Yellow Wallpaper

adapted by

Kathryn Funkhouser

from "The Yellow Wallpaper"
by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

STAGE PARTNERS

yourstagepartners.com

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

Yellow Wallpaper Copyright ©2024 Kathryn Funkhouser
All Rights Reserved.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: *Yellow Wallpaper* (the "Play") is fully protected by copyright under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, Australia, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including, but not limited to professional/amateur stage rights, film, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio, television, video or sound recording, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

PROHIBITION OF ALTERATIONS: There shall be no changes of any kind made to this Play, including deletions, alterations, changes of character gender, changes of character race or ethnicity, cutting of dialogue, cutting of music, addition of dialogue or text, or alteration of objectionable language, unless directly authorized in writing by Stage Partners. The title of this Play shall not be altered in any way. Please Note: Some authors include pre-approved alterations in the Production Notes, Cast Notes, and/or Author's Note sections of the script. Please refer to those sections for more information.

PERFORMANCE: *Professionals and Nonprofessionals are hereby warned that performance of this Play is subject to payment of a royalty, whether or not admission is charged.* The stage performance rights throughout the world for this Play are controlled exclusively by Stage Partners. No professional or nonprofessional performances of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of Stage Partners and paying the requisite fee. Current Nonprofessional royalty rates and performance information may be found at our website: www.yourstagepartners.com. Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to the Authors c/o Stage Partners:

STAGE PARTNERS
P.O. Box 4795, Stamford, CT 06907
www.yourstagepartners.com
info@yourstagepartners.com

UNAUTHORIZED COPYING AND DISPLAY: Any unauthorized copying of this Play, or excerpts from this Play is strictly prohibited by law. For productions of this Play, sufficient scripts must be purchased for all cast members and crew. No part of this Script may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Stage Partners. No one shall display, upload, post, or make available, this Play, or part of this Play, to any websites, including, but not limited to, social media sites.

REQUIRED CREDIT: Anyone receiving permission to produce this Play is required to give credit to the Author(s) as sole and exclusive Author(s) of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and of a font size at least 50% as large as the largest letter used in the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author. The name of the Author may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in the Play. The bio(s) for the Author(s) shall be included in any program that contains cast and/or creative team bios. Author bios can be found on Stage Partners' website at www.yourstagepartners.com. Credit shall be given to any other parties, such as producer credits and commission credits, in the form and manner specified in the Script.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

Stage Partners Attribution: Licensee shall include the following notice in all programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with the production of the Play:

Yellow Wallpaper
is produced by special arrangement with Stage Partners.
(www.yourstagepartners.com)

RECORDING/REPRODUCTION: Recording: Rights to perform this Play does not grant the right to make, use and/or distribute a mechanical recording (rehearsal, performance or otherwise) of the Play or any portion of it by any means whatsoever, including, but not limited to, audiocassette, videotape, film, CD, DVD and other digital sequencing. Broadcast: Except for the usual right to advertise and publicize the Play by means of print, radio, and television (in which no radio or television commercial shall contain excerpts of more than 30 seconds), the right to perform the play does not allow you to broadcast, televise, and/or electronically post on the Internet any part of the Play, either audio or visual or both, including, without limitation, musical selections. Program note*:* You must include the following warning in your program: "The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited."

SONGS AND RECORDINGS: For performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in these Plays, the permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained. Other songs, arrangements or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted. For further information on the need to obtain permissions, and on procedures for obtaining such permissions, visit the websites of ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), and NMPA (www.nmpa.org).

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION INFORMATION:

If you have licensed performances of this Play, please consult your Performance Licensing Agreement for details about your specific license and an associated performance royalties and fees.

Scripts: Production Scripts must be purchased along with your performance license. The Production PDF Scripts may only be photocopied in connection with the needs of your licensed performance and may not be photocopied or shared for other uses. You are only allowed to perform the Play as it appears in the Script published and approved by Stage Partners.

Production Date Changes/Cancellation: Promptly notify Stage Partners in writing (email acceptable) of any changes in the Production Dates whatsoever, including, but not limited to, additional performances, rescheduled performances, postponements, etc., all of which are subject to prior written approval of Stage Partners. Should you desire to present additional performances, you must agree to enter into a new agreement with Stage Partners and to make additional royalty payments for any and all performances in addition to those already licensed. You should not announce, present, or sell tickets for such additional performances without prior written permission from Stage Partners AND payment of the additional royalty and fees due.

.....

Navigating theatrical rights can be confusing. If you have questions, that's okay. Reach out to us at info@yourstagepartners.com. We are always happy to help!

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

I have spent an all but sleepless night, I have told lies and made a fool of myself, and the very air tastes like wine. I have been frightened half out of my foolish wits, but I have somehow earned this joy; I have been waiting for it for so long.

—Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

Our mother has been absent
Ever since we founded Rome
But there's gonna be a party
When the wolf comes home

—The Mountain Goats, "Up The Wolves"

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

Cast of Characters

1910

JANE, 20s–early 30s. 1910. A writer who recently gave birth to a daughter, a difficult delivery. Postpartum depression has been mercilessly sapping her strength ever since, but it's 1910, and this condition is not yet known—everyone around her considers it to be a weakness of will, and so does she. She has a mordant wit about her. She wants to be good.

JOHN, 20s–30s. A doctor in 1910. It would never occur to him that he was doing anything but the best for everyone.

1950

ELEANOR, late teens. Dorothy's daughter. Bright and ambitious—but perhaps a little less worldly than she thinks she is

DOROTHY, 30s–40s. John and Jane's daughter. Eleanor's mother. She's been hurt a lot, and puts up walls to stop it from happening again.

FRANK, 20s. Studying to be a doctor. Eleanor's cousin. Generally kind, but his ego is fragile. *(Frank may be played by the same actor who plays John.)*

Both

JENNY, 20s–30s in 1910 and 60s–70s in 1950. John's sister, is how she would describe herself. She wears no age makeup when she's is in the 1950s—she simply carries herself differently, now that John is gone.

THE WOMEN IN THE WALLS— Spirits trapped in the nursery. They want out. They are unsettling. Something in the nursery, the force of the wallpaper, prevents them from speaking and limits their movements, forcing them to communicate through Jane's diary. *(See Casting Note that follows.)*

Casting Notes

The characters' genders are important to this particular story. However, the casting of these roles is entirely at the discretion of each production. Casting does not need to be as limited as the characters' world.

The Women in the Walls ensemble may be as large as desired. Lines are divided up between Woman 1, 2, and 3 for clarity in the script to illustrate how the messages are passed between Jane and Eleanor, but they can be divided as desired as long as the basic concept of passing the messages is preserved.

If you wish to include additional spirits in the walls who are not women in your production, you're welcome to do so. However, please check in and request permission if you would like to modify any text to reflect this.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

Setting

Ancestral halls, a colonial mansion, a hereditary estate. *(*An isolated old house weighed down with history.)

A summer in the 1910s—the past. A summer in the 1950s—the present.

Production Notes

The pace should be swift, and the transitions should be flowing. There should be no pause and no blackout between scenes or during transitions between time periods.

The past (1910) and present (1950) can be more clearly differentiated from one another, with light, sound, color, or movement early in the play—then things become harder to differentiate as the situation escalates.

In design, I would lean away from realism, especially as the characters' sense of reality fractures

A central area onstage is dedicated to the nursery. There's a substantial door of some kind. The nursery should probably always be there.

The yellow wallpaper itself should be mostly depicted by whatever visual element you choose that indicates the Women in the Walls are trapped in the nursery. Some possibilities: Maybe it's fabric they're entangled in; maybe some part of their bodies must always be touching a particular wall or platform; maybe it's a particular path onstage that their feet must always touch; maybe it's ribbons that act like chains. Create a rule the spirits must follow, and make it visual.

Other areas of the stage can be flexible, perhaps with minimal elements that can quickly be moved in and out to suggest the other spaces depicted, such as the kitchen, the garden, and Frank's dorm.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions you'd like to discuss about the play, or if you would like to request cuts or changes. I would be happy to talk to you. I'd love to hear about your experience if you produce it, too. If your messages are not delivered via figures in the walls in a timely fashion, please email me at kathryn@kathrynfunkhouser.com, or get in touch through Stage Partners.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

YELLOW WALLPAPER

adapted by Kathryn Funkhouser

from "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

1. A Haunted House, 1910

(JANE and JOHN enter an old nursery at the top of the house where they will be spending the summer. Throughout the following exchange, the shadows of WOMEN IN THE WALLS slowly take their places around the perimeter of the room.)

JANE: *(Trying to make light:)* How often do you think mere ordinary people get ancestral halls for the summer? A colonial mansion.

JOHN: It was very reasonable.

JANE: A hereditary estate. I would say a haunted house, but that would be asking too much of fate!

JOHN: The place has been empty for years. Some legal trouble with the heirs.

JANE: Oh. Well, that spoils my ghostliness a bit, I'm afraid, but I don't care. There's something strange about the house—I can feel it.

JOHN: What you're feeling, my dear, is a draft.

(He moves to shut the window.)

JANE: Oh no, leave it open, won't you? *(Teasing:)* Anyhow, you're the one who's mad for fresh air.

JOHN: Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear, and your food somewhat on your appetite—

JOHN:
—but air you can absorb all the time.

JANE: *(Quoting his oft-repeated phrase:)*
"But air you can absorb all the time."

JOHN: You know that's the reason we came here.

JANE: *(Chastened:)* I know. And I'm grateful. It's beautiful here. The gardens, the old greenhouses. Even though they're broken, I like them.

JOHN: You'll have perfect rest. That's what you need to get better.

JANE: So decrees the good doctor John.

JOHN: So decrees your devoted husband.

JANE: I'm so glad to go away to the country, darling. It's just…do you think… There was also that room downstairs. I love the roses on the window.

JOHN: There's only one window and there isn't another free room close by. How am I supposed to keep an eye on you?

JANE: All right. It's just a bit…not funny but…strange, that the baby should be sleeping downstairs and I'm up here in a nursery.

JOHN: I suppose.

JANE: What ravages these children made. Look at all the scratches! They must have hated that hideous wallpaper.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JOHN: I really wish you wouldn't be so childish. The nursemaid can only raise one of you.

(Beat. This was a low blow.)

JANE: I'd better finish unpacking.

JOHN: What have I said now?

JANE: You can't think— You know I want to be with the baby.

JOHN: You know, you never used to be so sensitive.

JANE: *(Stung:)* I—I'm sorry. I think, it's only since, I've had this—this nervous condition…

JOHN: Now, none of that. If you think of it like that, you'll completely neglect proper self-control. It's a temporary nerves case. A slight tendency to hysteria, that's all.

JANE: You're right, you're right. I'm sorry.

JOHN: Now, you have to listen to me. Listen to the doctor, all right? You'll take your phosphates, you'll have perfect rest, and I absolutely forbid you to work at your writing until you are well again.

JANE: No writing at all?.

JOHN: Jeremy agrees with me.

JANE: You wrote to my brother.

JOHN: I've got to take care of you darling, I wanted a second opinion from another physician. And we agreed you would exhaust yourself. The very worst thing you can do is think about your condition.

JANE: It does—it does make me feel bad, to think about it.

JOHN: So there you have it.

JANE: Shall I get the bags?

JOHN: Absolutely not. You won't lift a finger for the rest of the summer.

(JANE and JOHN exit. The WOMEN IN THE WALLS have reached their places. Perhaps we see them more clearly for a flash before they freeze and we shift into…)

2. A Hereditary Estate, 1950

(The same room, 40 years later. ELEANOR, rushes in, eagerly exploring. A bright girl, smart and ambitious—but perhaps a little less worldly than she thinks she is.)

ELEANOR: What's in here?

(JENNY enters behind her—an unassuming, tidy woman in her 60s or 70s, followed by DOROTHY, who is Jenny's niece and Eleanor's mother.)

JENNY: Be careful dear, or you'll trip, running that way.

DOROTHY: Don't clomp around your Great-Aunt Jenny's house like a buffalo.

ELEANOR: Sorry.

JENNY: Are you looking for something in particular?

ELEANOR: Just looking. But if there happened to be a radio, or a bicycle…

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JENNY: I think the gardener might have something like that out in the shed. It's the sort of thing gardeners enjoy, I think. Bicycles.

DOROTHY: I don't see why you want one now. You hardly ride the one you have at home. *(To JENNY:)* —She's too busy playing records and rattling my cage.

ELEANOR: I didn't realize I wasn't allowed to *enjoy music*—

DOROTHY: —If you call that music—

JENNY: —Cage-rattling seems to run in the family.

DOROTHY: I'm sorry, Aunt Jenny. I seem to turn seventeen again myself, the minute I walk through the door of this house.

JENNY: *(Fondly:)* You're always a little girl to me.

ELEANOR: How far is the nearest town? Has it got a movie theater?

DOROTHY: Don't be rude, we're here to help Aunt Jenny.

ELEANOR: Of course. Just, if there's a little time…

JENNY: About three miles.

DOROTHY: That's too far on a strange road.

ELEANOR: *(Despairing:)* Three miles from anywhere.

DOROTHY: Anyhow I should have thought you'd be studying all summer, since you're going to be a great doctor and all.

ELEANOR: People can do two things.

DOROTHY: Maybe you ought to do one thing before you start giving lessons.

JENNY: You're all tired from the trip. A long day. And you're so kind to help me with packing up the house.

ELEANOR: I really am sorry you have to move. And I'm sorry about Grandpa John.

JENNY: Oh, he wanted to sell this place long ago. But it seemed wrong to give it up.

DOROTHY: *(A little emotional, the grief is still fresh:)* We don't need to get into all that.

JENNY: I'm afraid this room will take a long time to clear out. It's only storage now, it hasn't been used since it was a nursery, before we even rented the place.

DOROTHY: I don't think I've ever seen it before. It used to be all shut up when I would come visit you in the summer.

JENNY: I couldn't have you thinking less of my housekeeping. Things do pile up so.

ELEANOR: I can start in here. I like sorting out a mess. You should see our garage.

DOROTHY: You should have seen Eleanor, covered in dust from head to toe.

JENNY: I was thinking we could begin in the kitchen. I can't quite catch my breath in here, it's so stuffy.

(They start to leave. ELEANOR calls after them.)

ELEANOR: Well why don't we open a window?

DOROTHY: Come on, Eleanor.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(ELEANOR crosses to the window to open it, then sees something. A sharp inhale.)

ELEANOR: Aunt Jenny…

(The sharp inhale echoes from the walls, as though the WOMEN IN THE WALLS were waking up suddenly from a bad dream…)

JENNY: *(Offstage:)* What's that?

ELEANOR: Why are there bars on the windows?

(From the walls come a long, slow exhale. JENNY reenters.)

JENNY: I believe they put them in for the nursery. *(Though her tone remains even, she lowers her voice, to ensure only ELEANOR can hear her.)* You know, children love exploring but I find they don't quite realize when they've climbed too high or leaned out too far. Better to keep the window shut before they do something dangerous. Don't you think?

(ELEANOR is unnerved, unsure what to make of this.)

ELEANOR: I think…I think I'd better help Mother with the bags.

JENNY: That's good. That's a good girl. And we'll stay out of this room from now on. Won't we? We can't have you getting covered in dust.

(She ushers ELEANOR out, then takes a moment. Exhales—a release of tension—turns out the light, and follows. The WOMEN IN THE WALLS inhale, an echo…)

3. Dead Paper, 1910

(…and now awakened, we see the WOMEN IN THE WALLS fully. In 1910, JANE enters the nursery and begins unpacking. She cannot see the WOMEN. Like many spirits, the WOMEN IN THE WALLS have unfinished business. They try to communicate to JANE. They try and fail to speak, to beckon her. They are stopped by some force in the room.)

(One WOMAN finds Jane's writing supplies and tries to write, but cannot. She can't contain her anger. She slams the pen and paper down on the desk…and some flicker of this causes JANE to turn towards the pen. The WOMEN are excited. Contact!)

JANE: *(To herself.)* …I shouldn't.

(She turns away. Frustrated, the WOMAN slams the pen down again. JANE turns.)

JANE: …I would not say this to a living soul of course…but this is dead paper, and a great relief to my mind…

(JANE sits. The WOMEN gather, eager to see what she writes.)

JANE: *(Narrating as she writes:)* John is a physician and *perhaps*—perhaps that is one reason that I do not get well faster. You see, he does not believe that I am sick! Just…weak. And what can one do, if a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, tells friends and family that there is nothing the matter with one but weakness? And your brother, also a physician of high standing, says the same thing?

JOHN: *(Offstage:)* Darling, where is my shaving kit?

JANE: *(Calling:)* In the green bag in here! I'll bring it down.

JOHN: *(Offstage:)* No, you stay there. I'll come in and get it. You must rest.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JANE: *(Scribbling off one last thought:)* Personally I believe that congenial work, and excitement and change would do me good. But what is one to do? Talk about the house. Tell you about the wallpaper.

(She folds the paper, and hurriedly looks for a hiding place. The WOMEN IN THE WALLS create a crack in the wall with their hands, where she slips it as she exits. The WOMEN pass it among each other, hold it up, dance in triumph. Their work can begin! They fade back into the walls.)

4. Bluebeard's Treasure on the Telephone, 1950

(Elsewhere in the house, ELEANOR enters, stretching the phone cord as far as possible for maximum privacy. Her older cousin FRANK is on the other end, in the hall of his college dormitory.)

FRANK: Come on, Cousin. Next you'll be telling me about chains rattling in the night.

ELEANOR: I'm not saying I believe in any of that. But you have to admit that there's something strange about a house, when there's an honest-to-goodness *creepy abandoned nursery* in it.

FRANK: Sounds to me like there's nothing to do up there so you're inventing something interesting to happen like a silly girl. But you're not supposed to be a silly girl, remember? You're supposed to be a doctor too. You can't go soft on me now!

ELEANOR: I'm not soft, and neither was Great-Aunt Jenny when she politely told me to stay away from that nursery. The last harsh word I've ever heard that woman say was when you put your elbows on the table, Christmas dinner 1945. But this was a real warning.

FRANK: So what?

ELEANOR: So that's a deviation from a pattern, dear cousin of mine. Cold, hard scientific evidence that something's up. Isn't that what they're teaching you at that place?

FRANK: Mostly I'm naming bones of the foot.

ELEANOR: So you're not doing any surgeries yet?

FRANK: Not in the first semester.

ELEANOR: Oh.

FRANK: But probably soon.

ELEANOR: But what do you think I should do?

FRANK: Well, Nancy Drew, *if* there is anything Aunt Jenny's hiding, which I doubt, it's going to be the room where she told you not to look.

ELEANOR: I'll tell you what I find. And Frank? If you call here and my mother picks up say you're Tommy Atwood, would you? I just can't stand it anymore, how she says, "Don't pester him, he's at medical school, the last thing he wants to do is talk to *you*."

OFFSTAGE STUDENT: Frank, we're going to be late!

ELEANOR: Oh, are you meeting those the girls from your class?

FRANK: Um, the other kind of girls, actually. For a date.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

ELEANOR: Oh. You know since I told Mother there were *two girls* there in your class, so girls *do* go, now every time she asks me "and how are the *girl doctors?*" with this *dig* in her voice. So if you could just say you're Tommy Atwood when you call.

FRANK: Sure thing. You and Great-Aunt Jenny, you're a pair with your secrets.

ELEANOR: Frank—you would tell me if I were really pestering you, wouldn't you? I don't want to be a pest or a burden to you or…or a silly girl.

FRANK: You're really not, cousin. …Except for exactly right now, when I have a date.

ELEANOR: *(Relieved, a big smile:)* Alright, alright, goodbye!

FRANK: Bye cousin. Tell me if you find Bluebeard's treasure or anything! Bye.

ELEANOR: Won't you have egg on your face if I do?

(FRANK and ELEANOR hang up the phone and exit.)

5. A Matter of Will, 1910—and a Discovery, 1950

(The nursery. In 1910, the baby begins to cry downstairs. The WOMEN IN THE WALLS are restless, mirroring how everything in JANE desperately cries out that she must go to her baby. But she holds herself back, just as the WOMEN are held back by the room. They want to comfort her, but with no way to communicate, all they can do is give her the paper and pen again. JANE writes, a bit more agitated than before.)

JANE: *(Narrating as she writes:)* John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious. I am glad my case is not serious. He does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him. Of course it is only nervousness…

(The cry changes in pitch. She can't help it, crosses to the door.)

It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way. I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

(She stops herself, before she opens the door. Turning away, convincing herself…)

It is fortunate the nursemaid is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby! And yet I cannot be with her, it makes me so nervous.*(She returns to her desk, full of self loathing.)* John is right. I should not be with her. I suppose John never was nervous in his life.

(She slams the paper down in despair, an echo of the WOMEN IN THE WALLS earlier…and the door to the nursery opens. It's ELEANOR, in 1950, exploring with a flashlight so as not to attract attention. She can't see JANE, and JANE can't see her—they each only perceive their own time—but the WOMEN IN THE WALLS see them both and they're excited this door has opened. They part, clearing a path for ELEANOR. She weaves among them, not seeing them, but feeling an unsettling presence.)

(In 1910, JANE goes to hide her paper, and one of the WOMEN takes it. They pass it among each other, until one of them places it directly in ELEANOR's path.)

ELEANOR: What's that?

(She takes the diary entry, and remains onstage off to the side, reading Jane's account of the following events. In 1910, JOHN enters.)

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JANE: You had said that we could have the room repapered perhaps—

JOHN: But we shouldn't and let me tell you why. Because you are letting it get the better of you. There is nothing worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies. After the wallpaper, we've got to redo the windows—

JANE: —Just the bars.—

JOHN: —and then the gate at the head of the stairs, and on and on. Really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a summer rental.

JANE: Then perhaps can we go downstairs? There are such pretty rooms there.

JOHN: You blessed little goose, you know if you wanted it, I'd move to the cellar even. What does her majesty desire? Does she want the whole cellar whitewashed? And a new feather bed down there?

JANE: No, it's silly. I don't want to move us all around for a whim. And it's perfectly comfortable. I'm getting rather fond of it really. Except all that horrid wallpaper. But I love looking out the window at the garden. Can't you practically see elegant people walking down that path?

JOHN: You should just be careful. Giving way to fancy like that. With your imaginative power, your habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like yours is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies.

JANE: Oh.

JOHN: But never fear. You can check the tendency with your will and good sense.

JANE:. And I try, but…perhaps if I could write, it would relieve the press of the ideas a little. It might be restful even.

JOHN: Perhaps. As soon as you are well enough to write. And when you get really well, perhaps we could have Cousin Henry and Julia down for a visit.

JANE: Really? Oh that would be so wonderful. Just to have *someone.*

JOHN: But you must get better first. I would as soon put fireworks in your pillowcase as let all those stimulating people around you now.

JANE: I wish I could get well faster.

JOHN: It's a matter of will, my dear. You just have to try.

JANE: I will. I do. Try.

(He exits, leaving JANE alone. In 1950 ELEANOR finishes reading Jane's account. Her sense of justice is insulted. It makes her angry…)

ELEANOR: Can't he see you're trying?

(…And her anger unlocks something. One of the WOMEN echoes her.)

WOMAN 1: *(Thrilled to realize she can speak:)* "Can't he see you're trying?"

(The WOMEN IN THE WALLS pass this reply down a line, like a game of telephone, that overlaps more as they get excited, until it reaches JANE.)

WOMAN 2: "Can't he see / you're trying?"

WOMAN 3: "Can't he / see you're trying?"

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(The WOMEN are now able to speak and pass messages between JANE and ELEANOR… but they can only speak the language of the diary entries, and echo some of ELEANOR's responses back to JANE. Perhaps when they are passing on the message between times there's a movement, a touch of a hand or shoulder, to show it.)

(When this echo reaches JANE, the relief of being heard is so powerful that now she sees the WOMEN IN THE WALLS and speaks directly to them when she writes, as if talking to a new friend. She passes her next diary entry to WOMAN 1.)

JANE: Let me tell you about this wallpaper. The color is—

JANE & WOMAN 1: *(As the paper changes hands:)* —repellant, almost revolting;

WOMAN 1: *(Turning to WOMAN 2:)* a smouldering, unclean yellow,

WOMAN 1 & 2: *(As the paper changes hands:)* strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

WOMAN 2: *(Turning to WOMAN 3:)* It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places,

WOMAN 2 & 3: *(As the paper changes hands:)* a sickly sulphur tint in others.

WOMAN 3: *(Turning to ELEANOR:)* No wonder the children hated it!

WOMAN 3 & ELEANOR: *(As the paper changes hands:)* I should hate it myself / if I had to live in this room long.

(Then they pass the echo back up the line to JANE, overlapping:)

WOMAN 2: I should hate it myself / if I should have to live in this room long.

WOMAN 1: / I should hate it myself if I should have to live in this room long.

(JANE laughs. She sits down to write, and ELEANOR sits down to read. Both feel a connection they don't entirely understand. Nursery lights dim [though the occupants may remain onstage].)

6. A Decent Cup of Tea, 1950

(Focus shifts to DOROTHY and JENNY as they enter a kitchen.)

DOROTHY: Let me do that, won't you Aunt Jenny?

JENNY: It's still my house for now, child. I won't have a guest serve me.

DOROTHY: You're worse than he was.

JENNY: John couldn't brew a decent cup of tea if his life depended on it.

DOROTHY: *(In John's voice:)* "*I* didn't go to a finishing school, did I?" *(JENNY laughs.)* No I mean, he didn't much like to be helped, either.

JENNY: I'm delighted you're here.

DOROTHY: You know, after the crash when Daddy's practice was in trouble, there was no more boarding school for me, no more money for the girl to answer the phones for him. So I said, *I* could be the girl to answer the phones. I wanted to help, and I knew that he didn't want me underfoot with the patients all the time, but I thought maybe if I could be useful… quietly, where he'd see… Well. He let me, but he didn't like it. He didn't like to look at me behind that desk. He hated that he didn't have another choice but to let me help him.

JENNY: The front desk…is a very visible place.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

DOROTHY: You think he'd rather I was invisible?

JENNY: Well, the tea is finished so there's nothing else to argue about.

DOROTHY: I didn't mean to argue.

JENNY: Of course you didn't. You're a good girl. You always have been.

DOROTHY: Did he, Aunt Jenny, did he ever say—

JENNY: If you'd like to look on the bright side, it could be hard to know what John thought when he was alive. So what you know now is the same.

DOROTHY: At least with Eleanor, I know exactly what she thinks. Even if she thinks I have nothing to teach her.

JENNY: That's a quality she needs to learn to control.

DOROTHY: I don't know how to make her understand she's got to be more careful.

JENNY: You've really got to keep an eye on that one.

DOROTHY As a matter of fact, where is she right now?

JENNY: Let me find her. You drink your tea.

(JENNY exits, followed a few moments later by DOROTHY.)

7. A Strong Friend, 1910 and 1950

(Focus shifts back to the nursery. The WOMEN IN THE WALLS offer ELEANOR another diary entry in 1950, as JANE continues to write in 1910. As the connection grows, the WOMEN are able to speak more of JANE's words and pass them more quickly to ELEANOR.)

JANE: *(Passing a paper to WOMAN 3:)* This wallpaper, I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before,

WOMAN 3: *(To WOMAN 2:)* and we all know how much expression they have!

WOMAN 2: *(To WOMAN 1:)* I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of plain walls and furniture than most children could find in a toy store…

WOMAN 1: *(To ELEANOR:)* I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

WOMAN 1 & ELEANOR: *(ELEANOR reading from the diary:)* "I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe."

(JENNY slowly approaches the nursery. It's important that this is happening for BOTH Jane in 1910 and Eleanor in 1950.)

JANE: *(Narrating as she writes:)*
There comes John's sister.

ELEANOR: *(Reading:)*
"There comes John's sister."

(The WOMEN IN THE WALLS all swivel towards the door as one as one, wary of JENNY.)

ELEANOR: *(Realizing who that is:)* "John's sister." Aunt Jenny…

WOMAN 1: *(To WOMAN 2:)* Jenny, Jenny…

WOMAN 2: *(To WOMAN 3:)* Jenny, Jenny…

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

WOMAN 3: *(To JANE:)* Jenny. Jenny…

JANE: *(To WOMAN 3:)* Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me.

JANE & THE WOMEN: —I must not let her find me writing.

WOMAN 3: She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession.

ELEANOR: *(Muttering back to WOMAN 3:)* Sounds like Mother.

(A laugh makes its way back up the chain of women to JANE. It gives her strength, and for a moment she is surrounded by friends.)

JANE: I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick! But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

(ALL laugh. JANE peers into the wall, weaves down the line of WOMEN, tries to see what's at the end…trying to find ELEANOR.)

JANE: This wallpaper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

WOMAN 1: But in the places where it isn't faded, and where the sun is just so,

WOMAN 2: I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure,

WOMAN 3: that seems to sulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

(Before JANE can find ELEANOR, she hears JENNY approaching the nursery— JANE decides she must warn the figure of ELEANOR, whatever she may be.)

JANE & WOMAN 1: There's sister on the stairs!

(JANE suddenly touches WOMAN 1's shoulder and WOMAN 1 touches ELEANOR's shoulder. ELEANOR startles, but she can't stop to think about what just touched her—she has to get out of here…but there's no time. She crouches out of sight behind something, turns off her flashlight. JANE loses track of ELEANOR at this, and exits, confused. JENNY enters. ELEANOR stays very still, heart pounding.)

JENNY: Eleanor? Are you there?

(JENNY turns the light on. DOROTHY enters behind her.)

DOROTHY: Any luck?

JENNY: I thought I told you to drink your tea.

DOROTHY: I thought I should help. It's my wayward daughter after all.

JENNY: Why don't you look out in the gardening shed?

DOROTHY: That's the one place I know I won't find her. Any small, closed-in space like that. She's even skittish about closets and basements and things.

JENNY: Claustrophobia?

DOROTHY: Terrible. Out in the garden maybe? She likes digging around out there.

JENNY: Like a badger. She'll ruin her clothes. All right, we'll look there.

(They turn the light off again and exit. After a moment, ELEANOR tucks the diary page into her pocket, rubs her shoulder where WOMAN 1 touched her, and sneaks out.)

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

ELEANOR: *(Exiting, calling off:)* Were you calling me? Aren't people allowed to go to the bathroom around here?

8. A Straightforward Telephone Call, 1950

(ELEANOR reenters on the phone, and FRANK steps out to join her mid-conversation.)

ELEANOR: So, you see? It's pieces of a diary. The different entries are hidden all over that old nursery. But I only found a few so far. I think there's got to be a lot more.

FRANK: Sounds like something *you'd* do to seem mysterious.

ELEANOR: I don't have a diary. Who wants a book of all your feelings that just anyone could read?

FRANK: So you hide it in pieces everywhere.

ELEANOR: She wasn't allowed to be writing at all. Her husband, the doctor, he says it's bad for her. Is that… Is that a treatment?

FRANK: I don't know, it's probably something from second year.

ELEANOR: Could you look it up? I haven't got a library in three miles.

FRANK: Come on, I have to study—and you should be too if you really want to get in.

ELEANOR: I would, but if Mother sees that textbook I'll never hear the end of it. She thinks I'm going to ruin my life if I do anything besides bat my eyes at baseball players and wait.

FRANK: *(Joking:)* What, don't you think they'll come?

ELEANOR: That's not the point, Frank.

FRANK: Don't yell at me. If I wanted to get yelled at by a girl I'd call Susan Winters back.

ELEANOR: I…didn't mean to yell. I… Sorry. *(Beat. ELEANOR wants to salvage things.)* I know why Aunt Jenny didn't want me in the attic. The diary. She's in it.

FRANK: Who's writing about *Aunt Jenny* in their diary?

ELEANOR: The writer says "my husband's sister, Jenny," so I think it's Jane. *(FRANK is blank.)* My mother's mother. Grandpa John's first wife.

FRANK: Oh…oh. The one who left. I don't think I even knew that was her name.

ELEANOR: It's not like they talk about her much. This must have been before. Although…to be honest… It doesn't quite sit right with me. She doesn't seem…flighty. Like somebody who would up and abandon a baby without a word. In fact, it doesn't seem like she can hardly get out of the nursery at all.

FRANK: She was on bedrest, I guess. Well, why don't you ask your mother about it?

ELEANOR: …I don't know. Show her the diary? I wasn't even supposed to be up there. Jenny told me not to. And I don't know if it would upset her. My mother I mean.

FRANK: In my experience, you've got to be straightforward about things.

ELEANOR: My mother doesn't do straightforward.

(Elsewhere in the house, JENNY is revealed, listening on a second receiver. She's heard everything.)

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

FRANK: Girls and their mothers. Just ask her. Listen I've got to go study, all right?

ELEANOR: All right. Good luck. Bye.

(All hang up, then exit.)

8A. Following The Pattern, 1910

(Transition— JANE reenters the nursery for a moment in 1910, trying to find the formless figure in the wallpaper again, weaving among the WOMEN with her paper and pen.)

JANE: I'm getting really fond of this room in spite of the wallpaper.

WOMAN 1: Perhaps because of the wallpaper.

JANE: It dwells in my mind so!

WOMAN 2: I lie here on this great immovable bed and follow that pattern.

WOMAN 3: I determine for the thousandth time that…

JANE & THE WOMEN: I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

(JENNY enters, and sees JANE writing before JANE notices her.)

JANE: *(Narrating as she writes:)* It makes me tired to follow it.

JENNY: Of course you must be tired. You aren't getting any rest.

JANE: *(Startling:)* Jenny. I was just—

JENNY: I just worry about how you're going to ever get better this way.

JANE: …You are kind to worry about me.

JENNY: Why don't you give those to me, and we can keep this between us. No need to worry him.

(JANE reluctantly gives her paper and pen to JANE.)

JANE: I would appreciate that very much. It's only, without… But if I can't… Do you think *you* could…could you perhaps sit and talk with me awhile?

JENNY: Oh I'd be happy to… Except I must go and feed your dear little baby.

(JENNY exits. JANE, reeling as if she were just punched in the stomach, remains onstage in the nursery through the following as lights dim.)

9. The Size of Things, 1950

(Focus shifts to elsewhere in the house, where ELEANOR meets DOROTHY, packing up a box.)

ELEANOR: Where's Aunt Jenny?

DOROTHY: Starting on dinner, I think.

ELEANOR: I feel like she just finished clearing lunch.

DOROTHY: There's no stopping her.

ELEANOR: I asked if I could at least help with the dishes, but…

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

DOROTHY: She didn't let you. Of course she didn't. When I'd come up in the summers, much younger than you, even, she'd always say, "you're the guest." It was good of you to offer though. Good girl.

ELEANOR: Did Great-Aunt Jenny always live here?

DOROTHY: My father leased the place one summer, just after I was born, and she said she fell in love with it. Imagine, Aunt Jenny in love.

ELEANOR: It's rather frightening to think about.

DOROTHY: So my father bought it for her. He said, at least he could make HER happy.

ELEANOR: Not like your mother, you mean.

DOROTHY: *(Turning away:)* Why don't we go through some of these old books.

ELEANOR: All right… So, you were all there together that summer? Little you, and Great-Aunt Jenny and Grandpa John and your m—

DOROTHY: I don't remember.

ELEANOR: Well, of course you couldn't. You were only just born.

DOROTHY: And even if I had…she couldn't stand to look at me. Refused to come out of her room.

ELEANOR: That's not true—

DOROTHY: *(A warning:)* —Eleanor.

ELEANOR: That she didn't want—

DOROTHY: —I am not arguing about this.

ELEANOR: Who told you that?

DOROTHY: You've just got to know better about everything, don't you? You weren't there. Aunt Jenny was there, I was there. For once, my mother was there.

ELEANOR: I'm not trying to be contrary, Mother, really, I—

DOROTHY: But you can't help it. Because I'm such a fool.

ELEANOR: I never said—

DOROTHY: You don't have to. You make it very clear.

(Beat. They work in silence.)

ELEANOR: You just…you take it very personally when I know something you don't know or do something you wouldn't—

DOROTHY: What on earth are you talking about?

ELEANOR: Like when I talk about studying medicine or anything you wouldn't want—

DOROTHY: You think I don't want things?

ELEANOR: Mother…we could be sitting in a, a beautiful five-star restaurant, where a famous chef has just made the greatest, most magical meal in the entire world, and you'd say to me Eleanor, wouldn't you love to be a *waitress* here one day? Because that's what you think of me. Maybe she can keep the glasses full for the real people.

DOROTHY: You don't know how to cook. And I've never *been* to a five-star restaurant.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

ELEANOR: —It's not the *restaurant*—

DOROTHY: —Because I was cooking for my father, and then you.

ELEANOR: Here she comes, the sainted martyr. And I'm your cross to bear.

DOROTHY: It has never once occurred to you how easy it would be to put it down, did you? You think it's impossible because I love you so much, but you forget. My mother *did.* When you were a baby, I'd think about it all the time. You'd be crying all night and I'd be so desperately tired and I'd think to myself "I wonder if that was the final straw? I wonder if that was the moment with me when she first looked at the door?" And then… And then I would stay up with you in my arms for as long as it took. Longer. You've made it clear that seems so small to you, but you don't know the size of anything until you lose it, or come close. It's big. It's so big. And you've never really lost anything.

ELEANOR: I'm sorry. I didn't—it doesn't make sense.

DOROTHY: I know.

ELEANOR: It doesn't make sense that she left. There has to be more.

DOROTHY: You really don't listen at all.

(She exits. ELEANOR, upset and angry at being misunderstood, returns to the nursery.)

9A. Relief, 1950 and 1910

(Focus returns to the nursery, the WOMEN reenter and offer ELEANOR more pages which comfort her in 1950, but in 1910 JANE is frustrated when they offer more writing implements to replace the ones Jenny took. We hear the baby crying again.)

JANE & ELEANOR: I get positively angry

WOMAN 1: with the impertinence of that wallpaper

WOMAN 2: and everlastingness.

WOMAN 3: It's like it knew what a vicious influence it had.

JANE: *(To the WOMEN:)* I don't know why I should write this. I don't want to. I don't feel able. And I know John would think it absurd.

JANE & ELEANOR: But I must say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief!

JANE: *(With growing desperation:)* But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief. I'm getting dreadfully fretful. John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to the doctor Weir Mitchell in the fall. *(This idea really scares her.)* But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so. I must regain strength now, before it's too late. I must get away from here.

(She steels herself. ELEANOR remains onstage, reading about the following as it unfolds.)

10. Comfort, 1910

(JOHN enters the nursery, where JANE is waiting).

JANE: John, I'd like to talk to you.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JOHN: So serious! My ears are yours. *(Coming to embrace her:)* My ears, and my lips and my hands and my arms—

JANE: But I am serious. I— I— *(She blurts out before she loses her nerve.)* I'm not gaining any of my strength back here, and I need you to take me away.

JOHN: Our lease is up in three weeks.I don't see how we could leave before that. Of course if you were in any danger, I could, and I would. But you are gaining color, your appetite is better, whether you can see it or not. I feel really much easier about you.

JANE: *(Getting upset:)* I don't weigh a bit more, nor as much. And my appetite may be better in the evening, when you are here, but it is worse when you leave in the morning…

JOHN: Bless her little heart, she shall be as sick as she pleases! Really, you are better!

JANE: Better in body perhaps—

JOHN: —Darling. My darling, I beg of you, for my sake and for our child's sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. But no wonder you have this idea. You've been writing.

JANE: Jenny told you.

JOHN: She informed your physician, and she was right because I hear now you have these false and foolish fancies. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?

JANE: *(Desperate:)* If you would let me go downstairs and see the baby. Just for a moment. Please.

JOHN: Let you! Darling. You know perfectly well that you're not able to go downstairs. You wouldn't be able to stand it. Look. See? You're already upset.

JANE: It just takes a great effort to think straight…

JOHN: You're exhausted.

JANE: *(Full of anger at herself:)* Just this nervous weakness, I suppose.

JOHN: Let me read to you. Let me read to you until your head is all tired out. You are my comfort. You are all I have. You must take care of yourself, for my sake, and keep well. Nobody but you can help you out of it. You must use your will and your self-control, and you must not let your silly fancies run away with you.
…See? You're already crying. That's just the sort of thing you can't do.

JANE: But the baby…the baby isn't crying… The baby is well?

JOHN: Of course the baby is well.

JANE: The baby is happy?

JOHN: *(This has never occurred to him to consider:)* I…I think so?

JANE: That is *my* comfort.

(JOHN exits. JANE remains.)

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

11. Shaking the Pattern, 1910 and 1950

(JANE tells the WOMEN her revelation, with a new strength, and ELEANOR hears it too.)

JANE: There's one comfort.

WOMAN 1:The baby is well, and happy,

WOMAN 2: and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper.

WOMAN 3: If we had not used it that blessed child would have!

JANE: What a fortunate escape!

WOMAN 1: Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

JANE: I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all. I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

WOMEN: *(Echoing:)* I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

ELEANOR: You loved her. You loved her.

JANE & ELEANOR: I can prove it.

(During the following, ELEANOR and JANE search wildly through the walls of the entire nursery for each other, weaving in and out among the WOMEN IN THE WALLS, who are offering ELEANOR papers upon papers, produced by JANE until they surround her, until it's overwhelming to them both.)

JANE:
There are things in that paper that
nobody knows but me,
or ever will.

ELEANOR:
There are things in that paper that
nobody knows but me

WOMAN 1: Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

WOMAN 2: It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

WOMAN 3: And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern.

JANE & ELEANOR: I don't like it a bit.

(ELEANOR remains on the margins, trying to break through the pattern of the WOMEN IN THE WALLS, trying to get through to JANE, shaking the paper.)

ELEANOR: "The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out—"

(JENNY suddenly enters the doorway of the nursery, breaking the spell.)

JENNY: *(Terrified, and terrifying:) What are you doing here?*

12. It Runs in Families, 1950

(JANE exits. The WOMEN freeze. Surrounded by papers, disheveled ELEANOR looks around for them, but they are frozen so she's essentially alone with JENNY in the nursery.)

ELEANOR: I couldn't sleep.

JENNY: I— I thought I told you not to come in here.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(ELEANOR begins to gather up the paper.)

ELEANOR: I haven't been sleeping well at all the last few days—weeks, really, so, I thought, I could help with cleaning up.

JENNY: I thought for a moment that you were someone else.

ELEANOR: Maybe I am. You know, Aunt Jenny. I'm beginning to think…I'm beginning to think that you're *all* someone else. You and Mother and Grandpa John and—

JENNY: —What do you have there?

ELEANOR: You couldn't stop her writing. Not completely.

(Beat.)

JENNY: Give that to me, please.

(ELEANOR flinches, clutching the papers. JENNY realizes ELEANOR's afraid.)

JENNY: Eleanor. Sweetheart. Don't be ridiculous.

(ELEANOR takes a step back.)

JENNY: Whatever…whatever it is you have there. Whatever it is that you think you know. You need to remember that, that my brother's wife was not in her right mind.

ELEANOR: Jane.

JENNY: What?

ELEANOR: Your "brother's wife." She called you her sister. Her name is Jane.

JENNY: I know that.

(JENNY sees a piece of paper that Eleanor missed. ELEANOR scrambles for it but she's too far away, JENNY coolly picks it up first.)

JENNY: That's all right. I always picked up after her. I don't like to say her name because—Well I don't like to complain, but it hurts me to talk about her. Still. After all of the pain she caused.

ELEANOR: It seems like she was *in* pain.

JENNY: Maybe. Maybe. But you know who was hurt the most? My brother, God rest his soul. Her child, your mother. Please. Eleanor. Say these ridiculous things to me if you must, but please don't hurt your mother again.

ELEANOR: I'm not trying to hurt anybody.

JENNY: So why do you insist on opening old wounds? Prying?

ELEANOR: —Jane says she would always do what's best for the baby… She wouldn't leave her… She says—

JENNY: She says, she says. But what did she do?

ELEANOR: What *did* she do? What happened to her?

JENNY: There was something evil in her.

ELEANOR: She was sick.

JENNY: Call it madness if you want.

ELEANOR: It seems to me like she was driven there.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(Beat. This hangs in the air.)

JENNY: You look very like her right now. Creeping around in the dark.

ELEANOR: I just think that Mother should have all of the information if she wants it.

JENNY: But you don't have any information, do you? You have the rantings of a mad woman. Are you certain of what you think you know? Scraps of paper. Keep them, if you want. They're meaningless to any sane person.

ELEANOR: What… What do you mean?

JENNY: It runs in families, you know. Madness. You look very tired, Eleanor. Perhaps you ought to sleep on it, before you make any decisions. That's what John would always say.

(ELEANOR is stunned. JENNY quietly exits, closing the door behind her… And then there's the sound of the door locking. ELEANOR runs to the door, tests it.)

ELEANOR: Jenny—

JENNY: Quiet, now.

(She starts to panic, breathing shallow— Her panicked breathing is echoed by the WOMEN IN THE WALLS.)

ELEANOR: Jenny, please, I can't be trapped in here…

JENNY: Quiet, dear. Unless you want to wake your mother.

(JENNY exits. ELEANOR goes to pound on the door, to shout— But the WOMEN hold her back. She stifles a scream, but they breathe with her, first shallow and fast like her, then slowing. JANE re-enters, still searching, enraged by her conversation with JOHN.)

JANE: On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind

(ELEANOR thinks. Does she want to wake her mother? She thinks of how disheveled she must look. How unbalanced.)

WOMAN 1: The color is hideous enough,

WOMAN 2: and unreliable enough,

WOMAN: **3**: and infuriating enough,

WOMEN: But the pattern is torturing.

(ELEANOR tries to calm herself, tries to think. She smooths out the crumpled papers in her hand.)

JANE: You think you have mastered it,

WOMAN 1: but just as you get well under way in following,

WOMAN 2: it turns a back somersault and

JANE, ELEANOR, THE WOMEN: there you are.

WOMAN 3: It slaps you in the face,

WOMAN 2: knocks you down,

WOMAN 1: and tramples upon you.

ALL: It is like a bad dream.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(ELEANOR sinks to the ground, staring at the door. She picks up an entry and reads:)

ELEANOR: *(Reading from the diary entry:)* "At night in any kind of light,"

WOMAN 3: in twilight,

WOMAN 2: candlelight,

WOMAN 1: lamplight,

WOMAN 3: and worst of all by moonlight,

WOMEN: It becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean,

ELEANOR: "and the woman behind it is as plain as can be."

(Her fear subsides. Her anger rises. Lights out on the nursery.)

13. Neat and Tidy, 1950

(Morning. Lights up on JENNY in the kitchen. DOROTHY enters.)

DOROTHY: Jenny, have you seen Eleanor?

JENNY: I don't know how she can sleep so long, it's nearly lunchtime.

DOROTHY: That's what I thought too, but she's not in her room.

JENNY: Maybe she went for a walk.

DOROTHY: For nearly four hours? I didn't hear her go out this morning, did you? Her bed didn't look slept in.

JENNY: Well, nothing to worry about. Just because she's been acting a bit peculiar. She couldn't possibly have gone far.

DOROTHY: What if she took that bike out on the highway after all? She could have been hit by a car, or twisted her ankle—

JENNY: Now let's not let our fancies run away with us, as your father used to say. I'll go and see if the bike is still in the gardener's shed… You look upstairs.

DOROTHY: What did you mean, peculiar?

JENNY: Oh I'm sure I didn't mean anything. Only that she's been a bit…erratic of late.

DOROTHY: Jenny. Tell me what you've seen.

JENNY: Oh, no, you shouldn't…nothing like that. Nothing like her. Go on now. Look upstairs.

(DOROTHY approaches slowly, perhaps a little afraid of what she'll find.)

DOROTHY: Eleanor…Elle? Are you in there?

ELEANOR: *(Calling through the door with slightly desperate cheer:)* Oh, good. Mother, can you help me with these boxes?

DOROTHY: Didn't you hear me calling? This door is locked. Are you all right? Did you lock the door?

ELEANOR: Oh, it must be stuck again. You know, the other day Jenny was able to get it with the spare key. If you could find it?

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

DOROTHY: I'll ask her. *(Retreating, calling:)* Jenny? Is there a spare key to the attic?

JENNY: It's never occurred to me—I don't think so? Is she there? Is she all right?

DOROTHY: I'm not sure. She says the door is stuck? She sounds strange. *(Back towards the door.)* It's all right, honey, we'll get you out of here in a second.

ELEANOR: I'm all right, except for the dust.

DOROTHY: You're all right. It's not too closed in?

ELEANOR: Oh, I had hardly noticed. I'd been so busy.

JENNY: *(Unlocking the door:)* There we go—

(Revealing ELEANOR…placing a box on a neat stack in the now organized and tidy attic. The WOMEN have helped her do it. She's cheerful, making a show of being all right.)

JENNY: Well, you *have* been busy.

ELEANOR: I must look a fright. But look how much I got done.

DOROTHY: You must have been up here all night.

ELEANOR: I woke up early to surprise you. I felt bad about yesterday. I thought it was time I pitch in a little more.

JENNY: What happened yesterday?

DOROTHY: It doesn't matter now. That's good of you, Ellie. It looks awfully nice.

ELEANOR: What do you think, Aunt Jenny? All that jumble and confusion…I think…I think it's a lot clearer now.

JENNY: All tidied up now?

ELEANOR: Neat and tidy.

DOROTHY: Well the room is. You, on the other hand, ought to have a bath.

ELEANOR: I might need two baths! *(Picking up a box:)* Here. I'll start taking this down to the trash. *(Right before she exits, she looks a dagger at JENNY. She hasn't forgotten. She adds sweetly:)* Don't let that door close on you. It tends to stick for some reason.

DOROTHY: I'll be right behind you.

(ELEANOR exits with the box.)

DOROTHY: *(To JENNY:)* Well, I feel a little silly to worry.

JENNY: Girls are inexplicable creatures.

(DOROTHY follows ELEANOR out, but JENNY lingers in the attic a moment.)

14. Stains, 1910

(Something's off. As JENNY looks around at Eleanor's handiwork, the WOMEN IN THE WALLS begin to creep out from behind the stack of boxes. JENNY is pulled back to a moment in 1910. Then JANE emerges, watching her, just as when JENNY walked in on her writing. JENNY feels uneasy but doesn't see her yet. She touches the wallpaper, trying to figure out—Where are we in the pattern? Is it the past or the present in the room now?)

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JANE: *(To the WOMEN IN THE WALLS:)* I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times looking at the paper! And Jenny too. I caught Jenny with her hand on it once.

(She steps into the room with JENNY.)

JANE: *(Quiet:)* What are you doing?

(JENNY startles and turns:)

JENNY: Why do you do that? What have I done, that you should try and frighten me?

JANE: You were looking at it. The paper.

JENNY: Your clothes. John's clothes. They all have yellow stains, you know. That paper stains everything it touches. And who do you think gets the stains out? Your clothes come back spotless, yours and John's. But there's scrubbing and blotting and bleaching. Because I scrub and blot and bleach them. So you can stain them again.

JANE: You're studying the pattern.

JENNY: I just wish you would be a little more careful, that's all.

JANE: You're studying the pattern, but—

JANE & THE WOMEN: —you're never going to find it out.

JENNY: Keep your clothes clean. Like mine.

JANE: Nobody else will, but me.

(JENNY would say she exits, but anyone else would say she runs away. JANE stays onstage.)

15. Fragile, 1950

(Elsewhere in the house, ELEANOR reenters alone, drops her cheerful demeanor. She pulls the diary entries she collected out of the box, reading like people read a catechism—for strength.)

ELEANOR: *(Reading:)* "I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can. It is a very bad habit, I am convinced, for, you see, I don't sleep. And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake,—oh, no!" *(She picks up the phone and dials.)* Frank, Frank are you there?

(FRANK enters, picks up.)

ELEANOR: Listen to this.

(She reads from the diary entry. JANE joins in to amplify her from her place in the nursery.)

JANE & ELEANOR: "The fact is, I am getting a little afraid of John. He seems very strange sometimes, and even Jenny has an inexplicable look."

ELEANOR: "It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis, that perhaps it is the paper!" …a scientific hypothesis. She was thinking clearly. And so am I. She knew there was something wrong.

FRANK: Slow down, slow down.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

ELEANOR: I don't have much time, Frank. She could come in any minute.

FRANK: You're not making any sense. Begin at the beginning.

ELEANOR: The attic, the attic—

FRANK: —So you were in the attic—

ELEANOR: She *locked me in.*

(A beat.)

FRANK: Now is it possible she forgot—

ELEANOR: Listen to me.

FRANK: She forgot you were in there? At her age, memory issues—

ELEANOR: —She knew exactly what she was doing. It's all in the diary.

FRANK: Eleanor…that diary is from forty years ago.

ELEANOR: But now she's found out about it, and she knows I've read it, it's back. The same mess, and she can't stand a mess For her, it's all come up again and she said I'll end up just like her, just like Jane—

FRANK: What are you saying?

ELEANOR: I'm afraid of her. All right? There's something wrong with her, Frank.

FRANK: *(Can't help but chuckle a bit:)* I'm sorry, I— You're afraid of Aunt Jenny?

ELEANOR: Jane didn't abandon my mother. In the diary, Jenny and John wouldn't even let her see the baby, they kept her in that room with bars on the windows—

FRANK: Jenny is an old woman.

ELEANOR: So she was there. So she remembers everything. John's dead. She's the only one with something to lose.

FRANK: You really think that fragile old woman—

ELEANOR: —She isn't, though. She acts this way, she takes people's arms on the stairs, but she's not just sharp, she's sharpened. She's honed.

FRANK: You're not making any sense.

ELEANOR: I'm making perfect sense, you're just not listening. Is this the kind of doctor you're going to be?

FRANK: What has THAT got to do with anything?

ELEANOR: —I'm trying to tell you—

FRANK: I don't appreciate being shouted at on my own—

ELEANOR: —I'm trying to tell you— I'm trying to tell you that I don't know what she's going to do. *You didn't see her eyes when she closed that door on me.*

(Beat. FRANK makes a decision.)

FRANK: All right. I hear you. I understand. Now can you calm down?

ELEANOR: I am calm. I'm clear. I don't think I've ever been more clear.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

FRANK: Good. All right, now. I think you need to just try and stay calm, and stay quiet, and let me think, and I'll call you back tomorrow.

ELEANOR: Frank, I don't know what's going to happen before then. Do you think…maybe you could call in, a, a noise complaint or something. So somebody comes by…

FRANK: No, no, I don't think you want all that fuss. That's, that's bound to get her suspicious isn't it?

ELEANOR: I guess. No, you're right.

FRANK: Just, just stay out of her way. Go out and work in the garden or something.

ELEANOR: I could hide the diary out in the shed…

FRANK: Tomorrow, we're going to talk and we'll figure all of this out. Promise me you'll go outside as soon as we hang up. And don't move. Don't do anything.

ELEANOR: Promise you'll call tomorrow.

FRANK: I promise. All right. Chin up, kid.

ELEANOR: Thank you. Bye.

FRANK: Bye cousin.

(ELEANOR and FRANK hang up. ELEANOR takes the box, shouting off:)

ELEANOR: Mother, I'm going to work in the garden!

(ELEANOR exits. FRANK remains, looking at the phone a moment, then dials again. The phone ELEANOR just hung up rings again. DOROTHY enters, and answers it.)

DOROTHY: Dr. John Smith's residence… Frank! How lovely to hear your voice. *(Face dropping:)* What about Eleanor?

(DOROTHY's conversation with FRANK continues, silently, under the following:)

15A. A Great Many Women, Across Time

(While DOROTHY remains on the phone in one room, in another room, JENNY enters and picks up the extension, as before. She listens. She smiles. ELEANOR enters in the garden, with the diary, reading along with JANE, who is writing in the nursery. All four women are visible.)

(FRANK fades away.)

(The WOMEN IN THE WALLS stop, pointing towards JENNY, DOROTHY, and ELEANOR, and suddenly, JANE can see them all. ALL FREEZE but JANE. She gasps. A breakthrough. The WOMEN IN THE WALLS echo her gasp.)

JANE: *(To us:)* I really have discovered something at last. Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out. The front pattern does move—and no wonder! *(She walks right up to ELEANOR, thrilled.)* The woman behind shakes it!

(JANE is no longer bound to the nursery, she can walk through time and space at will. But then the WOMEN IN THE WALLS reanimate too, and JANE and ELEANOR get swept away

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

from each other in the confusion of all of the panicked women trying to get out and break the pattern.)

WOMAN 1: Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind,

WOMAN 2: and sometimes only one,

WOMAN 3: and she crawls around fast,

WOMAN 2: and her crawling shakes it all over.

WOMAN 1: Then in the very bright spots she keeps still,

WOMAN 3: and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

JANE: And she is all the time trying to climb through.

WOMEN IN THE WALLS: But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so;

JANE: I think that is why it has so many heads.

(The WOMEN IN THE WALLS scatter. JANE weaves through them easily. ELEANOR exits.)

16. Jenny is Useful, 1910 and 1950

(JANE steps aside to watch the following, the way ELEANOR observed her scenes with JOHN earlier. She can see how the pattern is repeating.)

(JENNY goes to the center, and holds a conversation simultaneously with brisk and cheerful JOHN, stage left, 1910; and distraught and halting DOROTHY, stage right, 1950.)

JOHN: *(Simultaneously:)*
Jenny.
Jenny!

DOROTHY: *(Simultaneously:)*
Jenny?
Jenny?

JENNY: Yes, I'm here

JOHN:
I've been writing to some colleagues…
(Clears his throat.)
About Jane.

DOROTHY:
Um…
…Frank called…
…

JENNY: Is the poor thing all right?

JOHN:
Oh,
Yes…
(Beat.)
…Only…

She has been saying troubling things
How is she sleeping?

DOROTHY:
Frank?
…
Frank is fine. It's Eleanor.
…

She has been saying troubling things
…she…
She slept in the attic last night.

JENNY: Well, she sleeps a great deal in the daytime.

JOHN:
She doesn't sleep at night.

DOROTHY:
…
…Do you think that's a, a sign…

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JENNY: She eats when I remind her to…

JOHN & DOROTHY: She eats and she sleeps and *she sees things that aren't there.*

(Beat.)

JENNY: Only tell me how I can be useful.

(JOHN nods and exits. DOROTHY and JENNY keep talking low, through the following, as JANE looks on and confers with the WOMEN IN THE WALLS.)

JANE: As if I couldn't see through him! Still, I don't wonder why he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months. It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jenny are secretly affected by it.

WOMAN 1:There are only two more days to get this paper off,

WOMAN 2: I believe John is beginning to notice.

WOMAN 3: I don't like the look in his eyes.

(Lights dim on the nursery. JANE remains onstage and watches through the following:)

17. Shouting, 1950

(Focus shifts to the kitchen, where DOROTHY and JENNY have had a very emotional conversation but try to seem normal as ELEANOR enters. She matches them, immediately on her guard.)

ELEANOR: Hello Mother. Hello Aunt Jenny.

DOROTHY: Darling, won't you sit down?

ELEANOR: Oh, I'd better get cleaned up first, I've been out in the garden and my fingernails…

JENNY: This once I think we can overlook your fingernails.

DOROTHY: Please just sit down…

ELEANOR: All right.

DOROTHY: I know there is only a few weeks left of summer.

JENNY: And you have been so sweet to help me with the house.

DOROTHY: But you've been working so hard. Maybe too hard.

ELEANOR: *(Uneasy, joking:)* Goodness, who are you and what have you done with my mother?

DOROTHY: You don't know me?

ELEANOR: I mean what happened to "I collected aluminum cans that fed us through the crash" and "Idle hands are the devil's plaything"?

DOROTHY: But your health is the most important thing.

ELEANOR: My health? My health is—

DOROTHY: —And I think maybe what you need is a rest. A real rest. Somewhere they can look after you.

ELEANOR: *What?*

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JENNY: *(Very evenly:)* Your cousin Frank is very concerned.

(Beat.)

ELEANOR: Frank…

DOROTHY: He said you were saying things that made no sense, sweetheart.

ELEANOR: You called him?

DOROTHY: He called me. And the things he said were scaring me.

JENNY: And you know, he's a doctor.

ELEANOR: He is not a doctor. He is in his first semester of school—

DOROTHY: And we've all talked it over and we think that maybe the best thing— We've been wondering if maybe it would be better for you…more healthy…to spend the rest of the summer…to spend it…somewhere you can rest.

ELEANOR: *(Not shouting:)* Oh we have, have we? Have we all talked it over?

JENNY: I'd appreciate if you wouldn't shout indoors.

ELEANOR: *(Shouting:)* YOU'D APPRECIATE— You're trying to have me COMMITTED, I'm going to shout my head off if I want to.

DOROTHY: No, my darling please it's not, it's nothing like that—

ELEANOR: *(Turning to DOROTHY, desperate:)* Then what is it like? I'll tell you exactly what it's like. It's the pattern. It's happening again. She's doing it again. I'll prove it to you. It's just like with your mother—

DOROTHY: No, no, don't say that. You're nothing like her.

ELEANOR: She is like me. But she didn't leave you. They took her away from you. I have her diary out in the shed.

DOROTHY: But…but it's such a small space.

ELEANOR: There are things I'm more afraid of now. Let me go get it.

JENNY: Please sit down. Can't you see you're upsetting your mother?

ELEANOR: *(Looking DOROTHY dead in the eyes:)* She can take it. She's strong. She's not a fool.

(ELEANOR exits.)

JENNY: I had better call the people at the Mitchell hospital right now.

DOROTHY: Just wait, it's all happening too fast. Let me think.

JENNY: That's what she wants you to do.

(JENNY and DOROTHY remain onstage off to the side, talking low, firm, and inaudible, through the following.)

18. The Same Woman, Across Time

(ELEANOR reenters outside, rushing to get the papers from the garden, to find the proof she needs. In the nursery, JANE stands and calls out to ELEANOR, throwing her a lifeline:)

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JANE: I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why—I've seen her!

(ELEANOR turns.)

I can see her out of every one of my windows! It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

(ELEANOR sees JANE for the first time. She recognizes herself in the story. They connect. She gets an idea.)

ELEANOR: "I see her on that long shaded lane, creeping up and down."

JANE: I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden.

ELEANOR: "I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines."

JANE: *(Kindly:)* I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

ELEANOR: You have no idea.

JANE: If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one. I mean to try it, little by little.

ELEANOR: I'll help you, I'll help you.

(Arms full of papers, ELEANOR barrels towards the nursery and JANE, past JENNY and DOROTHY, elsewhere in the house.)

DOROTHY: Where are you going?!

ELEANOR: Come with me!

JENNY: She's sick. There's nothing to be done.

DOROTHY: If you are sick, I will make you well, or I will catch what you have and we will be sick together.

ELEANOR: I can take you to her, Mother. I can.

DOROTHY: Please don't go to wherever she's gone, I can't lose you too.

ELEANOR: So come with me, come with me to her room. See for yourself, there's nothing to be afraid of. But I must get to work.

(DOROTHY hesitates. ELEANOR exits. JENNY and DOROTHY remain onstage.)

19. Creeping Women, Across Time

(In the kitchen, JENNY inaudibly tries to convince DOROTHY not to follow. Simultaneously, Lights come up on the nursery, where JANE welcomes ELEANOR as she enters.)

JANE: *(To ELEANOR:)* Hurrah! This is the last day,

ELEANOR: But it is enough.

DOROTHY: *(Calling after her:)* Ellie?

JANE: As soon as it was moonlight, and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

DOROTHY: *(Calling after her:)* Eleanor, are you all right?

(JANE and ELEANOR pull at WOMAN 1, together, trying to free her from the pattern.)

JANE: I pulled and she shook,

DOROTHY: *(Calling after her:)* Ellie?

ELEANOR: I shook and she pulled,

(WOMAN 1 gets her arm out of the pattern. The WOMAN takes her first breath of freedom. Inhale, exhale.)

WOMAN 1: and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

(They turn and the three of them begin to pull at WOMAN 2, to free her arm from the pattern. JANE confides to ELEANOR, inspiring her.)

JANE: I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path. I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

(WOMAN 2's arm is pulled out of the pattern. She takes her own breath.)

WOMAN 2: I want to astonish him.

(WOMAN 1 and 2 join ELEANOR and JANE to pull at WOMAN 3.)

ELEANOR & JANE: And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me I declared:

(WOMAN 3's arm is freed, and takes her breath.)

WOMAN 3: I will finish it today!

(The WOMEN IN THE WALLS, an arm free each, begin to claw at the pattern, though still not quite free.)

(DOROTHY stands to follow ELEANOR, very distraught now:)

DOROTHY: Ellie, come back, come back…

JENNY: There's nothing to be done for her!

(JENNY moves to physically stop her from going to the nursery. DOROTHY turns, and she shows for a moment the same terrified, terrifying power of Jenny:)

DOROTHY: Get out of my way.

(DOROTHY exits. JENNY is left alone in the kitchen, a little impressed.)

JENNY: Well, you've torn up the wallpaper, have you, Jane?

JANE: *(Now free to come to her:)* I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

JENNY: It's ugly, I'll grant you. I wouldn't mind doing it myself. But you must not get tired.

JANE: How you betray yourself. But you're too late. No person touches this paper but me—not alive! I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again. How the children did tear about here! But I'll call you when I wake.

(She goes back to the nursery. Through the following, JANE begins circling the room, an endless pattern. Each time she circles, she tries to break another bit of the pattern, to free another limb for one of the WOMEN IN THE WALLS.)

JENNY: My brother told me to watch you.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(JENNY exits.)

(DOROTHY enters the nursery, afraid for her daughter. She still sees only ELEANOR, not JANE.)

ELEANOR: Oh thank you, Mother, thank you. And here.

(She locks the door behind Dorothy.)

DOROTHY: What are you doing?

ELEANOR: I don't want to come out, and I don't want to have anybody come in. *(She throws the key to a WOMAN, and they pass it out the window.)* There, the key's just down on the front path. I want… *(She laughs.)* I want to astonish you!

DOROTHY: Sweetheart, it's going to be all right.

ELEANOR: It is, it is. It will be… *(The WOMEN hand ELEANOR a diary that she presses into DOROTHY's hand.)* Look. Read. Listen to her. Listen to me.

(Suddenly, a loud sound as JENNY tries to enter the nursery but is stopped by the locked door.)

JENNY: DOROTHY! Dorothy!

(The WOMEN IN THE WALLS are afraid. They pull their arms back into the pattern.)

JANE & ELEANOR: Why, there's John at the door!

(Throughout the following, when ELEANOR and JANE speak together, ELEANOR is speaking the diary entry, perhaps she has memorized…or perhaps she is channeling Jane's words in a more supernatural way. DOROTHY tries so hard to understand.)

JENNY: *(Desperate:)* She hasn't hurt you, Dot?!

JANE & ELEANOR: It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

DOROTHY: Of course not.

JENNY: Then open the door.

DOROTHY: We're just talking.

JENNY: OPEN THIS DOOR.

(JENNY pounds. She's getting desperate and in her desperation, JOHN enters and joins her and they pound together. JANE keeps circling, trying to tear off a bit of wallpaper and free a bit more of the WOMEN each time. In time to the pounding, the WOMEN IN THE WALLS begin to shake the pattern in the same rhythm.)

JENNY & JOHN: OPEN THIS DOOR RIGHT NOW!! Or I'll get an axe!

JANE & ELEANOR: Now he's crying for an axe. It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door.

(DOROTHY starts and looks up from the page at ELEANOR. This is…awfully specific.)

JANE & ELEANOR: *(In the gentlest voice:)* John, dear. The key is down by the front steps, under a leaf.

JOHN & JENNY: Open the door, my darling.

JANE & ELEANOR: I can't. The key is down by the front door under a leaf.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(JOHN & JENNY pound on the door as the WOMEN IN THE WALLS shake the pattern.)

JANE & ELEANOR:	**JENNY & JOHN**:	**DOROTHY**:
(Gentle yet relentless:)	*(Enraged:)*	*(Panicking:)*
The key is down by the front door under a leaf.	Open it.	
The key. Is down. By the front door. Under a leaf.	Open the door	Stop that.
The key. Is down. By the front door. Under a leaf.	OPEN THE DOOR	
The key. Is down. By the front door. Under a leaf.	OPEN IT NOW.	STOP IT! STOP IT!
The key. Is down. By the front door. Under a leaf.		

(JENNY and JOHN storm offstage. By now the WOMEN IN THE WALLS have both arms free. JANE smiles and resumes "creeping" in her endless circle around the room.)

ELEANOR: *(To DOROTHY:) Do you see?*

DOROTHY: I, I don't know…

ELEANOR: *(With increasing frustration:)* Look, see what she wrote.

DOROTHY: *(Getting frustrated too:)* I'm trying!

ELEANOR: Don't you see? Don't you understand? The pattern! *(She starts following JANE creeping around in an endless circle.)*

DOROTHY: I'm trying, I'm trying. I truly *don't know what you want from me.*

ELEANOR & JANE: *(Together, angrily:)* I peeled off all the paper I could reach. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

DOROTHY: *(Reading an entry:)* "I am getting angry enough to do something desperate."

(In her own anger, this phrase strikes a chord in her. JANE stops as DOROTHY continues:)

DOROTHY: "There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper. If we had not used it that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds. I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all. I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see."

(DOROTHY looks up. She sees JANE. JANE sees her. At last, DOROTHY knows her mother. They embrace.)

JANE: I couldn't look out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

(Then together, they begin to pull at the WOMEN, to pull them out of the walls. There's wallpaper coming off in ribbons, more than is possible, as time comes undone and all of the WOMEN circle each other, in a creeping dance, in and out of the wallpaper.)

DOROTHY: I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did?

DOROTHY & ELEANOR & JANE: *(Triumphant:)* But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get me out in the road there!

(ELEANOR fades back and finally exits, leaving DOROTHY and JANE alone together.)

DOROTHY: I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

JANE: It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

DOROTHY: I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jenny asks me to.

JANE: For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

DOROTHY & JANE: But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

(DOROTHY and JANE touch hands, and JANE pulls DOROTHY to take her place in the past, just as JOHN reenters, returning with the key. JANE remains off to the side looking on, among the tattered wallpaper. JOHN opens the nursery door, ready to take charge—and stops short.)

(DOROTHY is now creeping in JANE's path around the room. He doesn't know how to process what he's looking at. He is terrified. She enjoys that very much.)

JOHN: What is the matter? For God's sake, what are you doing?!

(DOROTHY continues creeping, but turns her gaze to him over her shoulder.)

DOROTHY: I've got out at last. In spite of you and Jane! And I've pulled off most of the paper. *So you can't put me back.*

(JOHN crumples to the floor in a faint. He falls in DOROTHY's path. She slows her path for a moment…then steps over his unconscious body, continuing her loop without cease.)

(JANE steps back in, and the two women circle one another again. They touch hands once more. JANE takes her place in the past, now DOROTHY fades back to watch. JANE takes up the loop, and comes around to find herself face to face with JENNY in the doorway, who has just entered and stopped stock still in horror.)

JENNY: John! *(To JANE:)* What have you done?

JANE: Now, why should that man have fainted?!

JENNY: What did you do?

JANE: It's all right…

(JENNY rushes to JOHN, takes a pulse, is relieved to feel one.)

JANE: It's all right. You don't have to go back either.

JENNY: I've already called the police.

20. A Different Time, 1950

(DOROTHY steps into the scene, breaks the spell.)

DOROTHY: What have *you* done.

(JENNY crumples, ages. DOROTHY pulls her back to 1950 with her. JANE, JOHN, and the WOMEN IN THE WALLS exit. ELEANOR reenters to watch, but stays quiet. It's just the three women of 1950 now.)

JENNY: I…I…did what I thought was best.

DOROTHY: She died wherever it was they locked her up?

JENNY: I…I haven't—

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

DOROTHY: —So she could still be alive?

JENNY: …No. No my darling. She's not.

DOROTHY: My wicked mother. My careless mother. My mother who abandoned me.

JENNY: Would you rather know, she died a madwoman, raving about the wallpaper—

DOROTHY: Yes. Do you know that I blamed myself every day, every night, every birthday, every Christmas—

JENNY: —But I couldn't let you blame your father.

DOROTHY: Jenny…*why not?*

JENNY: What?

DOROTHY: Why couldn't you?

JENNY: It would hurt him too much.

DOROTHY: To see what he'd done. He, himself. To see the truth. Wasn't SHE hurt?

JENNY: It was a different time.

DOROTHY: But you knew it wasn't right.

JENNY: And who would ask his old maid sister? What do I know except how to get the stains out? And to keep this in the past was something I could do for him, that no one else could do.

DOROTHY: She wasn't a stain.

JENNY: But he was so sure. And she was so strange, so abrasive. Nothing like you. If I had you, I would never be tired like that—

DOROTHY: —Sick. She was sick. And he made her sicker.

JENNY: When you were small you never got sick, you were so shy and helpful and—

DOROTHY: Alone.

JENNY: I WAS TWICE THE MOTHER SHE WOULD BE.

(There it is at last.)

DOROTHY: For all this. For everything, I could have forgiven you one day. Except that you proved today that you would do it all again. And you would do it to *my daughter.*

JENNY: No.

DOROTHY: I can hire someone to help you with the rest of the boxes.

JENNY: I don't want strangers here.

DOROTHY: Well the house doesn't belong to you anymore. My father sold it when he died. Did you think he would keep it for you? There's a pattern, Jenny. You can't even see that you're part of it.

ELEANOR: *(To DOROTHY, with immense pride:)* But you did.

(DOROTHY and ELEANOR exit, together. For a moment, JENNY is alone.)

(But then, the WOMEN IN THE WALLS begin to creep back in, and last of all, JANE. JENNY is afraid…but JANE simply hands her a single page of the diary.)

JANE: I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did?

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

(But JENNY takes it and scuttles into the wall. Whatever was holding the WOMEN there, she runs to it, embraces it, ties herself up with it. JENNY chooses the wallpaper.)

(Throughout the following, the WOMEN, now free of the wall, turn away from her and exit. When JENNY defiantly lets the diary entry flutter to the floor, JANE exits too.)

JENNY: *(Reading:)* "But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get me out in the road there! I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard! It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please. I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jenny asks me to. For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow. But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way."

(JENNY is alone, defiantly entangled in the yellow wallpaper.

In the silence, it dawns on her how fully she is trapped.

She inhales, exhales, and wonders, for the first time, if she's done the right thing.)

End of Play.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.

About the Author

Kathryn Funkhouser is a writer whose plays have been produced throughout the U.S. and internationally. In addition to her plays with Stage Partners, published plays include *Careless People: A Great Gatsby, Double Double, Unbreakable Timmy Cratchit* (with Tyler Dwiggins), *Do You Read Me?, Weekend Warriors,* and *Badger Poison*. She wrote the libretto and lyrics for the musical *Imagine a Dragon* (Beat by Beat Press). Her articles and essays have appeared in publications such as The Toast, McSweeney's Internet Tendency, *The Atlantic,* and *The Nation.* BA Drew University. Member of the Dramatists Guild, Athena Writes (2018) and Project Y Theater Writer's Group (2018-2019). She lives in Brooklyn with a lot of original cast albums. For links and more, visit kathrynfunkhouser.com.

Stage Partners plays by Kathryn Funkhouser

Yellow Wallpaper

How (Not) To Be a Wizard

The Bargain (In the collection *Ten(ish): Comedies*)

Will You Be My Nemesis?

Beware the House on Haunted Hill!

The Collector (Part of the *Rogues' Gallery* collection)

Knock Knock

About Stage Partners

Stage Partners is an independent play publisher dedicated to making exceptional plays accessible to all theatres and schools. Founded in 2015 by two playwrights with extensive backgrounds in theatrical publishing and licensing, Stage Partners was created with the simple idea that regardless of whether you are a new drama teacher or an experienced artistic director, finding the perfect new play should be easy, engaging, and exciting. With scripts that are always free to read, lightning-fast licensing, production & educational resources, and a passionate staff, Stage Partners is committed to offering industry-best services to both its customers and its playwrights. If you are looking for a publishing partner that understands that making theatre happen is hard work, but discovering a great new play should be a breeze, join us at www.yourstagepartners.com and we'll begin together.

FOR USE BY ADAM FAW, PINECREST PLAYERS THEATRE ONLY. Stage Partners Order #12597.