

THE HIVE - AN OPERA

THE HIVE LIBRETTO - Carole Hayman

'If you want your children to grow up intelligent, read them fairy stories..' (attributed to Einstein)

NB: All mise on scene is created by giant screens at the back and sides of the stage – no need for actual scenery. These double for shadow play, puppetry etc.

1. Opening – Conference I

Int. a conference hall. Dark. Day but indoors, so lit like night.

A dimly lit Banner announcing “25th Royal Forensic Psychiatric Conference. ” The Nature/ Nurture of Evil” hangs over the proceedings.

Chorus sings Gesualdo – Moro, Lasso

A dark stage, with only a spotlight pooling light on Dr T, who sits on an upright chair, directly addressing the audience (ie The Conference audience) .

Behind him on the screens (or, in real life, if possible) is the chorus - a group of bound figures suspended on meat-hooks, within a “forensic” tent, slowly twirling in the shadowy lighting.

DR T

Imagine, if you will, a situation where a psychopathic killer has you in his power. You know this person doesn't give a damn about you. He has no empathy. No humanity. He is the Hunter. The Lone Wolf. Attractive, charismatic - he has an aura. It draws you in.

Makes you part of the act.

But he will kill you whatever you say, or do. His urge is overwhelming. He craves to be watching as life leave your eyes. He is looking you in the eye. Mesmerising you. Tell me, what would you do?

Pause. Silence from the audience.

DR T (CONT'D)

Let's say, I'm the killer, you're the victim. I'm going to do something to you. I've got total control and I'm going to do it at my leisure.

(4 bars of instrumental)

You are lost. Alienated and alone. You know you're down a very dark alley. You're trying everything to stop it, ev'ry thing in your power. You're about to be killed. And I don't give a fuck. What is it that happens between us at the point of death? You're gone, but I've taken something of you...

(silence)

SPOKEN

Not just trophies, a finger or a toe - no, your life essence, your life force. You.

Gesualdo – Moro, Lasso

Gesualdo's Moro, lasso acapella choral singing, gets louder. Light comes up on a white, 'forensic' tent at the back of the stage. It is back-lit, so semi-transparent and the figures inside it are seen only as ghostly silhouettes. Now we see more clearly that they are bound, still, female forms, hanging like meat from hooks above and slowly, slowly turning. The chorus of dead, or dying, swaying women – they are bound, almost like mummies, with gaffer taped heads and straws up their noses - sing "no comment" with glottal stops.

NB: Like the clicks on the Grimm's police interview tapes.

It punctuates several scenes, making its own 'no comment'

DR T (CONT'D)

And then there are the women. Ah, the women.

CHORUS

No comment. (*Repeated interjections*)

DR. T

There is a school of thought which says they can't be psychopaths – women, women are not natural killers - they don't have a penis. Hah! A penis. They can only do it in a partnership with a man - at least that's how it's presented in court. Ah, God love her she was dominated, she went along with it, was an unwilling partner, had no choice. Women aren't violent - they're mothers, sisters, daughters...

A woman screams from the audience.

WOMAN

Whores!!!!!!

There is a shocked silence in the auditorium and on stage, as the woman leaps to her feet, shoves past the people in her row, runs up the aisle and clambers onto the stage. Dr T looks dumbstruck. He stands uncertainly. The woman runs up to him, grabs his tie, yanks him forward, head-butts him and knees him in the balls. Blackout.

2. Int. The Huntsman's House

Lights up on a chaotic domestic scene in Hunter's house. Living room. Several kids are running around playing some kind of tag game. On the screens, the TV is on playing a

kid's program. Loud music comes from somewhere off. A flurried Hunter enters with a battered briefcase. He crosses to his desk and starts rifling through and gathering papers. He shouts to off-stage in tune to the music.

HUNTER

Griselda - any idea where my blue folder is?

GRISELDA (OFF)

Where you left it!

KIDS (IN CHORUS)

Folder, what folder, what folder Dad. No Dad, no Dad, no Dad.

Folder, what folder, what folder Dad. No Dad, no Dad, no Dad.

HUNTER

It's blue! A4. It's Blue. It's A-4. It's important. My speech!

GRISELDA

Under the sofa?!

KIDS

Speech, what speech, what speech Dad? No dad, no Dad, no Dad.

HUNTER

It's the Conference! I'm making a speech! I can't go with no speech!

GRISELDA

It's probably in the fridge!

KIDS

Fridge, the fridge. In the fridge. Yes Dad, yes Dad, yes Dad.

Fridge, the fridge. In the fridge. Yes Dad, yes Dad, yes Dad.

HUNTER crashes around looking. Stuff from the desk crashes to the floor. Patient GRISELDA enters, wearing an apron and holding out a blue folder.

GRISELDA

Hunter stop! Stop! It's on the kitchen table. Where you left it!

GRISELDA & KIDS

Where you left it!

HUNTER (SLIGHTLY SHAMED)

Sorry. Oh sorry. Thanks. It's just I'm late. And I can't go without it. It's got my speech. For the Conference! I'm making a speech! I must go with my speech!

GRISELDA

Why are you going? Bloody Conference! Bringing it all back up. KIDS! Bringing it all back here.

KIDS (sung underneath GRISELDA)

Why are you going? Why go, Dad? No Dad, no Dad, no Dad. Bloody Conference! No, Dad, no Dad, no Dad...

HUNTER (Shouts!)

KIDS!!

GRISELDA

Bloody Conference!

HUNTER

Sorry. I'm sorry. I ..I just have to. Sorry. I owe it. I just have to. I have to go.

He grabs his jacket up from a chair and runs out. His wife and kids stand still and stare after him. Sound of a small child crying, offstage. GRISELDA hurries to see what's wrong..

Blackout.

3 INT. THE CONFERENCE MAIN HALL.

As before, Banner across stage or video screen announcing "25th Royal Forensic Psychiatric Conference. The Nature/ Nurture of Evil" but now fully lit.

NB: For the following scenes, the stage will be divided into several areas, defined by lighting. Some are in the Conference , some in a flashback Courtroom during a trial.

Characters stay in situ throughout)

Lights up on Hunter - rather smoothed down - sitting in the Hot Seat (The same as Dr T) lit by a single pool of light. He addresses the Conference audience (ie Us)

HUNTER (Speech rhythms)

It was when I was doing mostly legal aid. I was called to the cop shop in the middle of the night. (Pause) I was the duty solicitor. (Pause) The rest, as they say, is history.

Lights down on HUNTER.

4. Int. A police station. *Lights up on Hansel in custody, with a policeman. Hansel is sitting at a table, laboring over writing a note. His lips move with the effort.*

Hansel (*Spoken*)

Nine, approx...

NB: This scene is in Hunter's head - an active flashback as if he was telling the conference audience (ie us) the story.

5. Int. The Grimm Household - Breakfast

Lights up on a scene of domestic holocaust. The Grimm household. Breakfast time. The kids and dog are eating toast, while watching Spongebob Squarepants (or other) on TV (Screens). Hansel is leaving for work - he is late. He is in his outdoor clothes, steel-capped boots and underpants.

Introduction – 4 bars of music

HANSEL

Gretel, where's my bloody work jeans?

GRETEL

On the bloody bedroom floor, where you left them

(4 bars of music)

HANSEL

Cinders, go and get them for me, I'm late.

CINDERS

No, I'm watching Spongebob Squarepants..

GRETEL

(Threateningly) Do as you're told.

KIDS (TOGETHER)

Or you'll end up under the patio.

Cinders sulkily gets up and goes

HANSEL

What's for breakfast?

GRETEL

Toast. You says you was late.

HANSEL

Toast! What kind of a breakfast is that?!

Lights down on them and up on Hunter..

HUNTER (To Conference)

(Speech Rhythms)

There's this strange kind of loyalty. (Pause)

Fear, I suppose, but also in these abusive situations you can have that complete wall of
silence. (Pause)

Hansel liked to film Gretel and he like to have cam'ras in the rooms, so he could hear the
noises she'd make when she was with her men. (Pause)

He'd keep all her stained knickers in a jar. (Pause)

GRETEL (Sulky)

You says you was late, you was goin'.

HANSEL

I should have gone. I should have gone bloody years ago!

GRETEL

Go then. I don't bloody care

HANSEL

You will bloody care, now get my breakfast and do as you're told!

GRETEL

Or what? Or I'll end up under the patio?

Or I'll end up under the patio?

*She dishes up a couple of cold sausages and plonks them down under
Hansel's nose. The Dog comes up barking for some. Hansel kicks it
away with his steel-capped boots..*

HANSEL (to the dog – after his sausages)

Garn! Get out of it!

CHORUS, KIDS AND GRETEL.

Or you'll end up under the patio. Or you'll end up under the patio, the patio

HANSEL (Spoken/Hissed)

Shuddup about the bloody patio!

Cinders enters with jeans.

GRETEL

Think we don't know what's under there?

CINDERS

Rapunzel. Rapunzel's under the patio.

*All turn to look at her. She holds out the jeans. Smiles.
Blackout.*

Insert Tableaux – frozen stills on the screens.

Lights up on screen

5a *Cinders in an embrace with a large older man wearing an animal head
(later seen in the orgy scene). The rest of the family watch.*

Lights down.

Lights up

5b. *Hansel leaving. Gretel approaching the kids, brandishing her thick, buckled belt.
They cower away. The dog whimpers..*

Lights down.

5c HUNTER (TO CONFERENCE)

There was a lot of evidence of her moaning and groaning (pause) And Hansel having microphones in the bedroom, or even in the lounge (pause) Gretel would be upstairs with some chap, while the kids were watching Sesame Street. I mean it defies belief.

5d *GRISELDA appears lit up in another part of the stage. She is back at the house folding the laundry for many kids.*

GRISELDA (At Home)

The irony of the whole situation, Hunter catching the short straw with the Grimms, was that at that point we had eight children and Hansel and Gretel had the same number and yet the whole setup was different. Our children have been born out of love and cherished as gifts.

(4 bars of music)

Lights down

6. Int. A Court room / Cinders

Lights up on a moment in the Courtroom. Cinders in the witness box, giving evidence.

Music Begins (12 bars)

CINDERS

I was glad my Dad was dead. He could be a mean little shit. He killed my cat - stomped on her with his boots. She were only a kitten - he said.

(4 bars of music)

She's buried under the patio, it was already dug up, so I buried her - give her a nice send off with daisies and my iPod playing.

She's buried next to Aurora, another awepair that we had. She was nice. I still got her slippers, I found them under her bed. I seen Hansel – Dad that is – fill the hole after Aurora disappeared . They said she'd left, but I knew she hadn't. I kept watch in a place they didn't know about.

Key change (10 bars of music)

I seen Dad take her down the basement. She 'ad Gaffa tape over her mouth. She was kicking and struggling. I knew she went there 'cos that's where he put all the others.

(Laughs darkly)

(4 bars of music)

It was a family joke. If you don't behave - Dad'll put you under the patio. And you will join all the others.

Pause. Lights down on Cinders

7. Int. The Grimm Household - Teatime

Lights up on domestic scene in the home of the Grimms Chaotic with many children, a dog & huge, high wall-mounted TV blaring (ie: on the screens used throughout). Hansel slouches in a battered armchair wearing his grimy work dungarees and steel-capped boots - he has a plate with food and is scoffing as he looks up at TV – Strictly Come Dancing. In the background a sound-track of heavy breathing, cries and orgasmic moans. It comes from speakers in the room. We hear it throughout the scene.

HANSEL

Cinders, turn that blasted TV down!

CINDERS

But Dad, it's Come Dancing.. the final dance off!

HANSEL

I don't care if it's the fuckin' final fuck off. (*Spoken*) Turn it down!

CHORUS

Or you'll end up under the patio

CINDERS (MUTTERS)

The Tango's my fav'rite..

HANSEL

Oh yeah. The Tango is it? I'll show you Tango!

(*They dance a tango*)

12 bars of instrumental music

He gets up and catches hold of Cinders , watching the screen above, he whirls her around, dipping and bending and doing wild, exaggerated tango moves . Cinders loves it , the children shriek with laughter , the dog barks . On the speakers, the moans reach an over-riding crescendo. Hansel stops dancing and drops Cinders to the floor.

A silence falls in the room, as the moans become screams of ecstasy.

Blackout.

8: *Lights up on HUNTER on the 'Hot' seat at the conference. He shifts uncomfortably.*

HUNTER (*To Conference*)

When Gretel was interviewed by a psychiatrist (*pause*) she said she'd never had an orgasm in her life, and as she prefers women to blokes, you think well...(*pause*) all the heavy breathing, moaning and groaning (*pause*) she was putting on an act just to please Hansel (*pause*) Hansel said he wanted to try Gretel on some lesbian. (*pause*)

9: *Lights up on Patient GRISELDA doing the laundry. Ironing by now.*

GRISELDA (AT HOME)

There was some suggestion that Gretel was the dominant one, but I never felt that, I felt that he controlled her, and she took out her frustration by controlling others – Her children. We do have quite a, warped attitude to motherhood as a society you know, what a mother should be.

8 bars of Music

GRISELDA

I don't believe that somebody, anybody is a hundred percent evil. I think that the deeds were evil, but I don't see Gretel, or Hansel, as evil. *(She stops. Looks up. Thinking)* It's a distortion, yes, of what they could have been. But I think that's true of all of us, it's just a scale. You know, we all could do evil things, and in fact, we all *do* do evil things, but something holds us in check so we don't quite go that step further, or that thousand steps further. Something holds us back in check. Something holds us back in check.

Lights down on GRISELDA

SCENE 10. INT. THE CONFERENCE. DAY.

Lights up on Conference banner, as we cut back to Hunter on the Hot seat. Hunter takes out a hanky and wipes his brow.

HUNTER

The press were a nightmare to deal with. There'd be some little story crop up, and everyone would jump on it, it was pretty exhausting. *(Pause)* It unhinged me a bit and it was a rocky time for the marriage but then, you know, I might have been unhinged anyway.

He laughs. Lights down on Hunter.

SCENE 11. INT. HUNTER'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Lights up on Patient Griselda in the kitchen. She is making a mug of tea.

GRISELDA

Certain newspapers fuel the attitude to people who are seen to do wrong. Especially women. It makes us 'normal' people feel better about ourselves.. *(Drinks)* Because then we can say, oh well, look what so and so did .. *I..* would never do that.

Lights down on Griselda

SCENE 12. INT. CONFERENCE. DAY.

Lights back up on Hunter on Hot seat

HUNTER

There were all these Polaroid photographs in an album, which I think in the porno trade they call hamburger shots - vaginas - which may have been the full count on the victims. It was so many. Haunts me. How many did Hansel - did *they* - actually kill?

Lights dim on Hunter. Gesualdo acapella singing from the chorus, as before. Light comes up on the white, 'forensic' tent again. As before, it is backlit, so semi-transparent and figures inside it are seen only as ghostly silhouettes. They are the bound, still, female forms, hanging like meat from hooks above and slowly, slowly turning, while singing.

Chorus

Moro, Lasso....

Scene 12a

Hansel in the cop-shop as before. He sits at the table, staring out as if watching a scene in his head. The twirling figures descend and we see they have skeletal, bone motifs on their bindings. They flit about him, lightly, poking at him with their bones, as if teasing him.

HANSEL

My Angels..

POLICEMAN

What?

Hansel smiles.

Lights down on the tent. Lights up on Hunter on Hot seat.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

I nearly didn't go that night. I had a cold I'd caught off the kids. I was really dizzy. When the police rang me I said I felt too ill to come out, but they said there was no one else on duty. When I got down there I said 'what's the charge?' I nearly passed out when they said 'murder'

SCENE 13. INT. THE COP-SHOP. NIGHT.

Lights up on Hansel at the cop shop table as before. He finishes writing by signing his name (mouthing it) with a flourish. Hansel holds up his note and reads it out loud.

HANSEL (*Spoken or sung*)

I, Hansel Grimm , wish to admit to the killing of nine , brackets, (he puts it back on the table and laboriously draws brackets) 'approx'.. young women.

Lights down on Hansel

SCENE 14. INT. CONFERENCE. DAY

Lights up on Hunter on Hot seat, as before.

HUNTER

In brackets, 'Approx'. Like you forget! (Laughs) Gretel never admitted to anything. (Pause. He shakes his head) Fate! Like it or not it's part of my life. (Grunts) The Ancient Mariner - I'm compelled. Telling the story helps make some sort of sense of it.

Lights down on Hunter.

SCENE 14a. EXT/INT. THE TENT. NIGHT.

Lights up on the ghostly forensic tent (Screens). The bodies turn, singing a chorus of :

CHORUS

I wish to admit to the killing of nine , brackets approx. young women.

Lights down on them.

15. Int. Conference II

Lights up on the banner & Dr T in the Hot seat. It's later in the day. Dr T has regained his composure.

DR T (SPOKEN)

Does anyone else want to take a swing at me? (*Polite laughter from Conference*)

DR T (SUNG)

That was, if you like, (*laughs*) your introduction to working with female patients.

(Polite laughter)

DR T (CONT'D)

So, as I was saying - There have of course, been women serial killers throughout history. Mostly poisoners (*smiles*) the so-called, black widows. Take the notorious Mary Ann Cotton, who killed her husbands, her lovers and her children.

Like Gretel, she was a murderer, but was she a psychopath? Her early life gives some clues: Her parents were strict and religious. It is conceivable that physical chastisement was used. Now, in the Freudian developmental view, Mary Ann had a trauma in the period of 'latency'.

DT.T. (SPOKEN)

Some psychiatrists believe that this latency phase is a key fixation that you find in serial killers.

DR T (SUNG)

Now, let's look at a woman who kills her children.

CHORUS

No comment. (Repeated interjections)

DR T (CONT'D)

A woman conceives, carries and delivers a child. She is usually the prime carer. What happens when that woman is disturbed? The proper bond is breached – she never sees the child as sep'rate from herself. If she harms herself (-and she often will) – harming the child is merely a self-extension. Women kill within a small area. Where they have most influence – within their domestic coral. You might say...(he smiles) Women kill close to 'the hive'.

SCENE 16. INT. A COURTROOM. DAY.

NB : THIS SCENE IS SPOKEN/ PRE-RECORDED.

Lights up on a court scene. A Judge sits on his bench. A Defense Barrister is addressing the court.

THE BARRISTER

There were no direct witnesses to the killings - just malevolent gossips, with an axe to grind. Supposed witnesses popped up from all over - some of them from places she had never even been. And of course, there were sensational headlines. With utter contempt for the court proceedings, the Press claimed she had killed her own and other people's children. The mores of the time placed emphasis on the moral superiority of women: they were supposed to save men from themselves. She was a monster in the eyes of the media, which had always been sensationalist, but was even worse in this age of mass distribution.

THE JUDGE

And the woman of whom you speak is Gretel Grimm?

BARRISTER

No M'lud. It is Mary Ann Cotton, who was hung for multiple murders in 1873.

JUDGE (ANNOYED)

I am puzzled as to why you are speaking of her? Surely, this is the trial of Gretel Grimm, now?

BARRISTER

Indeed M'Lud. I just mean to give an example of how little attitudes towards women who transgress have changed in over a century.

JUDGE

Harrumph.

BARRISTER

M'lud, this is exactly what is happening to Gretel Grimm. Now. When Hansel Grimm killed himself before trial, she was left as the only defendant in the case. The press focus has changed quite dramatically since Hansel left the scene. Everyone has forgotten him. He's become a ghost figure. All the attention has focused on Gretel - as if the press want a scapegoat for all the evil they believe has taken place.

Lights down on Barrister.

SCENE 16a. INT/EXT. THE FORENSIC TENT. NIGHT

Lights up on the forensic tent. The bodies twist and chorus sings.

CHORUS

'No comment'

Lights down

Scene 17 - CINDERS II – The Courtroom.

Cinders is still in the witness box

Music begins (12 bars)

CINDERS

Dad messed with me loads. Down in the cellar most every night. He started sticking things in me. His cock, his willy, his penis. *(She holds her throat)*

4 bars of music

It was the same with the other girls. First off me sisters. And then the orpairs, and nannies. All the ones they murdered.

One day they'd be there and the next they would be gone. Their bones was found under our patio. That's right now they didn't bury their-selves, did they? *(Laughs darkly)* I'd see me Dad take the girls down to the cellar.

Pause. Cinders rubs her eyes as if to erase the sight.

Key change – 10 bars of music

CINDERS (CONTD.)

Gretel would take down a tray of tea. There'd be muffled grunts and groans. My Dad was a shit and so was my mum. But the strange thing is I still love them.

Lights down on Cinders.

SCENE 18. INT. THE CONFERENCE. DAY.

Lights up on Hunter on Hot seat.

HUNTER

I can't imagine what it's been like for Cinders. She was sexually abused by her mother, and her father, and her uncle, her father committed suicide, her uncle committed suicide, and her mother's serving life imprisonment for the murders she committed including, you know, her sister.

Lights down on Hunter

SCENE 19. INT. THE COURT ROOM. DAY.

The Defense Barrister is addressing the court, giving evidence.

NB: This is spoken.

BARRISTER

I'm the defense barrister instructed as council for Gretel Grimm. She had been charged with ten murders, all young women, in the place where she'd lived with her husband, Hansel. Before the trial, Hansel Grimm hung himself in prison. Until then, there had been enormous interest in the fact that he was a builder, he had a van, he was digging holes - anybody who had ever seen Hansel dig a hole was interviewed ..

She pauses. Shakes her head.

Afterwards, vengeance was unleashed on my client.. *(Pause)* Yes, she was a sado-masochist married to a killer, yes, she joined in the sexual torture, yes, she had a terrible temper., but did she actually *kill*?

The evidence against her was all circumstantial..

Lights down on Barrister.

SCENE 20. INT. THE TENT. NIGHT.

Lights up on the tent. As before, the twisting chorus sing

CHORUS

"no comment".

Lights down on the tent. The singing fades slowly..

SCENE 21. INT. CONFERENCE. DAY

Lights up on Hunter on Hot seat.

HUNTER

I don't know, I'm not sure, but I may have, I may have heard her say –

(Gretel's disembodied voice over speakers) “I don't want them digging up the patio, there's bodies buried under there..”

I mean, I don't know..

Lights down on Hunter.

Scene 22 . Int. Gretel's prison Cell. Night.

Gretel in her cell. She nurses a furry soft toy bunny, stroking its ears. A screen behind her has projections of her trophies, as they appear in her narrative.

GRETEL

I 'ad a real bunny once. In 'ere. But they killed it. I got back from tea and he was dead in his cage – there were blood everywhere.

(She whimpers, close to tears).

At home, I 'ad cats *(photos on the screen)* Jack an' Jill an' Mary an' Lambie..

I miss 'em terrible. It's cruel keeping me from my pets. *(Pause)* Hansel killed my babies , but I'd always have more. I just wanted something to love me.

(She sobs)

I get accused of all sorts – *(sulky)* – abductin', abusin' torturin', murderin' –

(shouts) Lies, all lies. They thought I was their mother. I took them cups of tea. It was Hansel. All Hansel – he's one sick motherfucker!

(She puts her fingers in her ears and hums. Nursery rhyme tune, “Polly put the kettle on” Lalalalalalalalala)

I was just a normal housewife – ain't never done nothing wrong.

(Pause. She leans forward , confidentially)

I get letters all the time. People wantin' to marry me. *(She laughs)* . I got engaged. But then I thought, no. I like it in 'ere. It's safe. I don't never want to go out again. I'd be in Hell out there.

(Pause)

I'll be in 'ere 'til I die.

(She wraps her arms round the bunny and clings on tight)

But then I'll be in Heaven and I'll be 'appy..

In my dreams, Heaven's all sunny. A green meadow with a stream and daisies , an' there's bunnies and lambies scamprin' about.. *(breaks off)* By the way, I make angels, you can buy them..

(On screens, picture of cushions with angels embroidered on them)

(Pause)

I was just a normal housewife – ain't never done nothing wrong.

(Pause)

I deserve to be 'appy. I miss my pets, my babies, my friends..

(pause)

I got a *few* friends in 'ere – I teach 'em line-dancing..

(She stands, dropping the bunny and steps forward doing a Riverdance-style, Irish step-change. Music. On the screen a photo of Gretel in a pub, line-dancing with other women, all laughing.

In her cell, she gets more and more into it.

The 'bone' girls appear in the cell from the gloom. They assemble in a line with their arms around each other and Gretel, and all do the line dance, Riverdance style, across the front of the stage. They sing.)

GRETEL

They thought I was their mother. I took them cups of tea.

CHORUS

The family is a very dangerous place..

**NB: LINE DANCE possibilities
(one and a two step
three and a four step)**

I was like their mother
Brought them cups of tea

She was like our mother
Brought us cups of tea.

Optional

The family is dangerous
The family is dangerous

And/ Or

Step and kick, step and kick
Ball change and shuffle

SCENE 23. INT. THE COURTROOM. DAY.

Lights up on the Court scene - Maid Marian giving evidence in witness box. As she speaks, dim lights come up on one single bound, twirling figure in the tent.

MAID MARIAN

My name is Maid Marian, and I'm here because my sister Beauty was one of the Grimms' victims. And after 20 years of wondering, we finally found out what happened to her all those years ago. *(Pause)*

I had a dream in which a pathologist gave me a sack and in it was a toy skeleton kit. In the dream it assembled itself and it became Beauty. I held her, she rested her head upon my shoulder. *(pause).*

The twirling figure (dressed like a skeleton) descends, embraces Maid Marian and softly dances with her. The skeleton disappears leaving Maid Marian reaching after her..

MARIAN

We buried her and put a poem on her gravestone. (pause) A shaft of sunlight shone on the grave. (pause) Some cockerel bantams came out of nowhere, scratching about the grave. (pause) Where did they come from? Why did they come then? What on earth were they doing there? (pause)

(Spoken – music stops)

We looked at each other, because in our childhood we'd had bantams, and Beauty used to paint them. All these things felt like an affirmation. Then there was a very long deep silence that held us all.

(Sung – music begins)

I had another dream after Beauty in that dream she came back from a water-meadow and said these words: 'If you sit very still. You will hear the sun move. (pause)

(Spoken)

And I experience in the dream - and when I woke up – this very profound feeling of peace, which I've never experienced before or since.

Gretel's disembodied recorded voice comes over the speakers/ or from where she's still sitting in a pool of light in her 'cell' ..

GRETEL

They'll never get a fuckin' confession out of me .'Cos I aint fuckin' done nuthin!

The whole of the forensic tent lights up and the entire ghostly, hanging chorus twists and sings.

CHORUS

'No comment'

SILENCE AND BLACKOUT.

Scene 24 – Int. Conference III

Lights up on a semi-circle of seated conference attendees - all forensic, psychiatric professionals. DRS M, B, J, T, G, C, E. They are in seminar mode, batting ideas between themselves, but playing to the conference audience.

Music begins – 8 bars

DR M

A lot of us, would like more power and money, why don't we take that by force from people? Well to some extent we don't like hurting fellow men.

DR J

Unless they're bankers.

DR C

Or Brexiteers (*They all laugh*)

4 bars of music

DR M

There aren't as many women who commit such crimes, and the ones who do look very different from the men. Take my unit. It's full of men who've done terrible things, but it's still a very orderly place. These men are not mentally ill, they are not depressed, they don't take overdoses, they do not cut themselves. Go into the women's ward, it's full of women hearing voices, having extreme mood swings, they self harm, doing things for no apparent reason.

Everyone murmurs agreement.

DR M (CONT'D)

It seems there's something in men that allows them to be comfortable with antisocial, predatory, aggressive behaviour. Whereas for the women to do those sort of things, they have to be really screwed up.

Music (8 bars)

DR B

Well, talking of screwed up - seventy years ago this year, fourteen men sat round a table in Wannsee. Nice, intelligent, thoughtful, organised men with wives and lovers, cultured men - they listened to opera, they loved their dogs. They sat down and they planned in detail, in the most cruel and absurd ways, how they would shoot people, gas and torture people, what they would do with people who were half Jewish, I mean really deranged cruelty by a lot of ordinary, nice men drinking wine, having a lovely meal.

4 bars of music

DR M (CONT'D)

You and I in the right circumstances and in the right political climate - we would be capable of genocide - I think I really do believe that.

DR B
M!

DR M

Come on, B, I bet there are moments when you've said, "That bastard! I really want to kill him" *(They all laugh)*

DR B *(LAUGHS)*

You know far too much, much too much about my life.

DR C

The idea that you, that any woman is actively destructive, especially to her children, is really horrifying for society to contemplate.

DR J

The man got the thrill off the perversion of what he did, the woman is giving pleasure through participating in the event. We don't have so-called serial women killers, they're always linked to the man.

(They all laugh)

DR B (Spoken)

Pure sexism!

DR J (Spoken)

There are four times as many male psychopaths, as there are female psychopaths, in the general population, as there are in prisons.

DR M

Thanks for that, J, good to know.

DR J

You're welcome.

DR C

I'd argue that women can be as destructive as men, but the destructiveness is expressed in different ways. My hypothesis about women who attach themselves to serial killers, is that it allows expression of their own violence and destructiveness, but they need the man to do it.

DR J

You write to serial killers?

DR C

I am quite capable of violence and destruction, ask any of my lovers.

They all laugh

DR B

We're fascinated 'cos we wonder whether we might be able to do such things. Because most people have the experience of hatred, anger, cruelty even briefly..

DR C

Like I said. Ask my lovers.

They all laugh

But, you know, there's something about the glamour of serial killers,

DR E

Everybody likes to see *slasher* movies.

DR C

The stars of the murder industry.

DR E

They love the salacious, terrible details. (*Clicks her teeth*) And women are even worse!

Everyone nods agreement. Thoughtful pause.

DR J

Women killing their children is extremely controversial.

DR M

You get a lot of feminist debate. Daily Mail outrage.

DR C

The Daily Mail isn't feminist!

DR J

There's lots of heated debate!

DR M

Women behaving badly. No! No! No! No! No! No! NO!!..

They all laugh. A drinks trolley is wheeled in.

DR M (*SPOKEN*)

Ah, just in time to prevent further violence.

DR C

Or, to provoke it.

Blackout.

Scene 25. Int. A BAR/ LARGE ROOM WITH NOISY PARTY. NIGHT.

(THIS ENDS ACT ONE. IT'S PART SPOKEN / PART SUNG.)

The Conference networking cocktail party. A merry occasion with the forensics and all others taking part. The same DRs as above. They mill about on stage drinking and chatting. There are canapés on food trolleys and waiters with trays of drink. Background choral chat at all times, but the lighting areas come and go on individuals, couples and groups, as we need to focus on them. Everyone is quite drunk and gets drunker as the scene goes on. People often speak or shout over each other, or speak at the same time - as you do at a noisy party. The characters, repeating the following given lines only, speak to each other, singly, doubly, or in groups, or talk to themselves, and eventually drunkenly shout the lines and break into song. Eventually they fan out across the stage singing competitively. It becomes quite hysterical. It starts to resemble a Dionysian Fantasy. It reaches a peak, where everyone screams a top note line.

NB: This can take place towards the end of the interval – ie as the audience is filing back in – the players would mill about them, drawing them in as though they're all at the same drunken party. The players sing the lines below, separately and/or all together.

The idea is to directly involve the audience – thereby making them complicit.

DR T

Some of the female Gods are quite nasty

DR E

All these salacious, terrible, little details ..

DR B

Broadmoor is a word of iconic significance in English culture.

DR C

There's preoccupation with getting inside the object, drilling holes, taking bits out, etc.

DR M

Instead of wanting to go to work, psychopaths want to go out and murder people.

DR B

Fourteen men sat round a table in Wannsee, and planned the mass murder of Jews.

DR C

The IOP search a final solution to the Psychopath question..

DR M

They don't like psychopaths because they're unreliable..

DR E

We don't have women serial killers, they're always linked to the man.

DR M

What kind of society encourages an eight-year-old to walk around in the street, with sexy kitten written on their front?

DR C

Just as horrible, just as violent, just as cruel, no different, you know, no different.

DR B

If you want your children to be really fucked up, you just treat them in a really awful, cruel way.

DR C

I wanna kill him! Ha ha ha.

DR J

There are four times as many male psychopaths, as there are female psychopaths, in the general population.

DR B

We all are fascinated by why people do horrific things.

DR C

There's something about the glamour of serial killers. They're the stars of the murder industry..

DR T

That was my introduction to women as patients..

DR C

A toxic relationship

DR M

A marriage in perverse heaven

DR E

A domestic holocaust

HUNTER

A complete wall of silence.

DR B

It's taught me what a very dangerous place the family can be.

Blackout. End of act one/interval

ACT 2

In ACT 2 The chorus members are dressed as fairy-tale witches. They act together as before, swaying, humming and occasionally singing.

SCENE 1. LIGHTS ON CONFERENCE BANNER/SCREEN.

Lights up as Crystal Tipps (AKA Chrystal) enters and takes her place on the 'Hot' seat. She addresses the Conference audience.

CRYSTAL TIPPS (SPOKEN)

Hello. My name is Chrystal . I am an artist and writer and I have made a piece of work based on my research into women who have been involved with serial killing. In particular, I studied The Grimm case. It's 20 years this year that Gretel Grimm was convicted of killing ten women, including her own daughter, Rapunzel. She was sent down for life and is still in a High Security prison up North where it's Grimm - HaHa. Sorry. Gretel never admitted the killings and much of the evidence against her was circumstantial. The work I am going to show today, is an artist's attempt to make some kind of metaphorical sense of the grisly fairy tale in which the Grimms and their victims were involved.

Lights down on Chrystal. Lights up on another central part of the stage. The lights all around it dim. A play begins to unfold (Think a-play-within-a-play as in The Players scenes in Hamlet. Use of screens as in Act 1).

SCENE 2 EXT. A BEAUTIFUL FOREST GLADE IN (PERHAPS) THE FOREST OF ARDEN. DAY. (LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD)

On screen. A gorgeous, bright, sunny day. Impression of swaying leafy trees. Birdsong. All is well with the world. The chorus, now dressed as witches, move keening, through the background trees in the forest. They sing:

CHORUS

Drown the bitch! Dirty witch! Duck her again - she's still breathing!

A young girl wearing a red hoodie jacket enters with a basket. She is picking and eating blackberries. She has earphones on and is talking to her mobile phone.

NB: *During this first scene, the 'Play' gradually morphs into our reality and is no longer a play-within-a-play. LRRH is played by same actor as Cinders. She is speaking into her phone.*

CHORUS (Bass)

Drown the bitch, the dirty witch

Drown the bitch, the dirty witch

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

These berries are so delicious, yeah, I just can't resist. Even though, yeah Nana's waiting for me she's poorly and Mum's baked her fairy cakes.

CHORUS

Drown the bitch, the dirty witch! Duck her again - she's still breathing!
Drown the bitch, dirty witch! Duck her again - she's still breathing!

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD (CONT'D)

Dunno, probably late, yeah, Nana will want to stay and chat, she gets lonely. It's boring just watching daytime T.V. Mum begged her move nearer but she's like 'no' She likes it out here it's her home. It's where she was born and raised. Mum begged her move nearer but she's like 'no'. She's a stubborn, stubborn old boot.

She picks and eats more berries.

CHORUS

Drown the bitch! Dirty witch! Duck her again - she's still breathing!
Drown the bitch! Dirty witch! Duck her again - she's still breathing!

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD (CONT'D)

Yum. I'm starving, yeah, yeah, but I daren't eat Nana's cake - I once ate her scones and then there were none. If I do it again, she'll kill me!

Fiddles with earphones

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD (CONT'D)

Oh bum my signal's gone - it's rubbish in this forest. I'd better get going or else I'll be going home in the dark.

She hurries off. Now we have fully entered the "play". Scenery , trees, bushes etc are in place. (Or, on screens all around) The chorus wafts across the stage again.

The chorus disappears, as the daylight starts to wane. Sound of shotgun fire off stage. HUNTER enters. He is dressed - pantomime/opera style as a 'hunterman'. Lincoln green, hat, shotgun, stick with furry creatures or birds on it over his shoulder. Very 'Magic Flute' - but just as much a modern-day gamekeeper. There are forest sounds, rustles, birds, sharp animal cries, as the daylight turns into dusk. HUNTER has his phone to his ear. He takes it shakes it.

Scene 3. EXT: THE FOREST. THE HUNTER

Griselda! Hello? Griselda? Damn, there's no signal. Now it's getting dark, better get home.

He hurries off. Pause. Shot fired. Squawking as the birds take off. Flurry of feathers rain down on stage. HUNTER re-enters with a bloody pheasant in his hand. He is grinning.

HUNTER (SPOKEN)

Couldn't resist. Sitting Duck. Well, pheasant.

Light is now rapidly fading.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

Right that's it for today, head for home.

(Little Red Riding Hood – SCREAM offstage)

HUNTER (CONT'D)

What the...

Another terrified scream - this time muffled. Hunter is torn. He shakes his head and goes off in the direction of the scream. Lights down

Lights up on another part of the stage.

GRISELDA has the phone to her ear. She shakes it. Taps it. Nothing.

GRISELDA (SPOKEN)

Dead.

Lights down on her. Lights up on another part of the forest.

**SCENE 4 INT/EXT: A FAIRY TALE GINGERBREAD-STYLE HOUSE. NIGHT.
(GRETEL PETAL)**

On Screens. The house looks warm and inviting, in the gloom gathering around. There are muffled sounds from within, laughter and music - sounds like a party.

4a: We go 'inside' of the house in shadow-play on the SCREENS. Grotesque shadow shapes of heads - foxes, rabbits, birds - play on the windows and walls. They are having all kinds of sex. It looks like an animal orgy. A rough and low-life Dionysian frenzy. (NB: Mirrors the one at the end of ACT 1)

The front door opens and Hansel comes out to have a fag. He is in fancy dress - a Satanic looking wolf's head with bared fangs on his head. He's got a beer in his hand and is quite drunk. He rolls and lights up a fag, takes a deep drag and shouts back into the room..

HANSEL (SPOKEN)

Hey you, come out here. Gretel Gretel, Gretal Petal..!

Gretel comes out dressed as a cow - her costume has a very exaggerated bottom and big udders. Hansel grabs at and squeezes whatever he can. She giggles and shies away being very coy and burlesque sexy.

HANSEL

Gretel! Petal! Come here my (CUNT) sausage! Gretel! Petal! My own (CUNT) sausage! Show me your ass, big, fat ass! Show me your udders, big fat udders!

Gretal! Petal! Feel my bump! Give it a hump! That's the way to do it!

Gretel giggles, breaks free and runs off into the trees. Hansel does a wolf howl and runs after her.

Lights down

SCENE 5. INT. CELLAR. NIGHT.

Lights up on the cellar in the Gingerbread house. It's decorated like a brothel. Little Red Riding Hood is tied up, gagged and hung from a meat hook in the ceiling. Muffled music and party sounds from upstairs. LRRH's internal voice comes from speakers, as she dangles there.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Someone come. Find me. Save me. I can't I scream. I can't speak. They've took my phone. Who are they? Will I die here? Is this it? Oh Jesus! Oh Mummy! Someone. Help me.

The chorus, as bodies buried in the cellar come to life as skeletons (dressed like bone fragments as before). Hansel's voice repeats "My angels"

They circle LRRH humming softly. Moro, Lasso.. / or they repeat her lines with her. "Oh Jesus, Oh Mummy, someone, help me!"

They lift her up comfortingly and move/sway/ dance with her.

Lights down on her/them.

SCENE 6. INT. THE COURTROOM. DAY.

Lights up on Court Room. Judge as before. Long John Silver (A Senior Investigating Officer) is in the box giving evidence.

LONG JOHN SILVER (SPOKEN)

Gretel was not a prostitute under the normal definition of the word - she didn't get paid for her services she gave her sexual favours, er, free of charge and very often it seems er, she had a number of Afro-Caribbean er gentlemen that would visit her and she would have sex with them, all with Hansel's knowledge. And it seems that on a Thursday - which this was, a Thursday, Gretel would see these gentlemen callers. She'd be dressed in what you might say, a negligee, as you would be - or some kind of costume. They had this big box of like fancy dress. Everything from maid's to masks. Rubberwear, leather clothing. One of the rooms was decked out to look, almost like a bordello. It was called the black magic bar, and this room, Gretel's special room, had this bed-head, with a cow and a bull havin' intercourse on it, and, subscribed on the front of the bed was the word, 'cunt' - like, chiseled out. Oh yes, it was often quite a party.

CHORUS

Drown the bitch, the dirty witch. Duck her again-she's still breathing.
Drown the bitch, the dirty witch. Duck her again-she's still breathing.
Drown the bitch, the dirty witch. Duck her again-she's still breathing.
Drown the bitch, the dirty witch. Duck her again-she's still breathing

SCENE 7 EXT. THE CLEARING IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE. NIGHT

It's now almost completely dark as Hunter, the huntsman, enters. He peers round the glade and approaches the house.

HUNTER

Hello? Hello there? That scream came from over this way. Probably nothing. Someone over-excited. Someone's had too much to drink. Still, better take a look.

(HUNTER addresses the audience. SPOKEN)

Did anyone else hear it? Am I in the right place?

AUDIENCE

(Muffled responses) 'Yes' 'Girl' 'Tied up' 'She's in the house', 'In the cellar.'

Hunter holds his hand over his ear

HUNTER

What's that? Louder..

AUDIENCE

Behind you.....Dadadadadadada

Muffled shouts as before.. Hunter shakes his head as if he can't make the words out. He repeats his former words.

HUNTER

Hum. Probably nothing. Someone over-excited. Too much to drink. Still..I'd better have a look..

He goes up to the front door and knocks. After a moment, a large man wearing a stag's head and clutching a bottle opens the door. He grins and waves to Hunter to come in. Hunter looks towards audience as if uncertain, raises his eyebrows, then shrugs and enters. Lights down.

Lights up in another part of the forest.

SCENE 8. EXT. ANOTHER CLEARING NEAR THE G-HOUSE. NIGHT.

Gretel runs into the clearing. She looks behind for Hansel - as if she has run away from him. Her costume is all rucked up behind and hanging half off her. Clearly, they have been having sex. Gretel stops, bends over and breathes deeply.

GRETEL (SPOKEN)

My God, that man is insatiable (*Pause – she gets her breath*)

(Little Bumpkin)

GRETEL (SPOKEN OVER MUSIC)

I was thirteen when I first met Hansel. He was that much older and quite a glamour boy, round our way. He had a motorbike and had his hair long in a ponytail. He was very good-looking.

He worked in town, whereas I was from the backwoods really. He called me his little bumpkin. I met him at a line dance in the village hall.

GRETEL (SUNG)

He wasn't dancing, he'd come in for a look with some of the biker lads. I saw Hansel as soon as he came in – I thought, ooh he's a bit tasty.

After the dance he give me a ride on his bike. He said he'd take me home, but we just roared round the lanes for hours didn't have crash helmets or anything on.

We stopped in the woods he took some cider out of his pillion seat. We drank it all, then we had sex.

I'd never had it with anyone I fancied before. He was much better at it than my brothers or my Dad.

GRETEL (SPOKEN)

His Dad was a builder in town, his mum worked as a dinner lady. He had three brothers still at school. I didn't say much about me - well, how could I?

CHORUS

Drown the bitch, the dirty witch, Duck her again she's still breathing

GRETEL (SUNG)

That summer he took me all over even to pubs. You're probably wonderin' was it romance and I say that it really was.

CHORUS (repeats)

Drown the bitch, the dirty witch, Duck her again she's still breathing

GRETEL

I'd never known anyone like Hansel - He really cared for me. He treated me like a princess like I was in a fairy story (like I was in a fairy story).

Sounds from off of Hansel trampling through the forest, still raucously singing. He is fast approaching.

GRETEL (CONT'D. SPOKEN)

How was I to know it would turn into a horror story??

Gretel runs towards the Gingerbread house. She opens the door - party noise, as before - and enters, slamming the door behind her.

REPRISE OF ORGY SCENE HERE. SHADOW SHAPES ON THE SCREENS, DANCING, HUMPING ETC. RAUCOUS SEXUAL SOUNDS, MUSIC, LAUGHTER.

From off-stage the faint sound of the chorus singing eventually overtakes the party sounds..

CHORUS

Drown the bitch! Dirty witch! Duck her again - she's still breathing!

Hansel stumbles from the forest into the clearing, now quite drunk.

HANSEL (SPOKEN)

Gretel, where are you? You run away, you fat cunt. You know I doesn't like girls who try ter run away. Where do they end up? (He laughs leerily) Down below, that's where. We got a nice little cunt waiting there haven't we? Little Red Riding Hood. Save her for later. Special treat. (Mutters to himself)

He stands still - fixed stare as if looking into his own head. Lights down on Hansel. He still stands there.

The chorus as a ring of spectral skeletons/bones surround him. They hold hands and sing

Chorus

“Ring a ring ‘o’ roses, a pocket full of poesies, atishoo atishoo, we all fall down,”

They fall at his feet and melt away. Hansel clutches head. Groans in terror

SCENE 9. INT. THE COURTROOM. DAY.

Lights up on Court scene. Long John Silver giving evidence.

LJS (SPOKEN)

If you imagine that the top of the garden was a pie, then underneath that was a sort of a custard, which was a mixture of earth and sort of sand, and then once below that, was a mixture of sewerage - earth and muck and of course the remains, eventually, of three young women. I can remember the pathologist saying - unless we've come across the first three-legged woman then er, there's another set of remains down here..

SCENE 10. EXT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE. NIGHT

Lights up on front of Gingerbread house. The door opens and HUNTER comes out. He has a glass of red wine and is flushed, as though he has been drinking. The door stays open lighting the scene - inside sounds of leery merriment.

Hansel stands there, still, almost transfixed, as before..

(HUNTER Meets Hansel)

HUNTER (TO HANSEL)

Hello there...I'm sorry I was out hunting in the woods

HANSEL (WARY)

Who the fuck are you?

HUNTER

Sorry, I'm Hunter. I was hunting in the woods. I heard a noise, like a scream? Maybe from your party?

HANSEL

Quite likely. People gets carried away at parties...Who the fuck are you?

HUNTER

No-one seems to have heard it. No-one there inside

HANSEL

They wouldn't hear if someone was chopped up.

HUNTER

Chopped up?

HANSEL

In a wheelie bin chopped up and stuffed in a wheelie bin. In a wheelie bin.

HUNTER

A wheelie bin, chopped up and stuffed in a wheelie bin? In a wheelie bin?

CHORUS

In a wheelie bin, chopped up stuffed in a wheelie bin, in a wheelie bin.

HANSEL (GUFFAWS)

Too far gone.

HUNTER

Too far gone?

HANSEL

Drinking, smoking. Wouldn't hear a chain saw massacre

HUNTER

Chainsaw? Massacre?

HANSEL

I 'ent seen you at one of our do's

HUNTER (pretty uncomfortable by now)

I've not been, never been at one of your do's. Like I say I was on my way home when I heard this noise like someone in distress. Maybe someone lost? Maybe trapped? Maybe someone caught in a bush? Tangled in the ivy? Frightened by an animal? Did you see anything in the woods?

HANSEL

In the woods? Nah. (laughs) I'm the only wolf in these parts.

(strokes his wolf mane)

HUNTER

That's a fine head you've got there. Looks real when the moon is out.

HANSEL

Oh, it's real alright. You must be psychic you've come as a huntsman. Like a huntsman.

(He laughs. After a moment, HUNTER rather nervously joins in)

HANSEL (CONT'D)

No - we ain't got no Little Red Riding Hood here. No abducted girlies.

HUNTER

No abducted girls?

HANSEL

No one tied up and gagged. No one waiting to be eaten!

HUNTER

No one tied and gagged? No one waiting to be eaten?

HANSEL

Come on in, see for yourself. Come right in.

HUNTER

Thanks, but I must be getting home. My wife will be worried.

HANSEL

My wife puts on a show.

HUNTER

My wife will be worried.

HANSEL

She loves a party, does Gretel. I'm Mister Punch and she's my Judy.

HANSEL (CONT. SPOKEN)

That's the way to do it. Give him a blow! (Nudges Hunter & leers) There's a promise of pleasure, you'll be missing a treat.

HUNTER (SUNG)

Maybe another time.

(More Than One Man Can Handle)

HANSEL

Any time. She's insatiable is my Gretel. More than one man can handle is my Gretel.

I hire her out. Not for money - don't get me wrong - just for friends, like them indoors. She likes a touch of the Tar, does my Gretel. They're big those black buggers - had to make a special bed to take the weight of them, never mind the length.

I've seen 'em at it many times, take a look if you like in the viewing hole. It's better than anything on the telly. A sight for sore eyes.

HUNTER (Lost for words)

Yes. I see. (pause) Well I must be off - it's quite a way back.

HANSEL

You watch yourself now. You never know what can happen in the woods...

HUNTER

(Still alert to the scream) What sort of thing do you mean?

HANSEL

(Strokes his mane thoughtfully) Well, in the dark. Trippin' over tree roots, fallin' down holes, gettin' tangled in barbed wire, like..

HUNTER

Oh, right. Well, cheers.

He sets off. Hansel watches him leave, then enters the house and shuts the door, killing light and sound.

Eerie sound of rising wind and in the distance the chorus's ghostly singing.

CHORUS

Drown the bitch! Dirty witch! Duck her again - she's still breathing!

HUNTER creeps back to the house. He says this straight to the audience. This is intercut with GRISELDA, in another pool of light in her kitchen and Long John on the witness stand, also in a pool of light.

HUNTER

She was in the cellar all the time...

LONG JOHN *(In the witness box)*

Unless we've found the first three-legged woman. There's another one buried here...

HUNTER

That's where they found her. Under the cellar floor.

GRISELDA

Dead. (*Shakes phone*)

(Hunter on The Edge)

Music begins - 8 bars

HUNTER (Sung)

I should have stayed searched some more, not taken no for an answer

GRISELDA

Dead! (*Shaking Phone*)

HUNTER

I should have said you're lying to me, used the gun, should have been much tougher.
You're standing right next to it, yet somehow on the edge. Where should be love and trust
– a den of lust. How do you ever know you're on the edge?

GRISELDA (*Spoken to the phone*)

Not in touch. Drinking too much!

6 bars of music

HUNTER (*Sung Cont.*)

It shakes your faith - I stopped going to church. How could God let that happen to those
poor girls?

GRISELDA (*Spoken*)

Dead.

HUNTER

You know, we all can do evil things – and in fact, we all *do* do evil things.

GRISELDA (*Spoken*)

Dead.

HUNTER

Something held me back, I didn't take that step. I could have found the girl. Saved Red
Riding Hood.

GRISELDA (*Spoken*)

Dead.

HUNTER

There were other bodies buried down there! Something held me back.

GRISELDA (*Spoken*)

Still Dead.

Throws down the phone.

(*Spoken*) Hopeless!

SCENE 11. INT. CONFERENCE, IV

Music begins

All protagonists sit in a semi-circle (DRs T, B, C, J, , HUNTER, Maid Marian – NB: Dr A doesn't exist in this version. Her lines are sung by DrB) . Silence, apart from the sound of one person sobbing. This is a group therapy/ revelation session to end the Conference. Chrystal Tipps is on the Hot seat being questioned about her presentation.

DR B (*Speech Rhythms*)

Chrystal, the piece inhabits a kind of fairy tale or 'fantasy world'. Why is that?

CHRYSTAL (*Spoken*)

It appeared to me - and the case was often referred to by people I interviewed - as a terrible kind of grisly fairy tale.

DR C (*nods*)

Every grisly little detail..

DR B

So, it is , as you mentioned, a metaphor..?

CHRYSTAL (*SPOKEN*)

That was my intention..

DR B

A way of dealing with the reality..

DR T

Using the usual tool - a certain dark humor..

Chrystal nods. People smile, laugh.

HUNTER

It has a dreamlike feeling..

CHRYSTAL (SPOKEN)

Again, interviewees stressed the importance of their dreams and not letting the killers get into them...

DR B

What about you? Did they get into your dreams?

There is a small commotion off-stage. Confused voices, we hear only 'Pilates' 'late' and 'baby sitting' GRISELDA bursts onto the stage. HUNTER looks down.

GRISELDA

I'm Sorry. Sorry everyone but I am in this too. I'm Griselda, Hunter's wife. This case is part of my life, too. I can't allow that to be ignored. It took a terrible toll on the whole family. Still does. I've tried to be patient, but enough is enough..!

DR B

Sit down Griselda - you are welcome.

Hunter gets Griselda a chair. As she sits, he touches her shoulder.

GRISELDA

(Whispers to Hunter) You promised to be back for my Pilates class. Honestly, Hunter it's only once a week.

GRISELDA (CONT'D)

Hunter's embarrassed by me now. He never wants to face up to what happened. As far as he's concerned, it was all about him.

CHORUS (repeated)

No one escapes.

(She turns to Chrystal) At least you put me in your piece.

CHRYSTAL

No one escapes, Griselda.

MAID MARIAN *(To Chrystal)*

Going back to what you said, I understand about dreams, they were important to me. The can bring release, A sense of relief, Even redemption

HUNTER *(Spoken/Shouted)*

REDEMPTION!? I FIND NO REDEMPTION!

GRISELDA

And Why? Because, because you lost your faith!

GRISELDA (SPOKEN)

He did. He stopped going to church. He said he couldn't see the point, he'd stopped believing in God

HUNTER (SPOKEN)

Griselda!

GRISELDA (SPOKEN)

And therefore, in redemption.

MAID MARIAN

I still believe in it. . (Pause) But you have to forgive. Give up all hope of a better past. See what happened as a testing. A terrible but profound blessing. Transform it to healing. Give society where it happened, meaning. Then you will get peace at last..

Hunter

I can't find meaning. I can't forgive. I have no peace..

He puts his head in his hands. Long silence.

DR T

Chrystal you didn't answer Dr B's question - did the killers get into your dreams?

CHRYSTAL.

I often dreamed I was a witch. In the dream, I had murdered someone and was being chased by a screaming crowd.

NEXT SECTION SPOKEN . DOWN AS FAR AS THE CHORUS, 'NO SAFE WORD'

DR C

Sounds like artistic angst to me!

DR T

Fear of being found out?

CHRYSTAL

All artists have that.

GRISELDA

Being a witch is scary but powerful.

DR A (B) AS ABOVE DR A IS DR B

There isn't a woman here who doesn't know that.

They all laugh

DR T

Or a man here who isn't terrified.

They all laugh.

DR A (B)

I dreamed I was strapped to a ducking stool, once..

DR J

You always did like a bit of bondage.

DR T

Too *much* dark humour , Dr J ?

DR A (B) (*She Nods*)

It wasn't a bit like bondage, J. There was no safe word.

CHORUS (sing)

No safe word.

HUNTER

(Butting in, almost unaware of the others)

I've never in my life had such clear dreams. HAMBURGER shots. Bones dancing.

He waves his arms above his head, as if dispelling the visions of skeletons, which skit about him. They all look at him. Griselda puts a warning hand on his arm, shakes her head.

HUNTER

Sorry. I'm sorry.

Short silence, then DR T starts again.

DR T (*TO CHRYSTAL /DR A/B*)

Can you describe your dream?

DR A (B)

I dreamed I'm being stoned,

CHRYSTAL (*SPOKEN*)

I'm being stoned.

DR A (B)

Spat on. I'm almost naked – just a ripped shirt with bare legs and feet.

CHRYSTAL (*SPOKEN*)

Bare legs and feet.

DR A (B)

A baying crowd follows after me.

CHRYSTAL (*SPOKEN*)

They follow me

DR A (B)

I'm crying, I'm gasping for breath as I'm plunged into the water.

I hear their howls grow fainter as I break the surface.

The chorus figures, still dressed as witches, hurry across. They enact the chase and the crowd. There is screaming. Shouting. The sound of water splashing.

CHORUS

Drown, drown, drown the bitch! (*repeated*)

DR A (B)

The water's cold and there's no land in sight; Just the dark ultramarine of the depths,
calling out for me.

MAID MARIAN

Transform it to healing, choose forgiveness Then you'll find peace at last.

DR T (*SPOKEN*)

Do you drown?

CHRYSTAL (*SPOKEN – MUSIC STOPS*)

I don't know. The dream ends there.

MAID MARIAN

I had another dream after Beauty disappeared, and in that dream, she came back from the water and said these words: 'If you sit very still you will hear the sun move.'

11a. DR GEORGE

There is another off-stage kerfuffle. Voices and the outside world intruding. Eventually a man rushes on, apologizing profusely. It is Dr George.

DR GEORGE

Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry. Please forgive this terribly tardy arrival - my plane was delayed from Stockholm.

DR T (SPOKEN)

It's a syndrome

They all laugh, including George.

(NB: CONFUSION OVER DRs B AND G HERE. IT'S MEANT TO BE DR B – SHE IS THE MODERATOR THROUGHOUT.)

DR B/G (SPOKEN)

Ladies and Gentlemen this is our last guest, Dr George. He is, as you know, a celebrated forensic psychiatrist and profiler.... And he was, for his sins, Gretel's pre-trial assessor.

Dr George takes the Hot seat to address the Conference

DR GEORGE (SUNG)

I know time is short, Conference is almost over, so I'll just plunge right in with the Elephant question. Is Gretel a psychopath?

(SPOKEN)

I'd say not..

DR B

You don't have any problem using that term for a woman?

DR GEORGE (SPOKEN)

No, I *don't* have any problem using that term for a woman.

(SUNG)

As I was saying...Gretel exhibits distress when others are hurt, her children and her pets for example. Even some of the young women who gave evidence against her, said they regarded her as a mother.

DR B

The family can be a very dangerous place..

Chorus of agreement from the others

CHORUS (VERY RESTRAINED)

They regarded her as a mother, the family can be a dangerous place.

DR GEORGE

Gretel is a very damaged person - that damage happened early in her childhood.

HUNTER

Long before she met Hansel?

DR. GEORGE

Yes. She was sexually abused by her father from an early age.

CHORUS

The family can be a dangerous place

DR C

A classic case.

DR B/ DR M, HUNTER, DR T

A classic case.

DR. GEORGE

Gretel's responses to relationships were formed by this incestuous trauma. When a charismatic, older man came along, worldly wise, fun to be with, showing apparently devoted love for her. She was immediately captivated by him.

DR B, DR. M, HUNTER, DR. T

It's no surprise

CHORUS

She wasn't wise.

Drown the bitch! The Dirty Witch!

Duck her again - she's still breathing

Drown the bitch! The Dirty Witch!

Duck her again - she's still breathing

DR GEORGE

She was happy to give in to his more exacting demands - sexually and otherwise - and importantly, Hansel provided escape from her appalling home life. She wasn't to know how controlling he quickly would become.

HUNTER

She'd have little to judge ordinary relationships by...

DR GEORGE

Precisely. Being used and abused was “normal” for her.

DR T

Yes, but did she know what else he was doing?

DR GEORGE

Look - what I observed of Gretel is that she's simply not that different from us.

CHORUS (*SPOKEN – RISING TIDE OF CHORUS OF DISAPPROVAL*)

She's not like us! She's a monster!

CHORUS

Monster! Monster! The woman's a Witch!

Monster! Monster! Drown her!

Monster! Monster! The Dirty Witch!

Monster! Monster! She's still breathing!

DR GEORGE

(Shakes his head)

NO! NO!

She's not the monster that the popular press describes! Whether we like it or not, she is human.

DR T

Well, we're all *human*.

HUNTER

It's a condition from which we can't escape..

DR GEORGE

But - which we are all too quick to judge in others who transgress.

DR. B, DR. M, HUNTER, DR.T

All too quick to judge.

DR GEORGE

Think about this: If all our nasty habits, our darkest fantasies, murderous thoughts, were laid out side by side and someone was judging us. How would we look?

DR J

Hardly super clean?

DR B

Not pristine...

HUNTER/GRISELDA

Moral? Good? Never mean?

DR. T

I don't think so

DR. GEORGE

We make a terrible mistake when we judge people like Gretel as different – except in degree from us

DR B

Saying they're inhuman.

DR C

Not one of us.

HUNTER

Given the right conditions we're all capable of doing wrong

DR T

Perverse fantasies..

DR B

Torture

DR J

Murder

DR T

Even genocide!

All singing various lines interweaved over each other. Gretel appears carrying her furry toy bunny. Around her are a group of cell-mates, line-dancing.

GRETEL

I'm only human. It's only human. I'm sick, sick, sick of being treated like I'm some kind of monster! They thought I was their mother! I made them cups of tea!! I'm sick, sick, sick of being treated like I'm some kind of monster!

CHORUS

NO ONE IS INNOCENT! ALL PAY A PRICE! NO ONE ESCAPE! WE'RE ALL GUILTY!

NO ONE IS INNOCENT! NOT ME, NOT YOU! NO ONE ESCAPES! WE'RE ALL GUILTY!

DR A/B

Terrorists! Nazis!

In the right circumstances we could all be those things.

Onlookers! Media. All of us are implicit!

MAID MARIAN

Transform it to healing. Choose forgiveness, then you'll find peace at last.

HUNTER, DR T

We're all human. It's a condition from which we can't escape.

ALL TOGETHER

NO ONE IS INNOCENT! ALL PAY A PRICE! NO ON ESCAPES!

WE'RE ALL GUILTY! NO ON ESCAPES! NOT ME NOT YOU!

NO ONE ESCAPES! NOT ME! NOT YOU! NO ONE ESCAPES!

Blackout

EPILOGUE

*The lights slowly come up on the screen, which has the William Blake painting - **Eve Tempted by the Serpent***

Then slowly on two hot seats, which are pooled in light. Hunter and Maid Marian sit on them, very still. They sing a Duet - Redemption Song 111

Maid Marian

Letter to Gretel (Spoken, or sung, or both)

Dear Gretel,

It has taken me years to write this letter. My sister Beauty disappeared from my life thirty years ago. She was abducted, tortured and murdered. You have denied having anything to do with it.

It doesn't matter if I believe you or not – I know you too had a terrible life – some part of *you* was abducted, tortured, and murdered.

As for Beauty, we laid her bones to rest. And I embarked on seeking a route to forgiveness. Yes, seeking to free myself from anger, guilt and pain. For unlike Beauty, I must go on living. My murderous rage towards you was overwhelming me – drowning out all joy. All possibility of healing.

But the horror is a burden I want to put down. Transform it to healing. Choose forgiveness.

Give up all hope of a better past. Then I will find peace at last.

Part of my heart is frozen still, but part of it melts in the shining sun. May you too feel the warming rays. May you too be healed by them.

If I sit very still I can hear the sun move. That way lies Redemption.

Hunter

(His reflections several years later. *Spoken, or sung, or both.*)

Did I get over it? (*Laughs*) You tell me. All these years later, I still don't know..

I was stuck in Why me? What did I do to deserve this fate? But then, what did those poor young women do – did they deserve it? Where was “God” in all of that? Why didn't “God” save them?

I did go back to church. Once. It was warm and bright with candlelight. (*Laughs*) Not like when I was an altar-boy. Up at five, cold and dark, waiting for Father Kelly to maul me.

To what could I confess? Terrible dreams of slaughter? Hansel, the Grimm Reaper,
(*Laughs*) Sorry. But perhaps he was? Trapping creatures who thrived with young, beating hearts before being snared and butchered?

Good citizens milling to get a macabre glimpse - seduced by the allure of a female serial killer?

Despair over human nature - my own included?

(*Pause*)

After Gretel's trial, I read the Malleus Malificarum. The fifteenth century Hammer of The Witches – 90% of whom are women! (*laughs*). It insists women are more prone to vice, feebler of intellect, more prone to wickedness ..

(CUTS HERE: “All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable.” It accuses witches of infanticide, casting evil spells and stealing men’s penises. (*Laughs*) It concludes, perhaps understandably, as it was written by a man, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” No wonder so many would be tortured, burned, drowned, or hanged in the following centuries.)

(*Pause. Throughout the above the CHORUS sing versions of “ Kill the bitch. Drown the witch , Duck her again, she’s still breathing.*)

Did Gretel really deserve that? All the evidence against her was circumstantial...

I have struggled, but I have prevailed. I hope I’ve achieved catharsis.

As my dearest Griselda says ,

SUNG BY GRISELDA..

“You don’t need God to be good. Let go of your suffering; Choose to forgive. Remember, no-one is wholly evil.”

At the end, the lights spread as the rest of the cast come on stage still dressed as their characters. They reprise the last two lines, but in a much softer , gentler, melodic mode. Repeated as often as seems right..

CAST

No one is innocent. All pay the price. We do and You do. No one escapes..

THE END

