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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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THE TOTEM AND THE BRUSH

A play based on the life
of Emily Carr

Amanda Hale

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
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ABSTRACT

THE TOTEM AND THE BRUSH

Amanda Hale.
Concordia University, 1978

Plot: Emily Carr, at the age of fifty-five, having failed to take herself seriously as an artist during the previous thirteen years, is invited to Ottawa to exhibit her Haida totem paintings in an exhibition of West Coast Indian art. While in the East she meets several members of the Group of Seven, and is particularly impressed by Lawren Harris, whose work is a revelation to her, and who strongly urges her to start painting again.

Upon returning to Victoria, elated but disturbed by the events of her trip, Emily is faced with the prospect of resuming her role as landlady of an apartment house. She must decide whether or not, with all her domestic responsibilities and family pressures, she can manage to pursue her career as an artist again.

Themes: The play is an attempt to dramatize the dialectical movement involved in the process of becoming. In showing Emily at the major turning point in her life, and using dream and fantasy sequences to elucidate her past, an attempt is made to reveal the process by which she suffered a symbolic death and, with Lawren Harris as catalyst, achieved a subsequent rebirth.

In revealing the conflicts, complexities and dualistic pattern inherent in Emily's character, I attempt to expand her particular dilemma to embrace the issue of Canadian cultural autonomy, and to posit her as a universal symbol of the true artist for whom, ultimately, there is no choice but to create. In the act of creation the dualities are synthesized.

FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION
CONCERNING SLIDE PROJECTIONS OF PAINTINGS

- ¹ pp. 15 - 16 in the script. Page numbers for Emily Carr's totem paintings are quoted from Emily Carr by Doris Shadbolt, published 1967 by the Vancouver Art Gallery. A centennial exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of Emily Carr's birth in 1871.
- ² pp. 25 - 28 in the script. Page numbers for Lawren Harris paintings are quoted from Lawren Harris, edited by Boss Harris and R.G.P. Colgrove, with an introduction by Northrop Frye. Published 1969 by Macmillan of Canada, Toronto.
- ³ p. 51 in the script. If the Director decides to use slide projections of Emily Carr's early work, a selection should be made from her London work, dated 1899.
- ⁴ p. 54 in the script. Page numbers for Emily Carr's French paintings are quoted from Emily Carr by Doris Shadbolt.

C A S T

EMILY LAWREN HARRIS
ALICE FOUR TENANTS: PROFESSOR PANQUIST
 MRS. PENDERGAST
LIZZIE MRS. FITZJOHN
 MISS PILLCREST
SOPHIE

ART CRITIC

BOBBY

NURSE

FATHER

MRS. PIDDINGTON

THREE MALE SUITORS

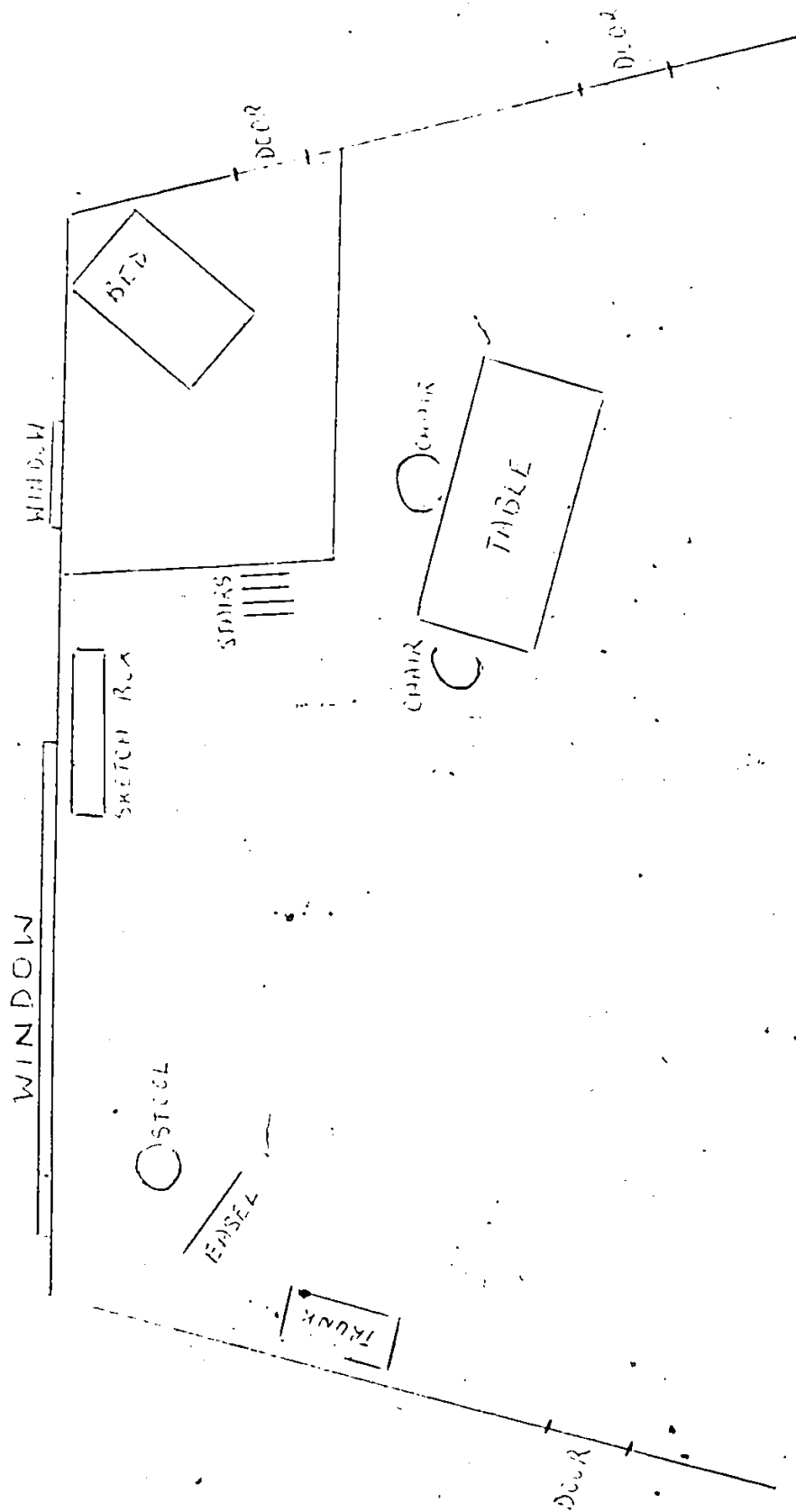
TWO FEMALE VIEWERS

TWO MALE VIEWERS

(It is possible for the above 17 roles to be played by 6 actors - 3 male and 3 female. Therefore, given a tight production budget, a total cast of 10 could suffice)

POOR COPY

SET



ACT ONE

Emily Carr's studio in the House of All Sorts. Large window on upstage wall overlooking garden. Easel USR. Entrances DSR and DSL. Box of sketches and canvases on upstage wall in front of window. Large rectangular table DSL covered with general clutter - lumps of clay, pottery draped with wet rags, tubes of paint, brushes, carpentry and garden tools, sewing materials, string, rags, shoes, oranges, books etc., and a white rat in a cage. Two chairs at table. Steps leading up to simulation of attic bedroom on platform in USL corner of set. Small window in upstage wall of bedroom, bed set diagonally from the corner, entrance on SL wall. SEE SET PLAN ATTACHED.

December 1927. Emily 55, Alice 57, Lizzie 59.

Alice, Lizzie and four tenants onstage.
 Alice is flitting around the studio dusting nervously.
 Lizzie is calmly arranging objects on the table.
 Tenants are clustered DSR: Professor Panquist, Mrs. Pendergast,
 Mrs. Fitzjohn, Miss Pillcrest.

Prof. Panquist: This house is a disgrace!

Mrs. Fitzjohn: We won't stand for it any longer.

Mrs. Pendergast: What sort of a landlady does she think she is? Gallivanting across the country, leaving us to fend for ourselves.

Lizzie: We're looking after you on our sister's behalf.

Alice: She's an artist as well as a landlady.

Miss Pillcrest: Yeah, thinks she's something special.

Alice: It was a great honour to be invited to exhibit at the National Gallery.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: You call those hideous totem poles art?

Lizzie: They do in the East apparently.

Mrs. Pendergast: Easterners are crazy. Why, they even had Indians dancing on Parliament Hill last summer for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

Miss Pillcrest: I don't care what they're up to in the East. I want my apartment painted for Christmas.

Prof. Panquist: And I want that furnace repaired. It was a mere forty-nine degrees in my bedroom last night.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: And how d'you expect me to get my baby's wash done with tepid water?

Mrs. Pendergast: What about me? With two children to wash for. And not a clean rag left to put on their backs.

Prof. Panquist: And she'll have to get rid of those dogs.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Yes, those wretched creatures've done nothing but howl every night since she left.

Miss Pillcrest: Not to mention the barking when my gentlemen friends come to call.

Lizzie: Everything will be attended to when Miss Carr returns.

Mrs. Pendergast: That's what you've been saying every day for three weeks.

Prof. Panquist: We won't be put off another minute.

Alice: Please be patient. She's expected home today.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: She had no right going in the first place.

Miss Pillcrest: Leaving us in the lurch.

Alice: Oh, she was most reluctant to go. It was all we could do to persuade her.

Lizzie: Even when the Gallery provided her train fare.

Alice: We did so want her to have a vacation.

Lizzie: She's been extremely overtired lately.

Alice: She works so hard.

Lizzie: And we don't want her to fall sick again like she did in London.

Alice: And in Paris.

Prof. Panquist: Fiddlesticks! The woman's strong as an ox. Why, the morning of her departure she pushed me onto the coal heap and hurled a string of abuse at me that would shame a fishwife.

Lizzie: You must have provoked her.

Miss Pillcrest: It don't take much to do that.

Mrs. Pendergast: I'll say. Some days she'll bite your head off if you so much as show your face at her door.

Prof. Panquist: Shameful manners.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: No breeding.

Alice: Oh!

Lizzie: Mrs. Fitzjohn! You insult our family name!

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Oh, no offence to you I'm sure, but there's a rotten egg in every basket.

Alice: Oh, Lizzie, how embarrassing.

Lizzie: We won't tolerate such insults.

Prof. Panquist: And I won't tolerate such living conditions. If Miss Carr won't live up to the terms of our agreement I shall . . . I shall . . . see my lawyer.

Alice: Oh, please don't.

Lizzie: Miss Carr is dependent on this house for her livelihood.

Mrs. Pendergast: Then she should look after it properly.

Alice: But she has her career as an artist -

Prof. Panquist: Let her earn her living at that.

Lizzie: She would dearly love to but you know her paintings don't sell.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Then she's got no right calling herself an artist.

Miss Pillcrest: I've never once seen her sitting at that easel.

Lizzie: You don't leave her much time with all your fussing.

Alice: But this exhibition may be her chance to start again.

Mrs. Pendergast: Lord forbid! We'll be neglected worse than ever.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: She must get her chores done before she starts fiddling around with paints.

Lizzie: Don't worry. The chores will be done.

Alice: Please be patient with our sister. She's very sensitive. Why, even as a child -

Prof. Panquist: Patient! How can I be patient when I'm kept awake all night by dripping taps?

Mrs. Fitzjohn: And howling dogs!

Miss Pillcrest: And creaking floorboards!

Mrs. Pendergast: And knocking pipes!

Lizzie: Hold your fire, ladies!

Prof. Panquist: Ladies? Are you implying that -

Lizzie: Never mind. I've listed your complaints and I'll present them to my sister as soon as she returns.
(Shows tenants out DSR)

Mrs. Pendergast: Don't forget the piano.

Lizzie: Everything will be dealt with tomorrow.
(Tenants exit delivering parting shots)

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard that.

Prof. Panquist: We'll fight for our rights under the landlord tenant act.

Miss Pillcrest: I'm sick and tired of those grubby walls.

Mrs. Pendergast: She'll get an earful from me when she shows her face.
(Lizzie closes the door)

Alice: Oh Lizzie, what dreadfully rude people. Thank goodness you managed to get rid of them before Millie arrives.

Lizzie: It might've done her good to see what we've had to put up with.

Alice: Oh no, dear. She'll be dreadfully tired. All that time on the train without a decent night's sleep. I do think we should've gone down to the ferry to meet her.

Lizzie: We've already discussed it, Alice. You know how independent she is.

Alice: Yes, but her luggage -

Lizzie: Millie always insists on carrying her own luggage.

Alice: Of course. You're right. Oh, but I can't wait to see her!

(Lizzie sits at the table, reads the Bible)

D'you think everything's clean and tidy enough?

Lizzie: A good sight better than when she left. My goodness, I never saw such a mess.

Alice: She left in a great hurry.

Lizzie: No excuse. Anyway, we've made a start. Now she'll have to finish setting her house in order herself.

Alice: What if she starts painting again? Remember how it used to be? Canvases and paint-rags and brushes all over the place.

Lizzie: I can't understand how anyone could live in such disorder.

Alice: But she was happy then. Do you think she will start again?

Lizzie: She's going to have her hands full with the tenants. We must pray to the Lord to give her humility.

Alice: And strength.

Lizzie: (Quoting Bible) Lift up thy voice to the Lord
and he will answer thee.

(Sound of dogs barking from upstairs)

Alice: Listen! The dogs! She must be here! (Runs
to window) Yes! She's home, Lizzie, she's
home! Oh, the dogs are jumping all over her.

Lizzie: Oh dear, we should've tied them up.

Alice: (Running around in a panic, rattling her hair,
tidying things, generally fussing) I haven't
finished dusting yet. Oh, I didn't think she'd
be here so soon. Is my hair in place?

Lizzie: Don't fret. Millie won't notice.

(Enter Emily from SR carrying two large
suitcases, shopping bag, purse)

Emily: Sisters! Sisters! I'm home. The prodigal
has returned.

Alice: (Embracing Emily) Oh Millie, it's so good to
see you. We've missed you. Did you have a
good trip?

Emily: I missed you too, Alice. And Lizzie.

Lizzie: (Embracing Emily) Welcome home, dear.

Alice: Sit down. Tell us all about it. You didn't
say much in your letters.

Emily: There wasn't time. Such a whirl of activity.
So many wonderful people. I was quite overwhelmed.

Alice: So much has happened while you've been gone.
Lizzie's been elected President of the Ladies'
Church Committee -

Lizzie: And Alice has three new pupils starting
kindergarten in the new year -

Emily: Splendid!

Alice: And we've been frightfully busy making plans
for Christmas.

Emily: Christmas! Oh, don't mention it. (Taking rat out of cage) How's my little Susie?

Alice: Don't let her out of the cage!

Emily: She's so thin. Haven't you been feeding her?

Lizzie: { Everything's been taken care of, Millie. The mortgage payments are up to date, and my Chinese boy has been tending your garden -

Emily: But I can't afford hired help.

Lizzie: Well, I can.

Emily: Lizzie, I can't let you pay.

Lizzie: Don't be proud.

Alice: Accept a little help for a change.

Emily: Oh sisters, sisters! You're so good to me.

Alice: We love you, Millie.

Lizzie: It's our Christian duty to help each other.

Emily: I'm so grateful to you for taking care of everything. Three weeks away from all this. I feel like a new woman.

Alice: Did they like your pictures in Ottawa?

Emily: (Hesitating) I wasn't long in Ottawa. Spent more time in Toronto. Oh, the paintings I saw there. And the artists I met. These men who call themselves the Group of Seven. They made me feel so welcome, Alice.

Alice: That's nice, dear.

Lizzie: Don't let it turn your head, Millie. You've had a nice vacation but you're home now and it's time to buckle down to work.

Emily: Yes, they want me to start working again. But I don't know, Lizzie. I've been wrestling with it all the way on the train. I just don't know what to do.

Lizzie: (Producing a list) We'll tell you what to do. We've kept things up to date as much as possible but there's a number of matters to be dealt with immediately. The furnace needs repairs urgently.

Emily: No, no, you misunderstand. I thought I might start painting again.

Lizzie: And Professor Panquist needs new washers on his taps.

Emily: Oh no, don't remind me of the wretched tenants.

Lizzie: Mrs. Fendergast in lower west wants the piano tuned.

Alice: And don't forget Miss Pillcrest in lower east. She wants her apartment painted for Christmas.

Emily: But that's impossible. Christmas is only a week away.

Lizzie: Don't panic, dear. It'll only take the painters half a day.

Emily: You know I can't afford to have painters in. I'll have to do it myself. And there's all the Christmas shopping to be done, and baking, and -

Alice: But Millie, didn't you sell any of your totems?

Emily: No. Nothing's changed. The public won't buy.

Alice: Then there's no use to start painting again.

Lizzie: It's your own fault, Millie. I told you years ago, if you'd only paint portraits you'd be very successful.

Emily: I don't want to paint portraits.

Alice: Miss Hemmings' brother just got a big commission. Six portraits at a thousand dollars a piece.

Emily: Sham commercialism!

Lizzie: Sour grapes. You had your choice, Millie. You could have made your living as an artist if you hadn't been so stubborn and impractical.

Emily: Impractical!

Alice: If you painted portraits and flower arrangements you could exhibit with the Island Arts and Crafts Society.

Emily: That bunch of old tabbies! Placidly content to purr over the annual exhibition of their sentiments. Or rather their sediments. No thank you, Alice. I'd rather abandon art altogether than associate myself with a bunch of old-fashioned fools.

Alice: But people buy their paintings.

Emily: Fools who wouldn't know a first-class honest painting from their backside!

Lizzie: You've always insisted on being perverse and look where it's landed you.

Emily: It's you who's being perverse, you righteous old windbag!

Alice: Millie! That's not nice. We're trying to help you.

Emily: You've never liked my painting, have you?

Lizzie: I forgive you, Emily. But you must learn to control yourself with the tenants.

Alice: Yes, they've been complaining about your temper.

Lizzie: Professor Panquist tells me you pushed him onto the coal heap and called him vile names.

Emily: He deserved it, the silly old fusspot. Always griping about the lack of heat. He could see I was trying to get the wretched furnace going.

Lizzie: You must remember who you are. Father was one of the pillars of the community.

Alice: And it's very embarrassing when we go into town and hear people whispering about you, Millie. They think you're a little strange.

Emily: Oh, to hang with the lot of them! I don't give a damn what they think.

Lizzie: Emily. Watch your language.

Emily: Why don't you leave me alone? I've not been home five minutes before you start nagging and criticizing.

Lizzie: Calm down, dear.

Emily: I'm tired as a dog, and I have all this unpacking to do, and the animals to feed, and Christmas letters to write, and -

Alice: Let us help you.

Emily: You don't seem to understand. I have an important decision to make.

Alice: What decision?

Emily: Whether or not to start painting again.

Lizzie: I should've thought that would have been out of the question. With all the work you have in this house.

Emily: But if I could just get the tenants under control I'd have more time.

Lizzie: Now then, Millie. Don't get any foolish notions.

Emily: But I want to paint again. I am a painter.

Lizzie: Nonsense, dear. You haven't painted seriously in almost fifteen years. Ever since that awful exhibition.

Emily: No one understood my French paintings!

Alice: They were so embarrassing, Millie.

Lizzie: Embarrassing! Those pictures were a disgrace to our family name.

Alice: Your totem poles were much nicer.

Lizzie: Anyway, there's no use in discussing this. You're too old to start again now.

Alice: Maybe it's time to settle down.

Lizzie: (Quoting) Accept your lot and find enjoyment in your toil. This is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes, chapter five, verse -

Emily: (Explosively) Leave me alone! You don't understand anything! Why don't you just leave me alone for God's sake!

(Pause)

Lizzie: Very well. I'll leave this list on the table.
Don't forget to attend to these matters first
thing in the morning. Come along, Alice.

Alice: We'll see you at church tomorrow?

Lizzie: And luncheon with me at the old house as usual?

Emily: (Inpatiently) Yes, yes. Now please go.

Alice: Goodbye, dear. (Kisses Emily) Get a good rest
tonight. You're overwrought from the journey.

Lizzie: (Kissing Emily) God bless, Millie. I shall
pray for you.

(Exit Lizzie and Alice SR)

Emily: (Slumping down on chair and banging fist on table)
Patience, patience, patience. They're your sisters,
Emily. You know they mean well. I love them dearly,
but they make me mad with their silly piousness and
their sham ladylike ways. (Talking to rat) Oh Susie,
what am I going to do? My mind's in a turmoil. Like
a great bubbling volcano ready to erupt. I'm so
excited . . . and so afraid. Just when I'd given
up hope - resigned myself to being a household drudge
for the rest of my days. (Pause) Adventure. We
live only when we adventure. (Pause) Lawren Harris
. . . those men in the East . . . Susie, we're not
alone! I'm not crazy after all! There are others
with the same beliefs. They expect me to paint again.
And I'm tempted. Oh, I'm sorely tempted.

(Knock on SR door)

Yes? Who is it?

(Enter Sophie Frank from SR - Haida Indian,
approximately the same age as Emily)

Sophie: It's me, Emily. Welcome home.

Emily: (Embracing Sophie) Sophie! How are you, my dear?

Sophie: Fine, fine. Have a good trip, Emily?

Emily: Splendid! But it's good to be home, Sophie.
To see you and my sisters.

Sophie: I waited till they left.

Emily: You mean -

Sophie: In the garden.

Emily: But why?

Sophie: They don't like me.

Emily: Nonsense. You mustn't be shy. I know they seem a bit uppity, but they don't mean any harm.

Sophie: Are you still my friend, Emily?

Emily: Of course. I'll always be your friend. Why d'you ask me such a question after more than twenty years?

Sophie: Sometimes people change.

Emily: Nothing's changed. Sophie, what's on your mind?

Sophie: You're an important lady. The gentleman from Ottawa - he'll make you famous. Make big money.

Emily: No, no. The exhibition was a failure. Fizzled like a wet firecracker.

Sophie: But something's happened. You've changed, Emily.

Emily: I've had a vacation. I met some wonderful artists who were most generous with their praise. It was overwhelming, embarrassing, because deep down I felt such a fraud. I, a quitter, being praised by real workers.

Sophie: You want to paint again. That's it, isn't it?

Emily: Yes, but . . . that's all in the past. I haven't touched a brush in so many years -

Sophie: If they said you must paint, then you must.

Emily: I have too much work to do here - with the house and the tenants. (Attending to pottery on table) And these wretched little pots. Another shipment due at the beginning of January.

Sophie: They are not important. They do not come from inside you like the paintings.

Emily: But they do help me eke out a living. It'd be grand if they'd pay me to paint instead of to make pots, hook rugs, breed dogs. But there's no use daydreaming. Lizzie's right. I must be practical.

Sophie: Your spirit is what you are, Emily.

Emily: When I built this house I was determined to prove to my sisters that I could earn my living as a landlady in a respectable ladylike manner. And I've done it. I've proved that an artist can cook and housekeep and meet the mortgage payments. But I can't paint honestly and keep boarders at the same time.

Sophie: You need not prove anything, Emily. You need only paint.

Emily: It's no use, Sophie. Everything was against me from the beginning. All my plans were dashed when war broke out. Rentals sank, living rose. I couldn't possibly afford the hired help I'd counted on.

Sophie: That is the past, Emily. You are different now.

Emily: Yes. I am different. Thirteen years of backbreaking drudgery has crushed all the life out of me. But the situation is no different. I still have to be owner, agent, landlady and janitor. There's no time for real work.

Sophie: I'll help you.

Emily: You can help me unpack. Here, you know where everything belongs.

(Emily unpacks, hands things to Sophie, who deposits them in various places - on table, in bedroom etc.)

Sophie: I could be your servant.

Emily: Sophie! Where's your pride? A Haida Indian would rather die than become a slave.

Sophie: Work for you in the house while you paint.

Emily: No, I won't hear of it. Have you forgotten the laws of your people? Slavery is the most degrading thing possible.

Sophie: I have forgotten many things. Everything changed when the priest saved me.

Emily: Meddling missionaries. The Church's belly is never full enough.

Sophie: The priest is good. He taught me the white man's laws.

Emily: And made you forget who you are. Well, I'll remind you, Sophie. We're equal. We always have been. Like sisters, right from the beginning.

Sophie: I was shy when I first met you. You were a fine lady, just home from England.

Emily: Yes, dragging my tail between my legs. I was living in that dingy little studio in Vancouver.

Sophie: I came to your door selling clams.

Emily: And those beautiful baskets you used to make.

Sophie: You gave me old clothes in exchange for a basket. A thick warm skirt for the winter.

Emily: More use to you than money. Poor Sophie. All your money went on tombstones.

Sophie: All my babies dead. Mine. All me.

Emily: Remember when I visited you at the Indian Village? And I watched you and the other women weaving your baskets. Then you took me to the cemetery and showed me your huge family of tiny tombstones.

Sophie: Twenty-one.

Emily: Barely a year apart.

Sophie: All mine. I paid.

Emily: You were so proud of those cold little stones. They were the only totems in your village.

Sophie: Don't need totems now. I'm Catholic. The priest saved me. Baptized my babies. Saved them from hell.

Emily: It was you, Sophie, who made me decide to paint the totems. They must be remembered.

Sophie: No more totems. My people have left their village. Learned from the missionary to live like the white man.

Emily: The history of an entire people carved into the trees. Then forgotten by their creators. Deserted. Left to be chopped down and shipped off to museums where they're stared at and ridiculed by ignorant white men.

Sophie: The white man is good. You are white, Emily. You are a fine lady.

Emily: My tenants don't think so.

Sophie: They are troublemakers. They talk bad things about you in town. Leave them, Emily. Go to the Indian villages and paint.

Emily: Oh, if only I could, Sophie. If only I could run away from all this. Escape to the beauty of those deserted places.

Sophie: The Indian spirits will make you happy like you used to be. They will free you.

(In unpacking, Emily pulls out a brochure from the Ottawa exhibition, showing reproductions of some of her totem paints. During the following sequence slides of this work should be projected on or above upstage window, signalling Emily's retreat into reminiscence as she leafs through the brochure. She is oblivious to Sophie)

Emily: I remember my first trip north.

(Slide: Photo of Skidigate harbour)

Crossing the water to Skidigate harbour. An awesome holy sight. Deserted beach. Ghostly totems towering above the canoes, looming eerily through the early morning mist. Every summer I went north.

(Slide: Haida Totems, Cha-Atl, Q.C.I. 1912. p.74)

Sophie: If only, if only. You always did what you wanted to do. Now you are a slave to this house.

(Slide: Kitsewakla, Skeena River, circa 1912. p.72)

Too much work to do. That is foolish talk. You are stubborn. You refuse the help of a friend.

(Slide: Tsatsinuchoml, B.C., circa 1912. p.73)

Sophie:

I know I am your equal. That is why I offer my help. It makes me angry when you refuse. And it is painful to feel the slow death of your spirit.

(Slide: Indian War Canoe, Alert Bay, 1912. p.71)

Yes, you are a fine lady, Emily. You have a good spirit, a warm heart. But sometimes you are foolish. Sometimes you should listen to me.

(Slide: Skidigate Totem, 1912. p.74)

1

Emily:

Oh, how I wrestled to capture the spirit of your totems. But I was not equal to it. I needed more training. I heard talk of the new way of seeing that was sweeping France. Impressionism they called it. I was desperate to get over there and find out for myself. So I started to save again. I had to go all the way to Paris, Sophie, to learn how to paint Indian totems.

Sophie:

And now you don't paint no more. Your paintings are dead, like my babies. Dead. All dead. Only memories now. You are like me, Emily. Dead inside. Full of sad memories.

Emily:

Oh, we're a couple of sentimental old fools, Sophie. There's no use dwelling in the past. You're right. It's dead.

Sophie:

It's too late for me. No more babies now. I'm too old. But you could paint again. It's not too late for you.

Emily:

(Angry) I'm fifty-five years old, Sophie! And I'm saddled with this wretched house and a bunch of miserable tenants making demands on me twenty-four hours a day. How d'you expect me to paint under such conditions?

Sophie:

O.K., Emily. O.K. You be a slave for the tenants.

Emily:

I was a fool to let them persuade me to exhibit in Ottawa. Ridiculous to think that my work might be accepted after all these years. It's not good enough and it never will be. I deserved to be humiliated, letting my hopes run away with me. My sisters are right. I must forget that I ever called myself an artist.

Sophie: O.K., O.K. Go ahead. Crush your spirit.
But one day you will paint again. I know.
You have to paint.

Emily: Yes, I have to paint Miss Pillcrest's apartment.
That's as close as I'll ever be to painting again.

(The unpacking is now finished)

There, that's finished. Thanks for your help, Sophie.

Sophie: There's no need to thank me, Emily. We are equal.
Remember? I must go now and let you rest. Shall
I come back tomorrow?

Emily: Yes, please do. And let's hope I'll be better
company. Sophie, forgive me for being cranky.
I don't know what's wrong. Everything's gone
crooked.

Sophie: I understand, Emily. You have a big weight on
your mind, and many things worrying at you. You
must sleep. The eagle spirits will watch over you.

(Emily and Sophie embrace. Sophie exits SR)

Emily: (Sitting at table, talking to rat) Foxy old Sophie.
Can't keep any secrets from her, can we, Susie?
She knows me better than I know myself: Oh, what
am I going to do? Lawren Harris. Your words keep
ringing in my ears. Your pictures are imprinted on
my mind - the biggest, strongest part of my whole
trip. I can't disappoint you. And yet I made no
promises. (Pause) Wretched man. You're tearing
me apart. You've waked a passionate desire in me
that I had thought quite dead. And it's painful
and frightening and joyous!

(Change in lighting to signify fantasy flashback
sequence. Lawren Harris, 42 years old, enters
through USL door in Emily's bedroom, slowly
descends stairs)

Harris: Emily Carr! Welcome to the East! I've seen the
exhibition. Your paintings are strong . . . powerful.

Emily: (Rising) But Mr. Harris . . . the public . . . there
was a mere handful of viewers at the opening.

Harris: Public recognition is always slow. But the important
people are your fellow artists. They're the ones who
know. Lismer and Jackson have seen your work and
they're greatly impressed.

Emily: Lismer and Jackson? Are they members of this . . .
this Group of Seven?

Harris: Yes. You must meet them.

(Art Critic enters from DSL. He is also a
fantasy figure and represents all the art
critics of the time who were hostile to the
Group of Seven)

Emily: Look, I live in the backwoods. What exactly is
the Group of Seven?

Critic: A bunch of posers, frauds and sensationalists!
They've overthrown every decent tradition with
their formless daubs of paint.

Harris: Those traditions belong to another continent. Canada
is different in spirit from Europe and the Old Country.

Critic: It's the people who make a country. And we're all of
British or European ancestry. Tradition is the
backbone of our culture.

Harris: Alien traditions! We must create our own.

Critic: Look, Harris. You've got to give the public what
they want.

Emily: But the public wants a tame watered-down version of
our wild landscape. They pretend they're living in
an English country garden, neatly fenced in.

Harris: Precisely. And it's our job to break those fences
down, Emily.

Critic: What about sales? You and your group are always
complaining that your paintings don't sell. But
you go on defacing the walls of our art galleries
with your ugly daubs.

Harris: If you critics hadn't misled the public we'd be
well established by now.

Critic: You must consider the layman an ignoramus to be
taken in by that stuff.

Harris: It's our duty to paint, and your duty to understand
and interpret our paintings.

Critic: Agh, you're crazy. You're under the neurotic
influence of the French Impressionists.

Harris: The truth is that we have you critics in confusion. That an important art movement should be arising here in Canada is more than you can credit.

Emily: Does this mean that your work isn't recognized?

Harris: No, no, don't listen to him. It's been a long hard struggle, but we are beginning to achieve a measure of acceptance.

Critic: A flash in the pan, Harris. You'll be forgotten in ten years' time.

Harris: Emily, I understand you haven't painted for a number of years.

Emily: I no longer think of myself as an artist, Mr. Harris.

Harris: Why not? You're exhibiting your work in Ottawa.

Critic: Ah, so this is Emily Carr.

Harris: This is the perfect opportunity for you to start painting again.

Critic: I've seen your totems. Damned impressive.

Harris: They're magnificent!

Emily: It's old dead work. I was persuaded to include them in the exhibition against my will. I shan't exhibit again.

Harris: Afraid of the critics?

Emily: They've been consistently cruel.

Harris: Forget the critics, Emily. They always belittle what they can't understand.

Critic: That's not true. You had considerable critical acclaim a few years back. Then you dropped out of existence.

Emily: I can't paint any more. The art in me is dead.

Harris: Then we must bring you back to life!

Emily: No, no, don't raise my hopes. I'm resigned.

Harris: Adventure, Emily! Adventure! We live only when we adventure and give expression to the results of that adventure.

Emily: I'm too old and tired to be adventurous.
It's all been crushed out of me.

Critic: Aha! A martyred artist. I know your type. You haven't got the guts to go on painting so you blame it on the critics and the public.

Emily: I can't make my living as an artist if the public won't buy!

Critic: You like to think you're misunderstood because it justifies quitting.

Harris: Why did you stop painting, Emily?

Emily: Because no one took my work seriously.

Critic: Come off it. From what I hear you were starting to make quite a name for yourself.

Emily: Yes, as a crank.

Critic: I know how you artists are about your work. Especially women artists. You over-react to the slightest criticism.

Harris: I believe in you, Emily. It takes courage to fight the inertia . . . the old dead traditions people live by -

Critic: Better old traditions than none at all.

Harris: But you can do it.

Emily: No, I can't face the challenge again.

Harris: Of course you can. You have loads of courage. Your work reveals the stuff you're made of.

Critic: I'll say. And it has nothing to do with courage. By golly, those totems remind me I'm a man.

Emily: What d'you mean?

Critic: Let's face it, Miss Carr. They're blatantly phallic.

Harris: There's no call for such crudity. Art is an expression of the spirit.

Critic: Who're you trying to kid? All art is an expression of passion and sexuality.

Emily: My work has nothing to do with such filth!

Critic: You never married, did you?

Emily: That's none of your business!

Critic: It shows. Your paintings are rampant with repressed sexuality. You make love to the canvas.

Emily: You filthy-minded pervert!

Critic: Don't get me wrong. I'm all in favour of it.

Harris: Really, I don't think this is -

Critic: You could take a few lessons from her, Harris. Those totems have all the earthiness and raw sensuality that your work lacks.

Emily: You cheap, smutty-minded critics don't understand the higher aspects -

Critic: Oh, I understand alright. You're such a prude you don't even recognize the basic quality of your own work. Don't be such a hypocrite, Miss Carr. That passion is the driving force in your paintings.

Harris: Emily, I'm sorry about this.

Critic: If you don't like it you can stuff it. But that's my honest opinion.

Harris: You must learn to ignore the critics.

Emily: I'm not interested in your filthy opinions.

Harris: What matters is to paint. You must start again.

Emily: No, Mr. Harris. I can't face the struggle, the self-doubt, the feeling of inadequacy -

Harris: Of course it involves suffering as well as joy. Better that than to be one of the walking dead. All of life is a paradox . . . an interplay of opposites. And creativity is the only way of finding oneself in the universe.

Critic: I wouldn't want to find myself in your petrified universe, Harris. All spirit and no flesh.

Harris: The creative spirit in man and the creative spirit in the universe are one and the same.

Emily: Yes. Yes, I've always felt that. But I didn't think there were others. And you express it so beautifully.

Critic: A load of pretentious rhetoric. What he's really talking about is the sex drive.

Harris: You've been isolated out in the West, Emily.

Critic: And it's time you went back.

Harris: But you're here now. You're one of us.

Critic: Don't listen to him. You don't belong here with this group of madmen.

Harris: You won't have to work alone any more.

Emily: I couldn't leave the West. It's my home.

Harris: Of course not. You love and understand British Columbia. You must return. But at least you'll know there are men in Eastern Canada with goals similar to your own.

Critic: She's got nothing in common with your crowd, Harris. Her work is vibrant and alive. (To Emily) Your only problem, if I may say so, is that your paintings lack a sense of detail. Your application of paint is too rough . . . too slapdash.

Emily: (To Harris) It's all very well for you. You men have each other for support. You have no idea what it's like to face the scorn and ridicule alone.

Harris: Yes, that's true, but -

Critic: Scorn and ridicule! What did I tell you? A mild word of criticism and you fly off the handle.

Harris: We have to put up with all this chatter that goes on in art circles here.

Critic: Just like a woman.

Harris: (Indicating Critic) You see what it's like. You'd lose patience with it, Emily. We have to seek our solitude. You have it ready-made out in Victoria.

Emily: Oh, you have an answer for everything.

Critic: Yes, he fancies himself as a theosophist. Watch out or he'll talk you into a corner.

Harris: (Getting carried away) Creative life is a dynamic bridge between opposites. Between the spiritual and material in man. It's the union of these opposites in a work of art that gives it vitality and meaning.

Prof. Panquist: (Entering DSR) Get down to the basement and fix that furnace!

Harris: When we view a great mountain soaring into the sky -

Prof. Panquist: Miss Carr!

Harris: . . . it excites us, evokes an uplifted feeling within us.

Prof. Panquist: My apartment is like an ice-box!

Emily: Yes, yes -

Prof. Panquist: Ah, so you admit it.

Emily: When I came through the Rockies on the train I wanted to cast off my earthly body and float away -

Prof. Panquist: Nevertheless, I'll bet the train wasn't as cold as my sitting room.

Emily: . . . through those great pure spaces between the peaks, up the quiet green ravines into the high pure clean air.

Prof. Panquist: What on earth are you talking about? Miss Carr?
MISS CARR!

(Emily finally notices Prof. Panquist. As she becomes aware of this intrusion of reality into her fantasy, the lighting will change, Harris and the Critic will retreat slowly towards their respective exits)

Emily: Oh! You gave me such a fright. How dare you intrude on my privacy!

Prof. Panquist: I'm sorry, but the lack of facilities in this house is scandalous.

Emily: You should knock before you enter a lady's apartment.

Prof. Panquist: No heat, no hot water -

Emily: You'll have to wait till tomorrow. I'm busy.

Prof. Panquist: Busy daydreaming when you should be attending to your duties.

Emily: Now look here, Professor Panquist -

Prof. Panquist: I refuse to spend another evening sitting in that ice-box.

Emily: Then boil a kettle, fill a hot water bottle, and go to bed! (Starts pushing Prof. Panquist out of DSR door)

Prof. Panquist: But . . . but . . . I -

Emily: Get out! Go on! Get out of my apartment!

(Emily pushes Prof. Panquist out and slams door. Harris is about to ascend steps to bedroom. Critic hovers by DSL exit. Lighting changes to signify continuation of fantasy flashback)

Lawren: Lawren, don't go! I want to see your work.

Harris: Why of course, Emily. Come into my studio. (Moves upstage to sketch-box)

Critic: The chamber of horrors.

Emily: I didn't ask you to stay.

Critic: You won't get rid of me so easily.

(Emily joins Harris upstage at sketch-box. As they look through canvases in the box Harris's paintings are projected on or above upstage window)

Harris: I'd like your criticism.

Emily: But I'm not qualified to criticize. It's been so long since -

Harris: Have more confidence in yourself, Emily. We'd like to make you an honorary member of the Group if you'll accept.

Emily: Me? A woman?

Harris: You, an artist.

Emily: But . . . but I'm not worthy.

Critic: You're worth more than the whole bunch of them.

Emily: I'm through with painting.

Harris: You'll change your mind.

Emily: I'm honoured that you accept me. But I'm not used to it. When I studied in Paris -

(Slide: Above Lake Superior, 1924, p.13)

Oh, this is marvellous!

Harris: Above Lake Superior.

Critic: Looks more like an agricultural scene. The sky's like a ploughed field. And those naked trees in the foreground remind me of pitchforks.

Emily: Oh no, they're beautiful and pure. Stripped by fire and ice.

Harris: You say you studied in Paris?

Emily: Yes. At the Académie Colarossi.

(Slide: North Shore, Lake Superior, 1926, p.53)

Oh, your work is magnificent!

Critic: A deformed prick. Where are the balls, Harris? Don't they fit into your spiritual vision?

Emily: I'm sick of your obscenities!

Critic: Your totems are much more honest and wholesome.

Emily: If this were my studio, I'd throw you out!

Harris: Never mind him, Emily. I'm used to it. Go on. You were telling me about Paris.

Emily: (Flustered) Paris? Oh yes, yes. Any praise my work received there was always qualified by the fact that I was a woman. I had two canvases accepted and hung in the Salon d'Automne - the rebel Paris show of the year. I could hardly believe it.

(Slide: Mt. Lefroy, 1927, p.65 - final version 1930)

Oh, the ~~weight~~ of that mountain!

Critic: That's a mountain? Thought it was an ice cream cone. You should go into commercial art, Harris. You'd do well painting billboards.

Emily: I've never felt anything like the power of these canvases.

Harris: The Salon d'Automne. That's a real achievement.

Emily: My Paris professor said I'd be one of the painters of my day. Women painters. He would never allow a mere woman could compete with men.

Harris: But he was right. You will be one of the painters of your day.

Critic: Not if she falls under your influence.

Emily: That was fifteen years ago. Things are different now.

(Slide: Maligne Lake, 1924, p.19)

Harris: What happened to make things different, Emily?

Emily: Oh God, what am I seeing?

(Multiple images should be projected at this point to indicate that Emily is overwhelmed by the intensity of this experience)

It's wonderful! Mighty! Not of this world!

Critic: That's the trouble with it. It's too damned spiritual. There's no life in these fossilized abstractions.

Emily: But can't you see the purity of his vision? The serenity of those awe-filled spaces?

Critic: It's cold and bloodless. Not like your totems, by God.

Emily: Oh, it's a glorious combination of sculpture, painting and music.

Critic: It's all intellect. There's no guts to it. And those heavy black outlines make it look like a child's coloring book.

Harris: Oh shut up. No one's taking you seriously.

Critic: You take art too seriously. It's not sacred, you know. Get a bit of character and humour into the canvas instead of all this spiritual claptrap.

Harris: The growth of the spirit is all that matters.

Critic: What about the flesh? You can't ignore passion and sensuality.

Harris: One rises above all that.

Critic: Goddammit, Harris! You're supposed to be a painter, not a priest. If you carry on painting like this you'll end up in total abstraction, mark my words.

Emily: Oh Lauren, your work answers a great longing in me that I didn't even know existed. It speaks to the very soul of me.

Critic: And that's all it speaks to. It totally denies the life of the body.

Emily: Can I see more?

Harris: Anything in particular?

Emily: Everything! Show me everything! Starvation's made me greedy.

Harris: I'll show you some of my earlier canvases.

(Slide: Glace Bay, 1921, p. 34)

And you must see the other men's work. Lismer and Jackson both want you to visit their studios. You should see MacDonald's work too. I know it would interest you.

Critic: Don't get tangled up with this group, Miss Carr. This is the wrong direction for you.

Harris: Jackson has a particular appreciation of your work. He's painted out West. And he feels that you've captured the spirit that eluded him.

(Slide: Shacks, 1919, p. 31)

Critic: They'll try to win you over with flattery.

Emily: These early canvases are different. Full of worldly trouble and sadness.

Harris: One must move through worldly troubles in order to transcend them.

Critic: Your trouble is you don't know where to stop, Harris.

Harris: Let me be the judge of that.

Critic: You'll end up on a mountain top, completely isolated from the real world.

Harris: Emily, what happened when you returned from France?

Emily: Oh, I was all fired up. Ready to throw in my lot with Canada and women. I decided to show them there was at least one woman who could hold her own and help to put this country on the map. I exhibited my French paintings in Vancouver and -

(Slide: Miners' Houses, Glace Bay, 1921, p.35)

Oh . . . where was this painted? ²

Critic: In a graveyard by the look of it.

Harris: Glace Bay. Miners' Houses.

Critic: That shows you what he thinks of humanity. The walking dead, eh, Harris?

Emily: How did you get this transparent effect? And the vibration? Everything seems to move beneath the surface of your work.

Harris: I often rub raw linseed oil onto the canvas and paint into that. Then when the dark colors sink in I oil them out with retouching varnish. You must have developed some techniques of your own?

Emily: I used to mix oils with gasoline for my paper sketches. It was inexpensive and it also allowed me greater freedom and speed in sketching.

Harris: Giving the effect of a water color?

(Emily nods)

What was the response to your French paintings?

Emily: Disastrous.

Harris: Your public didn't understand Impressionism of course?

Critic: (Sarcastic) Of course not. Artists insist on being misunderstood. They'd stop painting if they had nothing to rebel against.

Emily: I didn't give two hoots about the public. It was my family's rejection that hurt.

Critic: Your family?

Emily: My sisters. All I've ever wanted is their acceptance. But I'm an embarrassment to them. They were so ashamed of my French paintings that they . . . they disowned me.

Critic: Why the hell should an artist care about her sisters' approval?

Emily: I'm very close to my family.

Critic: But you're a grown woman, for God's sake.

Harris: An artist must be ruthless, Emily. You can't allow emotion to get in the way of what you believe.

Emily: But it's dreadful to be so totally alone.

Critic: Women are weak and over-emotional.

Harris: That's a ridiculous generalization.

Critic: Look at your response to his spiritual emissions. You got so carried away that you lost all sense of critical judgement.

Emily: Mr. Harris's work moves me. I've never seen anything like it.

Harris: Will you start painting again, Emily?

Emily: Oh, I want to, but -

Critic: Take my advice, Miss Carr. Go your own way. Start painting again by all means -

Emily: I can't paint.

Critic: But don't be influenced by these pretentious charlatans.

Harris: Why d'you turn your back on the only thing that really matters to you?

Critic: Because she can't come to terms with her sisters' disapproval.

Emily: I'm buried up to my neck in petty domestic commitments. I run an apartment house. I've failed in everything else but at least I've proven that I can do that. I can't quit now and let my sisters down.

Critic: There, what did I tell you?

Emily: They've been so good to me -

Harris: But there must be time for painting?

Emily: No. There are too many responsibilities. The tenants, the animals, a shipment of pottery due next month -

Harris: You'll find a way. Painting is the only means of rising above these inconsequential things.

Emily: But they're not inconsequential! They're solid immovable obstacles.

Harris: Fine. Where would we be without obstacles to overcome? Static. Bogged down in mediocrity.

Critic: If you ask me this is a bunch of feeble excuses. She hasn't got the guts to go on painting.

Emily: No one's asking you! Why don't you leave?

Critic: Not till I've had my say. You should go home, pick up where you left off with those totems, and forget about Harris and his crew. That's my opinion. (Moves to exit DSL - turns) You'll never paint again, Miss Carr, unless you come to terms with your immaturity.

Emily: How dare you! I'm fifty-five years old!

Critic: Then stop courting family approval like a child. And face up to the fact that your paintings are shot through with passion and sexuality. (Exits)

Emily: Ignorant fool!

Harris: Critics are all the same - artists manqué. They attack us out of envy.

Emily: He makes me so angry!

Harris: Don't waste yourself in anger, Emily. You're going to need all your energy to start painting again.

Emily: The only way I could do that is to give up the house. And I have to earn a living.

Harris: Of course. But it's all a matter of balance. When you start painting you'll find that the household tasks will shrivel as the importance of your work grows. It'll be easier to deal with the mundane daily chores.

Emily: You make it sound so simple.

Harris: It's your duty, Emily. Not only to yourself but to Canada. I foresee the rise of a great native culture of poetry, philosophy, drama, fiction. Painting is usually the earliest form of expression. It awakens awareness to natural environment. And from this spring the other arts.

Emily: You mean that Canada might escape the British yoke around her neck? Throw off all the foreign traditions and stop being ashamed of herself?

Harris: Yes, in time. With dedicated work from people like us.

Emily: Don't include me in your group of pioneers. Even if I could find the time to work, it's too late. I've wasted so many years. I'm an old woman.

Harris: Nonsense. Age can only enrich an artist. You're ripe to embark on your best work.

Emily: Oh, you shame me, Lawren. I'm such a fraud and a quitter. I want to work in order to earn your praise, but -

Harris: You're not a quitter, Emily. You're an artist. I know you're afraid and you have reason to be. Any creative venture involves failure because there's always a gap between our vision and its realization in an actual work of art. But no matter how many times we fail we must never give up. I can't make the decision for you, but do think over what I've said. We'll keep in touch. And I'll help you in any way I can. (Mounts stairs to bedroom) And remember that I believe in you, Emily. I believe in you. (Exits through bedroom door USL)

Emily: Maybe he's right. Maybe I could try. (Goes to sketch-box and looks through some sketches) I so desperately want to paint again. It's the only reason I'm alive.

(Faint cacophony of sound gradually growing louder: Piano scales being played very badly, baby crying, two women arguing)

Emily: Painting is the only means of rising above it all, he said. Yes, perhaps I could find a way. I feel my skin bursting with things I want to say - things I want to dive into, live, express.

(Sits before the easel, takes a piece of charcoal and stares at the canvas)

But I'm so afraid of failing again. (Pause)
No. I must have courage. I can't let Lauren down. He believes in me, and that makes everything possible.

(As Emily puts charcoal to canvas Mrs. Fitzjohn bursts into the room from door DSR, followed by Mrs. Pendergast. Lights come up brightly to indicate change of mood and switch back to harsh reality. Noise is now very loud)

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Miss Carr! Miss Carr!

(Emily jumps up guiltily and moves DS)

Oh, there you are. About time too. You tell her to stop that child playing the piano.

Mrs. Pendergast: My little girl must practice. She's very talented.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Talented my eye! I can't take any more of it. My nerves are shattered.

Emily: Ladies, ladies! Please.

Mrs. Pendergast: What about my nerves? That baby of hers has been bawling its head off all evening, Miss Carr.

Emily: What d'you expect me to do about it?

Mrs. Fitzjohn: No wonder my poor baby cries. That dreadful racket on the piano woke him.

Emily: Mrs. Fitzjohn, Mrs. Pendergast, will you please be quiet. I've just arrived home, I'm tired and -

Mrs. Pendergast: Fine landlady you are, gallivanting across the country.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Neglecting your tenants.

Mrs. Pendergast: The piano needs tuning.

Emily: That's your business.

Mrs. Pendergast: But it's your piano.

Emily: I'm not your servant.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: I'll tune it with a sledge-hammer if this racket goes on much longer.

Mrs. Pendergast: Well I never! You hear that, Miss Carr? She's threatening me.

Emily: Will you please leave my studio.

Mrs. Pendergast: You're the landlady. Evict her. Wailing brats shouldn't be allowed in decent boarding houses.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: How dare you? You're the one should be evicted. You and your two ugly brats.

(Sound of a violin joins the other noises)

Emily: I won't tolerate this uproar.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Oh my God! There he goes again. That boy with his wretched violin.

Mrs. Pendergast: My little Eddie's playing a duet with his sister at the Christmas concert. The little angels are practicing.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: The little angels'll be playing harps in heaven if I lay my hands on them.

Emily: If you don't shut up I'll evict you both.

Mrs. Pendergast: The nerve of it! Who do you think you are?

Mrs. Fitzjohn: You can't do that. My husband's always on time with the rent.

Emily: I won't put up with this disturbance. You'll have to sort out your differences between yourselves.

Mrs. Pendergast: Either she goes or I go.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Get rid of that piano or else my husband will be giving you notice at the end of the month.

Emily: I don't give a damn! Take your pianos and your violins and . . .

Mrs. Fitzjohn: And I'll crown little Eddie with his bloody violin.

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Mrs. Fitzjohn: And I'll crown little Eddie with his bloody violin.

Mrs. Pendergast: Oh, you wicked child marauder! Just you wait. If you lay one finger on my little Eddie, I'll strangle your screaming brat.

(Sound of dogs barking offstage)

Emily: (Trying to push them out) Get out of my studio! I need peace and quiet.

Mrs. Pendergast: Peace and quiet! With those dogs of yours barking all the time?

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Yes, what about those yappy little creatures? You should muzzle them.

Emily: They only bark when you overexcite them with your caterwauling.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Caterwauling! Well, of all the nerve!

Mrs. Pendergast: That's no way for a decent landlady to speak to her tenants.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: I should say not.

Emily: I'm trying to be polite but you provoke me -

Mrs. Fitzjohn: I've never been so insulted in all my life.

Mrs. Pendergast: We're respectable ladies, aren't we, Mrs. Fitzjohn?

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Yes indeed. And we're married. Not like some crusty old maids I could mention.

Emily: (Losing her temper, getting Susie from her cage) Then for God's sake behave like ladies! Get out of my studio!

Mrs. Pendergast: (Screaming) Aaaaagh! Get that filthy rat away from me!

Emily: Go to hell, you silly bitches!

Mrs. Fitzjohn: How dare you threaten us with that verminous pink-eyed monster!

Emily: (Pushing Susie at them) Go on, go on, get out of here!

Mrs. Pendergast: Oooh, she's an evil woman.

Mrs. Fitzjohn:

My husband will hear about this.

(Two women exit DSR. Sounds of protest fading into the distance. Piano, violin, barking and crying also gradually fade out. Emily sits in chair, returns Susie to her cage, and slumps on table)

Emily:

Oh damn! Oh Lor'. Why must I always be plagued by hateful tenants and petty domestic squabbles? (Pause) Thanks for helping me get rid of them, Susie. Sweet dumb creature. You're my comfort. You, the dogs, the tabby. More warmth and understanding in you than in the whole human race. You accept me as I am. (Pause. Rises, turns studio lights off, mounts stairs to bedroom) Well, Lauren Harris. Now d'you see what it's like to be a landlady? (Sneering) Rise above it all. Huh, it's all very well for you. You have a wife to cook your meals and look after your house. You have money and servants. You live with your head in the clouds and you have the gall to hand out advice to me. Me, whose feet are firmly buried in the earth. (Emily prepares for bed. Puts on large white Victorian nightgown and undresses underneath it) Sometimes my soul cries out in revolt against this beastly house. At the slaving and pinching to keep it all up. To squeeze out a pittance of rent to exist on. Clean the furnace, chop the wood, weed the garden, sweep, dust, scrub. And when I sit at my easel there's no energy or desire left. I'm empty. And bitter. Oh, I hate myself when I'm bitter. (Pause) Maybe it's just plain laziness. Inspiration is intention obeyed. But all my intentions've failed. I built this house as a place for work and freedom, and it's become my prison. My tomb. (Climbing into bed, lying down, gazing up at rafters) The only privacy I have is here in my attic retreat. With the Indian eagles watching over me from the rafters. While I dream of escaping to the woods. Climbing through the gnarled wintry branches that beat against my window. Running through the forest. Becoming one with the great green ocean of growth. (Pause) One day I will escape. I'll escape them all.

ACT TWO

Emily is in bed. Flashback dream sequence of nightmare quality. Emily dreams of the time when she was in a TB Sanatorium in England, 1902, 30 years old. The scenes where she is out of bed represent delirious dreams she had while in the Sanatorium, and which she now relives as dreams within a dream.

Emily: (Tossing and turning) I want to go home. I hate this place. Oh, why won't they let me go back to Canada?

(Nurse enters from USL bedroom door, moves to US side of Emily's bed. Distinct British accent)

Nurse: Emily dear, you didn't eat your supper.

Emily: When can I go home?

Nurse: When you're better.

Emily: But I'm not getting any better. It's been eighteen months. I'm so tired of lying here day after day.

Nurse: Sleep, eat, and rest. That's the recipe for health. You must gain weight.

Emily: I can't eat. I have no appetite.

Nurse: Now then, you know that eating is compulsory at Sunhill Sanatorium. You must build yourself up.

Emily: (Weeping) I'll never get better. I'll never be able to work again.

Nurse: Always weeping. Are you homesick again, you poor child?

Emily: I am not a child! I'm thirty years old, and I'm a failure. I might as well be dead.

Nurse: Oh, dear dear dear. Emily Carr, you are a mystery. They all come and go but you stay put. No better, no worse. I think we should ship you back to your people. You just cannot transplant these Americans.

Emily: I'm Canadian!

Nurse: It's all the same to me, dear.

Emily: Why don't you send me home?

Nurse: Doctor says you need a rest cure. Says you're suffering from severe depression. I think you drove yourself too hard at that art school up in London.

Emily: If only I could work I'd be cured.

Nurse: You're too weak to work. Not that I call painting pictures work.

Emily: You don't understand. It's my career. It's my life. If I can't work I don't want to live.

Nurse: There, you see. You take it too seriously.

Emily: There's so much to learn and so little time.

Nurse: You should find yourself a good English husband and settle down. Marriage would cure you.

Emily: I don't want to marry!

Nurse: Thirty years old and still on the shelf. No wonder you're depressed.

Emily: Oh, why are you English so beastly about this marrying business?

Nurse: Lucky you don't look your age. There may be a chance for you yet.

Emily: (Crying) I want to go home!

Nurse: Now then, don't overexcite yourself, child. Settle down and rest. Close your eyes, Emily. Sleep, sleep, sleep . . .

(Nurse exits, drifting like a phantom)

Emily: (Tossing and turning, delirious) Bobby . . . Bobby . . . oh my love . . . I must go to the woods . . . I must paint . . .

(Emily rises from bed, moves like a sleep-walker down steps, moves to easel, sits on small folding canvas stool and paints. If possible create the effect of being surrounded by forest - an extensive backdrop of trees or a large slide projection. Emily continues to paint throughout the following sequence, growing increasingly frustrated. During this sequence Emily is 26, Bobby is in his late 20's)

Emily: I want to capture the spirit of the woods. The vast cruel beauty of it. Oh, why does it always evade me? It's not the handling of paint but the handling of thoughts that overwhelms me.

Bobby: (Voice offstage) Emily? Emily? Where are you?

Emily: Here I am, Bobby.

Bobby: (Entering from DSR) Emily, come and walk in the woods with me.

Emily: I must finish this sketch.

Bobby: But it's a glorious day. Clear blue sky. Bright sunshine. The air is full of spring. Can you smell the sap?

Emily: Hmm. Everything's budding and blossoming. Oh, if only I could capture the beauty and the splendour of it all.

Bobby: Don't drive yourself so hard, Emily.

Emily: But I must. I've been sitting here all morning staring at that tree. Waiting for the woods to say something to me.

Bobby: Don't force it. Maybe you should stop for a while.

Emily: No, no, it's all there! The tormented swirling growth of the forest. The twisted tortured roots. I can feel it . . . I can see it . . . but I can't capture the essence of it in my painting. Feeble scratchings . . . smudges of paint. Oh, I'm so lost and frustrated. (Ripping up sketch) It's no good! There's always that gap between what I see and what I paint.

Bobby: (Taking Emily in his arms) Don't be so impatient, my darling. It takes years of apprenticeship before an artist perfects his craft.

Emily: (Pulling away) But I'm twenty-six years old! How long does it take? How long, damnit! How long?

(Pause)

Bobby: Would you rather be alone?

Emily: No! No, don't go, Bobby. (Goes to him) I'm sorry.

Bobby: (Kisses her, then holds her at arm's length)
You're a beautiful woman, Emily.

Emily: And you're the only man who can make me feel truly alive. You've taught me so much about poetry and love, Bobby. There'll never be anyone else.

Bobby: Is anything wrong, Emily? I sense a sadness in you today.

Emily: (Breaking from him, pacing) Bobby. Do you think a woman must make a choice between love and work? Is it not possible to have both?

Bobby: I don't understand. Work is love for the artist. We know that. We're artists - I a poet and you a painter. We have all we need and desire in our work.

Emily: And in each other.

Bobby: There's no question of choice.

Emily: That's what I hoped you'd say. So I can go.

Bobby: Go?

Emily: I must, Bobby. There's no real art in British Columbia. Only society ladies painting pretty pictures. I'll miss you dreadfully, but -

Bobby: Go where?

Emily: To England. They say London is the only place where one can learn to paint.

Bobby: But didn't you learn enough at the art school in San Francisco?

Emily: I used to think so, but I realize now that I never got beneath the surface. (Indicating ripped sketch) Look at my work. It's humdrum. Unemotional. Objects honestly portrayed, nothing more. I'm like a child printing alphabet letters. I haven't yet learned to make words with the letters.

Bobby: You really want to be an artist, don't you?

Emily: Of course! Painting is more important to me than anything.

Bobby: D'you have enough money to go to England?

Emily: Yes. I've been saving the money from the children's classes. In a sock that I hung in the rafters of the cow barn.

Bobby: Then go! You're a splendid woman, Emily. I admire your pluck and ambition. Go to England! You'll get what you want if determination has anything to do with it.

Emily: Oh, I'm so glad you approve. I was afraid to tell you. I thought you might not want me to go.

Bobby: You're free, Emily. I have no hold over you.

Emily: I'll work frightfully hard, Bobby, and I'll be back home in no time. You'll see.

Bobby: It's been a fine year.

Emily: The best of my life.

Bobby: And now it's over.

Emily: Over? No . . . I -

Bobby: We're free spirits, Emily. That's why we were attracted to each other. That's why we've been such good friends.

Emily: No, more than that. Lovers.

Bobby: Yes, it's been a wondrous year. Stars moving into a single constellation, meeting for an instant in the interminable course of time. Now drawing apart and soaring on their separate paths.

Emily: But we won't be apart for long, Bobby. I promise. And we'll get married when I return.

Bobby: No, Emily!

Emily: I'll only be away for a year, and I'll write every day, and -

Bobby: Emily, Emily! You misunderstand.

Emily: You don't want me to go? You want to be married now?

Bobby: (Slowly retreating backwards towards exit DSR)
Oh, my dear. I didn't mean to lead you astray.
You know I can't be tied down.

Emily: You mean . . . ? (Backing away from him) Oh no.

Bobby: (Retreating further and fading out through exit)
You expect too much. Forgive me, Emily. I didn't
want to hurt you. (Exit, drifting like a phantom)

Emily: Oh, but you have. I give you my love and you throw
it back in my face. (Sobbing) I can't bear to be
alone again. How can I ever kill my love for you?
(Breaks down sobbing for a few seconds, crouched
on the floor) There's no-one I can confide in.
I'm so utterly alone now. (Pause) But I have my
work. Yes, I'll work and work so there's no time
to think. I'll work like the devil. And I vow
to be finished with arrogant men!

(Enter three suitors from DSR. All are in
their late 20's. Clifford and Ed have British
accents, Martyn is Canadian. Clifford pulls
Emily up off the floor. The three men circle
around her, pulling her this way and that)

Clifford: Emily, Emily, come out with me and see the sights.

Emily: No, I must work.

Ed: I'll take you to Madame Tussaud's. Show you the
Chamber of Horrors.

Emily: No, no, I don't want to look at wax figures.

Clifford: Meet me under the clock at Euston Station.
We'll look at the engines. Very newest models.

Emily: (Trying to break free) Let me go! Let me go!

Ed: I'll take you out for tea. Show you the British
Museum.

Emily: I hate the British Museum! It stinks of
disinfectants.

Ed: But it's frightfully educational.

Emily: It's dead and disgusting. The world mummified.

Martyn: Emily, Emily. I've come all the way from
Canada to see you.

Emily: Go home, Martyn. I haven't time. I must work.

Martyn: Come home with me, Emily. I love you.

Emily: No, no!

Clifford: Your tongue is losing its Canadian twist.

Ed: But it's still sharp enough to mow the lawn.

Martyn: Come out with me, Emily. We'll sit on a bench in St. James's Park.

Emily: No, Martyn. You sit too close.

Ed: Little barbarian.

Clifford: Crude colonial.

Ed: We'll knock the rough edges off you over here.

Martyn: Let me hold your hand, kiss you, move closer.

Emily: Oh, leave me alone!

Ed: Marry me, Emily, and I'll make an English lady of you.

Emily: I don't want to be English. I'm Canadian.

Martyn: Marry me, Emily. Come home. You don't belong here.

Emily: I can't marry you, Martyn. I don't love you.

Martyn: Love will grow.

Emily: No, no!

Martyn: I can't live without you, my darling.

Emily: Silly goat.

Three Suitors: (Garbled confused chorus)
Emily, Emily, Emily, Emily

Martyn: Marry me

Ed: Touch me

Clifford: Kiss me

Martyn: Hold me

Ed: I love you
Clifford: I'll teach you
Martyn: I'll take you
Clifford: I'll show you
Ed: Museums
Clifford: And engines
Ed: And mummies
Martyn: And flowers
Chorus: Emily, Emily, Emily, Emily -
Emily: No, no, no! Leave me alone! Damn you all!
Leave me in peace and let me work.

(Three Suitors fade away through exit DSR.
Emily sinks into chair, exhausted)

The harder I work the sooner I can go home. Leave
this hateful, dirty, crowded city. Oh, how I long
for the West. The vast silence of the rain forest.
Sea. Sky. Purple mountains. My roots are torn
and bruised with being ripped up. I'm so sick,
sick, sick -

(Enter Lizzie and Alice from DSR, During
this sequence Lizzie is 13, Alice 16, Emily 14)

Lizzie and Alice: (Chanting in hushed voices) Sick, sick, sick, sick -
Alice: Mother is sick.
Lizzie: Dreadfully sick.
Emily: (Loud and confident) She'll get better.
Lizzie: She might die this time.
Emily: No, no! She won't die. She always gets better.
Alice: Hush, Millie. You must be quiet.
Lizzie: Behave like a lady.
Emily: I don't want to be a lady. It's no fun.

Alice: You're so bad, Millie.

Lizzie: Fourteen years old. It's time you grew up.

Emily: I'm going to mother's room.

Alice: No, no, you can't see her.

Lizzie: She can't be disturbed.

Alice: Father's orders.

Emily: I won't listen to him. He's always giving orders. Why should I obey him just because he's a man?

Lizzie: You must obey.

Alice: You're the youngest.

Emily: Don't bully me. I want to see mother.

(Lizzie and Alice physically restrain Emily)

Lizzie: The doctor's with her. She's very sick.

Alice: Do be good, Millie.

Lizzie: Don't be a baby.

Emily: (Struggling to get free of her sisters)
No, no, please don't die! I love you, mother.
Don't leave me alone!

Alice: Hush, hush.

Emily: You can't die! I won't let you! You're the only one who loves me.

Lizzie: Be quiet, Millie.

Emily: (Violently) Let me go! Let me go!

(Father enters from DSR. Stern Victorian figure in his 60's)

Father: Emily!

(Sudden silence, three girls freeze)

Emily: (Running to her father) Father, father! I want to see mother! Let me see her! Please let me see her!

Father: Your mother is dead.

(Blackout. Funeral music and sound of Emily sobbing for a few seconds. Then lights up on Lizzie and Alice. During the following sequence Lizzie is 20, Alice 18, Emily 16)

Alice: Where's Millie?

Lizzie: I guess she's off in the woods again.

Alice: I'm so worried about her, Lizzie. She's changed since mother died. All the fun's gone out of her. And she spends too much time alone.

Lizzie: Saucy to sully. There's no in-between with her.

Alice: Don't be so hard on her, Lizzie. She's very unhappy.

Lizzie: I've tried to talk to her. I told her to pray for strength. And she gave me one of those looks. Fit to kill. She doesn't want sympathy, Alice. She's all closed in on herself.

Alice: Just like father. He's been so sad and quiet since mother died. It's as though he didn't want to live any more.

Lizzie: Alice! That's sinful talk. Father's a deeply religious man. He knows his duty.

Alice: I'm sorry, Lizzie. But, sometimes people lose the will to live. You don't think father's going to die, do you?

Lizzie: The Lord will take him when his time comes. And not a moment sooner.

Alice: It's as though they were both dead inside. Him and Millie. What a pity they can't comfort each other. They're too much alike.

Lizzie: Father's the head of this house and Millie shouldn't set her will against him. She gets that stubborn glint in her eye and you know, sure as Christ is our saviour, there's going to be trouble.

Alice: I wish I could help her.

Lizzie: Oh, don't worry about the little hussy. She's stronger than you realize. If she wants to go off on her own all the time, then let her.

(Spot on Emily, sitting on steps to bedroom, sketching)

Alice: I guess you're right. And she has got the animals for company. And her drawing to keep her busy. She's always scribbling away.

Lizzie: Wasting time when she should be studying. Sixteen years old and her spelling's a disgrace.

Alice: Oh, I know, and her grammar's a scream.

(Lizzie and Alice giggle. Light fades on them as spotlight on Emily grows brighter. Emily's next speech bridges two years so that, in the following sequence Emily is 18, Lizzie 22, Alice 20. Funeral music repeated during following speech)

Emily: Leave me alone! Stop nagging and prodding. You haven't given me a moment's peace since father died. Always telling me what to do and how to do it. I'll never be any good in school. The only thing I can do is draw. I'm not like you, and you don't even try to understand. I want to escape . . . escape . . . escape

(Lights up on Lizzie and Alice. Emily joins them)

Alice: But you can't, Millie. You can't.

Emily: Guardian says I can go. I'm almost nineteen. That's old enough to leave home.

Lizzie: But San Francisco is the wickedest city on the west coast. Seething with drunkenness, vice, immorality.

Emily: I don't believe it.

Lizzie: Read the newspapers.

Alice: Oh, Millie, you'll be ruined.

Emily: I can look after myself.

Alice: Please stay in Victoria. It's safe here. We know everyone.

Emily: There are no art schools in Victoria.

Alice: But why d'you have to go to art school? You can draw and paint all you want right here at home.

Emily: You don't understand. I must learn. There's no-one here who knows about art. It's no use arguing with me. I'm determined to go.

Lizzie: Stubborn as a mule.

Alice: If guardian has agreed I don't see how we can stop her, Lizzie.

Lizzie: No. But we're responsible for arranging her lodgings. If you insist on going, Emily, we'll place you under the supervision of Mrs. Piddington.

Emily: Oh no! Not Mrs. Piddington! I hate her!

Alice: You'll be safe with her, Millie. She's an old friend of the family.

Lizzie: A devout Christian and a hard-working member of the Temperance League.

Alice: She'll keep a close eye on you.

Emily: Why d'you always treat me like a mindless fool? Why won't you let me grow up?

Lizzie: You must be protected, Emily. You've led a sheltered life. You know nothing of the world beyond Vancouver Island.

Alice: We're all three of us orphans, Millie, but you're the youngest and we worry about you because . . . because we love you.

Lizzie: Because we're responsible for you now. And I won't have you disgracing us with your impulsive behaviour. We must keep up the good name of the Carr family at all costs.

Emily: (Turning away from sisters) Oh, why must they always worry about what people think? All men are sheep, all sheep are fools, and that includes women.

Lizzie: I daresay things will run smoother with her away.

Alice: I'll miss you, Millie. Life will be awfully dull without you. How long will you be gone? How long? . . . how long? -

(Lizzie and Alice fade out through exit DSR)

Emily: Three years away from home. I arrived with a straw suitcase and a battered birdcage. Free at last to study art! I was bursting with curiosity. Keen as mustard to learn and explore. (Pause) Mrs. Piddington met me at the wharf.

Mrs. Piddington: (Entering from DSR) Emily Carr, you may draw very prettily but you're green as a cabbage, child. I'm going to take you under my wing.

Emily: Lord preserve me from her wings. They're full of mothballs. (To Mrs. Piddington) I went exploring today, Mrs. Piddington. And I found a lovely quiet little street. All the windows had green shutters with ladies peeping through. And there was a red lantern hanging over each door. It was so quaint and romantic.

Mrs. Piddington: Silly little donkey! It's a red light district.

Emily: Yes, the lanterns were so pretty - shining on the green shutters.

Mrs. Piddington: (With emphasis) A place of prostitutes!

Emily: What d'you mean?

Mrs. Piddington: (Exasperated) It's time you learned the facts of life. (Addressing the audience)

Whoever heard of such naivety? And her a big girl, almost 19 years old. (With malicious joy) I was determined to crush the greenness out of her. I scared her nothing.

Opium dens, drug addicts, white slavery, kidnappings, drunkenness, prostitution, child abuse, sex, rape, murder!

(Climaxes in wicked laughter.)

Continues laughing as she fades out through exit DSR)

Emily: (Eyes growing wider with increasing terror during Mrs. P.'s tirade)

(Hands over ears)
No, no, no, no, I won't listen! I don't believe you! I don't believe the world is so wicked!

Emily: She was wrong! Love is beautiful and pure. Bobby taught me that. (Pause) Oh Bobby, I love you. I want us to be married, but I must tear up my roots and go into exile again. You of all people must understand. You're an artist too. (Pause) If I hadn't chosen art we would have been married, wouldn't we? But I had to go to London. Hateful city. Full of British snobs looking down their noses at me. Oh, I'm so homesick. I miss my sisters, I miss the woods, I miss —

(Interrupted by Alice entering DSR. During the following sequence Emily is 28, Alice 30)

Alice: Millie! Oh Millie, it's so grand to see you!

Emily: Alice! I can't tell you how glad I am to see you. (Embracing Alice) You're a little bit of home to brighten up this horrid place.

Alice: But it's wonderful. I'm so excited to be in London. I want to see all the sights.

Emily: I'll show you everything - such as it is. (Pause) Work can wait. We'll go to Kew Gardens. That's the best place of all.

Alice: But what about the museums and the castles?

Emily: Dead and dreary. The English are so backward looking.

Alice: But it's our heritage, Millie. Mother and Father were English.

Emily: And we're Canadians. Born and bred.

Alice: All the same, I think we're more English than Canadian.

Emily: I'd rather die than be like the English. They're fearful snobs, Alice. They think all Canadians are barbarians. And some of them don't even know that Canada exists.

Alice: Really?

Emily: Yes. Every time I open my mouth I'm taken for an American.

Alice: Maybe you should cultivate a British accent while you're over here. Then the English would accept you.

Emily: Why should I change to please them? I refuse to be a sham.

Alice: Oh Millie, you're as stubborn as ever. Lizzie and I hoped that a spell in England might tame you.

Emily: I came here to learn how to paint. Not to cultivate a phony accent and simpering manners.

Alice: Did you use your introductory letters?

Emily: A couple.

Alice: Why not more?

Emily: Well, those visits were so embarrassing. Tiresome people treating me like a country cousin. Asking me ridiculous questions about the population of Ontario, and how many cases of salmon British Columbia exports each year. And that Reverend Brown that the vicar told me to look up - he was the last straw. 'You have heard my brother, the Reverend Samuel Brown, preach in Chicago?' he asked. I've never even set foot in Chicago and I told him so. 'What!' he said. 'So few cities of importance in America and not know Chicago! Every American should be familiar with such cities as they have.' But I don't live in America, I told him. I'm Canadian. 'Same thing, same continent,' he said. So I asked him if he knew the Reverend Pushkin in Moscow. 'Moscow!' he said. 'I don't know any Russians.' Well, I'm surprised, I told him. After all, Moscow is no further from London than Chicago is from Victoria. You should have seen his face, Alice. He showed me the door without another word.

(Emily and Alice giggle together)

Alice: Oh Millie, you are a scream.

Emily: I went straight home and burned the rest of the letters.

Alice: Oh, Millie. You should have persevered. You never know when you might have met.

Emily: How many times do I have to tell you? I'm not here to pay social visits. I came to study art, and time is short.

Alice: Always in a hurry, ever since you were a child.

Emily: I don't have enough money to stay here much longer.

Alice: (Inspecting the room) If you want to come home, dear, there's nothing to stop you from sailing with me in two months' time.

Emily: Oh yes there is. (Pause. Watching Alice) Not interested in my work, are you?

Alice: Of course. But I haven't seen any.

Emily: (Indicating walls. Projections of some early work could be used here if the Director desires)³ All around you. I suppose you thought these were wallpaper.

Alice: Oh. (Awkward pause) Yes. Now I see. (Another awkward pause) They're very nice, Millie. But you know I don't go in much for pictures. Though I do like a nice flower study. (Pause) Well, let's go. What sight do we see first? I want to go to Buckingham Palace, and the Tower of London, and Madame Tussaud's, and the British Museum and -

(Alice fades out through exit DSR during the recitation of her tourist itinerary. Emily, deeply hurt, slowly turns and mounts the stairs to her bedroom)

Emily: She neither looked at nor asked about my work again during her entire visit. I was so looking forward to seeing her, but when she ignored my work all my joy fell flat. It was then that I made myself into an envelope, thrust my work in deep, licked the flap, sealed it from everybody. (Throwing herself on the bed, weeping) Now I don't even have that. I'm empty and broken. All I can do is lie here and weep stupid tears of self-pity. Oh, how I long to go home. And yet it would be so humiliating to creep home a failure, after all the fanfare of leaving five years ago. And I'm so weak . . . so weak -

(Enter Nurse from USL bedroom door, carrying electric shock equipment - small black box with two wires attached)

Nurse: Now then, Emily. You know we don't cry at Sunhill Sanatorium. It lowers the morale.

Emily: But I can't help it. I'm so beastly tired and miserable.

Nurse: I know, child. But do pull yourself together. Come along now. Chin up. I have good news.

Emily: I can go home?

Nurse: No, we're not quite ready for that. We're going to try a new treatment. Electricity.

Emily: Shocks?

Nurse: Yes. Combined with plenty of good food. And massage three times a day.

Emily: But I can't eat that soggy cabbage and suet pudding that you call good food.

Nurse: You must force yourself. We'll have no nonsense and no more crying. Doctor's written to your people in Canada, and they've approved the treatment. Your sisters want you home where they can look after you.

Emily: Oh, I feel such a fool. I want to go home, but not like this - a weak, miserable failure. Oh, I could die of shame.

Nurse: You're too proud for your own good, Emily Carr. You need to be taken down a peg or two. (Attaching wires on either side of Emily's head) Time for your first treatment. We'll have you on your feet in no time. You'll see. Next thing you know you'll be back in Canada surrounded by family and friends.

(Lights fade except for a strong spotlight on Emily. Nurse presses a button on the black box and Emily jolts violently, similar to an epileptic spasm. Total silence during the shock spasms, which last a few seconds. Voices echo in between shocks. None of the characters appear. All voices are recorded, including that of the Nurse)

Father: Your mother is dead, your mother is dead.

Bobby: Forgive me, Emily. I didn't want to hurt you.

Lizzie: You must be protected. You know nothing of the world.

Alice: You'll be ruined, Millie. You'll be ruined.

(Second shock)

Ed: (Suitor) Little barbarian.

Clifford: (Suitor) Crude Colonial.

Ed: We'll knock the rough edges off you over here.

Nurse: Thirty years old and still on the shelf.

Bobby: I didn't mean to lead you astray.

(Third shock)

Nurse: You drive yourself too hard.

Bobby: Don't be impatient, Emily. It takes years of apprenticeship.

Alice: Always in a hurry.

Lizzie: Stubborn as a mule.

Bobby: Work is love for the artist. There's no question of choice.

Nurse: You must learn moderation.

Lizzie: Don't be so proud.

(Fourth and final shock, followed by blackout, during which Nurse removes wires from Emily's head and exits with shock equipment.)

Emily's dreams now move into the present, in that she dreams of events subsequent to her confinement in Sunhill Sanatorium. First sequence: 1912. Emily exhibits her Paris work in Vancouver. Emily 40, Alice 42, Lizzie 44.

The stage remains dark except for a spotlight which comes up on Emily who is still in bed. In the darkness two male viewers, two female viewers + Lizzie and Alice enter and freeze in attitudes of amazement in studio. Sophie also enters and mounts steps to bedroom)

Emily: I'm home, I'm home! At last I'm home!

Sophie: And this time it will be different, Emily.

Emily: Oh yes, Sophie. Surely they'll accept me now.
I crept home from London a miserable failure.
But in France I achieved something. Two paintings
hung in the Salon d'Automne!

Sophie: They must accept you now.

Emily: I'm so nervous. I hate exhibiting my work.
It's like baring my soul.

Sophie: There's nothing to be afraid of, Emily.
You have a beautiful soul.

Emily: Will you stick with me at the exhibition, Sophie?

Sophie: (Standing by US side of bed, takes Emily's hand)
Yes, yes, I'll stay by your side.

(At this point Sophie becomes Emily, as people often do take on alternative identities in dreams. She will wear a mask to identify her as Emily's persona, and she should speak in Emily's tone and speech pattern.)

Emily remains silent in bed, covered by a white sheet, upon which slides of her French paintings are projected. The bed should be tilted.

Slide 1: French watercolor, 1910, p.68.
Slide 2: Cottage in Brittany, 1911, p.69.
Slide 3: Concarneau, 1911, p.69.
Slide 4: Canal in Brittany, 1911, p.69.
Slide 5: Autumn in France, 1911, p.69.
Slide 6: French trees, 1911, p.70.

4

Lights up in centre area of studio - this area is separated by darkness from bedroom, where a single bright spotlight remains on Emily. Viewers come to life - whisper, point, giggle as they view invisible paintings on US and SR walls)

Female 1: My dear, it must be a joke.

Female 2: It's child's work.

Female 1: My five year old could do better than that.

Male 1: And you say she went all the way to France for this?

Male 2: They say it's some new kind of art. Post-Impressionism.

Sophie: It's the new way of seeing!

Female 2: I'm surprised at the authorities. Allowing such a disgusting exhibition in a respectable town like Vancouver.

Sophie: No, no, you don't understand!

Female 1: Those hideous totems were bad enough, but this is the last straw.

Sophie: How can you be so cruel?

Harris: (Voice-over) Not cruelty, Emily - ignorance. Take no notice.

Male 1: The woman must've gone crazy over there.

Male 2: Never did trust foreigners.

Male 1: Especially the French.

Male 2: They've always clashed with the British.

Male 1: Crazy - the whole damn lot of them.

Female 1: I feel so sorry for her poor sisters.

Female 2: They must be mortified by this display.

Female 1: Indecent!

Male 1: Disgusting!

Female 2: Hideous!

Male 2: Monstrous!

Lizzie: Oh Alice, I'm so ashamed. How could Millie do this to us?

Alice: I could die of embarrassment.

Lizzie: She's a disgrace to the Carr family.

Alice: I can't bear to look.

Sophie: This is tame! What would you say if you saw Paris nudes?

Harris: (Voice-over) Don't waste yourself in anger, Emily. Rise above it.

Male 1: We don't want this new-fangled French stuff over here.

Male 2: Give me the old masters any day.

Male 1: Quite so. We're British.

Sophie: No, you're not! You're Canadian! Don't be so stuffy and conservative!

Female 1: It's very odd, this preoccupation she has with foreigners.

Female 2: Most unladylike.

Female 1: First of all it was the Indians -

Female 2: And now the French.

Male 1: Why did she have to go to France anyway? First it was San Francisco, then London -

Male 2: And now this. Really, it is the limit.

Male 1: Some women just aren't content to stay put and lead a normal life.

Harris: (Voice-over) Adventure, adventure!

Sophie: Where's your adventure?

Female 1: Oh my dear, look at this. It's too funny for words.

Sophie: I don't mind honest criticism, but your snickering makes me mad.

Female 2: I can't look at those garish colors. They're too disturbing.

Sophie: My children! My children! They are of my body, my mind, my innermost being.

Female 1: Of course, she's an old maid you know. That may account for it.

Female 2: Yes, she's always been a bit odd.

Male 1: She's ruined her reputation for good now.

Male 2: No-one'll ever take her seriously again.

Sophie: You never did! Nothing's changed. I've always been rejected.

Female 2: She won't get any pupils after this exhibition of indecency.

Female 1: I wouldn't risk sending my youngsters to her. Why, the woman's depraved.

Sophie: (Appealing to sisters in desperation) Sisters, sisters, tell me what you think. You've hardly said a word.

Lizzie: (Stony-faced) I saw some very nice floral studies at the Island Arts and Crafts exhibition last week.

Alice: (Embarrassed) Millie, I do like . . . (hesitates)

Sophie: (Expectant) Yes?

Alice: . . . your frames.

Lizzie: Come along, Alice. It doesn't look well to be seen lingering with Emily. We must salvage what dregs are left of the family pride.

(Two sisters and four viewers exit. Sophie descends steps and runs after sisters. Emily regains her identity)

Emily: (Sitting up in bed) Lizzie! Alice! Come back! (Pause) You disown me. You reject me. Fools! I'd rather starve than conform! I'll show you! I'll build a house on my plot of land from father's acreage. And I'll rent out apartments and continue to paint. I won't be rejected and ridiculed as a crank! I'll create a body of beauty that you can no longer ignore. (Lying down to sleep) I'll show you, sisters. I'll prove myself to you. Never never will you have occasion to disown me again. I'll do what you want me to do. I'll earn a respectable living. But I'll be an artist too. I have no choice. Art is my life's blood. There's no choice . . . no question of choice . . .

(Emily falls asleep. She tosses and turns deliriously during the following sequence, which is the Tenant Nightmare. This sequence is a condensation of Emily's experience as landlady of the House of All Sorts during the period from 1914 to 1927. Tenants enter one by one as their lines come up. Children's voices chant intermittently - the two Pendergast children)

Voices:

Crazy crazy Emily
Hasn't got a family
She sleeps in the attic
Because she is batty

(Sound of dogs barking)

Mrs. Pendergast:

You leave my little Eddie alone. He's not doing any harm.

Emily:

He's taunting the animals. I won't allow such cruelty.

Mrs. Pendergast:

Mean old witch. Fancy disliking an innocent child.

Emily:

I do not dislike children. But the boy needs discipline.

Mrs. Pendergast:

You're a monster.

Emily:

That child needs a good hard slap.

Voices:

Emily Carr the oddball
Is heading for a downfall

Prof. Panquist:

No hot water. Second time this week.

Emily:

Oh Lor', I forgot to stoke the furnace.

Prof. Panquist:

I'm not accustomed to primitive living.

Emily:

I'll see to it right now.

Prof. Panquist:

It's a disgrace.

Emily:

Alright, alright! I'm sorry.

Voices:

When the tenants ring her bell
She tells them to go to hell

Mrs. Fitzjohn:

Help, help, fire! Smoke all through the house!
Call the fire brigade!

Emily: It's only my pottery kiln. It's a crude thing. Catches fire sometimes.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Oh my god, we're gonna be burned out of house and home.

Emily: Don't panic. It's under control. See, I've got the garden hose on it.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Do something quickly! We'll be burned to the ground.

Emily: Quiet, woman. Have you never seen a bit of smoke before?

Mrs. Fitzjohn: (Hysterical) Help! Help! Aaaagh! She turned the hose on me, the dirty bitch.

Voices: Emily's an old maid
All her bills are unpaid
She is fat and dumpy
She dresses awful frumpy

Miss Pillcrest: I want my apartment painted for Christmas.

Emily: I haven't time. You'll have to wait till the new year.

Miss Pillcrest: But my gentleman friend is coming all the way from Calgary. I can't entertain him in a shabby apartment.

Emily: Miss Pillcrest, you entertain altogether too many gentlemen. What d'you think this is? A bawdy house?

Miss Pillcrest: My private affairs are none of your business.

Emily: Yes they are. I'm responsible for the moral standards of this house. I won't have this endless stream of men tramping back and forth between the front gate and your door.

Miss Pillcrest: Jealous old bat.

Mrs. Pendergast: (Screaming hysterically) There's a mouse in my apartment! Fetch the cat! Call the exterminators!

Emily: Ridiculous fuss over an innocent little mouse.

Mrs. Pendergast: Vermin! Filth! I can't live in a hovel like this.

Emily: Then leave. You're more trouble than you're worth.

Voices: Crazy, crazy, crazy
Emily Carr is crazy

Prof. Panquist: I need new washers on my kitchen taps.
They drip incessantly.

Emily: Weak wrists. Screw tighter.

Prof. Panquist: I tell you I need new washers. The dripping
gets on my nerves.

Emily: And you get on my nerves, you tiresome old fusspot.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Miss Carr, Miss Carr, my husband beats me
something terrible.

Emily: Oh, you poor soul. There, there, don't cry.
Come into my studio.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: He won't give me any money. Drank his whole
week's wages. And there's nothing in the
pantry for lunch.

Emily: You can share my meal. I've made a big stew
with dumplings.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Ooh, those hideous totem poles turn my stomach.
Can't you face them to the wall while we eat?

Emily: Is that your gratitude?

Miss Pillcrest: Can I borrow a cup of rice?

Emily: I have no more rice. You've exhausted my supply
with your constant borrowing.

Miss Pillcrest: How about some macaroni then?

Emily: None left. Go and buy your own provisions.

Miss Pillcrest: Bad-tempered old maid.

Voices: Old maid, old maid
All her bills are unpaid

Prof. Panquist: Now look here. I won't put up with this snoring.
My apartment is right underneath yours, and those
wretched dogs snore fit to raise the dead.

Emily: My dogs do not snore.

Prof. Panquist: You must be deaf, woman. Deaf as well as crazy.

Voices: Crazy, crazy, crazy
Emily Carr is crazy

(Sound of piano)

Mrs. Pendergast: When's the piano tuner calling? My little girl's all off key.

Emily: I haven't had time to telephone. I've been cleaning up after those filthy tenants who just left. And trying to repair the damage they left behind.

(Sound of baby crying)

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Quit the piano. My baby can't sleep.

Emily: Miss Pillcrest: Please remove that underwear from the line at once! You shame my house!

Miss Pillcrest: But it's only my peach scanties. I like to get them aired and sunned.

Emily: They're a public disgrace. People walking down the street! Why, they can see them!

Miss Pillcrest: Let them mind their own business, and you mind yours.

Emily: It is my business. What will people think?

Miss Pillcrest: Silly old prude.

Prof. Panquist: This is intolerable!

Emily: What is it now?

Prof. Panquist: Mid-December and no heat in my apartment.

Emily: Can't you see I'm trying to light the furnace?

Prof. Panquist: It's always going out.

Emily: She's temperamental.

Prof. Panquist: Call the serviceman.

Emily: I can't afford him. The last tenants skiddaddled without paying their rent.

Prof. Panquist: I'm colder than a corpse.

Emily: Then go to hell! You'll be hot enough there!

Voices: When the tenants ring her bell
She tells them to go to hell

(During the following lines the tenants mount the stairs to Emily's bedroom and slowly close in around her bed. Tempo and volume increase to a crescendo of nightmare quality. Tape of violin, piano, baby crying, dogs barking - gradually increasing in volume)

Mrs. Pendergast: The pipe's have burst. Call the plumber.

Miss Pillcrest: My cupboard's bare. Lend me some flour.

Prof. Panquist: Your dogs are snoring. I can't sleep.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: They bark all day and wake my 'baby.

Mrs. Pendergast: There's a mouse in my house! I'll raise the roof!

Miss Pillcrest: My fuse is broken. I'm in the dark.

Prof. Panquist: My taps are dripping. They drive me mad.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Fire! Fire! The kiln's on fire!

Mrs. Pendergast: Call the tuner. The piano needs fixing.

Miss Pillcrest: Paint my apartment. The walls are grubby.

Prof. Panquist: Stoke the furnace. I'm cold as a corpse.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Help, help! My husband beat me.

Mrs. Pendergast: Paint the piano.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Evict the violin.

Mrs. Pendergast: Kill the baby.

Prof. Panquist: Drown the dogs.

Miss Pillcrest: Stoke the walls.

Prof. Panquist: Tune the taps.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Mend.

Miss Pillcrest: Paint.

Prof. Panquist: Stoke.

Mrs. Pendergast: Tune.

Handwritten scribbles and marks at the bottom left of the page.

Mrs. Fitzjohn: Clean.
Miss Pillcrest: Scrub.
Prof. Panquist: Fix.
Mrs. Pendergast: Wash
ALL: Crazy, crazy, crazy
Emily Carr is crazy

(Emily screams. Blackout. All sounds are cut except for Emily's screaming. Tenants exit through bedroom door during blackout. As Emily's screaming dies away a loud knocking is heard at DSR door. Emily sits bolt upright in bed, finally awake)

Emily: Who is it? Who's there.

Sophie: (offstage) It's me, Emily. Let me in.

Emily: Sophie? Is it you, Sophie?

Sophie: (offstage) Emily, Emily, let me in.

(Emily jumps out of bed, opens DSR door, lets Sophie in - she is slightly drunk)

Emily: Sophie, my dear. What's wrong?

Sophie: All dead. All dead. Twenty-one babies.
All dead, Emily.

Emily: (As though she has been through this many times before) Come and sit down.

Sophie: (Muttering drunkenly to herself) Dead . . . dead
. . . all dead -

Emily: Why d'you do it, Sophie?

Sophie: Drink kills the pain.

Emily: No, it only makes you sad. You mustn't grieve for the past, my dear. It's all over now.

Sophie: I got stones for all my babies. Grave man said 'Sophie, you buy lots and lots of stones from me, so I'll make them cheap for you. And maybe by and by you'll have more dead babies, want more stones.' No more babies now. Too old.

Emily: But you're still alive, Sophie! And you have a good husband who cares for you. Come along now, sober up. You mustn't dwell in the past.

Sophie: All dead! Tommy, Rosie, George, Maria, Emily, Jimmy, Sara. All died of pox, measles, TB.

Emily: Yes, all the white man's diseases. (Pause) You need some good strong coffee, my dear. (Moves towards kitchen door DSL)

Sophie: (Producing a letter from her pocket) Letter for you, Emily. Saw the mailman at your gate yesterday. Important letter, he said. From Toronto.

Emily: From Toronto? (Opens letter)

Sophie: Sorry. Forgot to give it to you.

Emily: It's from Lawren.

(Lawren Harris phantom appears through door DSL. He speaks his lines as Emily reads the letter. She becomes oblivious to all else, as though in a trance)

Sophie: You read your letter, Emily. I'll go make coffee. (Exits to kitchen DSL)

Harris: Wondering, Emily? Questioning? I can almost see your next step. In wondering we dedicate ourselves to finding a new approach. Fresh vision.

Emily: I don't know what to do. I'm so confused.

Harris: Only work can lift you above the realm of doubt. Beyond the petty grievances and hurts.

Emily: I had such a terrible night. Full of wild dreams and nightmares.

Harris: In despair, Emily? Of course. Despair is part and parcel of every creative person.

Emily: My whole life an endless chain of foolish hopes, dashed by failure and rejection.

Harris: Despair can't be conquered. One rises out of it by persevering with work despite discouragement.

Emily: I'm so alone. Lost in this vast beautiful lonely West.

Harris: Creativity is the only means of finding oneself in the universe. Abandon yourself to the rhythm of joy and despair.

Emily: My whole life's been a crazy pattern of extremes.
I'm like a fat pendulum swinging wildly to and fro.
Barely tasting my joy before I plunge back into despair.

Harris: You can't escape despair because work always falls
short of its conception. No matter how fine your
work is there's always finer work to be done. You
must go on.

Emily: But I'm so afraid of failing again.

Harris: Have faith, Emily. Trust in life. And remember
that we live only when we adventure. There is
nothing to be gained without risk.

Emily: Oh, what am I to do? I've been thinking and struggling
with this problem for days and I'm still no closer to
a decision.

Harris: Don't think. Work. Follow your instincts.
There is no choice to be made, Emily. No
question of choice.

(Harris fades out through door DSR)

Emily: No choice. (Pause) I have no choice.

(Enter Sophie from kitchen DSL with coffee)

Sophie: Coffee, Emily.

Emily: Sophie dear, are you alright?

Sophie: Better now. I drank some strong coffee.

Emily: Let's have a bonfire!

Sophie: A bonfire? But there are no leaves left to
burn. And it snowed last night.

Emily: (Moving to sketch-box upstage, throwing sketches
and canvases into a pile centre stage) Splendid!
We'll have a bonfire in the snow. It's time to
get rid of all the old junk. (Throwing sketches)
Burn! Burn! Burn!

Sophie: No, Emily. Those are nice paintings. You're
crazy to burn them.

Emily: All the old stuff from the past, Sophie.
I don't have room for dead things in my studio.

Sophie: Maybe burn some of them. But keep the best ones.

Emily: No. All on the bonfire. It's good to destroy the old botched and bungled things. They've been cluttering up my studio for too long. I'm making a new beginning!

Sophie: You're going to paint again, Emily?

Emily: Yes, Sophie. I'm going to paint again!

Sophie: Fine, fine! (Pause) But you're making a big mistake here, Emily. One day people will pay big money for these paintings.

Emily: Nonsense! No-one wants this load of old rubbish. Throw it on the fire, Sophie.

Sophie: But, Emily. You'll be sorry when -

Emily: Come on, come on. There's no time to waste.

Sophie: (Shrugging) O.K., Emily. You know best.
(Exits DSR with pile of sketches)

(Emily is in a frenzy of activity, determined to discard as much as possible. Pulls an old trunk from a corner, rifles through bundles of letters, press cuttings, photos, clothing, etc.)

Emily: I have no valuable possessions. Just a lot of sentimental old junk. For thirteen years my roots have clambered over this place. Now I must dig myself up, prune, chop, reset again in new soil. There's a lot of dead leaves to be discarded. (Pause) What a proud, stubborn old fool I've been. (Laughing. Sorting through letters, photos, etc.) All these memories, and no-one to share them with. That's the penalty for being an old maid. (Picking up a letter, reading it, laughing) That silly goat. What was his name? Martyn. Followed me all the way to England. (Reading aloud from letter) 'Emily, my dear, you are making a great mistake in refusing to marry me.' He ought to be glad I didn't. He'd have found me a bitter indigestible mouthful. And he would've bored me till my spirit died. He wanted more than I could give. He demanded worship. (Picking up a photograph) Bobby. Ah, now he was different. If he had only . . . No. It's all for the best. Better to be alone. He knew that. It's taken me a lifetime to learn. There are lonely places in every soul. They are the soul's greatest strength.

Sophie: (Entering from DSR) I've got the bonfire going, Emily. It's blazing pretty good.

Emily: Oh, I'm a silly sentimental old fool. (Handing Sophie a bundle of letters, photos, etc.) Here. Throw these on the fire, Sophie.

Sophie: But you'll be sorry later, Emily, when all your memories are burned.

(Lizzie and Alice enter DSR wearing dressing gowns over long nightdresses, and bedroom slippers)

Lizzie: Millie: What d'you think you're doing?

Alice: We saw the smoke! We thought your house was on fire!

Emily: We're having a bonfire.

Lizzie: At this hour of the morning?

Alice: Thank goodness you're safe. We were so worried.

Lizzie: Look at this mess!

Alice: And we had it so nice and tidy.

Sophie: She's burning all her beautiful paintings.

Emily: I'm making a fresh start.

Lizzie: Ah, so you've finally come to your senses, dear.

Sophie: I told her to keep them. They'll be valuable.

Emily: I don't want anything weighing me down. (Pulling more sketches from sketch-box) Burn them all!

Sophie: No, no!

Lizzie: Do as she says. I'm proud of you, Millie.

Alice: Oh, I'm so glad you've made up your mind to settle down at last.

Emily: I've picked myself up and I'm going on!

Lizzie: Praise the Lord! It's a joy to see you setting your house in order.

Sophie: Emily is going to paint again.

Alice: Oh no, Sophie. She's through with all that.

Lizzie: She's burning her paintings.

Emily: One must destroy one's best in order to create something better.

Alice: Something better?

Lizzie: You can't mean-

Emily: Yes! I'm going to paint. That is my commitment. Now go home and let Sophie and I finish our work.

Lizzie: Emily, don't be foolish. What about the tenants?

Alice: And it'll soon be time for Church.

Emily: To hell with Church, and to hell with the tenants. I have real work to do. Now leave me alone. Go on. (Thrusting paintings and papers into their arms) You can throw these on the bonfire on your way out. (Pushes them out the door DSR)

Alice: (As she exits) Oh Lizzie, she'll never change.

Lizzie: (As she exits) Stubborn and self-willed. Really, I despair.

Emily: Oh, I feel so strong, Sophie! So full of life!

(Sophie smiles with a mixture of happiness for Emily and sadness for herself)

The new West has always called to me, but my old world heredity, the flavor of my upbringing, pulled me back. I was divided within myself. I thought I had to make a choice. (Pause) Don't be sad, Sophie, about your dead babies.

(Sophie smiles sadly and exits DSR with bundles of letters etc.)

(To herself) I've thrown mine into the fire. But you were right, Sophie. It's not too late for me.

(Complete silence hereafter. Emily walks to the window upstage, puts on her smock with her back to the audience - still wearing her Victorian nightdress underneath. She stands for a moment, then turns to the easel, takes up her palette, a brush, paints etc. She should appear preoccupied, absorbed, full of intense concentration. There should be a slow, solemn, ritualistic/religious quality to this sequence. Emily stands before her easel, deep in thought. Finally she makes bold, sweeping strokes with the brush. Silence continues except for brushstrokes. Lights grow gradually brighter until they are almost blinding, then abrupt blackout)

THE END