We need to keep as tight a lid on this as possible.

MARGARETE: Only to my mother. But she won't tell anyone. We've kept each other's secrets ever since I was a little girl ...  
IRMGARD: Your mother's dead. I thought you knew. I thought that's why you were asking for leave.

MARGARETE: But maybe you're not sure. Maybe it's just a rumour you overheard.  
IRMGARD: Of course, I don't know for sure. But they told me about you when they assigned me here

MARGARETE: Told you what about me?  
IRMGARD: ... that your mother was crippled. I asked if there was any chance she'd be sent here, and they said no, she'd been taken to Grafeneck. I assume to be killed on the spot. That's what 'taken' usually means. It's what it means here ...

MARGARETE: Stop  
IRMGARD: Like I said, I thought you knew.  
MARGARETE: But he said she'd be safe. He wrote a letter – he showed me – to Brandt ... Karl Brandt – Tiergartenstrasse 4, promising me she'd be safe.

IRMGARD: Surely you should have known better than to trust the likes of him, especially after he handled you like that.

MARGARETE: But I didn't know better, did I. I was worried, I was desperate. I had to trust someone. You'd have done the same in my place, wouldn't you? Of course, you would.

IRMGARD: I don't know. I don't know that I'd come here at all.  
MARGARETE: That's no answer!  
IRMGARD: Will you still want leave?  
MARGARETE: Yes – you said I'm entitled to it.  
IRMGARD: I said I understood why you want it. I'll let you know what I decide.

MARGARETE: But ...  
IRMGARD: We're short-handed now. If you leave, there's every chance of you not coming back. We can't afford to lose anyone. There's a nurse arriving on the next ambulance. When it comes, send her to me, then prepare the patients for their showers.

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MARGARETE: And that's how my mother died, too?  
IRMGARD: I think it's likely. *(Beat)* If you don't get a move on, I'll keep you here till you drop.  
*(Lighting shift.)*  
MARGARETE: *(As a voice over)* That was the hold they had over me.  
*(Lights up on the next exhibit – MARGARETE addresses ASTRID.)*  
ASTRID: And so what is that, your excuse?  
MARGARETE: What? I don't understand.  
ASTRID: Is that meant to make us sorry for you?  
MONIQUE: I suggest we interrupt as little as possible.  
ASTRID: I'm trying to get a line on how she thinks! *(To MARGARETE)* So you want us to feel sympathy for you because your mother died, when you caused how many thousands to die?  
MARGARETE: They tricked me!  
ASTRID: That's no answer.  
MONIQUE: Every one of them was tricked. This is a perfect example of how. They were kept in isolation ...  
MARGARETE: *(Overlapping)* That's true.  
ANDY: *(Overlapping)* I certainly was, and at my age, too. You said yourself, I was far too young.  
ASTRID: But women nurses must have had more contact. They must have eaten together, shared sleeping quarters. How many were there at any one time?  
IRMGARD: There were precisely 12 members of staff when I took over operations in April '41. These included, of course, cooks and cleaners ... telephone operators.  
MONIQUE: Very few may have been involved in the actual killing.  
ASTRID: They said they all were.  
IRMGARD: In my time, most people did everything. They were given a mixture of duties deliberately.  
ASTRID: That's certainly been my impression thus far. *(To IRMGARD)* And you say you were Director of Operations?  
IRMGARD: Despite his claims, Berlin felt Schulz was far too public a figure. This needed to be handled discreetly, by a nurse who knew what she was doing. I thought I'd be dealing with like-minded members of staff.  
*(CUNDRY ENGEL joins her.)*  
CUNDRY: I can't tell you what it is to work here at last. Several girls almost wet themselves with fear about taking the ambulance here. But I'm happy. I hope they were sacked ... sacked and imprisoned and shot for their treasonous conduct.

IRMGARD: Your name is ...?  
CUNDRY: Cundry Engel ... from Wittenau Institute. Those are the nurses I'm talking about. Don't they strike you as pathetic?  
IRMGARD: I've only just come here myself. (*Musing*) Wittenau.  
CUNDRY: They had the nerve to say I abused patients ... that I hit them, can you believe it? As though patients were there to be 'cured'.  
IRMGARD: One of your colleagues wasn't Schulz ... Fritzi Schulz?  
CUNDRY: No, who's she, another crybaby?  
IRMGARD: Come to think of it, that was at Eichberg anyway.  
CUNDRY: Wittenau wasn't as bad as Berlin-Bach, too. The bleeding hearts there would have turned your guts inside out. They were criminal. I'm not joking. Communist, they were. And when they found out about me – a loyal Reich member – they spat at me and tried yanking my hair out in big, gaping lumps. And they called me a dirty name. The dirty-minded Nazi. That's how twisted they were. That's why it's such a relief to be posted here. I almost couldn't believe my luck.  
IRMGARD: I don't like working with ideologues, Nurse Holstein.  
CUNDRY: What, you mean you're a red as well?  
IRMGARD: While I'm in charge, we'll each do her job without question or comment.  
CUNDRY: That suits me fine.  
IRMGARD: We don't proselytize.  
CUNDRY: But you do kill the cripples. I mean, that's what you're for.  
IRMGARD: It's never been openly acknowledged as Reich policy. (*Answering a look*) I know, the *Fuhrer* advocates it in his book. (*Beat*) Today I received an official memorandum that he deplores the practice and orders it to stop forthwith.  
CUNDRY: I don't believe it. It's a forgery.  
IRMGARD: I'm loath to act in defiance of it or permit my staff to do the same. (*Stopping her speaking*) We will carry on as quietly as possible. Are you listening? That means continuing with gradual starvation of our resident patients. Lethal injections for the most impaired ...  
CUNDRY: And the gassings? Everybody knows they go on here.  
IRMGARD: They'll continue but at a much reduced rate. And, as far as you're concerned, for the time being, you'll be restricted to answering the telephone.  
CUNDRY: That's absurd. I volunteered for this work because I believe in it.  
IRMGARD: I know. You've made that abundantly clear. But I'm in charge here, and that's your assignment for now.  
CUNDRY: And if I tell someone, over the telephone ...?

IRMGARD: Did you ever hear of our facility, the Sanctuary? We use it for patients and nurses alike. They're suddenly agitated, and then after a session in sanctuary, they become tranquil again. You will be as well, I'm sure.

CUNDRY: I don't understand. I came here to execute cripples, according to law. Why treat me like a criminal?

ASTRID: Are you sure that's what she said? Was she tried? Was she executed?

IRMGARD: She's dead. She died in the war.

ASTRID: Are you sure that's what she said? Because she's the voice behind this whole story ... this despicable attitude. (*To IRMGARD*) And you said exactly the right thing to her.

IRMGARD: What?

ASTRID: I'd have told her the same thing myself.

IRMGARD: I don't think you understand. The mercy killings continued, if anything, more than before. This was our major period, in fact.

ASTRID: But you stopped Holstein from taking part.

IRMGARD: ... stopped her from talking about them. We wouldn't have been able to carry out the programme she wanted if I'd let her broadcast our activities like that. If you want to hear about heroism, you'll have to talk to Mathilde Frey. She's the humanitarian among us.

ASTRID: So you let Holstein execute, after all.

IRMGARD: Of course.

ASTRID: How many deaths was she responsible for?

IRMGARD: That's impossible to calculate. Each nurse probably led several thousands to their death, except for Holstein, oddly enough. She died prematurely, you see. I think you'd better talk to Mathilde. She knows more about it than anyone else.

ASTRID: She's part of the exhibition, I know. Is she next?

IRMGARD: She was known among patients as the guardian angel.

MONIQUE: She's central to the only known instance of reprisal, so to speak. (*MATHILDE speaks from another alcove.*)

MATHILDE: I'm over here, madam.

ASTRID: Then we'd better see you without delay. (*To MONIQUE*) Guardian angel – she was acquitted, of course.

MATHILDE: But I'm guilty. If that's what leading people to their death means. I must have done that as much as anyone.

ASTRID: Why guardian angel then? Is it ironic?

MATHILDE: I don't know. Maybe because I sang them to sleep after giving them a fatal dosage.

ASTRID: It's ironic then.

MATHILDE: Or because I helped one girl escape.  
ASTRID: You were part of an underground railway? From Hadamar? Was she connected with Father Gallen?  
MATHILDE: What railway? I said I helped one crippled girl escape. That's all.  
MONIQUE: There's more to it than that.  
MATHILDE: Not much more ... especially if she never survived. You'll notice she's not here.  
ASTRID: We need to know about it, nevertheless.  
MATHILDE: Well. It started when Cundry Engel arrived. I must have met her later that night.  
(*CUNDRY ENGEL joins MATHILDE.*)  
The effects of the latest gassing are seen and heard. I always find this the hardest.  
CUNDRY: Why? What do you mean?  
MATHILDE: After the ambulance comes. I try to go for a walk in Hessen Forest till it's over. But that isn't always possible.  
CUNDRY: They ask you to do it as well.  
MATHILDE: I suppose they will. So far I've only had to supervise the feedings, of the residents. I meant they're not always finished when I come back.  
CUNDRY: (*Overlapping the last sentence*) I suppose you're new here.  
MATHILDE: What?  
CUNDRY: (*Too loudly*) I said I suppose you've just arrived!  
MATHILDE: There's no need to shout. I've been here about a year.  
CUNDRY: You ought to be used to it then. You're not a Communist, are you?  
MATHILDE: No.  
CUNDRY: The nurses I knew in Berlin were all Communist. Terrible lot. Deceptive as thieves, dirty-minded, plain dirty in their personal habits. They made you want to throw up. Not to mention I feared for my life ... that they'd take a surgical knife to me the first chance they got.  
MATHILDE: I'm not at all political. I just find the killings hard.  
CUNDRY: Then you ought to get over it before there's trouble. This is the job we're meant to do. It's necessary.  
MATHILDE: I know. The good death, they call it.  
CUNDRY: That's right – it is good. Good for the nation ... for the good of mankind. For the feint-hearted it's good for the subjects. They don't suffer, and they're spared the hardships the rest of us face in trying to create a better world. (*Beat*) I may as well be forthright. I've been sent here from Berlin to oversee the resumption of T4.  
MATHILDE: You're replacing Irmgard?

CUNDRY: No, I'm meant to be supervising your director ... for a time ... making sure that she's running things properly.

MATHILDE: She's doing as well as she can.

CUNDRY: It may be that's not good enough. HQ wants all nursing staff in every one of the centres to carry out at least 150 operations in a day.

MATHILDE: That's impossible!

CUNDRY: The subject's not open for debate.

MATHILDE: There aren't that many in the country. Who are they turning to next, wounded soldiers? That's self-defeating.

CUNDRY: As for the resident subjects, they're to be given no more than two weeks on reduced rations. After that, they're to be given injections. Are you familiar with the procedure?

MATHILDE: Yes.

CUNDRY: Ever done it yourself?

MATHILDE: When I've needed to.

CUNDRY: Good. You'll be able to do that much better. When we have no more residents, you'll be moved onto gassings. One more thing. If you attempt to query my authority, with your director or someone outside this institution, I'll have both you and the director declared subversive, leaving you both to a very uncertain fate. Is this the way to the showers?  
*(Sight and sound of the gassing. Smoke billows off. In a dormitory, two young disabled women – MINNA and CHRISTEL – are on cots kitty corner to each other. Some metres away, a commode serving a dozen cots.)*

MINNA: *(Looking out the window)* It's terrible ... I can hardly see anything. *(Coughs)* They must still be burning. *(The sound of a vehicle moving.)*  
The ambulance is going now. I don't blame you for not wanting to look.

CHRISTEL: It's not that.

MINNA: I don't blame you at all. Mathilde says they're going to increase deliveries to two, maybe three a day. She says they're going to do as many people as they can while they still have a chance.

CHRISTEL: Please, don't.

MINNA: I know. I don't want to think about it either. Even if we're not affected, it's still hard to think about ... impossible to think about.

CHRISTEL: You believe it then.

MINNA: Uh-huh.

CHRISTEL: They actually burn ...  
MINNA: Yes, I believe they actually burn people. (*Coughs*) The smoke says they do ... the smoke and the smell says they do. And something else. You know what that is? The fact that they tell you they don't ... the fact that they tell you everything's all right.

CHRISTEL: What are you talking about? They don't tell us anything.  
MINNA: That's what I mean.  
CHRISTEL: So who talks to you ... besides me? You and me are the only ones that say anything, and we're both just as ignorant –  
MINNA: Mathilde talks, doesn't she? When she brings up our soup. She talks to us both.

CHRISTEL: You mean she gossips.  
MINNA: That's talking.  
CHRISTEL: That doesn't mean it's true.  
MINNA: We don't know what's true and what isn't. But we know that people die, don't we? They're here one day and then they're not here.

CHRISTEL: You mean Pauline Kneissler.  
MINNA: That's exactly who I mean. Matty says they told Pauline's family she died from appendicitis.

CHRISTEL: That's what she did die from. (*Beat*) Minna?  
MINNA: Christel?  
CHRISTEL: What?  
MINNA: 'She died' from a lethal injection, got it? But they don't want it known that they do these things here. They want to maintain the fiction that people die of general illnesses.

CHRISTEL: Okay, stop it. (*Beat*) But you can tell my people I died from appendicitis. (*She tries to move*) Can you help me?  
MINNA: Do you have to go again?  
(*She rises to help CHRISTEL. Both have disabilities, but CHRISTEL is further disabled by some sort of illness.*)

CHRISTEL: I can't go ... that's the point. I try and try. I wish they'd let us use bedpans.  
MINNA: No, you don't want that ... anything but that. If you say you need a pan, they use that as an excuse to say you're finished, and then you end up like poor Pauline.  
(*MATHILDE comes on.*)  
Mattie! Can you help Christel?

CHRISTEL: No, please. I don't have to go any more. If you just help me back to bed.  
MATHILDE: You haven't eaten your dinner either.

MINNA: Honestly, Christel. Mattie risks her life and ours getting us extra rations –

MATHILDE: It's all right.

MINNA: It is not. We could be killed any time.

MATHILDE: Exactly. I think it's high time you both made a move.

MINNA: What!

MATHILDE: You didn't think this would go on indefinitely, did you? They've been inching ever closer. When your friend was taken last week, I thought, 'Oh, oh, they're next.'

MINNA: You didn't say anything.

MATHILDE: I wouldn't speak till I had a plan.

MINNA: Plan for what?

MATHILDE: Your escape, obviously. (*Answering a look*) There's nothing else you can do. The newest recruit, arrived today, shows how dangerous it is for you ... shows they're really serious. They're stepping up the gassings and telling us to discontinue gradual starvation. They want to treat you by lethal injection. The Nazi nurse that came told me as much.

MINNA: Has she been put in charge?

MATHILDE: She says she has. I don't want to take any chances.

MINNA: But Mattie, where would we go even if we could escape?

MATHILDE: I thought of little else since we first knew each other. You don't think I've been fattening you for no purpose, do you? The route's all laid out.

MINNA: But why are you doing this for us?

MATHILDE: Doing it for you, darling.

MINNA: All right, doing it for me. We're not related. Disability's not in your family. You're taking incredible risks.

MATHILDE: I'm sickened by what they've asked us all to do. That's it, that's the whole motivation. If German people didn't know in their hearts that this policy was criminal madness, they wouldn't need to keep it such a secret. It looks like the secret's now out. But a few of us can still keep our own secrets. My God commands me to do this – my God and my conscience and my country, what's left of it. You'll survive to tell the world a few of us did our best.

MINNA: I'll survive, but you don't tell me –

MATHILDE: Bodo Moos is going to drive you to safety. (*Answering a look*) The ambulance driver.

MINNA: Are you joking? He drives the death wagon.

MATHILDE: He doesn't put them to death. He doesn't believe in it. Trust me. (*To CHRISTEL*) Are you awake, darling? He'll meet you both at the

back door of the Sanctuary in ... 15 minutes. Then he'll take you to his cottage at the far end of Hessen Forest. From there you'll be taken to safety in Austria, to a motherhouse in Karlsbad, then to the Swiss frontier. I can't tell you all the details now. I don't know them all. But I believe you'll be safe. You'll have a future ... unlike the rest of us.

MINNA: But what about you?

MATHILDE: I'm staying here.

MINNA: What if I tell you we're not going to go without you? We refuse to go?

MATHILDE: Then I'll kill you myself by injection ... and you know I can do it. *(Beat)* There isn't the time to think about anything very much. Thinking is what gets us all killed. You're doing this because you can. You're not entitled to think anything else. *(Celebratory noise)* I've got to go now. They're toasting the 10,000th death, of all things. It's hard to imagine anything more ghoulish. *(Kissing her)* God be with you, darling. *(Kissing CHRISTEL)* God be with you. *(To them both)* Hurry. *(She leaves)*

MINNA: That's a really exceptional person. Our guardian angel.

CHRISTEL: Minna?

MINNA: She's right, we'll have to hurry.

CHRISTEL: I'm not going.

MINNA: But I'll help you. Once we get in the van, it'll be/fine.

CHRISTEL: I can't move at all. I'm ill.

MINNA: You're not ill. You're just frightened.

CHRISTEL: I'm telling you, it's appendicitis.

MINNA: *(Tearfully)* But it can't be. Please try to get up.

CHRISTEL: It's no use, I tell you. My back feels like it's broken.

MINNA: But if you stay here, you'll die.

CHRISTEL: No, I won't. The guardian angel will look after me. She's right, you haven't time to think. Fifteen minutes. We can't even say goodbye.

MINNA: *(As she leaves)* I'll send for you in a day or two. I won't leave the country without you.

CHRISTEL: *(She leaves. Noise of the party. CUNDRY comes on stealthily.)* *(Harsh whisper)* I told you to leave! *(Waits)* Minna? *(Waits)* Mathilde? *(Waits)* Who's there?

CUNDRY: *(After a moment)* I'm a friend of Mathilde's. I've just come on duty. She told me to look after you.

CHRISTEL: *(Speaking with difficulty)* That really was good of her. Minna's right – she's truly blessed.

CUNDRY: Can you tell me what's wrong with you? You're disabled, I know, but ...

CHRISTEL: Appendicitis.

CUNDRY: Has a doctor confirmed it?

CHRISTEL: There are no doctors here anymore. No resident doctors. There were, before I came.

CUNDRY: Don't try to say too much if it's hard for you. *(Beat)* I've just come myself, from Berlin-Bach. My good friend Mathilde worked there, too. She recommended me for here.

CHRISTEL: They say a nurse is in charge now.

CUNDRY: Ah, yes, Irmgard Huber. She interviewed me. She seems very nice.

CHRISTEL: I never met her. I'm still alive, that's all I know.

CUNDRY: I told you not to speak too much.

CHRISTEL: It's my back ... and when I try to go to the toilet ...

CUNDRY: You don't mean you walk to the potty?

CHRISTEL: Minna helps me normally.

CUNDRY: I'll get you a bedpan straight away. *(Beat)* What happened to Minna – dead?

CHRISTEL: Didn't Mattie tell you?

CUNDRY: No. she told me to ask you?

CHRISTEL: Did she? She must want to make sure everything's all right.

CUNDRY: That's it exactly.

CHRISTEL: Well, I can't go at all, as you can see. But Minna left ten minutes ago. I suppose she's safe by now.

CUNDRY: I'll be able to tell Mattie. Which way did she go?

CHRISTEL: According to plan – through the Sanctuary.

CUNDRY: The Sanctuary!

CHRISTEL: Are you going to get the bedpan?

CUNDRY: You won't be able to piss anyway. It isn't appendicitis you've got. It's acute kidney failure. You'll probably be dead before morning.  
*(She goes off in one direction. In a corridor from another direction – where the festivities come from – IRMGARD meets MATHILDE.)*

IRMGARD: What lunacy is this?

MATHILDE: Somebody said they were toasting a significant number of deaths. I'm not a part of it, honest.

IRMGARD: They've told us to be discreet. I don't know how that's supposed to happen in the midst of a Roman circus.

MATHILDE: They told you to be discreet? Your new assistant told me just the opposite.

IRMGARD: I've no new assistant.

- MATHILDE: She said she came from Berlin. Every nurse has been ordered to carry out 150 mercy killings a day. That's not true? Why did she say it?
- IRMGARD: Because she's a trouble-maker. (*Heads in the direction of the noise*) She probably started that racket in there.  
(*IRMGARD and CUNDRY almost collide.*)  
You! I told you you're confined to the telephones. (*To MATHILDE*) She's no authority to speak for anyone. I'm not sure she's even authorized to be here.
- CUNDRY: Ask her about the mass escape she engineered. I've just heard it from one of the cripples they're leaving behind ... (*At MATHILDE*) ... who informed on her!
- MATHILDE: It's not true. She doesn't know what she's talking about.
- IRMGARD: That's all right – she's going straight into Sanctuary.
- CUNDRY: That's where they're escaping from!
- IRMGARD: And I'm going to telephone Berlin to have you recalled. The Sanctuary.  
(*The same subdued lighting, the same trio of inmates. ANDY MUELLER is absent.*)
- BABETTE: Tomorrow morning, you know what you're going to do? You're going to ask them to take me next.
- ANIKE: Why would anybody want to take you? You're crippled and useless and crazy besides.
- BABETTE: I guess I've as much right to ride with Hansi Moonbooter as anybody. I saw him before anybody else did.
- ANIKE: That gives you more right than anybody.
- BABETTE: It does? Thank you.
- ANIKE: But she isn't riding with Hansi. She's going with Bodo Moos. In fact, she's gone ... been and gone and arrived where she's going by now. And, whatever happens, we don't know anything about it. Is that clear? They can torture us, threaten us with death ...
- BABETTE: I know that. But they're not going to threaten us with death ... are they?
- MITZI: They're not going to threaten us at all! Haven't you geniuses figured that out? Andy's the one they're going to threaten.
- ANIKE: Poor Andy Pandy.
- BABETTE: (*To MITZI*) You just say that because you're partial to him.
- MITZI: I say it because it's true.
- BABETTE: True you're partial to him. We should escape next just to give you the chance to be alone together.
- MITZI: He must have helped her escape. What could we do in here? That's all they'll think.

ANIKE: Are you sure he didn't escape with her? That's what I've been thinking.  
BABETTE: Why would he want to escape?  
ANIKE: Why would he want to stay here? That's the question. Consuming passion for Mitzi?  
BABETTE: Is there someone there?  
MITZI: Is that you, Andy?  
*(They mock her with hooting noises, foreshortened by a jarring noise. CUNDRY comes on.)*  
CUNDRY: Where are the lights here? *(No answer)* A prisoner escaped under cover of darkness. Where are the lights?  
ANIKE: We don't know where the lights are.  
BABETTE: This is all the light we've ever known, honest.  
MITZI: We're nearly blind ourselves.  
*(A pause. CUNDRY looks at them carefully.)*  
CUNDRY: How many of you are there?  
ALL: Three./Just three./Just us.  
CUNDRY: And you're in cells, is that right?  
ALL: That's right./We're like caged beasts.  
CUNDRY: And you've a jailer in with you?  
ANIKE: He sits out there, where you are.  
MITZI: But he sleeps somewhere else, in the big house ... he's never told us where.  
CUNDRY: But you saw him help a prisoner escape.  
ANIKE: We told you, there's only the three of us.  
BABETTE: We saw nothing, honest.  
MITZI: Who are you anyway? We never saw you before.  
CUNDRY: Shut up, all of you! We know that a prisoner escaped from here tonight. We know that this is an escape route for as many prisoners as possible. You're going to tell us where the secret passage is, what you know of the escape route from here ... and how many people are involved. We figured out that you must be the ringleaders, because you're the only ones here and you've been here for months. Start talking now.  
*(A pause.)*  
BABETTE: We don't know anything, honest.  
ANIKE: If we talked, it would only be rubbish ... because you're talking rubbish.  
CUNDRY: I told you, shut up!  
ANIKE: All right, but it's a fantasy, and all we'd be telling you is –  
CUNDRY: I don't want any more shit.  
*(A pause.)*

- MITZI: A crippled girl came through here an hour ago. She was like us and about the same age. But I never saw her before. And I couldn't say where she went. It was out of my field of vision.
- CUNDRY: (*Rattling keys*) You see these keys? You see this hypodermic? I'm going to unlock each of your cages one by one and administer the fatal dose...one by one. You'll all be dead in a shorter time than you've taken to tell me these lies.  
(*They scream.*)  
Shut up!  
(*Suddenly there is the sound of a heavy door closing, followed by the sound of gas jets going on.*)
- ALL: What's that?/What's happening?/Oh, my God./For God's sake.  
(*Blackout. In the darkness, perhaps with the voices echoing:*)
- ASTRID: So you pulled the switch.
- ANDY: I pulled the switch, yes. Those three were going to die anyway. They were fated. It was just a matter of when. The other one – the Nazi – was asking for trouble the moment she entered our midst. It hardly mattered that she wanted to denounce me as a pederast ... who'd abused patients at Eichberg. She hadn't a kind word to say about anyone.  
The mercy killings continued ... if anything, more than before. But they were quieter, without hysteria ... without vengeance, it's possible to say.
- ASTRID: And the escapee? What happened to her?
- ANDY: I don't know. She left with the driver, I know. I saw them leave. But I don't think she lived very much longer, for all that. She's not here, is she?  
(*Lights rise slowly on BODO MOOS's cottage on the edge of Hessen Forest.*)
- ASTRID: This is the final exhibit, is it?
- MONIQUE: I believe it's the only known example of anyone escaping. And it may be apocryphal.
- ASTRID: Apocryphal or not, it raises the matter of attitudes beyond the walls.
- MONIQUE: Exactly. The room represents the driver's cottage on the edge of the Forest.
- BODO: Can you sleep in the box room?
- MINNA: I can sleep anywhere you put me.
- BODO: I can sleep anywhere, too, when I finish an ambulance run. Sometimes I'm so tired, I can't even make it indoors. I fall asleep in the animal cemetery, where the spirits of mythical beasts watch

over me. Pegasus is my forest patron. Trudy says she prays he'll take me away. Trudy is my wife. She likes to tell jokes like that.

MINNA: I hope she doesn't object to me being here.

BODO: (*Waves his hand dismissively*) What she minds is that I drive a hearse. Another joke. I tell her it isn't a hearse because they're not dead when I drive them there. They're still alive. That's my joke. I'm really an ambulance driver! She doesn't laugh. The kids always laugh when they see me coming. They laugh and they point and they run and hide. And the last one to hide is the next one I'm going to collect. That's the game they play.

MINNA: Of course, I don't think I'll be here very long ... no more than overnight, so they told me. That's the next stage of my journey to freedom. Are you supposed to be driving me somewhere else?

BODO: My life isn't all that easy, you know. It's not easy at all. Of course, it isn't like you, being crippled. But it's not easy, and it certainly isn't a barrel of monkey laughs. Everybody afraid of you ... the kids making jokes at your expense. They're more scared of me than they are of the Allied soldiers, did you know that? And it's not my fault. I'm performing a useful service, a vital service, you know? Transporting the cripples to their last resting place.

MINNA: Please stop talking like that.

BODO: Eh?

MINNA: Stop talking like that. Can't you see how it hurts me?

BODO: I admitted my life's not as bad as yours.

MINNA: Can't we stop talking about it?  
(*A pause.*)

BODO: Gertrud will be back soon. Then we can all have chicory.

MINNA: Didn't they tell you anything about meeting me here or you driving me somewhere else?

BODO: They paid me to drive you here ... and then said that somebody else ...

MINNA: ... would come and collect me? Did they tell you when? What, exactly, did they tell you ... as much as you can remember.  
(*GERTRUD comes on.*)

BODO: Here's Trudy now.

MINNA: Perhaps she can tell me.

BODO: No, I don't think she can. (*To GERTRUD*) Good to see you, Trudy. We were wondering where you were.

GERTRUD: Who's this?

BODO: This is ... (*To MINNA*) I don't think you told me your name.

MINNA: Minna Zachow. It's very good of you to do this for me, Frau Moos.  
GERTRUD: And just what am I doing for you?  
MINNA: Didn't you tell her? Doesn't she know?  
BODO: Not exactly.  
GERTRUD: Not at all.  
MINNA: Oh, my God.  
BODO: They paid me to take her to our house.  
GERTRUD: Why didn't she pay you herself? And what happens next?  
MINNA: That's just what we're –  
GERTRUD: Who is she? Where does she come from?  
BODO: From Hadamar.  
GERTRUD: Hadamar? (*To MINNA*) Stand up.  
MINNA: Perhaps I'd better explain.  
GERTRUD: Quiet! Walk and down.  
MINNA: It's true. I'm a patient.  
GERTRUD: (*To BODO*) Are you out of your mind? Is this another practical joke they played on you?  
BODO: They paid me.  
GERTRUD: Paid you to help a prisoner escape. They'll execute the two of you together...and me along with you, you blockhead ... you fucking ...  
MINNA: I'm not going to stay very long.  
GERTRUD: You're not going to stay here at all!  
BODO: They gave me more than a month's salary to take her. And they said they'd pay me again for driving her on. Think about how much that is ... what we can get with the money. We can have as much liverwurst as we want .... We can Zweibelkuchen, Hopfensprossen, Spaetzel.  
GERTRUD: Shut up. Hopfensprossen. They gave you nothing but promises.  
BODO: (*Shows her*) No, look.  
GERTRUD: Where did you get all that money?  
BODO: What?  
GERTRUD: Who did you steal it from?  
BODO: It's not stolen. I told you. They gave it to me to transport her –  
GERTRUD: I don't believe you. Who'd give you that kind of money for her?  
BODO: A nurse. One of the nursing sisters, you know. I know her, but I don't know her name.  
MINNA: Mathilde? I bet it was Sister Mathilde. Oh, she is good. She's known as the guardian angel, and this shows it.  
GERTRUD: Who is she, your lover?  
MINNA: What? She's just a wonderful, wonderfully kind ...

GERTRUD: My brother Fanzi was ten times more than that. He was an officer ... a highly decorated –

BODO: If he was that decorated, they'd have posted him to Berlin.

GERTRUD: Shut up. The reason they didn't send him there ... You want to know the reason? Because his sister went and married an oaf, who's made himself the laughing stock of the district ... of the regiment ... of the whole service. My Bodo's exploits are legendary. Just imagine what they'll make of this little episode.

BODO: Let's hear about Fanzi.

GERTRUD: What?

BODO: Tell us what happened to your brother.

GERTRUD: You know what happened.

BODO: But our guest doesn't ... Fraulein Zachow doesn't.

GERTRUD: He was sent into Russia! Where he was wounded and blinded and frostbitten. The fingers of his entire right hand were simply ... eaten away by the fucking Russian winter. Only instead of sending him back like the hero he was. You know what they did? They shot him where he fell ... like a cur ... like an enemy criminal. He was no use to anyone any more. So they did to him what they said they wanted to do to her kind since before the war. And what I want to know is, why should she live while a national hero like my brother has to die like a cur? Can you answer me that?

BODO: But she was earmarked for death the way he was.

GERTRUD: But why didn't somebody pay this for him? He was worth it. She's not even worth –

MINNA: I know it. Believe me, I'm sorry.

GERTRUD: Sentiments don't butter Hopfensprossen, fraulein. He's dead, and you're living, and that's all I care about. (*To BODO*) Are we supposed to feed her with this money?

MINNA: Oh, I don't expect to be here –

GERTRUD: Nobody asked you. (*To BODO*) Were you planning to keep her in Zweibelkuchen?

BODO: As she said, she's not going to be here that long.

GERTRUD: How do we know that?

BODO: We can give her whatever we want. One look will tell you she doesn't eat very much.

MINNA: We lived on a diet of potato soup and watery tea.

BODO: After that, chicory is heaven-sent. (*To MINNA*) Eh?

GERTRUD: What if nobody comes for her? What then?

BODO: Oh, but I think I'm supposed to drive her –

GERTRUD: What if I don't want to take the risk?

*Unsex Me Here*

BODO: But think of the money.  
GERTRUD: Is it enough to risk losing you? You'd be driving by night as a criminal ... not even as Bodo the Body Collector. I think I prefer to have you here safe ... and her working for us.  
MINNA: But that was never the plan. I don't want to stay here!  
GERTRUD: You're in no position to say what you want.  
BODO: But I don't think –  
GERTRUD: Neither are you. You'd sleep out there with the wolves if I wasn't here to make a home for us both. And you give me little enough as it is. (*To MINNA*) You can earn your keep as our kitchen maid, our skivvy. And if you don't work out, we can send you back ... to the future you should have had.  
MINNA: I'll run away. I'll make it on my own.  
GERTRUD: And how long would you last? You needed our help to get this far.  
ANDY: (*Voice over*) I don't think she lived very much longer, for all that. (*Slow final fade.*)



Two Performance Texts

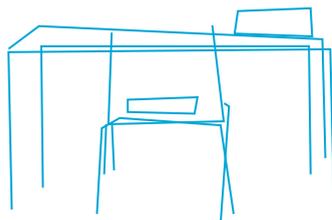
# FREAKS OF HISTORY

Disability studies have long been the domain of medical and pedagogical academics. However, in recent years, the subject has outgrown its clinical origins. In *Freaks of History*, James MacDonald presents two dramatic explorations of disability within the wider themes of sexuality, gender, and the Other. Originally directed by Martin Harvey and performed by undergraduate students at the University of Exeter, *Wellclose Square* and *Unsex Me Here* analyse cultural marginalization against the backdrop of infamous historical events.

MacDonald, who has cerebral palsy, recognizes that disability narratives are rarely written by and for disabled people. Therefore his plays, accompanied by critical essays and director's notes, are a welcome addition to the emerging discourse of Crip Theory, and essential reading for disability students and academics alike.

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**James MacDonald** is a playwright whose work is regularly staged in the United Kingdom. He is an Associate Research Fellow at the University of Exeter's drama department, and the author of *Russia, Freaks and Foreigners* and *Carnival Texts*, both published by Intellect Books.



*'MacDonald brings together so many interesting elements. I really admire his exploration of marginalization and belonging—which he approaches through elements such as ethnicity, culture, language, class, disability, sexuality, religion and spirituality.'*

**Thomas Fahy**

Professor of English,  
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Drama, Exeter University

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