

OLD STORIES, NEW PLAYS: DEVELOPING A NEW WORK FOR THE STAGE, INSPIRED BY
THE FORMATIVE TALE 'LITTLE RED CAP

By

RACHEL DEALTRY

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of MRES
PLAYWRITING STUDIES

College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
February 2014

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the process involved in crafting a new play for the stage inspired by a formative tale. *Red* (2013) is a play driven by an artistic desire to write a coming of age story whilst simultaneously critiquing the formative tales of childhood. Issues explored within the script are those of: gender imbalance, abuse of power and female repression. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the approach taken when attempting to write a coherent play for the stage. Formed and grounded in the critical teachings of playwright's Edgar, Waters and Smiley.

Red took inspiration from Grimm's version of *Little Red Cap*. This paper explores the new play which seeks to violate the very conventions of such tales. The play involves a soldier from a seemingly ordinary world, arriving injured in a non-naturalistic dark world of fairytale. The characters in *Red* drive the plot forward by breaking the conventions of the stock characters found in the formative tale. The play relies upon familiarity. It places itself within the tradition of other female playwrights who have taken oppressive themes found in formative tales and critiqued them. Hence, *Red* is a new play worthy of the contemporary stage.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this body of work to my father DAVID DEALTRY (1947 – 1989)

In my own formative years, my dad would often say something along the lines of:

'If you think you've got nothing to do, find something to do. Make something up!'

[Think creatively.]

'Don't look at the world through rose tinted spectacles.'

[Find the truth. Ask questions.]

'Let's go for a walk and get some fresh air.'

[Clear your head and find clarity.]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals and charities for helping me get this far:

Fraser Grace - Supervisor

Stephanie Dale

David Edgar

Equity Charitable Trust – Retraining and Education bursary

Access to Learning Fund – Birmingham University

Anne – at OLRC cafe

The librarians at OLRC

Doctor Amy Neale

David Gee – (For pointing me in the direction of the website ‘Informed Choice’)

Annie Siddons

Rebecca Lenkiewicz

Suzanne Leigious

Samantha Conroy

Eleanor Champ

Janet & Aubrey Rue

Sally Woolford

Sally Bennett

Beth Gibbons

Paris Dealtry

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RED – A STAGE PLAY BY RACHEL DEALTRY PAGES 1 - 71

THESIS ESSAY:

OLD STORIES, NEW PLAYS: DEVELOPING A NEW WORK FOR THE STAGE, INSPIRED BY
THE FORMATIVE TALE ‘LITTLE RED CAP’

INTRODUCTION	PAGES 1 – 2
CHAPTER ONE	PAGE 3
DEVELOPING THE PROJECT	
CHAPTER TWO	PAGES 4 – 7
MODELS	
CHAPTER THREE	PAGES 8 – 13
THE CONSEQUENCES WHEN USING FORMATIVE TALES AS INSPIRATION	
CHAPTER FOUR	PAGE 14
FORMATIVE STORY GIVES THE PLAY ITS TONAL REGISTER	
CHAPTER FIVE	PAGES 15 – 20
AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST	
CHAPTER SIX	PAGES 21 – 25
SPACE AND STAGING	
CHAPTER SEVEN	PAGES 26 - 27
STORYTELLING AND VIDEO	
CONCLUSION	PAGE 28 – 27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	PAGES 30 – 32
<u>APPENDICES:</u>	
APPENDIX ONE	PAGE 33
NOTES FROM EDWARD BOND XIV – XV	
APPENDIX TWO	PAGES 34 – 35
WRITING MANIFESTO	

RED

Cast

GRANDMA

Early seventies like the Grandma from Little Red Riding Hood.

RED

Seventeen, pretty and sweet.

GEORGE

Late fifties, rough around the edges, a huntsman.

ARRAN

Early twenties, lean, attractive, a rough diamond.

Act One

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Scene One | Beside the bridge which separates two worlds. |
| Scene Two | Grandma's House. |
| Scene Three | George's House. |
| Scene Four | Grandma's House. |
| Scene Five | The path between George and Grandma's House. |

Act Two

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Scene One | Grandma's House. |
| Scene Two | Grandma's House. |
| Scene Three | George's House. |
| Scene Four | By a bridge which separates two worlds. |

Notes:

When high wind is mentioned it forebodes danger.

Light and Shade: This is set at the edge of the forest. It is worth mentioning that the deeper into the forest, the darker things become.

Whenever a character tells a story it is heightened.

At the beginning and during the interlude a melody should be played – like that which you may find in an old fashioned jewellery box.

Notes Cont...

[. . .] stands for a trailing off in thought or whenever a character is overwhelmed with emotion.

All of the set/scene changes should flow into one. The soundscape can be built into a scene change.

There is a natural break in between Act One and Act Two.

Visually and ideally Grandma's stories would be complemented by black and white film projections.

Scene Five: The flowers could be structures with an inbuilt sound device.

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

Beside a bridge. Arran, a soldier is buried underneath a pile of limestones. In the distance bombs are going off, women and children are crying.

ARRAN *(Quietly)* I can't get out . . . I can't breath . . . help me . . . somebody?

I . . . just want to get out of here . . . I'm crushed. *My leg is fucked.* My brain's getting fried alive here. Anybody there? *This is a dark . . . place.* A dark place you hear me? I'm not – I'm not brave anymore. *I'm not a brave boy* . . . I'm afraid . . . I'm drowning in here. Help?

SILENCE

HELP? I just need some water . . . something . . . something to wet my mouth.

The sound of war gets a little more distant. George on. The sound of his crisp footsteps.

GEORGE *(Stopping dead at the foot of Arran's head)* Well, what have we here? Got yourself into a spot of bother down there?

ARRAN I can't feel much down here . . . I can't feel much of myself.

George takes out his flask and pours a liquid into the hole.

(Licking it up) What is that stuff? Rargh!

GEORGE It will help

ARRAN Rarggh . . . I'm not doin too good down here.

GEORGE No.

ARRAN *you gunna just stand there?*

GEORGE Not sure what I can do?

ARRAN What you can do is, you can get me out of here.

GEORGE I'm just not sure about that.

ARRAN *Just . . . get me out?*

GEORGE *It's bad down there?*

ARRAN Yea.

GEORGE You been here long?

ARRAN Not long . . . just . . . just . . . *help me?*

GEORGE *(Bending down to him) tragic.*

ARRAN Just take the stones away?

GEORGE *What are you doing here. Hey?*

ARRAN That's not helping me.

GEORGE You look like a toy down there, like a toy.

ARRAN Look! It's good of you to get all . . . *The stones? Please?*

GEORGE Some more?

ARRAN Yes.

George pours some more liquid down the hole. An explosion goes off nearby.

GEORGE I'll be seeing you then sunshine.

ARRAN No. Don't go . . . don't go. Don't leave me here to . . . to . . .

GEORGE *To die?*

SILENCE

ARRAN Please. The stones? I think I'll be okay, if you don't leave me.

GEORGE Dunno what I'm gunna find if I move 'em!

ARRAN ***(Sobbing)*** This is not the time to be a coward . . . this is not the time. *Just help me out?*

George takes a few stones away from his chest, Arran pulls his arm free.

Rarghg oh my fucking Jesus the pain . . . the pain.

GEORGE You asked me to move the stones.

ARRAN No. No I'm alright . . . just . . . do some more?

GEORGE I could shoot you. Put you out of your misery . . . like a sick dog.

ARRAN I'm not a sick dog. I'm not si . . . look, I'm alright. I'm talking to you and I'm alright. Just help me out here?

George takes away some more stones.

GEORGE *How d'you get over the bridge, eh?*

ARRAN Will you just help me get out of here?

GEORGE What if it's bad?

ARRAN I'm going to lose my life here if you don't help me. Sort me out, yea?

GEORGE *Think I'm soft in the head?*

ARRAN What does that matter? I am going to die if you don't help me

GEORGE *Look. I. Am. Not. God. I can't help you.*

ARRAN Yes you can.

GEORGE *You're just a piece of trash is what you are **(Begins to walk away)***

ARRAN *Don't leave me here?*

Another explosion.

DON'T GO. DON'T GO?

GEORGE ***(Goes to him)** Who knows what I'm going to find under there! hu? Here, have some more of this **(Pours liquid again)** Close your fucking eyes. Close your eyes.*

Arran grabs him.

ARRAN ***(Quickly)** I'm telling you now. Do not leave me. Don't let me go like this. I'm twenty one years old. I can't die like this. I can't die out here like this with no-one to give a fuck about me. *Please?* I'm begging you. I'm talking. I'm breathing. If you walk away from me you'll be a murderer, not just because you're told to be but because you have a choice . . . *you have a choice* . . . you don't . . . you can't . . . don't do this to me?*

George quickly starts taking the stones away

Thank you, thank you . . . just a . . . my le . . . my . . . rargh
(teeth chattering) I can't . . . I won't . . . don't . . .

George takes the stones away more furiously

GEORGE *You're not making much sense to me . . . it's those stones
what's keeping you together.*

ARRAN *I . . . please. Don't leave? Don't . . . my . . . don't leave me? I
can't . . . God? God?*

GEORGE *You're better off under them stones. You are *better off* under
them stones!*

***George uncovers the last stone from Arran's leg, Arran lets out a tremendous
bellow. An explosion goes off closer. Arran howls in pain. George takes out
his rifle and points it directly at Arran's head as if to shoot, he lowers the rifle
and helps Arran out.***

SCENE TWO

Grandma's house.

Red enters carrying a basket with wine inside. Grandma is sitting on her rocking chair knitting her a red cape. Her knitting is continuous but for natural breaks. The wind is howling and the Grandfather clock ticks.

GRANDMA *(Singing/almost humming)* 'I saw three ships go sailing by.
... go sailing by ... I saw three ships go sailing by on a
winter's day in the morn/

RED *(Lighting a candle)* I don't think those are the right words
Grandma?

GRANDMA Are they not? Are those not the right words Red? I thought
they were. Oh dear, oh dear. I must be getting forgetful in
my old age. Come, come child. Sit beside me and let me tell you
a story.

RED One minute, would you like anything?

GRANDMA Very well, very well. I'll take a glass of wine. Why not?

RED I'll fetch you one.

Red exits to kitchen

GRANDMA *(Muttering)* I saw three ships come ... I saw three ships come.
.. *(Slaps her own forehead)* Oh no, that's not right you silly old
witch. *(Calling)* It's a strong wind Red? I say, it's a strong wind
out there?

RED *(Entering)* Here you are. A nice glass of wine for you, that will
warm you up.

GRANDMA *A strong wind out there, isn't it?*

RED It is Grandma. (*Settles herself on the floor beside her Grandma*) Now then, this story?

GRANDMA Oh yes, well now . . .

RED Yes?

GRANDMA Many years ago, just over the forest there lived a young girl, pretty little thing she were – but a bit insipid looking if you know what I mean?

RED Pasty?

GRANDMA Deadly. Deadly pale and pasty looking. White hair too, as white as the snow. Anyway, she lived with her parents on the edge of the forest. Did I say that already? *Did I Red?*

RED Mmm yes. I think so. Go on?

GRANDMA Nothing special they weren't, her parents, just regular folk. But the father adored his little white beauty, and she grew up into a fairly decent young woman. She was good at *cooking and cleaning* and nothing was ever too much trouble for her. Anyway, this one day, she was walking back from the church and a young man from the village caught her eye. He asked her to walk alongside him, and she agreed to do just that. So off they went into the forest, but it was a windy day, the wind started low but it got high, *if you know what I mean?* Anyway, they seems to be enjoying one another's company, so they go deeper into the forest and he gives her his hand to hold

RED Does she take it?

GRANDMA Oh she does . . . and what's more, he leads her behind a cherry tree and goes to kiss her full on the lips!

RED Grandma!

GRANDMA It doesn't stop there, because she likes him kissing her, and she lets him take it further than that

RED *What happened?*

GRANDMA He notices that his hands are covered in blood!

Red gasps

GRANDMA It frightens him so much, he doesn't know what he has done to her. He starts to scream and pushes her away

The door is blowing

Oh Red. Go and shut that door closed

Red gets up and shuts the door

GRANDMA He thinks he's hurt her, and he gets very scared. He knows that if he takes her back to the village like that, they will think he's done it and all sorts of things go flying through his head. The girl goes as red as the cherries on that tree but she tells him she's not hurt at all and that it must be natural and must happen to all women.

RED What does he do?

GRANDMA He takes his hands and holds them tight around her throat

RED He doesn't?

GRANDMA Oh yes he does. He squeezes the life out of the poor girl.

RED Then what?

GRANDMA Well, she struggles a bit, but like I said she was already insipid looking. She just went all limp, and he picked her up and hung her from a branch. There she was, all strangled and covered in blood, hanging from a tree.

RED Did anyone find her?

GRANDMA Oh yes. The very next morning the vicar found her and alerted the village folk, well her parents were beside themselves with grief, inconsolable they were. The vicar organised a burial for outside the church and they covered her in cherry blossoms. Poor little thing. All glassy eyed she was.

RED Did they find the boy?

GRANDMA Well some say that he went off into the forest never to be seen dead or alive again.

RED Is that it?

GRANDMA That is not it! He went to live amongst the wolves. And some young girls who come of age make sight of him. Half man and half wolf. A handsome fella he's said to be, but something animalistic about him naturally.

Silence, clock ticking.

RED Oh is that the time! George will be wondering where I've got to

GRANDMA How are you going to get through that wind?

RED I'm young. It doesn't bother me. I'm not scared of a bit of wind.

GRANDMA ***(Casting off)*** Well, this should help ***(Holds up the red cape)***

RED Oh, it's lovely

GRANDMA It should at least keep you warm. You'll come tomorrow?

RED Yes of course, and George will come in the morning.

GRANDMA Put it on. Let me see you in it.

RED *(Puts on the cape)* What do you think?

GRANDMA Give us a twirl?

Red spins around.

You'll do.

RED Good. *(Kisses her on the cheek)* I'll be back tomorrow with your cake.

GRANDMA You're not to go straying from the path. No short cuts.

RED Not after that! It gives me the twists in my stomach.

GRANDMA *Twists?!* You just stick to that path, you never know what's out there, you hear me?

RED I hear you and . . . I love you Grandma

Red opens the door. A gust of wind. The door slams. Grandma sits.

GRANDMA I saw three ships come sailing in. Sailing in, come sailing in, I saw three ships come sailing in. Course I know the words! Every single last one of em.

SCENE THREE

George's House

A small cottage with a living room and kitchen in one, not much of anything: a tatty sofa, a sideboard, an oven, a fire grate and a rug. There are carcasses strung up above the oven.

GEORGE *(Holding a handkerchief to his neck. He picks up a hand mirror and considers his reflection)* Would you look at that! I've still got it alright. Good hair. Good teeth and good skin.

RED ENTERS

RED I'm home!

GEORGE There's a lot what's good about me aint there?

RED There is George

Red goes into the kitchen area and begins looking through the cupboards. She Finds a cake tin and sets it down on the side.

GEORGE Look at this 'tash, it's a beauty. I might be a little rough around the edges but that's what they like. *(Looks at the handkerchief)* It's a nasty one, I'll give her that much. Evil tart bag, fancy trying to take a chunk out of my neck *(Shudders)* Evil she was. *(Elongated)* Pure evil. All staggering and spluttering, murmuring to herself, crept up on me she did. I thought about it. I did think about it. Cause I thought, she's probably *got something nasty down there*, but a man's got needs, I thought if I can just get it up there quick it might not catch anything. But she wanted something else. I could turn a

blind eye to the missing teeth I could get it in and out quick as you like. **(Touches the wound, winces)** *Smelly, pissy old witch.* All nice and clean I am, man of *distinction*. Good hair. Good teeth and a dandy moustache. I let her have it good and proper, I did Red. She won't be coming creeping up on me no more.

RED **(Goes to George)** I'm sorry I didn't catch any of that, who won't be creeping up on you no more?

GEORGE Don't be sorry, it's nothing for you to go worrying about. Now, come here and let me take a look at you?

RED *Look what she made me!*

GEORGE Oh now that's pretty. She knit you that?

RED She did.

GEORGE How is the old -

RED You're hurt though, let me clean it up!

GEORGE It's nothing.

RED It's not *nothing*. Let me see

GEORGE Leave it out. **(she takes the handkerchief)**

RED That's a nasty one, let me clean you up?

She fetches a bowl of disinfectant.

GEORGE You seen the stuff for the cake?

RED **(Cleaning the wound)** Yes, yes. Now sit still.

GEORGE **(Aggravated)** Blimey! What you got in that stuff?

RED It's good. It'll stop it going funny.

GEORGE That's good then. Enough. Enough, stop fussing over me. Right, now look, we have a visitor upstairs and . . . I don't want to leave

you alone with him . . . but I'm thinking that he's not in no state to be playing silly buggers with you. I found him, earlier in the woods and I didn't want to bring him here but I didn't know what else to do . . . so I did bring him here and well, you just make your cake and then take it over to Grandma's . . . and stay away from upstairs, you hear me, you just stay well away from upstairs. If you need a tinkle then go outside the back door. I've got to go out again Red, I've got to go out and get some more food for us . . . you just leave him be and don't go bothering him. I haven't quite decided what to do with him yet, but when I do I'll deal with it. You hear me? I'll deal with it! Right **(Takes his flask out, swigs)** one for the road.

Picks up his rifle.

Sounds of rifles all around them. Fading out.

GEORGE *You hear that?*

RED What?

GEORGE *That noise – you hear it?*

RED I can't . . . I

GEORGE *Must be in my head. Tata. No going upstairs!*

George exits. Red sits and puts her head in her hands, she is just drifting off when Arran enters, he is limping badly and uses his rifle to prop him up.

ARRAN Can I come in?

RED **(Startled)** No. You're not supposed to!

ARRAN *Can I?*

RED You look funny. What are those clothes for?

ARRAN *(Considers himself)* What? These?

RED Yes

ARRAN I'm a soldier! *(He puts his rifle and bag down on the table)*

RED What like a real soldier?

ARRAN *(Taken aback)* Yes

RED We have soldiers with boiled eggs . . . I line them up and then dip them into the yolk *(She strokes the rifle)* George has one of these.

ARRAN It's nice and warm in here. *Who's George?*

RED *(Excited)* Should I make you some tea? I think he's my father.

ARRAN That sounds . . . nice

RED Good. *(Stares at him)* *You have really big eyes.*

ARRAN *All the better to see you with.*

They stare at one another

RED Tea then?

Arran sits. Red off.

ARRAN *(Looking around, pick up the hand mirror)* What is this place?

RED *(Enters with tea)* Here

ARRAN Thank you. Sit down with me?

RED *You want me to sit with you?* George will go crazy mad

ARRAN George has gone out. Just sit down with me a minute

Red sits

ARRAN Do you always do everything you're told to do?

RED Who are you?

ARRAN What?

RED *Who are you?*

ARRAN **(Serious)** What is this place?

RED *My Grandma tells me tales . . . I . . . she told me . . .*

ARRAN It seems . . . almost familiar . . . this place

RED Maybe you've been here before?

ARRAN Maybe

RED What are you doing here?

ARRAN I've run away

RED What from?

ARRAN Order **(Silence)** It's nice. Sitting here. Drinking tea with you.

RED **(Suspicious)** George said he found you in the forest.

ARRAN Can I touch your skin? Just to see if you're real?

RED I don't . . . I'm not sure . . .

ARRAN Just your cheek . . . I just need to check that you are there

RED My . . . you can touch my hand?

ARRAN Yes . . . **(Tentatively touches her hand)**

You are there aren't you?

RED **(She takes her hand away)** your hand is cold.

ARRAN Is this your place?

RED It belongs to George

ARRAN Your father?

RED I told you already. I'm not sure if he is or isn't

ARRAN Do you have a mother?

RED No. I don't think I do.

ARRAN *Everyone has a mother.*

RED Not me.

ARRAN You're peculiar. An enigma.

RED What's an enigma?

ARRAN Difficult to understand

RED *Difficult to understand?*

Fade in rifles firing. Red doesn't hear them, Arran does, he squirms.

Soundscape – The sounds overlap and interweave with the voice over. These are the sounds in Arrans head and he responds to them. He crawls forward, rifle ready.

SOUND: BEEP BEEP BEEP – GUN FIRE.

V/O: Good work team. 4,3,2,1. Ready for delivery. This is your mission. Do not disturb the operation. Suicide bombers stay back. This is your mission. 4,3,2,1. Nice work soldier.

SOUND: BEEP BEEP BEEP. RIFLES INCREASE

V/O: He's changing lanes. Changing course. This is your delivery package. Make no mistake. This is combat. 4,3,2,1

SOUND: BEEP BEEP BEEP

V/O: Reload. Reload. Point range

SOUND: SIREN. BOMB

V/O: One more down. Nice work. Let's go. Let's go. Good job. Good job

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS. BIRDS TWEETING

V/O: DELIVERY. DELIVER THIS IS YOUR CARE TEAM.

COMBAT READY ARMS. GO, GO SOLDIER

SOUND: BOMB EXPLODING.

ARRAN: ARGH. (*Rolls around on floor*)

V/O: INJURED. (*Echoed*) INJURED. (*Echoed*)

SOUND: CREEPY CARNIVAL MUSIC.

V/O: Dogs get ready to ride this package. MAN DOWN, MAN DOWN.
MAN DOWN.

SOUND: SIRENS.

V/O: This is your delivery siren.

SOUND: EXPLOSION.

V/O: Let's go! What made you keep your distance? This is the last
second. Comrades ready. Shooters get ready to clean up.
5,4,3,2,1. DOWN DOWN. One more

SOUND: SIREN. CREEPY CARNIVAL MUSIC.

Arran gets up and moves robotically

V/O Fierce FIERCE. CLEAN UP READY
SUPER SOLDIER. CONGRATULATIONS. YOU NOW
HAVE 5 BILLION 321 POINTS: YOU ARE AWARDED
EXPLOSIVES IN YOUR AREA.

SOUND FAIRGROUND. FADE OUT.

Arran looks at Red

RED *You're really weird.*

BEAT

ARRAN (*Sees the bag of food. Frightened*) What's in there?

RED Don't touch that! It's for my Grandmother. You're all sweaty now

ARRAN *What is it?*

RED I'm going to bake her a cake.

ARRAN Really?

RED *I do it every day. It's what I do; I'm really good at it.*

ARRAN What do you put in it?

RED Jam. And cream. And sponge.

ARRAN Delicious!

RED **(Flattered)** Yes

ARRAN Can I help you?

RED I shouldn't really let you . . . my Grandmother wouldn't like it.

ARRAN Why?

RED She's warned me about strangers.

ARRAN But we're not strangers now.

RED I know that . . . but I don't really know you at all, do I?

ARRAN But you'll never know anybody if you don't give them a chance

RED Do you ever feel lost?

ARRAN Completely

RED I feel so lost it hurts me inside. *Inside my stomach.*

ARRAN There. We have something in common

RED Why do I feel lost?

ARRAN Don't you know?

RED I don't. I don't know why. I can't work it out.

ARRAN I feel . . . found now.

RED **(Holds out her hand)** My name is Red

Arran takes her hand, pulls her towards him and kisses her tenderly on the lips.

ARRAN My name is Ar . . . my name is . . .

RED Can't you remember?

ARRAN ***(Tearful)*** I can't

RED It's alright. No-one's ever done that to me before

ARRAN *No-one's ever kissed you before?*

RED Not a single soul.

ARRAN ***(Pacing, almost dancing)*** We are going to bake up a cake and light up a fire? ***(Takes some whisky from his bag)*** This will fight almost anything ***(swigs)*** demons, monsters . . . sharks, the devil, the devil that lives inside here ***(Touches stomach)***. This is salvation for the sinner – Here try it? ***(Red shakes her head)*** This is how oppression finds expression ***(Swigs)***Tada Tada Tada ***(Hums 'If you go into the woods')*** Here's to you soldier. Here's to you and your comrades. There's a vicious wind blowing. A storm is afoot. Just over the bridge. I'll blast your eyes right out of their sockets. ***(Deep Voice)*** 'Now young man, what is it that you would like to do with your life? I have your records here. Right in front of me' ***(Childs Voice)*** 'Not sure Sir. . . I haven't done too well in school' ***(Deep Voice)*** 'Hardly surprising given your background' ***(Childs Voice)*** 'It hasn't been easy Sir' ***(Deep Voice)*** 'What you need is stability' ***(Childs Voice)*** 'Stability Sir?' ***(Deep Voice)*** 'I want to help you . . . I want to encourage you into a career of . . . stability. You need to learn

a trade boy. I'm going to recommend that you sign up'.

(Childs Voice) 'Sign up, Sir?' **(Swigs, hums. Caresses the bottle, crouches to the ground terrified)** Get down . . . down I said. This is a matter of life and death. Make one false move and you're . . . I'm hurt. Man hurt. Man down. How long do I have? Whoa 4,3,2,1 BLAST OFF. **(Plays dead. Silence. Opens eyes. Straightens out his hair. Howls.)**

RED **(In corner of the room, frightened)** You're doing it again

ARRAN What?

RED Being weird! You're being weird again! You should go back upstairs before George comes back.

ARRAN This place is . . . spooky. He won't be back for a while, I heard him, *I was listening*

RED George will be back soon and when he is he's going to kill you

ARRAN I . . . say the wrong things sometimes.

RED . . . *there's something wrong with you*

ARRAN There's not, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you. I'm sorry. . . . please . . . I don't want to be on my own. *Just let me be with you for a little bit?*

RED Just for a little bit? Because after the cake, I'm going to walk back to my Grandma's house.

BEAT

ARRAN I'll take a bath.

RED **(Surprised)** Why?

ARRAN I'm dirty. I need a bath.

RED I . . . I thought you wanted to stay down here with me?

ARRAN *I'll take a bath first.*

RED Right.

ARRAN I'll go and take a bath then?

He goes to the stairs

RED *(points to rifle)* Do you need to take that with you?

ARRAN I take it everywhere. You make a fire and when I come back I will be sparkling clean.

RED Sparkling?

ARRAN *(American)* Sparkling clean and dandy

Arran goes off up the stairs

Red takes some logs to the grate and makes a small fire.

She rummages through the books.

She sits down beside the fire and flicks through the pages.

RED Oh no no no this isn't how it's meant to go at all

This isn't how it's meant to be.

Everything is wrong

It's all gotten twisted up and turned inside out.

I don't know what to do with myself.

I'm not even sure how to be anymore

Is there a glass wall or a mirror or . . . or something? What am I supposed to do?

Frustrated, she goes to the other books and flicks through the pages, she doesn't find what she is looking for. She kisses the books.

I'm sorry books. I love you dearly. I really do. But I'm so confused. I always thought that you had the answers and you just make me feel more lost.

Kisses the books again

But I do love you still.

Kneels beside the fire, places another log onto the grate and hums to herself

ARRAN ***(Coming down the stairs)*** It's not much good to have a bath and then put back on your dirty old army clothes so I didn't bother. What are you doing?

RED ***(Startled)*** Nothing. I haven't met anyone like you before

ARRAN Well that makes two of us then! I haven't met anyone like you before either. Look. ***(Sits beside her)*** Feel how cold I am. ***(She touches his hand)*** I just can't get warm. Let me warm up my hands by this fire and then we could see about baking that cake? Tell me more about George. How come he's not your father?

RED He's told me a billion times. He found me in the forest, when I was a little baby and he thought I was an animal and he was going to bring me here and hang me up with the others ***(Points to the carcasses)***. *Fat little plum I was.* He was going to splash me with oil and fry me up for supper. But something stopped him. *I don't know what.* But something did. And here I am!

SILENCE

ARRAN So he's not your father at all?

RED Nope

ARRAN And you don't really know anything other than that?

RED Nope

ARRAN And he's kept you here all this time?

RED Yep.

ARRAN But you have a Grandma?

RED Oh, she's not really my Grandma, she's George's Grandma

ARRAN Is she very, very old then?

RED She's not very, very old.

ARRAN Where's his mother?

RED Dead.

ARRAN Father?

RED Dead.

ARRAN Sisters? Brothers?

RED Dead, dead, dead. It's just us. There are others but I think they
live across the bridge . . . like you. **(Gasps)** *The cake?*

ARRAN **(Bemused)** *The bridge? Let's do the cake.*

RED **(To the kitchen area)** I want to make this a special one.
(Smashes three eggs into a bowl) Can you help?

ARRAN **(Goes to her)** At your service! **(Salutes)**

RED Bring the flour.

ARRAN **(Fetches it, pours some into the bowl)** Here's the flour

RED Sugar?

ARRAN **(Same)** Sugar.

RED Now whisk

ARRAN Whisk!

Red begins to beat the mixture

ARRAN *(Staring)* You're a beautiful girl.

RED Are you playing silly buggers?

ARRAN Mmmm.

RED *He said you might.*

ARRAN Is that all he said?

RED Yes, and he said I wasn't to go upstairs and bother you.

ARRAN I'm not playing at anything. I really think you are beautiful

RED Like a princess? Beautiful like a princess?

ARRAN Yes. Like a princess.

RED Are you a prince or are you a wolf?

ARRAN I'm neither of those

Arran grabs her

ARRAN I don't understand you. What is this place? I'm frightened Red.
What do you know about princes and wolves? *Who told you this stuff?*

RED *(Touching his hand)* My books tell me about princess and my
Grandma tells me about wolves! You're warming up now.
Feeling better?

ARRAN A little

RED Can you fetch the tin?

ARRAN You can give out orders can't you?

RED We need to hurry. I can't go if the wind gets too high.

Arran gives her the tin and she pours the mixture in

She'll be waiting for me. (*Lights the oven. Places the tin inside*).

ARRAN Shall we clear up.

RED Clear up?

ARRAN Clear this place up. The mess?

RED I just wait a while for the cake to rise (*sets a timer*) Come, let's go and sit by the fire. You can tell me a story.

ARRAN A story?

RED Tell me a story. That's what people do.

ARRAN I don't know if I have any stories inside me

RED Yes you do. Silly. Everyone has a story to tell.

Red leads him to the fire

ARRAN I don't have any. You tell me one?

RED Lie on my lap then

ARRAN What! Like this?

He lies on her lap

RED Yep. It's the best way to get a story inside you. (*She strokes his hair gently.*)

RED Many moons ago there was a village . . . just north of the forest. And in the village was a lovely little vicarage where a vicar lived with his wife . . . Every Sunday, the people would come and sing songs and shake hands with one another. And one fine summer's day, when the blossom was ripe and the sun was smiling, the wife went for a walk to pick some flowers for the Sunday Service.

ARRAN That's nice

RED She wanted to find some yellow flowers, but all of the ones she came across near the vicarage were pink or white or purple.

ARRAN Didn't she just pick those?

RED She didn't. She got it into her mind that she wanted yellow flowers and she was stubborn minded so she went into the forest even though she knew not to. She came across the most beautiful yellow rose bush, and she fetched her clippers from her apron and went to clip some off.

ARRAN It was good that she went into the forest then?

RED No. It was not good. Oh look the fire's gone out. Could you fetch a log?

ARRAN ***(Fetches a log)*** Why was it not good? She found what she was looking for?

RED ***(More animated)*** it was not good because just as she reached out to clip off the yellow rose, the bush moved out of her reach.

ARRAN It moved?

RED It did . . . and she chased after it. It became like a game and it made her very cross, because like I said already, she was a stubborn woman and once she had her mind set on getting something she had her mind set on getting it! She kept reaching and the bush kept moving. The more she chased, the more it moved and took her *deeper and deeper into the forest*.

ARRAN Deeper into the forest?

RED Yes. And it got darker the deeper she went, **(Almost singing)** and the more she tried to reach those pretty roses, the more they jumped away from her, and then the nettles came.

ARRAN *Nettles?*

RED Nettles. They sprung up out of the ground, as if from nowhere and they got her legs, she came up in lumps and started to cry from the pain.

ARRAN Why didn't she just stop!

RED I have no idea, because had I been that vicar's wife I would have stopped chasing those yellow roses. And the more she got stung, the more she itched and scratched at the lumps . . . all this blood began trickling down her legs . . . but there was no stopping her, it was as though those yellow roses were pulling her along by an invisible chain.

ARRAN That's horrible

RED It got worse, because the nettles got bigger and soon they were covering her arms and shoulders, she *itched and scratched and chased* but blood was flooding out of her pores by then and eventually she just gave up.

The timer bleeps

(Excited) The cake's ready. **(Gets up and goes to the oven)**

ARRAN *You can't stop there.* What happened?

RED **(Removing the cake from the oven)** Would you look at this. It's better than yesterday's! **(slices cake in half and blobs the jam on)**

ARRAN *(Towards her)* you can't stop there. What happened to the vicar's wife?

RED Could you pass the cream?

ARRAN *(Passing cream)* Cummon?

RED *(Blobbing the cream on)* Oh, she just fell asleep in the nettles

ARRAN Did anyone find her? Did your Grandma tell you this?

RED Oh yes. The vicar got worried when she didn't return with the flowers and alerted the village folk. My Grandma tells me some and then I make some up from my imagination. Anyway, they sent out a search party by candlelight. They found her, not far from the edge of the forest asleep in the nettles, covered in lumps and blood, a beautiful yellow rose bush by her head.

(Turning) Look at this cake! Magnificent!

BEAT

Red puts on her red cape

They gave her a burial in the vicarage garden and planted yellow roses in the hollow where she lay.

She puts the cake into the basket and covers it over with a tea towel

(Turns to Arran, softly) It's time for me to go now . . .

ARRAN *Can I come?* I said . . . *can I come?* I don't want to be on my own anymore. I'm afraid of the dark you see . . . of the shadows that walk behind my own shadow. Sometimes . . . I can't find the right words . . . or sounds . . . expressions to let it out. *I don't want to run*, but they are all chasing behind me, growing in strength. Insects crawling along in the dark . . . pushing me . . .

spitting on me . . . making me move faster. A big beautiful church. Girls have ants in their pants. Uniforms everywhere. Families . . . but not me . . . *no one here for me. I AM A COURAGEOUS YOUNG MAN.* But I feel little like a little-mouse . . . I start walking with the others, walk turns to a gentle jog and then to a pace and before I know it *I'm running with the other boys, (excited)* running with the team. Part of something stronger than anything else, no-one can see me anymore and I become invisible . . . yes that's right *invisible*. Only there's a little bit of bacon stuck in my tooth. Someone's mum has made us all bacon sandwiches and the bit of bacon starts to gnaw at me . . . I stop and look around the room . . . I've been swallowed up . . . by them . . . into nothingness into a bacteria, a kink on a chemical chain that will spread infection and BOOM . . . I'm on the floor. The bacon sandwich mother is leaning over me, breathing onto my face, warm breath inside my eyelashes . . . a breeze and I feel safe now. I feel safe . . . I want to kiss her but I control it. March onwards like a good Christian soldier until everything goes . . . *dark*.

RED You'd better come with me, I think he's going to shoot you when he gets back here.

ARRAN I could shoot him first

RED No. Come with me.

Arran follows Red out.

SCENE FOUR

Grandma's house

The Grandfather clock ticks. Grandma is sitting polishing a pair of boots.

GRANDMA *(Humming to herself Incy wincey spider)* over and over again, knit one pearl one, knit one pearl one, scrub, scrub, scrub, shine, shine, shine. That'll make them nice and bright Georgie boy. This will make them dazzle *(Chuckles)*. Oh my poor boy, my poor little Georgie, gets himself all fired up over nothing. Gets chunks taken out of him and doesn't know what to do. Shiny Georgie . . . *all nice and clean* . . . all sparkling clean and good. What you need is a good dinner inside you, something rich, something to keep you going at night when the others are about. Granny knows best. Just follow in Grandmother's footsteps and you can't go wrong. *(A rattle)* Oh that wind. *That wind is getting high and creeping its way into my house* . . . blowing at the door . . . who's that blowing at my door . . . *(Calling)* I said . . . who's that blowing at my door?

George enters

GRANDMA *(Doesn't look round)* That you Red?

GEORGE It's me . . . It's *George*

GRANDMA *(Doesn't look round)* you. I'm polishing your boots.

GEORGE What were you rambling on about? I heard ya, coming up the path *(Throws the book at her)* Here . . . another one.

GRANDMA Watch it sunshine.

GEORGE *Stop pretending you're feeble.*

GRANDMA *(Looks at the book)* Snow White! Red will like this.

GEORGE There's not many left out there now.

GRANDMA Listen. I don't know why you've come back here again. I've already seen you today and I don't need to be seeing you no more. Leave me be, why don't you?

GEORGE It's bad out there today, over the bridge.

GRANDMA It's the wind. Can't make its mind up.

GEORGE Bit of wind don't bother me.

GRANDMA Seeing as you're here . . . you'd best give me one of those smokes.

George rolls a cigarette

GEORGE *Wicked old witch aren't you?*

GRANDMA I am not. *I'm a sweet old lady (Takes the smoke. Drags. Chokes)*

GEORGE Argh. There you go see. There you go. Nothing sweet about that is there? Red not here yet?

GRANDMA *Should she be?*

GEORGE I found one, just by the bridge. He's badly hurt, should have shot him up there and then. I must be going soft.

GRANDMA What dya do with him?

GEORGE Put him in the upstairs room . . . his legs fucked so he won't be able to go nowhere, and I told her to make the cake and hurry herself up round here. I just thought I'd see she was here and go back and shoot him up.

GRANDMA You've left my Red with one? Just shut up. *Shut up I tell you.*
You devil of a man **(Takes the boot and begins wacking him with it. George cowers)** You're just stupid. Stupid and incompetent. Something's gone amiss here, it's the wind, the wind is getting too high.

GEORGE **(Quietly)** What do you want me to do?

GRANDMA *Sit down on that floor and listen to me. (She drops the boot)*
George sits. Grandma sits. She picks up a smoke, takes a long drag and stubs it out.

Something has gone amiss George and I tell you how's I know.
It's the wind. It's moving in a funny direction.

GEORGE I'm listening.

GRANDMA Let me tell you a little story which begins at the end. *The end of life . . .* have I told you this one before?

GEORGE Probably but shouldn't I go and make sure Red's alright?

GRANDMA Yes well it's more important that you listen to me first. As I said, this tale begins at the end, the end of a young girl's life. It's a funeral, in the village. And all the village people are stood around looking down at this girl's body. Let's call her Violet, for names sake. Violet's dead but her eyes are wide open, and all the folk are standing saying their last prayers. Her mother is bent over double in grief for the poor lamb and the wind is low. It starts to rain, just a trickle and everybody starts to get fidgety and wants to go inside, so they do go inside and they try to take Violet's mother with them, but she won't go. She wants to walk

but something stops her, it's her body, it won't move. So one by one people start to politely move inside to get dry but she stays there, bent over, all in pain at the sight of her precious Violet laying dead in the mud. When she's alone, she lets out a tremendous cry, *a cry like no-one's heard before*. She's in pain you see, *physical pain* and it's the only way she knows how to release it. Anyway, she feels a whole lot better once she's let the pain out and she manages to crawl herself down into the hole where her Violet is. It's quite deep and the water from the rain makes it slippery, so she don't have too much trouble getting down there. It's a bit tight once she's in, so she shuvs Violet's body across a bit. She takes her hands and closes the poor little lamb's eyelids. She rests her head on her chest and . . . oh *George you are listening to me aren't you?*

GEORGE

(Cross) I am . . . *I don't see the point in this*. What's gone amiss?

GRANDMA

Good. *Good that you're listening*. Anyways, she puts her head on her chest and she falls asleep, right there in her Violet's grave. *She's tired with grief you see*, so she just drifts off . . . and when she goes into her dream, she's in a sunny afternoon, and there's these big sunflowers all around her . . . and she's happy there, you know in her dream. She sees these little wolf cubs . . . five or six or no, no six of them there are. Six little wolf cubs, playing in and out of the sunflowers, so she follows them through, smiling and laughing she is. . . anyways, the cubs, they

leads her back to a den in the side of a mountain and they runs inside. Well, Violet's mother, she wants to go inside with these cubs cause she's felt happy playing with them and chasing them around, so she pokes her head into the den and takes a look inside . . .

GEORGE *(Agitated)* Is this going somewhere?

GRANDMA It is. Yes it is. Her eyes take a while to adjust but once they do she lets out the most tremendous scream.

GEORGE WHY?

GRANDMA Well, there in the den is a big wolf, fast asleep snoring away, and right next to him is her Violet and the wolf cubs are suckling on her body . . . *suckling away they are.*

GEORGE Your stories are disgusting. **BEAT** What's your point woman?
Does she wake up?

GRANDMA Who? Red?

GEORGE *Violet's mother! Are you playing with me?*

GRANDMA *(Smirks)* Well, there's the thing. She does wake up. But it's too late. The man has come round you see, to fill in the hole with mud, so she wakes up just as the mud is being chucked into her mouth.

GEORGE *Didn't he see her? Didn't he look into the grave?*

GRANDMA He didn't because he was on automatic. He's so used to the routine because he does it every day that he didn't give poor Violet's mother so much as a glance.

GEORGE What's your point?

GRANDMA Quite literally buried alive she was. Give me your boots?

GEORGE *What for?*

GRANDMA **(Cross)** Just give me them. **(He does. She passes him the polished ones)** Put these ones on.

GEORGE Why?

GRANDMA You're going to need them, is why.

George puts them on.

Your girl?

GEORGE Red?

GRANDMA That's right, your Red. Well she aint your Red no more, if you know what I mean?

GEORGE *What's happened to her?*

GRANDMA Nothing that won't happen to most girls eventually. Fancy leaving her there, *with a wolf*.

George stands, he shakes Grandma

GEORGE You'd best start talking to me straight. *Where is she?*

GRANDMA Hang on . . . let me listen to the wind a minute **(She goes to the door)** *Is that right?* **(To George)** She's on the path to here, but she stopped to look at the pretty flowers.

GEORGE **(Hands around her throat)** What else?

GRANDMA **(Scared)** *I only knows what the wind tells me.*

George off

GRANDMA **(Shouting out the door at him)** you see! You shouldn't close your eyes to nothing. You shouldn't close your eyes. Too blind. Too much searching for those others to notice what's going on

beneath your nose. You fetch my Red (***Stumbles, tearful***) You
fetch my Red. Don't you go coming back without her, don't you
go coming back without . . .

DON'T YOU DARE!

SCENE FIVE

A path that bends a little.

Surreal flowers shoot up at the sides of the path and there is a darkness around the edge. The path is well lit.

RED It's this way

ARRAN Are you sure? This path seems to be twisting.
Is there a quicker way, off the path?

RED There is but we aren't allowed to go that way

ARRAN Do you want me to carry that basket?

RED No.

ARRAN Are you my yellow rose?

RED Are you my *wolf*?

SILENCE

ARRAN Sit down with me?

RED *Can't you hear the Grandfather clock ticking?*

ARRAN Nope.

RED Well it is . . .

ARRAN What if we could make it stop?

RED How do we do that?

ARRAN I don't know but I think we can . . . just pretend it's not there

RED But it's inside here. (*Touches her head.*) It's in the background.

It's how I know the time. Oh look! Look at these pretty flowers?
(She touches one)

ARRAN They are pretty. *(Pulls her to kneel down.)* Think about this moment and nothing else. *(They touch hands together.)*

RED I . . . *don't know.*

ARRAN Just imagine that there's nothing else here, nothing but you and me and the air around us. It feels as though my heart could burst, being here with you. *(He touches her breast.)*

RED Don't do that. *(Pulls her hand away.)*

ARRAN See this? *(Shows her the rifle.)*

RED What about it?

ARRAN *This gives me ammunition.*

RED I think you should go.

ARRAN Go where?

RED Back into the woods. If he finds you with me, he will string you up.

ARRAN *(Points the end of the rifle from her neck right down to her belly)* I think you should do as you're told. You shouldn't be walking on the path alone.

RED *(Angry)* I do do as I am told! And there's nothing wrong with this path. It's the woods that are dangerous and over the bridge where the other's are.

ARRAN Let me give you the orders now.

RED *Why should I?*

ARRAN *Why shouldn't you?*

RED Because you're scaring me.

ARRAN I want you . . . I want you to love me.

RED But I don't know you, I tried to get to know you. I let you kiss me.
You're weird.

ARRAN Turn around.

RED No.

ARRAN Turn the fuck around.

RED *No. I don't want to.*

ARRAN Listen to me little Red, listen to me good and proper. I told you to turn around and I will not say it again. DO IT.
DO IT NOW

RED I . . . I don't want to ***(She turns around)***

ARRAN ***(Rips off her smock)*** Bend over

RED I don't want to.

ARRAN Bend over. ***(He pulls her hair, forces himself onto her and rapes her from behind.)***

I didn't want to have to do it like this. I didn't want to hurt you. But you're being unreasonable. You've shown me that you wanted it, and girls like you, playing all naive and vulnerable, telling me about princes and wolves, making cakes and looking at pretty flowers. You have no idea what it's like out there, what it's really like out there for people like me. The horrors, *the horrors of the world*, you think life is all sugar and jam and . . . and cream . . . well feel this. Feel what it's really like, what it really does to you. It fucks you . . . *it fucks you good and hard when you're not looking. Life fucks you good and hard while*

you're not looking and there's nothing you can do about . . .

about it

RED *(Teeth chattering)* I . . . *(Calling)* George! George! Help . . . I . . .

. Please . . . stop

When he has finished, he sits with his head in his hands and begins to sob.

RED turns around and begins kicking and beating him. She picks up the rifle and aims straight for his head.

ARRAN I'm sorry . . . I've never done anything like that before.

Red pulls the trigger.

SILENCE

ARRAN It's not loaded.

RED *(Shaking)* What's wrong with you?

RED swings the rifle and goes to hit him around the head. He catches the end and pulls her near to him, he holds her in his arms and rocks her

ARRAN I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. You are so innocent. I've never done anything like that before. I don't know why . . . I don't know what came over me I just had to have you; I had to have you close to me. I'm not bad . . . I wouldn't do something like that I just . . . I

(He cups her face)

RED takes his hands away from her. He begins itching compulsively

ARRAN Would you just . . . could you just itch my . . . scratch my damn back for me?

RED I need to see my Grandma. *(Holds her belly)* I need to see my Grandma.

She collects her basket and begins to walk along the path

ARRAN *(Itching)* I'm coming.

He follows behind her.

The flowers talk echoed.

FLOWER ONE What are little boys made of?

FLOWER TWO Slugs and snails.

FLOWER THREE What are little girls made of?

FLOWER FOUR Sugars and spices.

RED *(Distressed)* Stop following me!

RED exits the path S.L followed by Arran who is scratching all over. George enters from S.R.

GEORGE *(Breathless)* Red . . . Red . . . RED . . . *(Takes some whisky)*

FLOWER ONE *(Whisper)* Georgie.

GEORGE *(Jumps)* Hmm.

FLOWER TWO *(Whisper)* Georgie . . . Georgie . . . over here.

GEORGE Where?

FLOWER THREE Here!

GEORGE Where? *(Rifle ready)*

FLOWER FOUR Silly Georgie. I'm over here.

GEORGE Come out you witch.

FLOWER ONE Here . . . see?

GEORGE What! Here. *(Looks at FLOWER ONE)*

FLOWER TWO *(softly)* Oh . . . Georgie Porgie . . . I'm here.

GEORGE Stop messing about with me. Where did they go? Have you seen them?

FLOWERS *(Sinister, singing)* Georgie Porgie pudding and pie, he kissed the girl and made her cry. Georgie Porgie pudding and pie he kissed your girl and made her cry. When Georgie Porgie came out to play, they went thata way! **(The Flower heads point to S.L)**

GEORGE I'M COMING MY LITTLE PRINCESS. I'M COMING . . .

FLOWERS Georgie! It was thata way **(The heads point to S.R. George runs in the other direction and exits S.R)**

The flowers laugh and it increasingly becomes hysterical and heightened.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Grandma's House

Red is heavily pregnant, Arran is half man and half wolf, he wears a knitted cap over his head but his wolf ears stick out a little, he still has his army clothes on but they are ill fitting. Grandma looks warn and weak, she is knitting baby booties. Red is reading through her books, the rifle is on the floor. Arran is plucking out hairs from his legs.

GRANDMA *(Humming 'When the Saints Go Marching In')* It's a strong wind out there. Won't be long now Red, I don't want a special burial, but you can sing me a song, a song will do.

RED Do you think he'll drop some off tonight, I'm so hungry?

ARRAN It's getting less frequent.

GRANDMA *He'll be back.* He might have abandoned her spiritually but he won't stop feeding her, he knows his responsibilities . . .

ARRAN What's that song?

GRANDMA *What dear?*

ARRAN That song you were humming, what is it? I know it.

GRANDMA It's a funeral song. You can sing it to me when I'm gone.

BEAT

RED *You're not going anywhere Grandma.*

GRANDMA I am . . . oh yes I am, one out one in, that's the way it goes.

RED *(Chuckles)* You're always humming something or other.

GRANDMA I know I know. It's my age, things start whirling.

RED It's alright grandma. Don't fret about it.

ARRAN It's dark in here.

RED It's always dark in here. You should be used to it now.

ARRAN I'll light a little fire.

RED Doesn't that fur keep you warm enough?

Red and Arran stare at one another

ARRAN Will you look at this? ***(Shows her his chest which has black hairs growing from it)*** my neck too. Help me pluck them out?

She puts the books down

GRANDMA I shouldn't bother.

RED Here, come and sit down.

Arran sits. Red takes some tweezers out of her apron and starts plucking the hairs, a little too hard. Arran is wincing

GRANDMA A thankless task is that. They'll only grow back thicker.

Did I tell you the tale about the boy?

ARRAN Ouch. Argh. That hurts.

RED *Sit still!*

GRANDMA The boy who lived in the village?

RED Just sit still. Stop it. ***(Continues to pluck)***

GRANDMA There was this young boy, called Peter. Was that his name? Oh I think that was his name. Yes. Let's call him Peter, that'll do won't it Red?

RED Hmm?

GRANDMA I said, let's call the boy Peter?

RED Yes. That'll do Grandma.

GRANDMA Peter lived in the village with his mother. And his mother was the proudest mother there ever was. She was well into her forties before she ever gave birth to the child and she considered him to be her little miracle. Especially because shortly after she gave birth, she was widowed. *Anyways*, she didn't like the pet to play out with the other children in the village as she was too afraid to let him get dirty. She thought that he might get an infection if he cut or grazed himself, so *she kept him indoors*.

RED *Who's my baby going to play with?*

ARRAN Us.

RED *(Plucks really hard) Us?*

ARRAN Awch. Give me those. *(Takes the tweezers off her)* I'm bleeding you bitch.

GRANDMA *Anyways*, like I was saying, every Sunday she would dress him up in a little suit and walk with him to the church for Sunday service. She put the poor little pet in a dickey bow and squeezed his hand tight so as he wouldn't stray from the path, and they would sing songs and he would shake hands with the congregation. Well . . . on the lead up to Peter's sixth birthday, his mother, *let's call her Wendy*. . . *Shall we call her Wendy, Red?*

RED If you like!

GRANDMA That's settled then. So Wendy, she made her son the loveliest cake ever. And she thought to herself – what harm could come if I invited some of the village children to a little tea party? So Wendy and Peter made some invitations themselves and that Sunday, they invited six of the village children to come to their little house and celebrate Peter's sixth birthday. Well . . . the other children didn't know the poor little pet, because Wendy had never let him go and play with them. But they were curious and *curiosity usually leads to somewhere*, so they agreed to go to the little pet's tea party. And Wendy was ever so pleased!

ARRAN I'll make that fire.

He gets some logs and starts putting them onto the grate

RED ***(Taps him around the head)*** Don't use too many, they're running out. Can't you get used to your fur? You're going to need to accept it sooner or later.

GRANDMA That's it. Get it nice and warm in here.

Red goes and sits at Grandma's feet and lays her head on her lap

One by one the other children arrived for Peter's tea party. Wendy made games with them to play, and the other children seemed to be enjoying themselves, all except for poor Peter who sat himself down in the corner of the room away from the others. They paid no notice to him whatsoever, they were just happy to be getting all the attention for themselves and were giggling and messing around. Happy as Larry they were . . . at Peter's little tea party, and when the little pet got up and went

to his bedroom, not a single soul paid a bit of attention to it, least of all Wendy, she was far too busy making sure that the village children were being kept entertained.

RED

It's a shame.

GRANDMA

Well, it is and it isn't, because little Peter didn't know what to do with himself without Wendy's attention on him, and he started to get very cross about it all, up there in his bedroom, on his own. He began throwing himself on the floor in a rage. All tears flying down his little face. When there's a little knock at the window, he looks round and would you believe it, there's not a thing there.

Arran lights the fire

GRANDMA

There's not a soul there that could have done that knocking, so he wipes his little face and goes to look out the window. Nothing. Nothing at all there. He opens the latch and lifts the window up and he sees a little girl down below. All dirty and scruffy she is – definitely not no-one from his party that's for sure! This little girl, she's holding a cup out to him, and she looks to be hungry and cold in the wind. So little Peter climbs right out of his bedroom window and down the vine, he lands with a thump and when he looks up, she's smiling at him, *the little girl that is*. So he goes to her, but just as he goes to her she turns and goes in through the gardens of the other houses. He follows her and she beckons him some more. He gets more annoyed because every time he gets close, she goes in another direction.

RED *Poor little lamb.*

GRANDMA *Eventually they come to the edge of the forest and she takes him deeper and deeper in.*

ARRAN *(Itching)* Doesn't his mother notice he's gone? *(Twitches)* Argh, do you have any idea how painful this is? *(Starts plucking at the hairs again)*

GRANDMA Oh well now! Wendy is lighting up the wonderful birthday cake and carrying it into the room for the other children. When she puts it down on the table, she looks around for little Peter and notices that he's not there. She blows out the candles and the other children moan. She runs up the stairs, frantic, and all that's there, is the bedroom window wide open and a big wind blowing everything around in the room. She goes and grabs the other children and takes them out into the street. Calling and wailing for her little Peter she is. Anyways, the other village folks start to come out from their houses and join in the search . . . hours pass and more people gather around. Eventually, just as dusk starts and the wolves starts to howl, they come across little Peter, crying under an elm tree, deep in the forest.

RED *Is he alright?*

GRANDMA *(Excited)* Yes. They thinks he's alright. She scoops him up into her arms and carries him home. She invites some of the folks in and they all have a slice of the delicious birthday cake. Peter is happy as Larry cause all the attention is on him. After a

while, the folks starts to leave because everybody's tired by then.

RED *Is that it grandma?*

GRANDMA That's not it. That's not it Red. After everybody's left, she boils up some milk for Peter and tucks him up tight in his bed. She kneels beside it and thanks the Lord above that her little boy is safe and sound and curses the day she had any ideas about a sixth birthday party.

Arran itches compulsively

RED *Stop itching!*

ARRAN I can't help it can I?

GRANDMA Leave him be. Anyways, Wendy and Peter falls fast asleep and when they wakes up it's a bright sunny day. Only the little pet can't stop itching, and writhing around in pain. Wendy runs him a bath and when she strips off his clothes, what do you know? *He's covered in hair.*

Red amused

GRANDMA ***(To Arran)*** Poor little pet is chest down, nothing but a wild animal!

RED What does she do, what does Wendy do?

GRANDMA She plonks him in the tub and takes a razor to the hairs, but the more she shaves, the more them hairs grow back and little Peter writhes and screams and hollers from the pain. Wendy doesn't know what to do for the poor pet and becomes more and more anxious. She boils up the kettle and pours it in the bath. She

must have done about twenty trips with that boiling kettle – thinking that the heat will help take away the pain, before you know it, the whole bathroom is covered in hair, *But she don't stop*. She just keeps going, shaving and shaving but it keeps growing back, eventually, she gives up and falls asleep on top of the pile of hairs.

RED *Does she wake up?*

GRANDMA Well, it's been days since anyone's caught site of her, and of course, a few have gone knocking on the door to see how little Peter is doing. But there's been no answer. Eventually, someone alerts the vicar and he tells the village folks to break down the door.

RED *Do they find her asleep?*

GRANDMA They break down the door and alls they find is a little wolf cub running around tearing up the place, some of the brave ones go up the stairs and find poor Wendy, layed out on a mountain of hair half chewed to pieces.

RED *Was she breathing?*

GRANDMA Well, it's said, that when they found her, she still had a tiny bit of breath left in her, but when the vicar went in and held her hand, she let it out. And that was that.

ARRAN What did they do with the wolf cub?

GRANDMA They let him out the door and he ran free, into the forest.
Happy as Larry he were.

RED *And Wendy?*

GRANDMA Oh they gave her a burial in the churchyard of course, and some say, that when dusk begins, a little wolf cub can be seen dancing on her grave. But if any folks try and get close to him, *he runs off, into the forest faster than the speed of light.*

Arran itching

Now you just stop that itching. **(To Red)** and stop plucking out them hairs. Let nature take its course, the more you fight it. *The more it will creep back up at you.*

ARRAN So he chewed her to pieces then?

RED ***(Pointing the rifle at Arran)*** PeeeeeOwwwww.

The lights dim, a wolf howls in the distance.

SCENE TWO

Grandma's House.

Morning.

George enters. Grandma is asleep on the chair. Red and Arran are asleep on the floor. The fire has gone out. The clock ticks. George eyes all three of them up with his rifle, first Red, then Grandma and finally he lingers on Arran

RED **(Opening eyes)** what are you doing here?

GEORGE *I should blow you all to next Christmas.*

SILENCE

Grandma stirs

RED Put the gun down!

GEORGE I should blow you all to next Christmas.

RED *Please put the gun down.*

GEORGE **(Takes the gun down)** I've got some, outside.

ARRAN Shall I help you carry them in?

George grunts

RED *Yes. Help him. (To George) You've stayed away so long.*

George and Arran off, back on carrying two carcasses. They string them up above the cooker. Red boils the kettle on the stove, Grandma wakes.

GRANDMA He's here then?

RED Yes. **(To George)** Why did you stay away so long? I'm almost due.

GRANDMA *I must have fallen asleep.*

RED *We all fell asleep.*

GRANDMA Won't be long now.

RED Don't say that.

GRANDMA One can't come along without another one going

RED Don't say that.

GEORGE What's she going on about now?

RED She thinks she has to die before this one can come along. Why have you stayed away from me? You're all I've ever known? You didn't teach me anything about this. You didn't tell me about life, about anything. You've raised me on fairytales and then abandoned me? Why? Why? Why?

GEORGE I brought you food to the door! You're a woman now and look at what you've landed yourself with? A hairy wolf!

BEAT

GRANDMA He's a mean man.

RED You didn't even take the time to ask me what happened.

GEORGE I got lost along that stupid path and then it was too late . . . I couldn't help you. You chose to get involved with this . . . creature and now you've got what you deserve.

RED You haven't even told me the truth about anything. You found me in the woods did you?

GEORGE I told you that a million times.

RED *(Angry)* You're a liar, a liar a liar! You didn't find me in the woods. You didn't. He's told me that. He's told me about people and that you probably are a big fat liar. That this is some sick little place and that you could be my father, he said that maybe

you impregnated your sister or your mother or . . . or maybe Grandma isn't Grandma and . . . oh it makes my head hurt to think about it all. It's better if you found me in the woods, its better if I came from somewhere else, maybe from another place, from a woman just over the bridge from a person, from a *real* person. And he's told me there's another place, another world out there and it's not even that far away because that's where he comes from and there are real people there and schools where children learn to read books, better books than you've ever given me and that you're sick . . . he says that you're a sick, sick man. Disturbed in the head! Why don't you just go away again and leave us here to rot?

GEORGE

All this coming from a wolf! (***Kicks Arran, Arran growls, He points the gun at Arran***) I only ever wanted to protect you Red. It's a bad world out there, there's not much left. There's no books left . . . you are the only one who has books. There's nothing out there for you to see no more. I wanted to protect you; I wanted to keep you young. There's nothing sick about that. But you just couldn't do as you were told, she told you too many stories and your mind, your mind was too inquisitive. I should never have left him there with you. I've had months full of regret.

RED

You didn't think to ask me what had happened? You didn't think to ask me whether or not I wanted this! I didn't want this, I wanted to stay young. I was happy there, I was happy in your

house, I was happy visiting my Grandma every day but I just wanted to know what was out there. I was just curious and besides I felt sorry for him.

GEORGE And now?

RED And now I'm due to give birth and I don't even know what to do or if I can survive, Grandma isn't much use to me. She thinks she's dying and she *is* frail.

Grandma grunts

GEORGE You're happy though . . . with him. *With your wolf?*

RED I hate him.

Arran cowers

GRANDMA Don't listen to him Red. He wants shot of the lot of us is what I think. Wouldn't surprise me if he hasn't got something up his sleeve. Curses the day he ever found you he does, but truth is, he's filled with hot air. You're a coward, aren't you George? Haven't got the bottle really have you Georgie boy? Look at him? All mouth and no trousers aren't you? Dropping off supplies by the door and running away again. Nothing ever changes . . .

GEORGE You'd best watch your mouth old lady. You haven't helped her.

GRANDMA I've taken her in. I've taken her and him in and I didn't need to do that did I?

GEORGE You're a lonely old witch. You've been telling her shit since the day she was born, filling her head up with nothing but nonsense.

It's tough out there. It's a tough world out there. I just wanted to keep her safe. I wanted to keep her young.

RED *(Bursting) I HATE HIM! HE TOOK ME . . . HE TOOK ME.*

GRANDMA He what?

RED *He took me!* I didn't want to do it. You think I had a choice but I didn't. I didn't. I didn't have any choice. I'm telling you now I didn't want to grow up, I didn't want to bleed. I didn't want to feel this inside me and you . . . you just left me! You just left me here with him.

George is stunned. Arran is prowling around the room.

GRANDMA *Why didn't you tell me?*

RED I felt so sick. So sick all the time and I've been patient . . . I've been waiting.

Arran is itching and prowling and attempts to get out of the door. George blocks the way pointing his rifle at him.

GEORGE *(To Red) Why didn't you tell her? She could've got me, I could have come to you.*

Grandma manages to get Arran's rifle and points it directly at George

GRANDMA Drop the rifle.

GEORGE *I've warned you. (Lowers the rifle) Red I'm . . . I . . .*

GRANDMA *Not so clever now are you.*

GEORGE Put the gun down, you're confused.

GRANDMA But look how powerful I am now little lamb.

GEORGE *Red . . . I'm sorry.*

Arran tries to leave

GRANDMA *Make one more move and I'll blow you to next Friday.*
I think I'll just take this with me, back to my little rocking chair.

GEORGE Don't . . . Grandma.

GRANDMA Here we go. ***(Stumbles back to the chair with the rifle. Places it on her lap)*** That's good. You just stay here with me, with your little old Grandma. ***(Strokes the rifle)*** *One false move from either of you two and you'll be tomorrow's supper.*

GEORGE Mad old bitch.

GRANDMA *What was that? What did he say Red? My hearings going in my old age, won't be long now . . . I suppose I could always do myself in with this, make it quick, stop it being long and painful. That what you'd like me to do George? Have I become nothing but a burden in me old age?*

GEORGE What's she on about? She's only ever been old. You're upsetting Red.

Red goes and kicks Arran who is cowering in the corner.

GRANDMA I've never been old. Not inside here ***(Taps her head)*** My body might be all wrinkled up and shrivelling but not my mind. Not my mind. That's as sound as the clock that keeps ticking away. But I know more than most people, that nature is nature and you *can't get someone in without first getting someone out*, that's the way things work and that's the way it will be. . . time is running out for me . . . the story is unfinished . . . *but the curtain is ready to close.* I have been a good Grandmother. I've done what all good Grandmother's do. I've shared my stories. *Aint that right Red?*

I'll probably be cursed to come back and do it all again, in fact, *that's a foregone conclusion*. . . but I have a decision to make now, regardless of you or you or you and it's up to me how I want to go this time, and none of you are going to stop me doing it. Now, what's this little machine I've got here on my lap? *It's a killing machine* and it would make things nice and fast for me. **(Points the rifle at Arran)** How long do you think it will take?

ARRAN Are you asking me?

GRANDMA *Exactly what I'm doing, I'm asking you sunshine.*

ARRAN **(Looks at George)** could be up to seven minutes, depending on the impact. Look, why don't you stop this, you're upsetting her.

RED **(Goes to Grandma)** Why do you think you need to go for this one to come? You don't need to go. We can stay here together.

GRANDMA *It doesn't work like that.* Did I tell you the story about the mother from the village who had twins? *Did I tell you that one already?*

GEORGE She's just told us she's been raped woman, and you want to tell us a story! Do me a favour.

ARRAN *What are you going to do with me?*

GEORGE Just give me the gun! Give me the gun and tell your stories to those who wants to listen to them

GRANDMA You're not having it. *You're not taking it away!*

GEORGE *Just do as you're told.*

GRANDMA Oh Red, I do feel tired. *I feel all tired and forgetful.* What was I saying?

RED You were telling me a story.

GRANDMA Give me the gun woman

ARRAN Red . . . I . . . Argh . . . I'm in pain . . . I (***scratching compulsively***)

GEORGE *The gun.*

RED (***Gets the books***) Look, Grandma, look at the pictures, look at the stories, I'll read you them and they will calm you down. Help you relax.

GRANDMA Oh you silly child. *I know those stories inside and out.* I've lived through them. I've had enough. I want out. I want to go. I want there to be stories but the stories are old like me. So just let me go . . . (***Drowsy***) Just let me sleep . . . the clock . . . tick, tock, tick, tock . . . the Grandfather clock . . . tick tock. Who's that knocking at my door. Listen to the wind. . . the wind is blowing up a foul gust out there . . . *a whirlwind* . . . get the mirror . . . don't look too much . . . what's going this way must come back that way. We are the searchers, the adventurers . . . the . . . *blow out your brains* . . . follow the road . . . into the forest . . . don't go stepping off the path . . . Come and try my gingerbread children . . . into the fire . . . sleepy sleepy . . . bite the apple . . . don't touch that, it's forbidden . . . over the wall and far away . . . let me in . . . no, no . . . I won't let you in.

(***Closes her eyes***) All fingers and thumbs . . . kiss the prince . . . make a pie . . . *Georgie* . . . stuck in the mud . . . out the cupboard . . . stuck in the way . . . in the . . . nighty night Georgie

. . . oh Red that cake is delicious, the most delicious cake I ever did eat. Poor little Red, my poor little Red. . . **(Nods off, snores)**

GEORGE **(Quietly, points his rifle at Arran)** *Why didn't I just leave you there to die? A bullet in the head is too nice a way for you to go!*

RED Don't . . . stop it . . . you can't, I **(Picks the rifle up from Grandma's lap)**

GEORGE *Don't you want me to?*

RED You're wrong. You . . . you . . . I wouldn't be here if it weren't for you.

GEORGE I'm sorry I kept you so young. I'm sorry I didn't let you out, I've only ever tried to help you. Tried to keep you safe. It's bad out there and I didn't want you to get hurt.

RED Give me that. **(Points to his rifle with her rifle)**

George hands her the rifle, she doesn't take her eyes off Arran

ARRAN **(Panic)** No . . . naoww Red, don't do it, don't . . . look, I'm happy being a wolf, I won't chew you up . . . I won't I . . .

RED This rifle is empty George, there are no bullets left! **(She throws it on the floor)** But this one, this one is full of fire, I've waited. I've waited a long time for this . . . I've thought about this moment. I've been dreaming about this moment. I have learned discipline and patience. I've held my breath and my tears. I've stopped myself from screaming and shaking and tearing this house down. It's all been kept inside, it's all been frothing around inside here, **(To George)** inside my head. *Do you think this thing . . . this thing inside me will be alright?*

GEORGE Was he like that when he did it?

RED What? Hairy? No, no he wasn't hairy. It started after.

GEORGE Should be alright then . . . **(Fatherly)** Should be just fine.

RED **(To Arran)** Come here.

ARRAN What?

RED Come over here. COME OVER HERE. DO IT. DO IT NOW.

He crawls over to her

ARRAN Red, I . . . I'm . . .

RED Bend over

ARRAN What?

RED Bend over like a good boy. I SAID BEND OVER LIKE A GOOD LITTLE SOLDIER.

Arran shaking does as he is told.

That's it. Bend over like a good boy.

RED Pull down your trousers.

ARRAN What?

RED PULL. DOWN. YOUR. TROUSERS.

Arran takes his trousers down. Red runs the top of the rifle from his neck, right down his back and pulling back his pants, settles on his anus. She toys around with the gun

ARRAN Please . . . don't.

GEORGE *Fuck.*

ARRAN Not that . . .

RED But isn't this what life does to you? What was it that you said? It fucks you, doesn't it? Doesn't it fuck you from behind when you

aren't looking? Isn't that what it's really like out there? And don't I just live in a world of make believe? What's the world I live in? What's that world? It's a world of jam and **(Jabs the rifle in)** . . . sugar . . . and cream.

ARRAN **(Whincing, crying)** Red . . . I . . . I oh . . . God . . . *help me?*

RED **(To George)** Who's God?

Grandma stirs

GEORGE I don't know Red . . . I really truly . . . don't have the answer.

RED **(Shaking)** Well . . . God can't help you . . . nobody can help you . . . nobody can. **(Pulls the trigger)**

The impact of the shot sends Arran flying, a pool of blood leaks onto the floor.

Grandma wakes up

GRANDMA Red? **(Delusional/muttering)** Did I tell you the . . . there were two of them . . . they lived by the vicarage . . . in the snow and all around them the . . . **(Angry)** *don't make me tell another* . . . let the clock . . . *stop.*

Grandma lets out one loud grunt, then silence.

RED Not now Grandma . . . *I'm not ready* . . . **(Holds her)** . . . she's not . . . she's not breathing . . . *she's gone* . . . **(Red sobs)**

GEORGE **(Feels Arran's neck pulse)** He's good and proper gone. **(Kicks him)**

Reds waters burst all over the floor

RED **(Frightened)** I'm going to have a baby. **(To George)** *Help me?*

SCENE THREE

George's House

Same as in Act One except there are no hanging carcasses. Red is rocking an old cradle. George is pacing.

RED Will you just do something?

GEORGE There's nothing left to do.

RED There must be something? I'm so hungry.

GEORGE I've tried to do everything I can . . . there's nothing left out there.

The baby cries

RED *(Rocking the cradle)* Oh, there's nothing wrong with you, is there little lamb, there's nothing wrong with you at all. *(The babe settles. To George)* At least I still have milk for her.

GEORGE But for how long? Eh? There's nothing out there . . .

RED We need to cross the bridge.

GEORGE I aint crossing no bridge Red . . . I aint crossing no bridge

RED Why are you so stubborn? We will perish if we don't leave this place?

GEORGE I've lived this side of the bridge for too long to go crossing it now. There's nothing out there now anyway.

RED But how do you know? How do you know if you don't at least try?

GEORGE *(Starts rifling through the kitchen cupboards, throwing things here there and everywhere)* I just need one . . .

RED What are you doing? You'll disturb her . . . look, she's settled now.

GEORGE I just need one and then I'll go and get some.

RED What, there's none left?

GEORGE There's one left. There's just one left somewhere in this god damn dirt hole.

RED And after that?

GEORGE After that? I'll do it with my bare hands. *(unconvincing)* There's still a few wild bears and what not. It'll be alright.

RED Stop disturbing her.

GEORGE Arr here, here it is. *(Finds a bullet at the back of one of the drawers)*

RED *You won't go for too long?*

GEORGE *(Loading the rifle)* I need to tell you something, I need you to listen to me for a few minutes.

The baby wakes

RED *(Putting the babe to her breast)* Shhh. Shhh. It's alright

GEORGE I want to you to be strong Red. You're the only person I've ever loved and I want you to be strong. I sometimes think that I ought to have left you there, in that forest. I think that the choice I made was a selfish one. But as soon as I got you home, I knew I couldn't get rid of you. You're a special one, more special than you think or than I've ever given you credit for. You've taught me more about myself than you will ever know. I'm not a bad man Red, I'm not a bad man but I aint too good either. When that

there girl is older you might realise that. You just love her and somehow survival will kick in, not for yourself you understand, but for the girl. She will give you the strength you need to carry on. **(Takes out his flask, sips, throws it on the floor)** Not even a drop of liquor left for me now!

RED Shhh . . . shh . . . don't get cross, she will feel it

GEORGE I'll go then

RED Will you come back?

GEORGE I'll come back alright.

RED George

GEORGE What?

RED thank you

George tearful exits

RED **(Rocks the babe, softly)** Shhh . . . it will be alright . . . everything will be alright . . . I'll tell you a story . . . One winter's day there was an old hunter out scouring the woods for wolves. He was a little tired so he sat down on a tree stump to take some whisky from a silver flask he kept about him, on his person. Suddenly and quite out of the blue . . .

A gun shot is heard in the distance

RED . . . **(Tearful)** a babe fell from the sky. The hunter didn't know what to do with himself . . . so . . . he raised his rifle and started to think about . . . shoo . . .ting his find . . . but the babe . . . crie . . . the babe cried and the hunter noticing that she was still attached to an umbilical cord that led right up to the sky, took out

his penknife and cut the babe . . . free. He cut the babe free and he carried her home in his rucksack . . . and . . . **(Puts the sleeping babe back into the cradle)** oh **(Holds her stomach)** oh. George . . . George . . . **(Sobs)** *What am I supposed to do now?*

SCENE FOUR

Beside the bridge

Red arrives carrying the babe in her arms, she looks worn out and hungry.

RED *(To the babe)* There's only one thing we can do now. We need to walk and keep walking, and then we might find somewhere. . . . Over the bridge, we might find a new place. Look at that blue sky . . . just over there!

The ghost of Grandma and George are present but distant

GRANDMA You made it!

RED *(Turning)* I did.

George holds his rifle

(To George) You told me you'd come back!

George nods

GRANDMA Red? I didn't finish the story

Red doesn't take her eyes away from the bridge

(Animated) There were two little twin girls who lived in the village. *I didn't tell it you already did I?* No I didn't. There was two little girls who lived in the village and they were twins, and identical if ever I saw anything like it. *Most strange they were, like two little peas in a pod.* Anyways, their mother was a flower arranger and their father was a postman. *They weren't wealthy but they worked hard and were always careful with their pennies.* Did I tell you that their mother used to arrange the flowers for the Sunday Service? Well, that she did. Every

Sunday she would make the flowers look pretty in the church. Anyway, the twins, they grew up some, and it became clear that the mother favoured one over the other. *The father?* Well he didn't care too much for neither of them, he just thought they was double trouble and swallowed up his earnings with their pretty clothes and toys. Anyway, these little dots was called Elenora and Eleanor, they even had exactly the same letters in their names. Well Elenora was the favoured one and she always wore a pretty pink carnation in her hair whilst Eleanor's hair was left uncombed and dishevelled. Anyways, the love that the mother had inside her for Elenora was so great that she started to really neglect Eleanor. She put them in separate rooms and she gave everything to one and nothing to the other. Eleanor started to get very thin and malnourished whilst Elenora turned as fat as the Christmas turkey and so, *they became very different in nature*. One became fragile whilst the other became spoilt. But they was twins, and twins being twins, they felt an inseparable bond and one Sunday, whilst their mother was attending to the church flowers, they decided to run away into the forest. Elenora gathered up some of her favourite toys and took the sandwiches her mother had made for her and fetched her sister from her cold bedroom. They went out the back door and left the latch open. Their father didn't even notice they were gone as he was dozing off in the front room at the time. They fled through the back garden and out into the forest where the

blue bells was all out. By the time their mother returned from the church and realised they were gone, they was deep into the forest and it would be like trying to find a needle in a haystack finding them girls! But the mother howled and howled and was so crazy mad with the father that she poured a kettle of boiling water over his head and he died instantly.

BEAT

She went off in a rage searching the forest all by herself calling '*Elenooooora. Elenooooora*' she didn't for toffee care about the other dot, poor Eleanor. She raged and raged and after a whole month of searching that forest she came across her two little girls. Of course, by then, they had evened up in size, and not one person would've been able to tell the difference between those two dots. *They weren't even weak* cause they'd been eating nuts and fruit from the trees and the forest animals found them amusing, so they looked after them they did. Anyways, the mother stood them up next to one another and noticing that one of them had a dead carnation in her hair, instantly knew that that was her Elenora. Well, *she raged and raged at poor Eleanor for being so mean as to take her precious Elenora out into the forest*, and told her that the consequences of her actions had led to her killing their father with the boiling water. Well, those girls were sobbing and sobbing for their father, even though he didn't give much of a jot about them! Well, the mother pulled down Eleanor's pants and started

spanking her, it was as though she was possessed, she just couldn't stop herself and the poor dot went completely numb with pain, but that just made her mother more cross, so she took off her shoe and began beating her with it, until there was no life left in the poor dot. So she grabbed who she thought to be Elenora and carried her back to the village. . . *Do you know what's coming next Red?*

RED

It wasn't Elenora she carried back?

GRANDMA

(Laughs) That much it wasn't, see? You know Red . . . you know! Elenora had pinned the carnation in her sister's hair *way before her mother found them*, and they just forgot it was there! Eleanor was the neglected one! but even when her mother lied to the vicar about a stranger coming from the forest and killing her husband and stealing one of her twins. *Eleanor kept it schtum*. She held that secret inside herself for a good forty years and it was only when her mother became very old and frail that Eleanor revealed who she really was. *Now, that news killed her mother*, and not because Eleanor took any revenge and well, who could have blamed the poor dot if she had? No, *she didn't torture her old mother or neglect her or make her suffer in any way whatsoever*. She just simply told her the truth and the truth ate away at the old lady from the inside right to the outside. And when she took her last breath it was Eleanor who sat with her, holding her hand and shedding a tear and the old lady was filled with nothing but remorse.

RED *Grandma?*

GRANDMA Yes. Red?

RED *Is it time for me to go now?*

GRANDMA Yes . . . it's time. You just need to walk over the bridge dear . . . you never know what's out there . . . **(Excited)** what adventure awaits!

RED I'm tired Grandma.

GRANDMA You'll soon wake up, once you're there. Just hold on tight my girl. Hold on tight and don't let go

GEORGE So long Red!

RED So long!

Red waves and begins to walk over the bridge. Grandma and George begin fading out. Red looks back.

GEORGE Don't look back Red. Think of us sometimes, but don't look back ever again.

Red walks over the bridge

They've gone. . .

GRANDMA *Back to the forest?*

GEORGE Back to the forest. You?

GRANDMA I've got some knitting to do!

GEORGE *We're not dead long are we?*

GRANDMA It's a cycle, it's just a cycle. It'll soon come back around again.
You can't fight with nature.

BEAT

Grandma and George begin to walk off.

Did I tell you the story about the boy who didn't do too well in school?

GEORGE *Probably! . . . I know this one already. . . I know it already woman, why do you have to keep telling me the same stories?*

GRANDMA *You best get yourself back out there, in that forest, looking for them wolves. There's sure to be a few around once the sun sets, and I need to get my beauty sleep so I don't wants' to be woken up by no howling. You hear me?*

GEORGE *Why do you keep telling me the same old stories?*

GRANDMA *It's cause you won't listen to me George. . . It's cause you won't listen!*

Old stories, new plays: developing a new work for the stage, inspired by the formative tale '*Little Red Cap*'.

INTRODUCTION

Red is a full length play for the stage, inspired by the formative tale '*Little Red Cap*'. The play is set in some woods. There are three characters living in the woods, these are: George – a huntsman, Red – a young woman who George found lost in the woods as a babe and Grandma – George's mother. The landscape and characters have been inspired by Grimm's version of the formative tale. George, Red and Grandma all live an orderly life within the woods. It is not an easy life, but they follow a good routine. George hunts and gathers food. Red cooks and cleans and Grandma provides some entertainment by engaging them in stories and tales of 'others' who have lived in or near their neck of the woods. There is a bridge which separates the world in which they live from any other world. One day, George is out hunting in the woods when he comes across a young injured soldier called Arran. George can see that Arran should not have arrived in their world; he also finds that Arran is in physical pain and mental distress. His gut reaction is to shoot Arran but Arran persuades him that he should help him, hide him away until he recovers and can go on his way. George agonises but makes the decision not to shoot him and this decision has dire consequences for himself, Red and Grandma. This is a point of no return, because in order for Arran to live within the confines of a fairy tale, he must assume one of the roles within the formative tale. Arran becomes the wolf and the consequences of George's decision are as follows: Arran brutally rapes the innocent Red, the rape results in an unwanted pregnancy, George retreats and Red is left with no option but

to live domestically with Grandma and Arran whilst the pregnancy matures. Red bides her time and when George eventually visits Grandma's house with a loaded rifle, Red seeks the revenge she has been waiting for on Arran. After the act of revenge, everything within the structure of the formative tale begins to diminish. Just as seasons change, or stories evolve, things wilt away and the only thing that's left is an essence of what went before. Red is the only one left, she plus her newborn babe in a world where everything has died. She has to make a decision to either live or slowly die in a dead world or to make a journey in which she might embrace a new world. She makes the journey to the bridge which Arran initially crossed and decides to cross the bridge in the hope of finding a new world.

CHAPTER ONE: DEVELOPING THE PROJECT

There were twin impulses when developing this project. They were to: Present a coming of age story in a world where bad things happen, and simultaneously critique oppressive tales from childhood

'Each writer must devise his own system of developing a work from a germinal idea to completed manuscript'. (Smiley.S 1971:20)

The first step was to take those impulses, research and source relevant material that might prove the basis of a coherent stage play. The Grimm version of Little Red Cap was particularly compelling and I remembered my three year old self being particularly terrified by the personification of the wolf. The character of Red Riding Hood appropriately fitted the coming of age part of my initial impulse for the project. The psyche of a female making the journey from innocence to enlightenment is a complex study. By taking inspiration from the Red Riding Hood tale, I was able to explore further my own perspectives of the tale. It also became a spring board for analysing the effect of this particular formative tale, and structure.

CHAPTER TWO: MODELS

I place my project within the tradition of female playwrights who have also taken the oppressive themes of formative tales and critiqued them. Two playwrights that have been of particular interest to me when developing this project are Caryl Churchill and Angela Carter. It has been useful to place my work within this tradition; it has helped me order the extensive material to create meaning:

'Like all artists, playwrights choose, arrange, and above all concentrate events and behaviours they observe in the real world in such a way that gives them meaning' (Edgar.D 2009:5)

Female playwrights will feel compelled to write and explore the structure of the fairytale because they are so strongly linked to the feminine psyche. The cautionary tales found in such stories strike a deep chord for females' and have impacted on their psychological development and how they relate to the wider society. Churchill explores this within her stage play *The Skriker*. *The Skriker* is a modern day fairytale about two young mothers who are plagued, befriended, seduced and finally entrapped by an ancient shape shifting fairy:

'Churchill's work repeatedly challenges expectations in an industry whose mainstream is still dominated by naturalistic writing' (Wolfe.G: 2011 online)

There has been criticism that *The Skriker* does not deliver a coherent message, but instead, it might be '*designed to interrogate the very impulse to interpret and explain*' (*ibid*). There are distinct differences between the way in which the male and female brain works. Still, in the 21st Century, female playwrights face the challenges of gender imbalance. Because artists will bring some of what they experience in the real world into their work, there will be an influx of artists saying similar things or looking to similar material for inspiration. Harris points out within Cousins' book, (which explores female characters on stage) that:

'It is indeed striking just how many of these plays do offer up female characters undergoing painful and difficult voyages of self exploration and self realisation and end just at the point at which the characters are leaving spaces that are physically, emotionally or metaphysically oppressive and constricting' (Harris. G: 2008 online)

The work of Angela Carter has positively influenced this project, in particular the play *The Company of Wolves*. Particularly inspiring for me were the narrative tales told by the granny in Carter's story. I wanted to take her work further, use it as leverage for my grandma in Red. Not to steal it but to honour it within my own work:

'The movie The Company of Wolves, developed from Carter's screenplay, which is itself developed from her radio play, which was in turn developed from a series of short stories in The Bloody Chamber that were based on the

tale of Little Red Riding Hood, concerns a girl who has a dream about a girl who gradually learns to be a storyteller' (Mcquire.J 2008: online)

A resounding theme that came out of reading Carter's work was one of caution, and that young girls should not always listen and believe the tales that they are told by their elders. The stories that grandma tells in *Red (2013)* are highly inappropriate for a young audience, they are gritty and disturbing, they are charged and deliver supernatural content - yet whilst they evoke fear in *Red* they also provide enlightenment. The character Red in my play is not a young child, but because of her innocence, grandma attempts to open her eyes to the dangers she faces. The resounding message from grandma's tales is that actions will result in consequences. By the end of the play Grandma delivers a tale with a metaphorical meaning that tells Red that life is not always fair; that some people (and in a wider perspective societies) are treated differently. One poor and abused, the other rich and spoilt but that fundamentally we are all responsible for our own actions and so must Red be, should she choose to cross the bridge into an unknown world

'Stories of length usually contain complications [...] the initial disturbance is, for example, a specialized complication. A complication is any factor entering the world of the play and causing a change in the course of the action' (Smiley.S 1971: 57)

There comes a point within *Red* where a tale that grandma tells changes the course of the action and this also causes a disruption of time within the plot. In scene four,

Grandma tells George a ghastly story of a mother whose daughter dies. The mother climbs into the grave to be close to her daughter but ends up buried alive because the gravedigger is so used to the routine of his work that he doesn't think to look inside the grave and in goes the mud. There are two meanings that emerge from this story, the first is that the playwright is saying more about the wider society (that by conforming to capitalist structures, people go about their work in some kind of conformist coma). And the second is that grandma is telling George that he is not paying attention to what is happening under his nose. She goes on to tell George that Red is in danger because the wind has told her, but that the wind is not always a reliable source. At this point, the audience know that Red is in danger from Arran, the subsequent scene shows Arran raping Red, followed by George frantically attempting to find Red but being too late:

'Playwrights should know the rules because they are the possession of the audience, their essential partner in the endeavour. They won't be thanked for sticking so closely to the rules that the play is predictable from start to finish. But nor will audiences readily accept their expectations being ignored' (Edgar.D 2009: 7).

By forewarning George that Red is in danger, Grandma is also forewarning the audience, whose expectations will rise. The audience's expectations will then either be fulfilled or unfulfilled. In this case, the audience's expectations of Red's impending danger are fulfilled as Arran acts out a brutal rape and simultaneously their empathy for Arran is shattered as he unleashes their deepest fear.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CONSEQUENCES FOR CHARACTERS WHEN USING FORMATIVE TALES AS INSPIRATION

The characters within Red follow the archetypal stock characters from *Little Red Cap*. They will already be familiar to the majority of the audience and therefore there are consequences attached. From a positive perspective, they will tap into the audience's subconscious and will be immediately recognisable. From a negative perspective the characters may come across as being two dimensional.

The initial impulse for Red was to study, analyse and violate the conventions of the formative tale *Little Red Cap*. Playwright Annie Siddons took a similar approach with her play *Rapunzel*, produced by Knee High Theatre:

'I wanted my Rapunzel to have the wit, the sass, the spirit of these Basileⁱ and Calvinoⁱⁱ heroines. I wanted her journey to have real growth and suffering. I wanted her to actively choose the prince, not just go with him because he happened to hop into her tower. And I wanted her to be flesh and blood, not just some odourless, laminated dollybird' (Siddons. A 2006:7)

Like Siddons, I did not want my characters to appear two dimensional. It became important that the character Red had the opportunity to seek revenge upon the wolf and could overcome her obstacles and oppressions. Whilst retreating to Grandma's and playing out a domestic life with Arran she may appear to be in submission but she simply bides her time and as soon as the opportunity to destroy her oppressor becomes available, she takes it. Red is not a victim of circumstance, she does not

submit to her destiny, she acts out the manifestation of the repression of her mind throughout the months she has been held in submission in an extreme act of violence against her perpetrator:

'We learn about characters by way of an introduction, then through their pursuit of an objective, and finally by their success or failure in achieving it. The invention and development of characters – including the means to make them arresting, engaging and memorable – are all constrained within those narrow confines, whether they like it or not' (Edgar.D 2009:44)

By making the decision to use only four characters within Red I was able within the time constraints, to allow these characters to fully develop. They all have multi-faceted personalities and psychologies. Although, their personalities are heightened, in fashion with the fairy tale theme, these characters have been fully thought through and extensive work has been undertaken to build their facets.

In early drafts there were many parts of the play that seemed fractured and therefore were not yet comprehensible to an audience. There was no clear protagonist and I had to allow the characters to play that out before adopting a strategy. In early drafts, I was collecting the material that I needed and forming the characters, it would not have been helpful at that stage to have adopted a strategy. Yet at a later stage I made a very strong decision to have Red as the protagonist, in order to better facilitate, what I as playwright was interested in exploring. Arran seemed to be fighting for the role of protagonist and it was essential to let this play out in order to find a twist in

the plot. He initially arrives in the surreal world of fairytale, traumatised by war, with much to tell Red about what life has been like for him on the other side. These actions lead the audience to believe that he is the protagonist. In the early drafts, the duality of what was happening to Red made it impossible to determine who the real protagonist of the play was going to be. Red is in a similar situation to Arran when they first meet. She is also feeling lost and confused about her role. She is told ghastly tales by her grandmother, she has reached sexual maturity yet it has been suppressed within the confines of her world. I could not decide which character it was that I wanted to make protagonist; both seemed to have valid arguments that could be explored within the play. The decision to make Red protagonist, meant I could further explore gender imbalance, abuse of power and female repression.

Once I had made that strong decision, Arran found his place in the dramatic strategy as a feint. The audience follows him, believing him to be the protagonist of the tale only to find that they have been led into a false sense of security and their illusions are shattered. It is a cheap trick, but one which is often found in most good crime plots. The audience thinks that they know who the baddy is, but somehow they are distracted from their gut feeling. Only further down the line to realise that they were right all along and should have trusted their gut instinct. Hand and Wilson quote Philip Brophy on Cinema within their book *Grand – Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror*:

'The contemporary horror film knows that you've seen it before; it knows that you know what is about to happen; and it knows that you know it knows you

know. And none of it means a thing, as the cheapest trick in the book will still tense your muscles, quicken your heart and jangle your nerves' (Hand.R.J, Wilson.M 2002 cited in Nevitt.L 2013)

The following passage provides an insight to the audience of the foreboding danger that will subsequently play out:

ARRAN Are you my yellow rose?
 (Are you going to keep running away from me?)

RED Are you my wolf?
 (Are you a predator?)

(Dealtry 2013:37)

These characters did not materialise over one night, the characters were built and developed over the course of several drafts and playwrights' workshops, even after the final Playwrights' Workshop at the Old Joint Stock Theatre, revisions were made, new idiosyncrasies from the actors raised new understanding and inspiration to character's and these were implemented in the script.

By the final draft of the play it becomes clearer that Arran is the antagonist in the play:

'The primary function of the antagonist is opposition to the protagonist. An antagonist usually best represents the obstacles. If his volition is approximately

the same as or greater than that of the protagonist, the resultant crisis and conflicts will be more dynamic and can more easily reach an optimum level for the specific material' (Smiley.S 1971: 97)

More than anything, Arran seeks to find love and acceptance; he is the epitome of a tragic character. His former life before arriving in Red's world bursts out in spasmodic flashbacks which suggest that his chances to succeed in life were narrow from the beginning, that even when he joined the army he felt anxious and confused, he hungered for a moment of tenderness in his life. After he brutally rapes the protagonist, he holds her in his arms and begs forgiveness:

ARRAN I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. You are so innocent. I've never done anything like this before. I don't know why . . . I don't know what came over me. I just had to have you; I had to have you close to me. I'm not bad . . . I wouldn't do something like that I just . . . I *(he cups her face)*

(Dealtry 2013:50)

Here, we see the antagonist continuing his objective which is to be loved. In this case his objective conflicts with Red's objective which is to escape him and therefore a great conflict ensues, whereby Red leaves and Arran follows. It is at this point that Red goes through a process of transformation. She has toyed with a wolf, whether it is out of pity or curiosity, she has allowed herself to play with that which she was warned not to, and the climactic effect of her continuance was a brutal rape. This is an exaggerated scenario but the fundamental caution runs parallel with the caution

explored in the story of *Little Red Cap*. The point of transformation is then withheld from the audience for much of the second act, whilst Red plays out the role of domesticity with her rapist and grandmother all living in the same house, clucking over her matured pregnancy. The pregnancy itself is symbolic of this transformation, following a pregnancy there comes the dramatic event of childbirth and by now the audience will be witnessing wolf hairs sprouting from Arran – they may be curious to know whether or not the product of Red's pregnancy will be natural or supernatural. Alongside this, the antagonist is tricked into a false sense of security, whereby he believes that his objectives are going to be realised and that he will be unconditionally loved and secure within the domestic setting.

CHAPTER FOUR: FORMATIVE STORY GIVES THE PLAY ITS TONAL REGISTER

The world that has been created with this project is a heightened and simplified world. The characters are bold, and the underpinning formative tale makes for exciting, unusual theatrical language. It is a non-naturalistic form of theatre. All of the characters are given simple identities and actions to pursue. Giving the characters simple tasks such as hunting, baking and knitting provided a useful means of grounding the action in recognisable routines and activities. The audience can naturally empathise and relate to these every day type of tasks.

Despite the positive effects stemming from the ordering of the formative tale, there were many struggles within the early drafts. The story appeared fractured and the piece shifted as it went through subsequent drafts. There was a very definite battle for supremacy between the characters. It felt as though they were all vying to be the protagonist of the tale, it became confusing and definitely weakened the script

'Unity is one attribute that brings beauty, comprehensibility, and effectiveness to any work of art' (Smiley. S 1971: 61)

The beauty of working with a formative tale for inspiration is the richness of its fantasia world and the freedom of that gives *Red* its tonal register. There is something very lyrical about working within this structure and it gives *Red* a musicality, not found in all contemporary work.

CHAPTER FIVE: AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

The climax of *Red* is the scene where Arran rapes Red, from there on in, nothing can possibly remain the same for those characters or for the audience who have witnessed it. According to Smiley, a climax cannot happen without a crisis:

'Climax is a high point of interest for the characters, a single moment following a crisis. It is the instant when the conflict is settled. Usually it involves discovery or realization for the characters, and it can be a moment of reversal in the story' (Smiley.S 1971: 58)

The crisis comes just before the rape scene when Red allows Arran to go with her to Grandma's house. At this point the characters begin to doubt one another, when Arran says to Red *'Are you my yellow rose?'* (Dealtry: 2013:37) he is referring to the tale that Red told him about a woman who kept chasing a desired object until it became the death of her. When Red responds *'Are you my wolf?'* (ibid) she refers to the tales her grandmother has told her about predatory males, the characters are in crisis:

'Crisis can appear in many guises, and it can operate at numerous levels. Simply explained, crisis is a turn in the action. More complexly, crisis is a period of time in a story during which two forces are in active conflict and throughout which the outcome is uncertain' (Smiley 1971: 58)

One of the themes being explored here is what it means to be innocent living in a dangerous world. Professor Zipes, expert on fairy tales states that:

'Little Red Riding Hood is about violation and rape, and I suspect that humans were just as violent in 600BC as they are today, so they will have exchanged stories about all types of violent acts' (Zipes.J cited by Gray.R. 2009. Online)

Red is a contemporary stage play inspired by the formative tale *Little Red Cap*. It is not only the main character that is violated by rape but it is also a violation of the conventions of formative tales. One of the conventions of the fairy story is that character's inner lives and psychologies are unimportant because it is the overall moral of the tale that has the most impact on the reader. One of the ways that *Red* breaks those conventions is by exploring the psychology behind the character of the wolf. In *Red*, Arran is not a personification of a wolf. He is not there to just carry out the actions of a perpetrator. He goes on a journey whereby he undergoes a transformation into a wolf. When Arran arrives in the world of fairy story, he is an injured young man, both physically and psychologically damaged by war. He then acts on an impulse and the impulse is to be close to Red. The rape is a selfish and greedy act but it is not presented without an insight into the psychological inner workings of the character, thus breaking one of the conventions of the formative tale. As a playwright I want to know why the wolf violates the girl, why the grandmother is sick and stays at home, I want to have a deeper insight of the characters within the conventional tale. I want to make them relevant to my outer reality. This strategy has

also been applied by playwrights such as Caryl Churchill who have broken the conventions of formative tales within their work:

'Nevertheless, experimentation with modes of conventional representation is, of itself, a provocative act that can threaten prevailing systems of belief and is, therefore, a potentially risky approach in terms of public reception. Counter attacks can be mounted in the form of reviews that deliberately distort the interpretation of a performance, or diminish it through negative comments directed at the playwrights' identity, originality or skill' (Lavell.I. 2004)

The main risk that any playwright faces when breaking the conventions of formative tales is that critics will say that their work is derivative rather than original. This critique may be unavoidable because memories of the original work will be awoken by the new play. Bond speaks about the need, in order to escape the conservative status quo to deal in *'punctured myths and broken stories'* (Bond 1978: xiv) [see Appendix One]

Putting a rape scene into a play script was not a light decision:

'The image of a man raping a woman is an image of male power over a female body, and furthermore, this power is linked directly to sex. Questions are immediately raised about the act of embodying such a rape onstage.'
(Nevitt.L. 2013)

It was a conscious choice in order to examine the formative tale and to violate its very conventions. I had to show that Red was going to move from innocence to maturity and that whilst Grandma made her best efforts to describe this awakening to Red through story, her endeavours were unsuccessful and Red remained naive. Her innocence had to be stripped from her so that nothing of her former innocent self was left behind. It is about coming of age in a brutal way. Waking up to a world in which bad things happen even if you do good things and go about your business in peace. Bad things still do happen to good people. We live in an unjust world and an unjust society and this is an area that, as playwright I strive to question.

To have placed a rape as the main dramatic action of a play is not without its risks. At the 2013 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the play *Nirbhaya* was presented at The Assembly Hall. The play focuses on sexual violence against women in India, the reception was mixed, Tiffany Jenkins writes that:

“There are limitations to staging such horror. Although Nirbhaya was not as graphic as it sounds – there was a certain amount of suggestion and poetry in parts – there was no subtext or ambiguity, no light or shade. And whilst I don’t doubt it was a therapeutic exercise for the participants, it was not clear what the audience was meant to get from it, beyond “awareness raising” – another justifying mantra for watching this kind of stuff’ (Jenkins.T 2013: online)

She goes on to state that audiences should turn their backs on this type of work which she believes is using sexual violence as entertainment. Jenkins is wrong. The theatre is a place where playwrights should question social values and challenge fears and gender imbalances:

'Not depicting something on stage doesn't mean it isn't happening and it certainly does nothing to make it stop happening. It merely continues to ensure that it is hidden from view' (Gardner.L 2013: online)

It was a determined choice that the rape was necessary for the action of this piece. To have hidden the fact that this does rear itself as a theme in the formative tale would be to lie to the audience. This new play strives to address the hidden elements of the formative structure. And most things that are hidden from view are a key factor in repressions.

One final area of special attention was the relationship between the non-naturalistic world of the fairy tale, and the mundane aspects of the world we know.

In order to move from a germinal idea into the complete manuscript that Red stands as today involved the building of a world that philosophises the original ideas in an abstract setting. Although, there is no naturalism within this explored world, there is an element of natural order within the daily tasks and routines that both Red, Grandma and George partake in as daily rituals: Grandma with her knitting, Red with her cake making and George with his hunting. By having the daily grind a constant

necessity in the lives of these characters, it helped me to pose the question of madness occurring within the constraints of domesticity and routine. To build this non-naturalistic world and to successfully make it cohere for a reader/audience has involved the process of several drafts, whereby, each draft grew a different layer of discovery, yet remained faithful to the germinal idea.

CHAPTER SIX: SPACE AND STAGING

The Play *Red* is set in a world which is different to the world in which we live. It is not a representation of a real world, rather it works on a metaphorical level, it is an expression of a distorted reality. Much like Churchill's play *The Skriker* and McDonagh's play *The Pillowman*, *Red* works with a dual reality. There are similarities between our world and the world of the play but it is not simply a clear reflection of a specific time and place that can be easily identifiable by an audience. In order for the audience to be able to engage with the world of the play, I had to adapt the script so that it would be accepted by an audience. Much of this discovery came after the Playwrights' Workshop in June 2013. A panel of literary professionals discussed a performed extract of *Red*. Some questioned the rules of the world of the play. It struck me that I needed to provide some clarity for the audience between the world that Arran had appeared from and the world of the distorted fairytale. I decided to use a device that would clearly allow the audience to register that they were in a fantastical world. I did this by placing a bridge between two worlds and having the play begin with George finding Arran (the soldier) buried under rubble beside the bridge – therefore having crossed over from one reality to another. The aim and hope for the implementation of this device is that the audience will feel empathic with the character of Arran. He is equally unsure of the world he has found himself in and whilst the character struggles to find some coherence to the strange place he finds himself in, the audience will empathise with his plight. By using this device, the audience will now be following the journey of Arran, and may believe that the story

will be about Arran and that he is the protagonist, that is until they meet the real protagonist of the play which is in fact Red.

The character Arran leads the audience into a strategically planned trap. The initial empathy that the audience feels for Arran is useful in two ways. The first is that they will accept the strange world of the play and the second is that they will feel catharsis when he betrays their empathy and the real protagonist is unveiled. McDonagh uses a similar technique in *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, the audience follows the plight of Maureen, a battered down daughter coping with her mother's debilitating illness, right up until the point where:

'Maureen slowly and deliberately takes her mother's shrivelled hand, holds it down over the burning range, and starts slowly pouring some of the hot oil over it' (McDonagh.M 1996: 47)

Similarly with Red, the audience follows the plight of an injured soldier who is suffering with post traumatic stress right up until the point where he brutally rapes an innocent girl:

ARRAN *(Rips off her smock)* Bend over

RED I don't want to

ARRAN Bend over *(He pulls her hair, forces himself onto her and rapes her from behind)*

(Dealtry 2013:40)

This strategy has been employed to take the audience on an emotional journey, and the structuring of this plot endeavours to take the audience on a cathartic rollercoaster. Waters.S (2010) warns about the contract which the writer goes into with the audience:

'There is a strange contract at work in writing for the theatre – the audience come to be 'moved' yet do not wish to be manipulated. The task of the writer is to create stories that generate emotional responses; but if writers direct all of their ingenuity to that end, their work becomes ingratiating' (Waters.S 2010: 157)

Waters makes a valid point and this has been considered when writing *Red*, however, when constructing the thesis play, it was not my intention to manipulate the audience. There was however, an intention to take the audience on an emotional journey whereby they can engage with the characters. And furthermore, consider the wider philosophical questions considered within the text and subtext of the play. Therefore, great care has been taken to not just seek to *'arouse a specified, singular emotional effect' (Ibid)* else the text may appear crude.

Space became an important factor within the progress of the play. In very early drafts of the script, there were major shifts in space between Red and Arran, they first met inside George's cafe but then subsequently met outside at a train station, further to that Arran visited Red at her house, followed by a long period of being lost in a forest

and finally enclosed within the confines of Grandma's house. Here, we can see big shifts in space between the scenes.

'A play's power to imply a specific staging format lies in its movement between spaces or its internal scenic workings' (Waters.S 2010: 53)

It was necessary in subsequent drafts of *Red*, to restructure the scenes between Arran and Red in order to close up the spaces between scenes. This made the storyline more linear and the plot more intense. It became clear after draft two, that Red needed to be seen as vulnerable to Arran and therefore the scenes needed to be re-formatted. The cafe was cut from the script completely, as a scene in a public space would suggest that there were other characters involved in the world of the play and this was not the intention. Additionally it became a necessary to show the audience that Red is in danger by Arran's presence. That there are few or indeed no actions that she can take to remove herself from her impending fate. Arran has been planted by George inside Red's comfort zone in scene two of the script - from there on in, there is no escaping him. The wolf is already in the lair and Red is in danger. As a character she will not escape this misfortune until she undergoes a full transformation from child to woman, thus fulfilling one of the twin impulses to write a coming of age story.

There are only four characters in the play and the space of the play becomes very intense. The script is intentionally dark in essence and the lack of space provides something of the sinister found within Grimm's version of the original tale. In

George's house there are bloody carcasses hanging above the cooker in the kitchen which leads to irony when Red is seen making a cake with jam and sugar and cream. A pleasant domestic scene is layered with sickening imagery, showing the audience that this is not a Walt Disney fairytale. The space in Grandma's house is close because of Grandma's constant presence on the rocking chair and the constant ticking of the Grandfather clock in the background, furthermore made claustrophobic by the constant warnings found within Grandma's storytelling.

CHAPTER SEVEN: STORYTELLING AND VIDEO

There may be some danger in the staging of Grandma's stories, they are very long and often involve little or no interaction from the other character's on stage. It is suggested in the notes of the play text that these long narratives are supported by black and white projections

'Sets that once remained static now positively pulsate with imagery, moving or otherwise, ranging from discreet surtitles to sweeping, animated vistas'
(Barbour.D 2011: online)

As a playwright with a background in collaborative theatre, it was natural to write into the script a visual device that will enhance the narratives entwined within the play. However, I am not sure that this is entirely necessary. Grandma's stories should be able to stand alone; storytelling is at the very core of great theatre.

Grandma's stories are not just there to push the action of the play along. They actually provide a deeper meaning to the overall aesthetic of the play posing the question of how important these stories are both culturally and educationally. Therefore, Grandma's stories speak more about literature and our use of literary fiction than about pushing a plot line forward. It is an intention that if the visual aid is used, it will transport the audience inside the tale they are being told, from the perspective of the storyteller. Therefore, it has not being added to the script as an affected device but to support a vision for the overall aesthetic of the play

'Des McAnuff's 2009 revival of Guys and Dolls was criticized for its animated projection sequences that added little or nothing to the show's charm' (Ibid)

It would be foolish not to consider that adding visual instructions to a stage play could be thought of as a devise making strategy to get around the obstacle of elongated storytelling. The idea to add projection in these scenes will further deepen the storytelling and the sinister nature of the tales being told. A director/designer will hopefully realise this ambition and not misconstrue the instruction as a fashion statement

'A play is a visual image as well as an imaginative verbal one [. . .] Drama as an art demands that spectacle be an organic element, one properly integrated with all the others' (Smiley.S 1971: 189)

CONCLUSION

To conclude, there were twin impulses when beginning this project. Firstly to write a coming of age story – a female’s rite of passage from innocence into maturity. The second impulse was to critique the oppressive themes found in formative tales. *Red* was heavily inspired by Grimm’s version of ‘*Little Red Cap*’ (2007). Churchill’s *The Skriker* (1994) and Carter’s *The Company of Wolves* (1996:61) have also had a positive influence on this work. I place this play within this tradition of those female playwrights who have also taken the oppressive themes of formative tales and critiqued them. It was important to consider my own personal writing manifesto when researching *Red* [See Appendix Two].

Strong and brave decisions were made throughout the re-drafting process. One of those decisions was to place Red as the protagonist in order to adhere to my manifesto. This was helpful in keeping me focussed on an end result for the script. Another decision was to place a rape scene as a turning point for the plot of the play. Without the brutal rape scene it would be impossible for Red to seek to destroy her oppressor. Without the initial act of violence, how could the second act of revenge violence occur? The decision makes the structure of the play coherent and builds upon the intense themes that emerge from Grimm’s version of ‘*Little Red Cap*’.

Developing *Red* has meant accepting certain rules, mostly concerning contractual obligations that the writer enters into with the audience. Smiley and Edgar both provide critical thinking and studying these theorists has assisted with the journey of *Red* from germinal impulse to coherent stage play.

ⁱ Basile – Neapolitan soldier, public official, poet and writer. His short story collection *Lo Cunto de li cunti* was one of the earliest such collections based on folktales and served as an important source both for later fairy-tale writers, such as Charles Perrault in France and the Brothers Grimm in Germany, and for the Italian commedia dell'arte dramatist Carlo Gozzi (Merriam Webster 1995: 111)

ⁱⁱ Calvino – Italian journalist, short story writer, and novelist, whose whimsical and imaginative fables made him one of the most important Italian fiction writers of the 20th century (Merriam Webster 1995: 111)

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Ayckbourn, A. (2002) *The Crafty Art of Playmaking*, Faber and Faber, Croydon.
- Bond, E (1978) *THE BUNDLE*, Eyre Methuen, London.
- Carter, A. (1996) *The Curious Room*, Random House, London.
- Churchill, C. (1990) *Plays: Two*, Methuen Drama, London.
- Churchill, C. (1994) *The Skriker*, Nick Hern Books Limited, London.
- Clapp, S. (1996) *The Curious Room*, Random House, London.
- Edgar, D. (2009) *How Plays Work*, Nick Hern Books Limited, London.
- Grimm (2007) *The Complete Fairytales*, Translated by Jack Zipes. Random House, London.
- McDonagh, M. (1996) *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Random House, London.
- McGuire, J. (2008) 'The Intelligible, the Sensible, and Fictivist Thought: Angela Carter's Window on the Wolves', *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, 5:2, 126-139
- Nevitt, L. (2013) *theatre & violence*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire.
- Pinkola Estes, C. (2008) *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, Ballantine Books, London.
- Siddons, A. (2006) *Rapunzel*, Oberon Books Ltd, London.
- Smiley, S. (1971) *Playwriting the Structure of Action*, Prentice Hall International, London.
- Waters, W. (2011) *The Secret Life of Plays*, Nick Hern Books Limited, London.
- Webster – Merriam (1995) *Encyclopaedia of Literature*, Merriam Webster. USA.

ELECTRONIC:

Barbour, D. *The Prevalence of Projections*, Theatre Communications Group (Accessed August 2013) Available at: <

<http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/dec11/projection.cfm>>

Gardner, L. (2011) 'Is storytelling the best form of theatre?' *The Guardian*, 23rd November 2011, available at:

<www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2011/nov/23/storytelling-theatre>

Gardner, L.(2013) 'With rape centre-stage, theatregoers can no longer turn a blind eye'. *The Guardian*, 4th September 2013, available at:

<www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2013/sep/04/rape-centre-stage-theatre>

Power, C. (2013) 'A brief survey of the short story part 48: Angela Carter'. *The Guardian*, (Accessed: 22nd March 2013) Available at:

<www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/mar/22/survey-short-story-angela-carter>

Sofia Pimentel Biscaia, M. (1999) 'Tales of the Grotesque and Carnavalesque: The fiction of Angela Carter and Salman Rushdie', (accessed 18 April 2013)

available at:

<www.academia.edu/187851/Tales_of_the_Grotesque_and_the_Carnavalesque_the_fiction_of_Angela_Carter_and_Salman_Rushdie> 'Refusing to write about the

bourgeoisie and their cleaning ladies' 1991, Radio Interview, BBC Radio 3, London.

Available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/writers/12245.shtml>

Gray.R (2009) 'Fairytale have ancient origin Popular fairy tales and folk stories are more ancient than was previously thought, according research by biologists' *The Telegraph*. [Accessed November 2013] Available at:

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/science-news/6142964/Fairy-tales-have-ancient-origin.html>>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE:



APPENDIX TWO:

Rachel Dealtry - Writing Manifesto

'It's a very, very difficult mix [...] real marble and fake [...] It's a masterpiece of kitsch but in a hundred years' time no one's going to be able to tell that it's kitsch.' Carter. A cited by Clapp.S (1996: VIII)

The above quote refers to Angela Carter (1940-1992) describing the walls of her favourite cinema in Tooting, London. Carter was a novelist, journalist and playwright widely celebrated for her use of magic realism, feminism and picaresque work. When choosing a playwright who exemplifies the work that I am trying to create, I pick Angela Carter. Her 'kitsch' style gives me great solace that I am on the right track. Similar to Carter, I too am obsessed with myth and fairytale. I feel as though I am just beginning to explore an area which could easily become a life time's work. I seek for my work to be different, individual, prophetic, visual, magical, horrific and beautiful. I love working with grotesques and am attempting to find new ways to distort/reinvent old stories. My concern is women's place within society, what makes women tick, what makes them subordinate, deceitful or independent in this modern society, I wonder if there really is true independence and reward available for women in today's society or does that come at a cost (considering the work of Churchill's *Top Girls*) are the 1980's truly behind us or are women experiencing a lengthy hangover. My work looks at the female from many different perspectives, but in order to find grounding, it must look at the influence past literature has informed upon the female. Fairytales are immensely important to my work; even my more naturalistic writings

are engaged in some way with the power of this form. Mirrors are becoming of importance in my work. Not just the old adage of holding a mirror up to society through playwriting, but more the object itself. What it means to look into a mirror and be confronted with either the truth or a lie and what is the aftermath of this.

I want my work to cross genres because it is not just a theatre audience that I hope to engage with. When I talk and listen to women/mother's who are stuck on a treadmill of child rearing, I see more than just the ordinary in their voices, I seek to interpret those voices, distort them, make them surreal, fantastical and theatrical but fundamentally let them breathe within a story.

I must remember in my manifesto that my roots are not that of privilege. I was not able to gain an education of excellence whilst in adolescence and I became a teenage single mother, I began writing because of the boredom of being at home with a baby and used writing as a form of escape from the immense financial and life pressures that were affecting me at that time. It is that nineteen year old mother's voice which forms the root of my journey and one that I shall never forget within my work.

Bibliography

Carter.A cited in Clapp.S (1996) *The Curious Room*. Random House. London.