

10 DAYS IN A MADHOUSE  
By  
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Based on the book  
By  
Nellie Bly

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Phone Number: 206-390-8852

FADE IN:

1 INT. BLACKWELL'S - RETREAT - LOUISE'S ROOM - MORNING\* 1

The interior of a late 19th century insane asylum, bare walls, water on the floor, bare metal frame bed. A middle aged doctor DR. KINIER and two nurses attend a young patient. The young patient, thrashes wildly against the leather straps that restrain her to the bed. Her pretty sallow face is drenched in sweat. Her patient gown is shredded. NURSE McCARTEN dabs her brow. NURSE GRUPE helps hold her in place. Superintendent E. C. DENT enters the room, he a handsome man, in a suit and tie with gold rim glasses and an academic demeanor. He's clearly out of place in this dark, moldy part of the asylum. The doctor looks up.

DR. KINIER  
(nervously)  
Something wrong superintendent?

DR. DENT  
Not at all Edward, I'm just here to make sure normal procedures are observed.  
Proceed.

Seated next to the bed, Dr. Kinier is a little nervous, he pulls out a large loop style syringe and a bottle of liquid from his bag. The patient ARENA PUGH sees it, convulses in cold fear.

ARENA  
No. Nooo. Please. There's nothing wrong with me.

DR. DENT  
Miss Pugh, we're here to help you. No need to be afraid. Dr. Kinier fills the syringe with an orange liquid.

ARENA  
(half-whispering to Dent)  
Please don't do it. I'm sorry I would never tell a soul the things that go on in here.

Dr. Dent raises an eyebrow, leans in.

DR. DENT  
Is that a threat Miss Pugh?

DR. KINIER  
(looking up to Dent)  
Delirium Abscotum, as diagnosed. Dr. Dent checks his fob watch.

(CONTINUED)

DR. DENT

Get on with it.

Dr. Kinier leans over Louise, syringe at the ready.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Now then, Miss Pugh, no one is out to get you. You are safe. This is part of your treatment here at Blackwell's Island. You do want to get well don't you?

Dent's question slows Arena, Dent nods to the nurses. The nurses pounce on Arena to restrain her. She struggles for her life, tries to buck them off. Dr. Kinier injects her with precision and skill.

CLOSE ON -- The orange liquid drains from the syringe and courses through her veins. It has an immediate effect.

ARENA

Noooooooo. Mamma. Mamma.

DR. KINIER

There. Isn't that better? Arena's eyes widen. She draws in a great gasp of air, her face turns bright red. Arena struggles and thrashes about. The nurses do their best to restrain her. Finally, she rises up with inhuman strength, lifting the nurses. Then collapses back, exhales a long breath and is still. The room goes quiet.

DR. DENT

Dr. Kinier? What is happening? Dr. Kinier quickly pulls a green bottle of liquid from his bag, holds it to the light.

DR. KINIER

(panicked, but not answering Dent)

I don't know if this will be enough --

He fills the syringe and injects Arena. No reaction. Dr. Dent watches as Dr. Kinier slaps her face, attempting to revive her.

DR. KINIER (CONT'D)

Can you hear me!? Miss Pugh -- He unstraps her from the table, shakes her like a rag doll.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

DR. KINIER (CONT'D)

Answer me!

He spreads her eyelids, examines her pupils. Nothing. Dr. Kinier looks up to Dr. Dent, expecting an admonition. Dr. Dent scowls at his resident Doctor's failure.

DR. DENT

Send her to the crematorium. I will make out the papers.

DR. Dent straightens his clothes, then exits. Grupe and McCarten look to each other.

MISS GRUPE

She brought this upon herself.

FADE OUT/IN:

2 EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NEWSPAPER ROW - THE YEAR 1887 - DAY 2

News offices stand in glorious opulence against the New York City skyline. CAMERA CRANES DOWN to the busy street filled with carriages, black-hatted men and fancy women.

TITLE SUPERS: NEW YORK CITY, 1887.

3 EXT. PARK AVENUE OUTSIDE THE WORLD NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY 3

Street level - impoverished and working poor mix with the well off who pay them no mind. NELLIE BLY, slight build, perky, vibrant, stylish, crosses the street, enters The World News Building.

4 INT. THE WORLD - NEWS FLOOR - DAY 4

Reporters at their desks. Periodically tobacco is deposited in or near spittoons. A man's world. No females, save for NELLIE BLY, who's seated at an empty desk. Her smile is infectious, endless. Her presence clearly irritate the press who talk in low tones, shoot her unwelcome glances.

REPORTER

Don't mind the gentlemen of the press Miss. They aren't used to a woman up here.

Nellie smiles with grace.

COPY BOY

He wants to see you now.

Reporters watch as if Nellie's being led to the gallows.

5 INT. THE WORLD - JOHN COCKERILL'S OFFICE FOYER - DAY 5  
 Nellie steps off the elevator. The copy boy remains.

COPY BOY  
 You can go in Miss Bly. He's expecting  
 you.

6 INT. THE WORLD - JOHN COCKERILL'S OFFICE - DAY 6  
 Nellie enters. JOHN COCKERILL is at his desk. A man is  
 standing with his back to her, looking out the window.

COCKERILL  
 Come in. Nellie Bly. I'd like to  
 introduce you to our publisher, Joseph  
 Pulitzer.

Nellie, smiling, walks across the enormous room. PULITZER  
 turns, looks her over as she approaches with hand extended.

NELLIE BLY  
 Very nice to meet you Mr. Pulitzer. It is  
 a great honor.

JOSEPH PULITZER  
 (not taking her hand)  
 Bly is not your real name.

NELLIE BLY  
 No. Nellie Bly is my pen name. My birth  
 name is Elizabeth Jane Cochran.

JOSEPH PULITZER  
 She's small.

Nellie, undaunted, withdraws her hand, stands for review.

COCKERILL  
 But plucky.

JOSEPH PULITZER  
 Is that enough?

COCKERILL  
 Her recommendations are impeccable. Her  
 reputation is outstanding. I believe she  
 was made for this.

JOSEPH PULITZER  
 She is a virtual unknown. If this fails,  
 it is not her reputation that will be on  
 the line.

With this, Pulitzer turns unceremoniously and exits.

NELLIE BLY

I would like to thank you for the advance Mr. Cockerill. I am ready for any opportunity The World Newspaper has for me.

COCKERILL

I have spoken with Mr. Pulitzer about some of the ideas you suggested.

Would you have really gone up in a balloon?

NELLIE BLY

Without question. You gave the assignment to a male reporter instead. I would have drawn greater sensation.

COCKERILL

No doubt. But we have another idea in mind. The World newspaper would like you to infiltrate one of the asylums for the insane in New York City.

NELLIE BLY

To report on the treatment of the patients.

COCKERILL

Yes. With a view to writing a plain and unvarnished narrative of the treatment of the patients and the methods of management.

NELLIE BLY

Which asylum?

COCKERILL

Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum for Women.

NELLIE BLY

To get in I will have to be committed.

COCKERILL

We'll find a doctor willing to sign the papers.

NELLIE BLY

No. I will have to do it myself. The only sure way that I not be revealed is absolutely everyone must believe I am insane. How will you get me out, after I once get in?

COCKERILL

I do not know -- Do you think you have courage to go through such an ordeal as the mission would demand?

NELLIE BLY

Yes.

COCKERILL

(irritated at her quick reply)

Can you assume the characteristics of insanity to such a degree that you can pass the doctors, live for a week among the insane without the authorities there finding out?

NELLIE BLY

I believe I can.

COCKERILL

It will be quite dangerous.

NELLIE BLY

I have faith in my abilities.

COCKERILL

No doubt you have belief in your ability to deceive the insanity experts. I am not so sure. It will be a difficult task to appear before a crowd of people and convince them that you are insane. Have you ever been near insane persons before in your life?

NELLIE BLY

I must confess I have not.

COCKERILL

Then you have not the faintest idea of what their actions are like?

NELLIE BLY

No.

COCKERILL

To be examined by a number of learned physicians who make insanity a specialty, and who daily come in contact with insane people --

NELLIE BLY

I will observe on the streets. I will learn their behaviors.

COCKERILL

I fear they cannot be deceived.

NELLIE BLY

I will teach myself to be mad.

COCKERILL

It is vital that you not be revealed. Your very life may be threatened.

NELLIE BLY

Can I assume insanity long enough to accomplish the mission entrusted to me? Can I pass a week in the insane ward at Blackwell's Island? I can and I will.

Cockerill studies her small frame. She smiles back. A copy boy comes to the door with papers.

COCKERILL

(forcefully)

Not now.

(to Nellie)

Very well. I want you to chronicle faithfully the experiences you undergo. Workings that are so hidden from the knowledge of the public by white-capped nurses and bolts and bars. We want you to report truthfully on mismanagement and cruelties that may exist within.

NELLIE BLY

I have read stories of abuses in such institutions. But I have regarded these as wildly exaggerated. I would like to believe that the most helpless of God's creatures, the insane, were cared for kindly and properly.

Cockerill is suddenly hesitant at Nellie's bright eagerness.

COCKERILL

I don't know. In talking with Pulitzer this seemed like such a great idea. But with you before me -- quite frankly, I just don't know. We have never attempted something like this. It's quite outlandish really. There are so many things that can go wrong. If you are revealed -- And how do we truly test the competency of the doctors and nurses?

NELLIE BLY

The answer is simple. I will be insane long enough to get committed. But from the moment I enter the insane ward on the Island, I will make no attempt to keep up the assumed role of insanity. I will talk and act just as I do in ordinary life.

COCKERILL

Clever. You like risk. During the war, those I knew drawn to risks are all dead.

NELLIE BLY

I am not afraid of danger.

COCKERILL

Danger you shall face. I was right to put you under retainer.

NELLIE BLY

For that I am deeply grateful.

COCKERILL

Then all the preliminary preparations for your -- ordeal are up to you. Only one thing we have worked out, namely, that you should pass under the pseudonym of Nellie Brown, the initials of which would agree with your own linen.

NELLIE BLY

Then it is decided?

COCKERILL

It is decided.

NELLIE BLY

I shall feign insanity and get myself committed to Blackwell's Lunatic Asylum.

COCKERILL

Yes. But one more thing --

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

What is it?

COCKERILL

I am afraid of that chronic smile of yours.

NELLIE BLY

I will smile no more.

Cockerill represses a grin.

7

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY HENRY MACDONA'S OFFICE - DAY

7

MACDONA looks at the petite woman sitting with him in amazement.

MACDONA

You intend to obliterate every vestige of your identity and enter the asylum absolutely leaving no trace behind.

NELLIE BLY

That is my intention.

MACDONA

Why have you come to me?

NELLIE BLY

To agree not to prosecute me for my fraud should it come to that.

MACDONA

I cannot in good conscience agree to such a hoax. I will have nothing to do with the matter.

NELLIE BLY

Why?

MACDONA

You will be in mortal danger. You are slight of frame. You do not possess sufficient bodily strength to enable yourself to pass harmlessly through such a threatening ordeal.

NELLIE BLY

Nothing shall stop me from pursuing this course.

MACDONA

Even if you should not befall physical harm, who could tell but that the strain of playing crazy -- being shut up with a crowd of mad people, might turn your own brain? You may never get back.

NELLIE BLY

I have contemplated that possibility. I am not asking your permission to enter Blackwell's. I am asking for immunity. If it is true that there are atrocities being perpetrated against the helpless and vulnerable patients in Blackwell's Asylum, they have no advocate. Nothing will stop me from bringing the truth to light.

MACDONA

I have not met a woman of your resolve before.

NELLIE BLY

I assure you that you have not.

MACDONA

And you will do this no matter what I say?

NELLIE BLY

No asylum keeper or anyone else is going to frighten me off.

MACDONA

Then, with my better judgment in reserve, I shall agree to your request. But neither I, nor my office will help you in any way. You are on your own.

NELLIE BLY

Yes. That fact is clear to me.

Nellie Bly walks down the sidewalk, as ahead, a MADMAN's wide eyed attention fixes on her. She casually studies him.

MADMAN

How long have you been in the city?

NELLIE BLY

(surprised)

What? Why?

He steps toward her in a pleading manner. Nellie remains calm as if nothing were out of the ordinary.

MADMAN

You have obviously not been here long. You don't know that you should not be out on the streets. They murder people. Cut them up into pieces. I've seen the bodies. They killed a whole family down on the fish docks. Chopped them into bits. I saw it with my own eyes. Were do you live?

Nellie doesn't answer.

MADMAN (CONT'D)

Where do you live?

NELLIE BLY

Not far from here.

MADMAN

But where? What street?

NELLIE BLY

Past the promenade. Why do you want to know where I live?

MADMAN

You are in danger. They are going to cut you into pieces. I must go with you to protect you. I must go with you to stop them.

He takes two more steps and is very close to Nellie. She is looking directly into his wide distant eyes.

NELLIE BLY

But if you go with me who will protect those on the streets?

He looks at her with great confusion. Nellie takes a step away as man in a wool cap passes. The Madman turns his focus to the new passerby.

MADMAN

You are in danger. They are murdering innocent people.

Nellie uses this distraction to back away and cross to the other side of the street. He doesn't notice her exit from his presence.

9 INT. HOTEL - NELLIE BLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

9

Nellie sits at her dressing table -- examines her face in the mirror. There is doubt.

NELLIE BLY

How can I hope to pass these doctors and  
convince them that I am crazy?

She opens her eyes as wide as possible and stares unblinkingly at her own reflection. Her own crazed sight causes a chill to run up her spine. She stands, crosses to her bed and sits next to a square bundle wrapped in brown paper. She unties the string and pulls open the paper. Inside is a small array of books. The first title is "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley. With a deep breath she picks up Frankenstein and begins to read.

DISSOLVES:

- 1) Nellie is back at mirror contorting her face and practicing fear.
- 2) Nellie is pacing back and forth in an agitated manner.
- 3) More reading.
- 4) Again Nellie is at the mirror with grotesque expressions. She falls asleep.

10 INT. DREAM/FLASHBACK - MARY JANE'S HOUSE 1878 - NIGHT 10

The simple architecture of the house interior is burdened and overcrowded by heavy ornate furnishings beyond the class of the surroundings.

Immaculately, but moderately dressed, MARY JANE FORD is at the dinner table with her children, Her astute, nearly 14 year old daughter, ELIZABETH, affectionately known as PINK. Across from her are 11 year old CATHERINE MAY and 8 year old HARRY. There is a thick tension.

At the head of the table is the disheveled, filthy, Union Civil War veteran, JACK FORD.

PINK

You ain't my papa. He was a good man.

Ford lashes out, grabs Pink by the wrist. Disgusted, terrified, Pink lunges to her feet, pulling Ford across his hot bowl of stew.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

In a sharp reaction, he violently flips the table over, sending the dinner fixings flying everywhere.

The children scream. Mary Jane does her best to pull them out of the way of the now raging Ford as he lunges at Pink.

MARY JANE

No Jack. Pink's just a child.

11 INT. HOTEL - NELLIE BLY'S ROOM - MORNING

11

Nellie, still at the mirror, startles awake -- looks to her bathtub filling with water. Her eyes are red from lack of sleep. She crosses to her bath, turns off the faucets, gently slips out of her clothing from the night before and eases herself into the tub. The hot water is revitalizing, calming. She's engulfed in peace. She reaches for the bar of soap, contemplating it.

NELLIE BLY

It may be for days, and it may be for longer.

She gingerly scrubs herself fully awake.

12 INT. HOTEL - NELLIE BLY'S ROOM - LATER

12

Nellie is in her undergarments at her sink. Dipping her toothbrush into the jar of tooth powder, she tenderly brushes her teeth.

13 INT. HOTEL - NELLIE BLY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

13

Nellie, starrng in the mirror, buttons the grey dress she's chosen for the occasion. She pauses at the last button.

NELLIE BLY

Shut up with a crowd of mad people might turn my own brain. I might never get back.

She throws the thought off, finishes the button, unconsciously smooths down the dress. At her desk, Nellie pulls a directory from a drawer. She thumbs through the pages.

CLOSE UP - THE DIRECTORY PAGE as her finger traces down to a listing - Temporary Home for Working Women, No. 84 Second Avenue.

DISSOLVE TO:

14 EXT. 84 2ND AVE - EVENING

14

Nellie Bly, in her grey dress, walks down the avenue and stops in front of Number 84, a four story brick walk up. She takes a deep breath and falls into the far away look of madness.

Nellie passes through a little paved yard to the entrance of the Home. Next to the door is a plainly painted sign: "Temporary Home for Working Women." She pulls the loud bell, and nervously waits. The door is thrown back with a vengeance, and a short girl of some thirteen summers stands before her.

NELLIE BLY

(faintly)

Is the matron in?

STANARD'S DAUGHTER

Yes, she's in. She's busy. Go to the back parlor.

The girl steps aside and Nellie enters.

15 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 1ST FLOOR - FOYER - EVENING

15

Nellie follows the not over-kind or polite instructions and finds herself in a dark, uncomfortable back parlor.

16 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 1ST FLOOR - PARLOR - EVENING

16

The room is austere. Nellie catches her reflection in the mirror. A slender woman, clad in a plain dress enters, stops before her.

MRS. STANARD

Well?

NELLIE BLY

Are you the matron?

MRS. STANARD

No, the matron is sick. I am her assistant. What do you want?

NELLIE BLY

I want to stay here for a few days, if you can accommodate me.

MRS. STANARD

Well, I have no single rooms. We are so crowded.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MRS. STANARD (CONT'D)

But if you will occupy a room with another girl, I shall do that much for you.

NELLIE BLY

I shall be glad of that. How much do you charge?

MRS. STANARD

We charge thirty cents a night.

Nellie produces a coin purse, counts thirty cents into Mrs. Stanard's expectant hand.

MRS. STANARD (CONT'D)

What is your name?

NELLIE BLY

My name is Nellie Brown.

MRS. STANARD

I am Mrs. Standard. Now, if you will excuse me, I have something else to look after.

Mrs. Stanard exits. Nellie takes a survey of her surroundings. They are not cheerful. A wardrobe, desk, book-case, organ, and several chairs complete the furnishings. Nellie is startled by a bell. Women troop down-stairs from all parts of the house. Nellie makes no effort to join them. Mrs. Stanard happens by.

MRS. STANARD (CONT'D)

Do you not want something to eat?

NELLIE BLY

I do.

Nellie follows Mrs. Stanard down the uncarpeted stairs.

17 INT. 84 2ND AVE - EATING ROOM - EVENING

17

Mrs. Stanard leads Nellie the eating room. Floors are bare. Plain wooden tables are unvarnished. The linens threadbare. Mrs. Stanard finds a seat for Nellie at a table with three other women. Stanard's daughter appears as waiter, placing her arms akimbo and stars at Nellie.

STANARD'S DAUGHTER

Boiled mutton, boiled beef, beans, potatoes, coffee or tea?

NELLIE BLY

Beef, potatoes, coffee and bread.

(CONTINUED)

Stanard's daughter makes her way to the kitchen. The three women at Nellie's table eat silently, sizing her up, noticing that she's still wearing her hat and gloves.

Stanard's daughter returns with Nellie's order, which she bangs down in front of her. Not removing her gloves, Nellie begins her not very enticing meal. Nellie watches the others with intensity. Her uncomfortable gaze causes them one after another to hurry through their meal and leave the table.

18 INT. 84 2ND AVE - EATING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 18

Nellie standing at the desk in the corner, where Mrs. Stanard sits, presents thirty cents in coins. Mrs. Stanard can't help but notice that Nellie is still in hat and gloves.

19 INT. 84 2ND AVE - PARLOR - NIGHT 19

Nellie enters the parlor where all sit. Nellie listlessly watches the women. One woman does nothing but read and scratch her head without lifting her eyes from her book. A NODDING WOMAN falls asleep only to wake herself with her own snoring. The majority of the women sit doing nothing. Mrs. Stanard sees Nellie's far away gaze, approaches her.

MRS. STANARD

What is wrong with you? Have you some sorrow or trouble?

NELLIE BLY

No. Why?

MRS. STANARD

Oh, because I can see it in your face. It tells the story of a great trouble.

NELLIE BLY

Yes, everything is so sad.

MRS. STANARD

But you must not allow that to worry you. We all have our troubles, but we get over them in good time. What kind of work are you trying to get?

NELLIE BLY

I do not know. It's all so sad.

MRS. STANARD

Would you like to be a nurse for children and wear a nice white cap and apron?

NELLIE BLY

I never worked. I don't know how.

MRS. STANARD

But you must learn. All these women here work.

Nellie looks around at the women.

NELLIE BLY

Do they? Why, they look horrible to me. Just like crazy women. I am so afraid of them.

MRS. STANARD

They don't look very nice. But they are good, honest working women. We do not keep crazy people here.

NELLIE BLY

They all look crazy. And I am afraid of them. There are so many crazy people about, and one can never tell what they will do. Then there are so many murders committed, and the police never catch the murderers.

Nellie sobs into her handkerchief. Mrs. Stanard gives a sudden and convulsive start.

MRS. STANARD

(whispers hurriedly)

I'll come back to talk with you after a while.

Nellie watches two women, Mrs. Caine and Mrs. King, who seem to be the most sociable. Nellie crosses to them.

NELLIE BLY

Excuse me. I feel dreadfully lonely. I wondered if I might join your company.

MRS. CAINE

Oh please do dear.

MRS. KING

So I said to the supervisor that it is just not right to keep the place so cold and if they want us to produce faster they would do well to invest in a few more sticks of wood for the stove.

(trying to include Nellie)

Doesn't that make sense?

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY  
I do not know. I cannot say.

MRS. KING  
I mean the girls would work harder if we weren't freezing cold. Don't you think?

NELLIE BLY  
Yes. I mean no. I don't know. I think everybody in this house looks crazy. Is it suddenly hot in here?

Nellie removes her gloves. Mrs. King and Mrs. Caine digest Nellie's strange reply in silence a moment.

MRS. KING  
Excuse me dear, it sound to me that you have the trace of a Southern accent. Do you not originally come from the South?

NELLIE BLY  
(too sharply)  
Yes.

Another pause of uncomfortable silence.

MRS. CAINE  
You seems as though you have recently traveled. Do you know anything about the Boston boats? Specifically at what time they leave.

NELLIE BLY  
(overly sure, quick)  
Nine A.M.

MRS. CAINE  
Are you certain, because I am --

NELLIE BLY  
I know nothing about the Boats to Boston.

MRS. KING  
But you just said --

NELLIE BLY  
Somebody has stolen my trunks. I have to find my luggage. Everybody here looks crazy.

Mrs. King, taken aback, sits in silence.

MRS. CAINE

What work are you going to do?  
 (looking at Nellie's  
 manicured hands)  
 Or have you ever done any?

NELLIE BLY

I think it very sad that there are so  
 many working people in the world.

MRS. CAINE

I had come into misfortune so I came to  
 New York. I worked at correcting proofs  
 on a medical dictionary for some time,  
 but my health has given way under the  
 task. I am now going to Boston again.

MRS. STANARD

It's time to go to bed, ladies.

NELLIE BLY

I'm afraid.

MRS. STANARD

What are you afraid of dear?

NELLIE BLY

All the women in the house seem crazy.

MRS. CAINE

Nonsense. You are just overly tired. A  
 good night's rest will give you a new  
 outlook.

Mrs. Caine gently takes Nellie by the arm.

INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Inmates of the house have gathered. Mrs. King approaches.

MRS. KING

No. This is my room. I'm not sleeping in  
 there. I will not stay with that crazy  
 woman for all the money of the  
 Vanderbilts.

MRS. STANARD

I can't have her driving you all away.  
 I'll send for a policeman to take her  
 away at once.

(to her daughter)

Go fetch a policeman from the corner.

The women are all in a terrible and real state of fright as Mrs. Stanard's daughter moves away to find a policeman.

MRS. CAINE  
I will stay with her.

NELLIE BLY  
I would like to have you do so.

Mrs. Stanard holds up her hand. Her daughter stops at the stairwell. Mrs. Caine looks around at the gawking women with gracious indignity. The women move away. Mrs. Stanard lingers an extra moment.

MRS. STANARD  
Suit yourself.

Mrs. Standard walks down the hall.

21 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - NELLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT 21

Mrs. Caine gently enters. Though filled with compassion, her demeanor is more cautious than her earlier energy. Nellie stares at the wall as Mrs. Caine pulls up a chair behind her.

MRS. CAINE  
Now then, let's take down your hair.

She moves to take the pins from Nellie's hair. Nellie startles, goes rigid. Mrs. Caine pulls back calmly. After a moment, she very gently resumes her task unpinning Nellie's hair. Nellie relaxes a little.

MRS. CAINE (CONT'D)  
I don't remember much about my mother. Bits and pieces really. She passed away from consumption when I was six. But I do remember her taking down my hair and getting me ready for bed. She was so gentle. I felt so safe with her. She was like an angel from my dreams.

Mrs. Caine slowly moves her hands to the top button of Nellie's dress.

MRS. CAINE (CONT'D)  
Let's get you out of this dress and ready for bed.

NELLIE BLY  
No! I will not take off my dress. I have to be ready. They are going to kill me.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CAINE

Who is going to kill you?

NELLIE BLY

The other women.

MRS. CAINE

No dear. The women here are just working women. They only want a good night's rest.

NELLIE BLY

I heard them in the hallway. They talked about murder.

MRS. CAINE

It is true that they gossiped and let their imaginations run away, but I assure you they mean you no harm.

NELLIE BLY

How can you know for certain.

MRS. CAINE

Some things we just know.

NELLIE BLY

That does not make sense. How can you just know some things that you can't know. I will not take off my dress.

MRS. CAINE

Then perhaps if you just lied down and rested with your clothes on.

NELLIE BLY

No. I must be ready.

Mrs. Caine comes to her feet and crosses to her bed.

MRS. CAINE

Here. Look. I will leave my clothes on as well so I can be ready with you. We can lie on our beds and keep watch together.

Mrs. Caine lies down, watchful of Nellie's movements.

NELLIE BLY

I will not.

Nellie continues to sit and stare blankly. Mrs. Caine lies awake for a few moments then sits up in a wretched state of unhappiness.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CAINE

Your eyes are shining terribly brightly dear.

Nellie says nothing.

MRS. CAINE (CONT'D)

Where have you lived before?

NELLIE BLY

I cannot remember.

MRS. CAINE

How long have you been in New York.

NELLIE BLY

I have forgotten.

MRS. CAINE

What were you doing before you came to this place?

NELLIE BLY

I have forgotten everything.

MRS. CAINE

Can you recall any family or a husband?

NELLIE BLY

Ever since my headache has come on I can not remember.

Mrs. Caine lies back down.

MRS. CAINE

Do try to rest.

Nellie just stares.

Mrs. Caine, startled awake by a blood-curdling scream, bolts upright. Nellie, sits, staring with the same distant look.

Mrs. Caine looks around, frightened, listens. She goes out into the next room. Muffled voices. Nellie draws a deep breath. For a moment, her insanity act falls away. The floorboards creek. In an instant, Nellie's stare resumes. Mrs. Caine comes in and sits on her bed.

MRS. CAINE

The woman in the next room had a hideous nightmare. She has calmed down now.

NELLIE BLY

Was it about me?

MRS. CAINE

Yes. She was dreaming of you.

NELLIE BLY

I knew it. I saw it in her eyes.

MRS. CAINE

She said she had seen you -- rushing at her with a knife in your hand -- with the intention of killing her. In trying to escape you she had fortunately been able to scream -- and so to awaken herself and scare off her nightmare.

NELLIE BLY

She wants to kill me. I knew the women in here are crazy. I must defend myself.

Mrs. Caine stares at Nellie a long moment then lays on her bed again, considerably agitated, but very tired.

INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - NELLIE'S ROOM - DAWN

Mrs. Caine wakes from a sound sleep. She looks over at Nellie who paces the floor. Mrs. Caine is surprised Nellie is awake.

MRS. CAINE

Dear, you are still awake and lively as a cricket. Have you not slept at all?

NELLIE BLY

I do not know. I have to find my trunks.

Mrs. Caine sympathetically rises, crosses to Nellie, puts her arm around her.

MRS. CAINE

If you have been on your feet all night, you must be exhausted. Sit and rest poor dear.

Mrs. Caine eases Nellie into the chair, soothingly strokes her hair.

MRS. CAINE (CONT'D)

Do you not want to go home, dear?

NELLIE BLY  
I do not know where home is.

MRS. CAINE  
(growing more anxious)  
What is to be done? Where are your  
friends?

NELLIE BLY  
I have no friends, but I have some  
trunks. Where are they? I want them.

MRS. CAINE  
(tried to pacify)  
Don't you worry. They will be found in  
good time.

NELLIE BLY  
I want my trunks.

MRS. CAINE  
I'll see if there is any word on them.

Mrs. Caine steps out of the room.

24 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - NELLIE'S ROOM - MORNING 24

Mrs. Stanard comes in, fluffs the blankets and opens the  
drapes, keeping a watchful eye on Nellie.

NELLIE BLY  
They all want to murder me. They've taken  
my luggage. There will be no trace left  
of me.

MRS. STANARD  
You must remain calm dear.

NELLIE BLY  
They are all crazy.

Mrs. Stanard tidies a bit more and calmly leaves.

25 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - NELLIE'S ROOM - MORNING 25

Mrs. Caine enters with a tray.

MRS. CAINE  
I have brought you a bun and coffee.

Nellie doesn't answer, stares at the wall. Mrs. Caine puts  
the tray down, goes to Nellie, kisses her on the brow as a  
mother would do.

25 CONTINUED:

MRS. CAINE (CONT'D)  
(whispering compassionately)  
Poor child. Poor child.

26 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - HALLWAY - MORNING 26

Mrs. Caine comes out of Nellie's room and whispers to Mrs. Stanard who is hovering near the doorway.

MRS. CAINE  
(true sympathy)  
Yes. I believe the poor dear is insane.

Mrs. Stanard's face is one of resolve as she stiffens.

27 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 1ST FLOOR - FOYER - MORNING 27

Mrs. Stanard sweeps down stairs with purpose. Mrs. Caine, engulfed in the tragedy, floats downstairs behind her. Women watch from the hall. Mrs. Stanard puts on her bonnet. Her daughter approaches.

STANARD'S DAUGHTER  
Where are you going?

MRS. STANARD  
To fetch the police.

Mrs. Stanard exits out the front door.

FADE OUT.

28 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - HALLWAY - DAY 28

Mrs. Stanard returns, bringing with her two policemen-big, strong men. One of them is TOM BOCKERT. Mrs. Caine is waiting at the top of the stairs and joins them as they walk to Nellie's room.

MRS. STANARD  
I want you to take her quietly.

POLICEMAN 1  
If she don't come along quietly, I will drag her through the streets.

MRS. STANARD  
I certainly wish to avoid raising a scandal outside.

MRS. CAINE  
There is no need for that kind of brutality.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CAINE (CONT'D)

Something has happened to the dear girl. Somebody has done her wrong. She is far away in her mind. She has been crying out for her lost trunks. Somebody must have taken them.

POLICEMAN BOCKERT

I know how to get her to come quietly.

INT. 84 2ND AVE - 2ND FLOOR - NELLIE'S ROOM - DAY

They enter the room unceremoniously, expecting to meet a violent, crazy person. Nellie is in her chair, staring, her back to them.

POLICEMAN BOCKERT

Hello there sweet girl.

Policeman Bockert comes closer to her. Nellie takes no notice.

POLICEMAN BOCKERT (CONT'D)

If you would like to come with me I will help you look for your lost effects.

NELLIE BLY

Who are you? I don't know you.

MRS. CAINE

Why he's a policeman, love. He means you no harm. He will help you find your things.

NELLIE BLY

I don't want to go with him alone. I do not know him.

MRS. CAINE

There, there. You don't have to go with him if you don't want to.

MRS. STANARD

I'll take you to find your trunks. We'll find them together.

NELLIE BLY

You will?

MRS. STANARD

Of course. I'm sure they can't have gotten very far. You just come right along with me.

Mrs. Standard takes Nellie firmly by the arm and walks her to the door. Mrs. Caine moves to intervene but stops herself.

30 INT. 84 2ND AVE - 1ST FLOOR - FOYER - MORNING 30

The women of the house hover everywhere as the spectacle unfolds. Mrs. Stanard follows Policeman 1 with Nellie firmly in her grip. Policeman Brockert is next with Mrs. Caine following behind. Mrs. Stanard stops at the front door and turns to Nellie.

MRS. STANARD

Just a moment while I get my hat.

Mrs. Stanard walks back to the side table, picks up her hat and leans in to Policeman Bockert.

MRS. STANARD (CONT'D)

Follow us at a respectful distance.

Mrs. Stanard places her hat on her head. Mrs. Cain has moved to Nellie's side, lovingly ties her veil on for her, primps and grooms her. Mrs. Caine leans in close.

MRS. CAINE

These policemen will help you. Bless you, my dear.

Mrs. Caine kisses Nellie on the cheek. Mrs. Stanard loops her arm through Nellie's and they start out the door.

31 EXT. SECOND AVENUE - DAY 31

Nellie walks with Mrs. Stanard, arm in arm - Nellie frightened, Mrs. Stanard determined. The two officers follow at some distance behind. Bockert eyes her closely. It's clear he thinks her mind is gone.

32 EXT. ESSEX MARKET POLICE COURTHOUSE - DAY 32

The street in front of the courthouse is bustling with people and carriages.

33 INT. ESSEX MARKET POLICE COURTHOUSE LOBBY - DAY 33

There is much foot traffic as Nellie is guided through the crowded lobby by Policeman Bockert and Mrs. Stanard. Ragged children are following them. Mrs. Stanard pulls Nellie close.

RAGGED BOY

What's she up for? Say, kop, where did ye get her? She's a daisy!

POLICEMAN BOCKERT  
Here's the express office. We shall soon find those trunks of yours.

NELLIE BLY  
Have all these people lost their trunks?

POLICEMAN BOCKERT  
Yes, nearly all these people are looking for trunks.

NELLIE BLY  
They all seem to be foreigners, too.

POLICEMAN BOCKERT  
Yes. They are all foreigners just landed. They have all lost their trunks, and it takes most of our time to help find them for them.

34 INT. ESSEX MARKET POLICE COURT - COURTROOM - DAY 34

Bockert, Mrs. Stanard and Nellie Bly stand in the courtroom. Nellie shivers as she looks around at the strange crowd. The room is composed of poorly dressed men and women with stories printed on their faces of hard lives, abuse and poverty. A sprinkling of well-fed officers watch the scene indifferently. JUDGE DUFFY sits behind the high desk.

JUDGE DUFFY  
(harsh tone)  
Come here, girl, and lift your veil.

NELLIE BLY  
(stateliest manner)  
Who are you speaking to?

JUDGE DUFFY  
(very kindly)  
Come here, my dear, and lift your veil. You know the Queen of England, if she were here, would have to lift her veil.

NELLIE BLY  
That is much better. I am not the Queen of England, but I'll lift my veil.

Nellie approaches the bench, lifts her veil.

JUDGE DUFFY  
(very kind, gentle)  
My dear child, what is wrong?

NELLIE BLY

Nothing is wrong except that I have lost my trunks, and this man --

Nellie indicates Policeman Bockert.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

-- promised to bring me where they could be found.

The Judge turns to Mrs. Stanard, who stands, pale and trembling, by Nellie's side.

JUDGE DUFFY

What do you know about this child?

MRS. STANARD

I know nothing of her except that she came to the home yesterday and asked to remain overnight. It is a temporary home kept for working women at eighty four Second Avenue.

JUDGE DUFFY

What is your position there?

MRS. STANARD

I am assistant matron.

JUDGE DUFFY

Well, tell us all you know of the case.

MRS. STANARD

When I was going into the home yesterday I noticed her coming down the avenue. She was all alone. I had just got into the house when the bell rang and she came in. When I talked with her she wanted to know if she could stay all night, and I said she could. After awhile she said all the people in the house looked crazy, and she was afraid of them. Then she would not go to bed, but sat up all the night.

JUDGE DUFFY

Had she any money?

NELLIE BLY

(cutting in)

Yes, I paid her for everything, and the eating was the worst I ever tried.

JUDGE DUFFY

Poor child. She is well dressed, and a lady. Her English is perfect, and I would stake everything on her being a good girl. I am sure some one is searching for her. Poor girl, I will be good to her, for she looks like my sister, who is dead.

The crowd hushes. The officers glance at Nellie more kindly.

NELLIE BLY

(silently)

Bless you.

JUDGE DUFFY

I wish the reporters were here. They should be able to find out something about her.

At the mention of reporters, Nellie flashes panic.

NELLIE BLY

(pulling down her veil)

I don't see why all this is needed to help me find my trunks. These men are impudent and I do not want to be stared at. I will go away. I don't want to stay here.

JUDGE DUFFY

I don't know what to do with the poor child. She must be taken care of.

POLICE OFFICER

Send her to the Island.

A murmur ripples through the court crowd.

MRS. STANARD

No. Oh, don't! Don't! She is a lady and it would kill her to be put on the Island.

Nellie's jaw tightens. Judge Duffy looks at Mrs. Stanard.

JUDGE DUFFY

Perhaps the Island is too far at this point. But, there has been some foul work here. I believe this child has been drugged and brought to this city. Make out the papers and we will send her to Bellevue for examination.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE DUFFY (CONT'D)

Probably in a few days the effect of the drug will pass off and she will be able to tell us a story that will be startling. If the reporters would only come!

NELLIE BLY

I do not wish to stay here any longer to be gazed at.

JUDGE DUFFY

(to Bockert)

Take her to my office.

35 INT. ESSEX MARKET POLICE COURT - JUDGE'S OFFICE - DAY 35

Judge Duffy enters his office where Mrs. Stanard and Nellie are seated. Nellie's gloves are placed in her lap. Policeman Bockert stands near the door. Judge Duffy takes a seat at his desk.

JUDGE DUFFY

Is your home in Cuba?

NELLIE BLY

(with a smile)

Yes. How did you know?

JUDGE DUFFY

Oh, I knew it, my dear. Now, tell me where was it? In what part of Cuba?

NELLIE BLY

On the hacienda.

JUDGE DUFFY

Ah, on a farm. Do you remember Havana?

NELLIE BLY

Si, senor. It is near home. How did you know?

JUDGE DUFFY

Oh, I knew all about it. Now, won't you tell me the name of your home?

NELLIE BLY

That's what I forget. I have a headache all the time. And it makes me forget things. I don't want them to trouble me. Everybody is asking me questions. And it makes my head worse.

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE DUFFY

Well, no one shall trouble you any more.  
Sit down here and rest awhile.

JUDGE DUFFY (CONT'D)

(to Bockert)

Come with me.

The genial judge takes Bockert and leaves Nellie alone with Mrs. Stanard. Nellie jumps up and runs back and forth through the office, Mrs. Stanard clinging terrified to her arm.

NELLIE BLY

I won't stay here! I want my trunks! Why  
do they bother me with so many people?

Mrs. Stanard throws open the door.

MRS. STANARD

Oh bring help! Please!

Judge Duffy, Bockert and an AMBULANCE SURGEON return to find Nellie on her feet, Mrs. Standard trying to calm her.

NELLIE BLY

No! I will not return to my seat. Why  
won't you help me find my trunks? It just  
does not make sense. They want to hurt  
me. They are all crazy.

MRS. STANARD

Please dear.

JUDGE DUFFY

(gentle, soothing)

Nobody wants to harm you, Miss Brown.  
Please. Have a seat and we will  
straighten this all out.

Nellie looks at the Judge a hard moment and then sits herself down hard, facing the window, staring far away, as if forgetting there is anyone else in the room. The Judge turns to the surgeon.

JUDGE DUFFY (CONT'D)

Here is a poor girl who has been drugged.  
She looks like my sister. And any one can  
see she is a good girl. I am interested  
in the safety of the child. And I would  
do as much for her as if she were my own.  
I want you to be kind to her.

The judge then turns to Mrs. Stanard.

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE DUFFY (CONT'D)  
(gentle, persuasive)  
Could you not keep her for a few days  
until her case is inquired into?

MRS. STANARD  
I cannot, All the women at the Home  
are afraid of her. They will leave  
if she is kept there.

JUDGE DUFFY  
If pay were assured you. Perhaps you  
could arrange --

NELLIE BLY  
I cannot eat the bad cooking in that  
place. They are all crazy there. They  
want to kill me. I am not safe there and  
I do not intend to go back to that Home.

The Judge sighs.

JUDGE DUFFY  
Doctor, will you have a look at her?

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
Yes, of course.

The Ambulance Surgeon takes a seat next to Nellie.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)  
(ordering briskly)  
Put out your tongue.

Nellie continues to stare out the window. He snaps his  
fingers in front of her. She looks at him.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)  
Put out your tongue when I tell you.

NELLIE BLY  
I don't want to.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
You must. You are sick, and I am a  
doctor.

NELLIE BLY  
I am not sick and never was. I only want  
my trunks.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
(more gentle)  
Please.

Nellie puts out her tongue, which the doctor looks at in a sagacious manner. Then he feels her pulse and listened to her heart with a stethoscope. When he does this, she holds her breath all the while he listens, until, when he quits, she has to give a gasp to regain it. Then he tries the effect of the light on her pupils. He holds his hand within a half-inch of her face.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)  
Look at my hand.

He jerks his hand hastily away, then examine Nellie's eyes. She stares straight ahead. He puts his hand in front of her eyes a second time.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)  
Again.

He pulls his hand away again. Nellie holds her eyes riveted unblinkingly upon his hand, and when he removes it she exerts all her strength not to blink. He repeats this several times.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)  
What drugs have you been taking?

NELLIE BLY  
Drugs? I do not know what drugs are.

MRS. STANARD  
The pupils of her eyes are enlarged.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
I believe she has been using belladonna.

NELLIE BLY  
I am near-sighted. I am not in the least ill. I have never been sick, and that no one had a right to detain me when I want to find my trunks. I want to go home.

He writes in a long, slender book.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
I am going to take you home.

JUDGE DUFFY  
Take her. And be kind to her. And tell people at the hospital to be kind to her and do all you can for her.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

The surgeon nods at his instructions.

36 INT. ESSEX MARKET POLICE COURT - COURTROOM - DAY

36

Guarded by Policeman Bockert, Nellie walks with the Ambulance Surgeon through the little, crowded courtroom. Mrs. Stanard comes out of Judge Duffy's office.

MRS. STANARD

Wait.

Nellie looks back as Mrs. Stanard comes to her side, pressing Nellie's gloves into her hands.

MRS. STANARD (CONT'D)

You forgot your gloves, child. May God protect you.

The small continent exits out a side door. Mrs. Stanard stands in the crowd, engulfed in worry.

MRS. STANARD (CONT'D)

(to herself)

May God protect you.

37 EXT. ESSEX MARKET POLICE COURT - ALLEYWAY -DAY

37

Nellie and the Ambulance Surgeon come through the side door into an alleyway, where the ambulance is waiting.

NELLIE BLY

I am not going in there.

AMBULANCE SURGEON

You must get in so we can take you home.

NELLIE BLY

I have never seen a carriage of this make before. I do not want to ride in it.

AMBULANCE SURGEON

This carriage will take you home. You want to go home don't you?

NELLIE BLY

Yes.

AMBULANCE SURGEON

Then you must get in. You must trust me.

Nellie lets him persuade her and with their gentle assistance she enters the ambulance. It begins moving.

38

EXT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - PATIENT RECEIVING -DAY

38

The ambulance stops with a sudden jerk at the patient receiving office of Bellevue and the doctor jumps out. A rough Bellevue Attendant comes forward.

BELLEVUE ADMISSION CLERK

What is your name and the reason for your transfer to Bellevue Hospital?

NELLIE BLY

Bellevue Hospital? I am not going to Bellevue Hospital. I am going home.

BELLEVUE ADMISSION CLERK

You must answer my questions.

NELLIE BLY

I refuse.

AMBULANCE SURGEON

It is not necessary to trouble her further. I have all the papers made out.

Nellie backs away.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)

(quieter)

She is too insane to be able to tell you anything that would be of consequence.

Nellie here's him, masks it.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)

(to Nellie)

I shall return.

The Ambulance Surgeon exits into the building. The clerk catches her tightly by the arm. She angrily struggles in his grip.

NELLIE BLY

How dare you touch me?

At this he loosens his hold somewhat and she shakes him off with more strength than she thought she possessed.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

I will go with no one but the man who brought me. The judge said that he was to take care of me, and I will go with no one else.

(CONTINUED)

The Ambulance Surgeon returns in haste.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
I'm so sorry. I will take you.

The doctor slips his arm through hers and they go arm in arm. They pass through the well-cared-for grounds and finally reach the insane ward.

39 INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - INSANE WARD HALLWAY - DAY 39

A white-capped nurse, MISS SCOTT, is there to receive her.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
This young girl is to wait here for the boat.

The Ambulance Surgeon starts to leave her.

NELLIE BLY  
Please do not go. Please do not leave me here. I beg you. Or take me with you.

The doctor continues out the door.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)  
You said you would take me home.

The last statement hits him. He turns back to her.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
I want to get my dinner first. You should wait here for me.

NELLIE BLY  
I shall accompany you. I have not eaten in some time myself.

AMBULANCE SURGEON  
I would be honored -- However, I have to assist at an amputation, and it would not look well for you to be present.

A horrible insane cry come from a yard in the rear. With all Nellie's bravery she feels a chill at the prospect of being shut up with a fellow-creature who is really insane. The doctor sees her nervousness.

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)  
(to the attendant)  
What a noise the carpenters make.  
(turning to Nellie)  
(MORE)

AMBULANCE SURGEON (CONT'D)

New buildings are being erected, and the noise came from some of the workmen engaged upon the construction.

NELLIE BLY

I do not want to stay here without you.

AMBULANCE SURGEON

I promise soon to return.

NELLIE BLY

To take me home.

AMBULANCE SURGEON

(melancholy)

Yes.

He leaves Nellie and she finds herself at last an occupant of an insane asylum. Miss Scoot leads Nellie down the hall.

INT. BELLEVUE - INSANE WARD - LATER - DAY

A kindly looking Irishwoman, MARY, maid-of-all-work, busily scrubs the walls. Nellie is seated next to a woman who, in other circumstances, would be called beautiful, though her hair is matted and dark circles of exhaustion engulf her eyes. This is Anne Neville.

NELLIE BLY

Hello. I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Nellie Brown.

Anne doesn't respond -- looks Nellie over with a defiant, but worn gaze.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

I am here waiting for a nice gentleman who is going to take me home.

Seeing Nellie's warm, earnest, non-threatening nature, Anne relaxes a little.

ANNE NEVILLE

I'm Anne -- Neville. This is not a place you want to wait long if you don't have to be here.

Nellie digests what she says. Anne studies Nellie with greater focus. Something is not right.

ANNE NEVILLE (CONT'D)

(almost in protest)

This is a place of the sick.

NELLIE BLY

I see. Are you sick?

ANNE NEVILLE

Yes.

NELLIE BLY

How have you come to be here?

ANNE NEVILLE

I have been sick from overwork.

Nellie and Anne sit in silence a moment.

ANNE NEVILLE (CONT'D)

I had been working as a chambermaid in a large house. When my health gave way I was sent to a Sisters' Home to be treated. My nephew, who is a waiter, is out of work, and, being unable to pay my expenses at the Home, had me transferred here to Bellevue.

NELLIE BLY

Is there anything wrong with you -- mentally?

Anne holds back anger. Looks Nellie in the eyes, reads her a long moment -- a puzzle she can't quite solve.

ANNE NEVILLE

No. The doctors have been asking me many curious questions and confusing me as much as possible, but I have nothing wrong with my brain.

NELLIE BLY

Do you know that only insane people are sent to this pavilion?

ANNE NEVILLE

Yes, I know. But I am unable to do anything. The doctors refuse to listen to me. And it is useless to say anything to the nurses.

An orderly appears with a BABY BOY and a woman, LOUISE SCHANZ. To the dismay of Mrs. Schanz, the orderly grabs her arm and marches her to a bench where he pushes her down. A nurse enters and grabs the boy from her arms.

LOUISE SCHANZ

Ich liebe dich Kind.

(CONTINUED)

The distress on the face of mother is extreme as the boy is taken out of the room. Nellie, Anne are beside themselves over the tragic moment.

NELLIE BLY

Perhaps your nephew can find a way to pay for your transfer.

ANNE NEVILLE

There is no money. My case is hopeless.

Nellie opens her mouth to speak, but Anne holds up her hand in dismissal. Nellie contemplates the sadness in her eyes.

41

INT. BELLEVUE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

41

Miss Scott looks at a chart that had hanging on the wall. She focuses on Nellie, approaches her with authority.

MISS SCOTT

Nellie Brown. Take off your hat.

NELLIE BLY

I shall not take off my hat, I am waiting for the boat, and I shall not remove it.

MISS SCOTT

Well, you are not going on any boat. You might as well know it now as later. You are in an asylum for the insane.

NELLIE BLY

I did not want to come here. I am not sick or insane, and I will not stay.

MISS SCOTT

It will be a long time before you get out if you don't do as you are told. You might as well take off your hat, or I shall use force, and if I am not able to do it, I have but to touch a bell and I shall get assistance. Will you take it off?

NELLIE BLY

No, I will not. I am cold, and I want my hat on, and you can't make me take it off.

MISS SCOTT

If you don't take it off then I shall use force, and I warn you it will not be very gentle.

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

If you take my hat off I shall take your cap off. So no.

Anger flares across Miss Scott's face. With sharp resolve she turns and leaves the room. A moment later Miss Scott re-enters the room with a second nurse at her side. Nellie is sitting quietly, hat and gloves in her lap. Miss Scott glares at her. Nellie responds with an innocent smile.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

It is very cold in here. Is there no fuel for the stove?

MISS SCOTT

You are in a charity place. You should not expect much.

Miss Scott exits as Mary enters with a load of laundry, looking over her shoulder. She squats next to Nellie.

MARY

Have ye any pennies about ye, dearie?

NELLIE BLY

What?

MARY

Have ye any pennies, dearie, that ye could give me. They'll take them all from ye any way, dearie, so I might as well have them.

NELLIE BLY

I have lost my purse.

Mary smiles and exits.

Nellie, who has been seated, stands and opens a cupboard and ATTENDING DOCTOR and Miss Scott enter.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

Looking for something? I've seen that face before.

NELLIE BLY

(great show of eagerness)  
Then you know me?

ATTENDING DOCTOR

I think I do. Where did you come from?

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

From home.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

Where is home?

NELLIE BLY

Don't you know? Cuba.

He feels her pulse.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

Stick out your tongue.

Nellie complies and he examines her tongue.

ATTENDING DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Tell Miss Scott all about yourself.

NELLIE BLY

No, I will not. I will not talk with that women.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

What do you do in New York?

NELLIE BLY

Nothing.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

Can you work?

NELLIE BLY

No.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

Tell me, are you a woman of the town?

NELLIE BLY

(heartily disgusted)

I do not understand you.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

I mean have you allowed the men to provide for you and keep you?

Nellie feels like slapping him, but maintains composure.

NELLIE BLY

I do not know what you are talking about. I always lived at home.

(CONTINUED)

He goes to Miss Scott.

ATTENDING DOCTOR

Positively demented. I consider it a hopeless case. She needs to be put where some one will take care of her.

The attending doctor exits.

INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - NIGHT

Nellie is sitting and writing in her small notebook as she hears heavy keys rattle the lock. She tucks the notebook away. The door swings open. Nurse Ball enters with DR. FIELD. He has the air of a gentleman. Nellie shivers as much from fear as cold.

MISS BALL

Nellie Brown, here is the doctor.  
He wishes to speak with you.

Nellie looks at the doctor. His sight is reassuring. He comes forward, seats himself next to Nellie.

DR. FIELD

How do you feel tonight, Nellie?

NELLIE BLY

Oh, I feel all right.

DR. FIELD

But you are sick, you know.

NELLIE BLY

(turning her head on the  
pillow, smiling)

Oh, am I?

DR. FIELD

Yes. Why did you think the women in the temporary home were going to harm you?

NELLIE BLY

Temporary home? I did not stay in any temporary home.

DR. FIELD

You didn't stay in a temporary home for working women?

NELLIE BLY

No. I have never been to such a place.

DR. FIELD

And what was the name of the judge who presided over your case?

NELLIE BLY

I do not remember going before a judge.

DR. FIELD

I see. Have you ever taken belladonna or eaten belladonna beauty wafers?

NELLIE BLY

No. Never.

DR. FIELD

Opium, laudanum, cocaine?

NELLIE BLY

No. I don't know what you mean?

DR. FIELD

What is your mother's name?

NELLIE BLY

I cannot remember.

DR. FIELD

What is your father's name?

NELLIE BLY

I cannot remember.

DR. FIELD

Do you have any brothers or sisters, aunts or uncles?

NELLIE BLY

I cannot remember.

DR. FIELD

Did you not have a lover that cast you aside?

NELLIE BLY

No.

DR. FIELD

On what street was the temporary house you stayed at?

NELLIE BLY

Temporary home? I did not stay in any temporary home.

DR. FIELD

I see. Thank you for talking with me Miss Brown. Try get some rest.

The doctor gets up and walks out the door with Miss Ball.

DR. FIELD (CONT'D)

(to Miss Ball)

She will forget all about our conversation in an hour.

The door is locked. Nellie lets out a deep breath, smiles.

NELLIE BLY

(low)

Not so sure of that.

44 INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - NELLIE'S ROOM - LATER NIGHT 44

Nellie, half slumbering is brought fully awake by the sound of heavy boot heels and loud voices.

NIGHT NURSE

They say Nellie Brown is hopelessly insane.

MISS BALL

I heard she had a lover who had cast her forth on the world and wrecked her brain.

NIGHT NURSE

I don' think they will keep her here long. I think her future lies on the island.

45 INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - INSANE WARD - WASH AREA - MORNING 45

Miss Scott shows Nellie to a washstand where Anne, Tillie and Louise are trying to rid their faces of all traces of sleep. Anne looks at Nellie with a frown. Tillie gives her a half smile.

46 INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - INSANE WARD - MESS HALL - DAY 46

Mary is at work cleaning. Nellie is seated in a stiff chair. Miss Scott comes in, opens a cupboard and takes out a wooden box which she sets up at a small table in front of Nellie.

NELLIE BLY

It is bitter cold. Might we not have some heat?

MISS SCOTT

It is one of the rules of the institution not to turn the heat on until October. So you will have to endure it, as the steam-pipes had not even been put in order.

Miss Scott opens the box. She takes out a small pair of nail scissors, grabs Nellie's right hand, begins trimming.

NELLIE BLY

Ow. Oww. You are trimming my nails to the quick.

MISS SCOTT

This is for everyone's safety.

47 INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - INSANE WARD - STAIRWELL - DAY 47

Dr. Field walks Nellie down the stairs.

DR. FIELD

Who are you?

NELLIE BLY

Nellie Moreno.

DR. FIELD

Then why did you give the name of Brown? What is wrong with you?

NELLIE BLY

Nothing. I did not want to come here, but they brought me. I want to go away. Won't you let me out?

DR. FIELD

If I take you out will you stay with me? Won't you run away from me when you get on the street?

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

(smiling)

I can't promise that I will not.

DR. FIELD

Do you ever see faces on the wall?

NELLIE BLY

No.

DR. FIELD

Do you ever hear voices at night?

NELLIE BLY

Yes, there is so much talking I cannot sleep.

DR. FIELD

(half to himself)

I thought so.

(directly)

What do these voices say?

NELLIE BLY

Well, I do not listen to them always. But sometimes, very often, they talk about Nellie Brown, and then on other subjects that do not interest me half so much.

DR. FIELD

What other subjects?

NELLIE BLY

I am tired of this. I will talk no more.

DR. FIELD

(angrily)

Won't you? I'll see if I can't make you.

With this he gets up and moves to Nellie's side. In a quick move he pinches her very severely in the ribs. She jumps to her feet.

NELLIE BLY

What do you mean by this?

DR. FIELD

I want to teach you to obey when I speak to you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

DR. FIELD (CONT'D)  
 (calling out)  
 That will do. Miss Scott.

Miss Scott, who is just on the outside, enters, puts her hand on Nellie's shoulder.

NELLIE BLY  
 Can I go away?

DR. FIELD  
 (with a satisfied laugh)  
 Yes. We'll soon send you away.

Dr. Field rises and walks to the door with them.

48 INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - INSANE WARD - WAITING AREA - DAY 48

Miss Scott is walking Nellie down the hall when Mary enters and comes up behind them.

MARY  
 Miss Scott, there is a gentleman waiting to interview Miss Brown. He says he's from The Sun Newspaper and has been asked by a judge to see if he can't help figure out who she is.

Nellie masks her panic at being discovered.

MISS SCOTT  
 Does he have papers from the judge?

MARY  
 No. But he has identification from his newspaper.

MISS SCOTT  
 Nobody is to see the transfer patients.

MARY  
 Yes, Miss.

Mary exits.

49 INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - INSANE WARD - WAITING AREA - DAY 49

Attendants, Miss Scott and Mary enter. Mary gives Nellie her hat and gloves. Nellie can hardly put them on, her nerves are so unstrung.

NELLIE BLY  
 Goodbye Mary.

(CONTINUED)

Nellie reaches out to her and takes Mary's hand. In doing so, she slips a few pennies into her palm.

MARY

God bless you. I shall pray for you. Cheer up, dearie. You are young, and will get over this.

NELLIE BLY

I hope so.

A rough-looking attendant twists his arms around Nellie's.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

(to Miss Scott)

Nos vemos, Miss Scott.

The attendant half-leads, half-drags Nellie out.

50 EXT. NEW YORK CITY - EAST RIVER EVENING - AFTERNOON 50

The hospital transport boat chugs toward Blackwell's Island.

51 INT, BLACKWELL'S ISLAND TRANSPORT BOAT - EVENING 51

Nellie is in into a dirty cabin with Miss Neville, Miss Mayard, Mrs. Fox, and Mrs. Schanz. Nellie looks to Mrs. Fox.

NELLIE BLY

Nellie Brown.

MRS. FOX

Mrs. Fox.

NELLIE BLY

Why are you on this boat?

MRS. FOX

I caught my husband with our chambermaid. Before I could accuse him of adultery he signed papers to have me committed for life.

NELLIE BLY

Did you not tell the doctors.

MRS. FOX

My accusation is called delusional -  
- proof to them of my demented fantasies. A woman has no voice when a man signs her away as insane.

51 CONTINUED:

51

FEMALE ATTENDANT

You two shut up.

They ride in silence.

52 EXT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND DOCK - EVENING

52

The boat reaches the dock

FEMALE ATTENDANT

You all sit still.

The patients are taken off, one at a time. Nellie is last. A man and woman take her by the arms and lead her up the plank to reach the shore. An ambulance is standing there, and in it are the four other patients.

NELLIE BLY

(hesitant)

What is this place?

The man sinks his finger deep into the flesh of her arms, expecting her to bolt.

DOCK ATTENDANT

Blackwell's Island, an insane place, where you'll never get out of.

With this she is shoved into the ambulance. The springboard is put up. An officer and a mail-carrier jump on behind, and the wagon is driven swiftly away from the water, toward the Insane Asylum on Blackwell's Island. Looking at the receding water's edge, Nellie and her comrades give a despairing farewell glance at freedom.

53 EXT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND INSANE ASYLUM - NIGHT

53

The wagon is rapidly driven through the beautiful lawns up to the asylum.

54 INT. WAGON ON THE WAY TO BLACKWELL'S - NIGHT

54

Nellie's satisfaction at having attained the object of her work are greatly dampened by the look of distress on the faces of her companions as they come into sight of the long stone buildings.

They pass one building and the stench is so horrible that the women are compelled to hold their breaths. There is a sign at the end of the drive. Nellie and Anne look out to read it. They both smile ironically at the statement printed on it -- Visitors are not allowed on this road.

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

Don't imagine they get many  
visitors.

ANNE NEVILLE

Especially on a warm day.

The wagon stops. An OFFICER and an attractive blond haired charge nurse with a German accent, MISS GRUPE, are standing by. Miss Grupe is dressed in a brown and white striped dress, fastened by brass buttons, large, white apron, a heavy green cord about the waist, from which dangles a bunch of large keys, and a small, white cap on her head. The hardened expression on Miss Grupe's face, says they should not expect much human kindness from her.

MISS GRUPE

Come on. Get out. All of you. Hurry  
up. We haven't got all night.

The patients climb out and stand in the cold night air. Miss Grupe recognizes one of the patients. Tillie Mayard.

MISS GRUPE (CONT'D)

You again?  
(to the patients)  
Go ahead up the stairs.

Nellie and the patients obey the orders to go up a flight of narrow, stone steps, which had evidently been built to accommodate people who climb stairs three at a time. Nellie strides up beside Tillie.

NELLIE BLY

Where are we?

TILLIE MAYARD

(sadly)  
At the Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum.

NELLIE BLY

Are you crazy?

TILLIE MAYARD

No, but I've been declared that.  
Same as you. We will have to be quiet  
until we find some means of escape.

55 CONTINUED:

55

Nellie looks up to see Blackwell's Superintendent Dr. Dent peering intently at the group from an upper floor window. Nellie makes eye contact with him and he turns away, dismissive.

56 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - RECEIVING - NIGHT

56

They are ushered into a narrow vestibule, and the door is locked behind them. At the sound of the unmerciful bolts clacking, Nellie's heart gives a sharp twinge.

TILLIE MAYARD

We are shut up in the madhouse.

Timidly they follow the nurse up the long uncarpeted hall to a room filled by so-called crazy women.

MISS GRUPE

Sit down.

Some of the patients kindly make room for them. The patients look at the new arrivals curiously. One comes up to Nellie, a young, kindly looking short haired woman, BRIDGET MCGUINNESS.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

Who sent you here?

NELLIE BLY

The doctors.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

(persisting)

What for?

NELLIE BLY

Well, they say I am insane.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

(incredulous)

Insane! It cannot be seen in your face.

Nellie is slightly panicked that she will be revealed.

MISS GRUPE

Come with me to see the doctor.

Nellie, glad to be removed from this clever patient stands with the others, follows Miss Grupe down a long corridor.

57 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT 57

Miss Grupe leaves them in a small waiting room at the end of the hall, while she goes into a small office. Miss Grupe reappears before them all smiles.

MISS GRUPE  
Come here, Tillie Mayard.

Miss Mayard obeys.

58 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT 58

Tillie enters to find DR. KINIER behind his desk. He doesn't look up at first, writing in a book.

TILLIE MAYARD  
I had recently been ill. It lasted so long I suffered from nervous debility. But I only had fevered thinking while I was ill. I do not belong here. I have recovered.

DR. KINIER  
I will decide your diagnosis.

TILLIE MAYARD  
Please try all your tests for insanity if you have any. I do not belong here.

DR. KINIER  
Everyone who enters here makes that claim.

TILLIE MAYARD  
Please give me justice.

Dr. Kinier finally looks up at her.

DR. KINIER  
Justice? Justice refers to the law. You talk as if you are entering a prison. This is a hospital. We are here to help you.

TILLIE MAYARD  
Please I beg you.

DR. KINIER  
You need not worry, Miss Mayard. We will get you the help you need.

59 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

59

Without one word of sympathy or encouragement Tillie is brought back to the group. She sits by Nellie.

NELLIE BLY

Poor girl. How my heart ached for you!

TILLIE MAYARD

I am so frightened. He didn't listen to me at all.

NELLIE BLY

I will try by every means to be of benefit to you.

TILLIE MAYARD

What can you do?

Nellie catches herself. Anne overhears what Nellie says and also finds it to be an odd statement.

MISS GRUPE

Mrs. Louise Schanz.

60 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

60

Mrs. Louise Schanz is taken into the presence of Dr. Kinier.

DR. KINIER

Your name?

LOUISE SCHANZ

Ich nicht sprechen Englisch.

DR. KINIER

(loudly )

Mrs. Louise Schanz?

LOUISE SCHANZ

Yah. Yah. Ich bin Mrs. Schanz.

DR. KINIER

Mrs. Schanz I am going to ask you some questions. Do you understand?

(pause)

Miss Grupe. You are German. Speak to her for me.

MISS GRUPE

I can only understand but a few words of my mother tongue.

(CONTINUED)

DR. KINIER

You know you speak German. Ask this woman what her husband does.

They both laughed as if they are enjoying a joke.

MISS GRUPE

I can't speak but a few words.

DR. KINIER

Give it a try.

MISS GRUPE

Was ist dein Ehegatte von Beruf?

LOUISE SCHANZ

Er is Kunstler.

MISS GRUPE

Her husband is a -- a craftsman.

DR. KINIER

(with a laugh)

Now, what was the use of lying to me?

MISS GRUPE

I can't speak any more.

DR. KINIER

Very well. Mrs. Louise Schanz is admitted to Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum.

Her voice broken by sobs, Louise Schanz, unheard, is led out by Miss Grupe.

61 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

61

The women are shocked at how easily Mrs. Schanz is committed. Mrs. Schanz sits next to Nellie, who puts her arm around her on one side and Tillie takes her hand on the other.

MISS GRUPE

Mrs. Fox.

Mrs. Fox follows Miss Grupe into the doctor's office.

NELLIE BLY

(quietly)

How can she be consigned to the asylum without a chance of making herself understood?.

Mrs. Fox comes out an expression of shock.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

MISS GRUPE  
Anne Neville.

62 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT 62

Anne is seated before Dr. Kinier.

DR. KINIER  
Can you tell me your name?

ANNE NEVILLE  
Yes.

DR. KINIER  
Well, what is it?

ANNE NEVILLE  
You don't know or are you seeing if I  
know?

He looks at her a hard moment then writes something down.

ANNE NEVILLE (CONT'D)  
What are you writing?

DR. KINIER  
You leave that to me. I ask the  
questions.

She slumps back in her chair.

ANNE NEVILLE  
Anne Neville.

63 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT 63

Miss Grupe comes out of the doctor's office with Anne, who  
lacks surprise at her commitment.

MISS GRUPE  
Nellie Brown, the doctor wants you.

Nellie rises.

64 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT 64

Nellie enters with Miss Grupe behind her.

MISS GRUPE  
Sit down.

Nellie sits opposite Dr. Kinier at the desk. Miss Grupe takes  
away Nellie's Hat, shawl and gloves.

(CONTINUED)

DR. KINIER  
(without looking up)  
What is your name?

NELLIE BLY  
Nellie Brown.

He writes what she says in a large book.

DR. KINIER  
Where is your home?

NELLIE BLY  
In Cuba.

DR. KINIER  
What's the color of her eyes?

Miss Grupe looks.

MISS GRUPE  
Gray.

DR. KINIER  
What's your age?

NELLIE BLY  
Nineteen, last May.

DR. KINIER  
(to nurse Grupe)  
When do you get your next pass?

MISS GRUPE  
(with a laugh)  
Next Saturday is my next day off.

DR. KINIER  
You will go to town?

MISS GRUPE  
(Miss Grupe laughs)  
Ya.

DR. KINIER  
Measure her.

Miss Grupe stands Nellie under a measure, which is brought down tightly on her head.

DR. KINIER (CONT'D)  
What is it?

MISS GRUPE

Now you know I can't tell.

DR. KINIER

Yes, you can. Go ahead. What height?

MISS GRUPE

I don't know; there are some figures there, but I can't tell.

DR. KINIER

Yes, you can. Now look and tell me.

MISS GRUPE

I can't. Do it yourself.

They laugh again as the doctor leaves his place at the desk and comes forward to see for himself.

DR. KINIER

Five feet five inches. Don't you see?

He takes her hand and touches the figures.

MISS GRUPE

(not really understanding  
the numbers, flirting)

Oh yes. I see now.

The doctor finds pleasure in aiding her.

DR. KINIER

Now put her on the scale and weigh her.

The doctor resumes his position behind the desk. Miss Grupe puts Nellie on the scales. She works around until she gets them to balance.

DR. KINIER (CONT'D)

How much?

MISS GRUPE

I don't know. You will have to see for yourself, Robert.

DR. KINIER

You are getting too fresh!

They both laugh. He comes to her aid and again takes her hand and touches the numbers.

DR. KINIER (CONT'D)  
pounds. What time are you going to  
supper?

MISS GRUPE  
Seven O'clock.

The doctor returns to his desk and writes something in his  
book.

DR. KINIER  
(referring to Nellie)  
That will do. I'm finished with her.

Miss Grupe places her hand on Nellie's shoulder.

NELLIE BLY  
I am not sick and I do not want to stay  
here.

He takes no notice of her remarks, completes his writings.

DR. KINIER  
That will do Miss Grupe.

Miss Grupe half forces Nellie to her feet.

NELLIE BLY  
No one has a right to shut me up in this  
manner.

Nellie is led into a a long, bare room, with benches  
encircling it. Barred windows face two double doors. Bare  
white walls are somewhat relieved by a series of lithographs.  
In the center of the room is a large table covered with a  
white cloth. Around it sits the nurses. Everything is  
spotlessly clean.

Nellie sits on a bench next to Tillie and Anne. Mrs. Cotter,  
a pretty, delicate woman is on another bench. Mrs. Fox is at  
the window. MATILDA, a small lady with a pretty pink  
complexion and who went insane over the loss of money, talks  
into the steam-heater railing at the lawyers who had taken  
her property.

Miss McCarten snatches a book from Bridget McGuinness.

MISS MCCARTEN  
Give me that. No reading. Where did you  
get that?

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

I found it on the table.

MISS MCCARTEN

(examining the book)

This belongs to the nurses. If I catch you touching the nurse's thing again you will spend the day in the quiet room.

Bridget cowers. Miss McCarten moves away.

ANNE NEVILLE

They won't let us read?

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

No. Nothing that excites our minds to fevered thinking. There are women who have been committed here for excessive reading.

ANNE NEVILLE

For reading too much. That is ridiculous.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

You are too loud. They will hear you.

MRS. COTTER

(to Nellie)

My husband is going to take me out of here.

NELLIE BLY

Hello. I am Nellie Brown.

MRS. COTTER

I am Mrs. Cotter. My husband, Benny is coming to take me home. When he finds out the way they treat us in here, he won't stand for it. He's coming to get me.

NELLIE BLY

He sounds like a very nice man.

MRS. COTTER

And smart too. A head for business. I worked with him until I fell ill after my brother died in my arms.

NELLIE BLY

Oh, I'm so sorry.

MISS MCCARTEN

Keep quiet ladies. Chatter and gossip gets you worked up.

Miss Grupe sees Mrs. Fox staring window.

MISS GRUPE

Fox, get away from the window. There's nothing for you out there.

MRS. FOX

Of that I am sure.

Mrs. Fox returns to another bench.

TILLIE MAYARD

(quietly, referring to the old fashioned piano)

Do you play the piano?

NELLIE BLY

Yes, Ever since I was a child.

TILLIE MAYARD

Play something for me.

ANNE NEVILLE

Oh yes. Play.

Nellie gets up and seats herself at the piano. She strikes a few notes. The un-tuned response sends a grinding chill through her.

NELLIE BLY

(to nurse McCarten, who stands at her side)

How horrible. I never touched a piano as much out of tune.

MISS MCCARTEN

(spitefully)

It's a pity. We'll have to get one made to order for you.

Nellie plays a variation of "Home Sweet Home." The talking ceases and every patient sits silent, while her cold fingers move slowly and stiffly over the keyboard. MISS MCCARTEN comes up to Nellie.

MISS MCCARTEN (CONT'D)

(roughly)

Get away from here.

(CONTINUED)

Miss McCarten closes the piano with a bang, almost catching Nellie's fingers. Nellie stands and Miss McCarten moves away.

COOK  
(off screen, yelling)  
Come into the hall!

MISS GRUPE  
Go out into the hall.

Bridget McGuinness sees the new arrival's look of worry.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS  
It is an invitation to supper.

The patients shuffle into the hall.

66 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - HALLWAY - NIGHT

66

Nellie and the patients crowd into a hallway where all the windows are open. Chilling wind whistles through. The women shiver and cradle themselves, lost and hopeless as they move along. Mrs. O'Keefe begins nudging Nellie with winks and noddings of the head.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS  
She's quite mad.

67 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - MESS HALL - NIGHT

67

Once inside, a rush is made for the tables, which reach the length of the room and are uncovered and uninviting. Long benches have been put for the patients to sit on. Nellie sits. Placed close together all along the table are large dressing-bowls filled with a pinkish-looking liquid.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS  
It's tea.

NELLIE BLY  
It doesn't look like any tea I have ever seen.

By each bowl is a piece of bread, cut thick and buttered. A small saucer containing five prunes accompanies the bread.

A patient, URENA LITTLE-PAGE grabs Nellie's bread and leaves her without any. A patient with poise, JOSEPHINE DESPREAU, sees it and holds out her own bread.

JOSEPHINE DESPREAU  
You may have my bread.

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

Thank you kindly but I will ask the nurse.

(to Miss McCarten)

Excuse my please, but I may I have a second piece of bread.

Miss McCarten takes a piece of bread from the main serving bowl and slams a thick piece down on the table.

MISS GRUPE

If you forgot where your home is you have not forgotten how to eat.

Nellie bites into the bread, but the butter is so horrible that she cannot eat it. She pulls the bread from her mouth.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

You can have bread unbuttered if you wish.

A fair-complexioned woman, MARY HUGHES adds --

MARY HUGHES

Very few are able to eat the butter.

Nellie turns her attention to the prunes. They are covered in mold. Nellie tastes one and is repulsed. She lays them down on the table. Sarah Fishbaum eyes Nellie's prunes.

SARAH FISHBAUM

Give them to me. I will eat them if you aren't going to.

Nellie slides them toward Sarah, who scoops them up. Nellie's bowl of tea is all that is left. She tastes it and spits it back into the bowl.

NELLIE BLY

Ohh -- It tastes like copper.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

You must force the food down. Else you will be sick.

NELLIE BLY

It is impossible for me to eat that stuff.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

To have a good brain the stomach must be cared for.

(CONTINUED)

Anne picks tiny bits off her bread and placed them into her mouth, chewing slowly. Nellie looks around and sees Louise Schanz staring out far away, her face filled with unbearable sadness. She leaves her food untouched. Mrs. Fox attempts to hand her the bowl of tea, but Louise shakes her head.

68 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

68

The patients are back in the sitting room. Miss Grupe sits at the Nurse's table where a rather lavish spread of fresh fruits, apples, grapes, crackers, cheeses and nice meats are on a tray in the center. Miss Grupe is eating with disregard for some of the patients who are fixed on the food spread. Anne is sitting sideways with her feet up on her bench. Tillie sits near Nellie on a nearby bench. Louise Schanz sits by herself, lost in melancholy thought. Miss McCarten sweeps through and slaps Anne's legs, knocking them off the bench.

MISS MCCARTEN

Feet off the bench. Sit up straight.

TILLIE MAYARD

Won't you play the piano again.

NELLIE BLY

I don't think that is a good idea.

TILLIE MAYARD

If you play I shall sing.

MISS MCCARTEN

Yes, play Brown. I didn't clip your fingers earlier so I am sure they still work.

Nellie goes to the piano and begins to play "Rock-a-bye Baby." Tillie sings along, and in spite of the ill tuned piano, sings it beautifully. Miss Grady enters and Nellie stops playing.

MISS GRUPE

Everyone is to come with me.

The patients rise.

69 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - BATHROOM - NIGHT

69

Nellie in the front, the patients are brought into a cold, wet bathroom. Miss Grady is in the center of the room, waiting by a single metal bathtub. Standing next to her, is an OBVIOUSLY MAD WOMAN with a discolored rag in her hand. She is chattering away to herself and chuckling in a manner which seems fiendish.

(CONTINUED)

MISS GRUPE

Line up. Form a single line.

Miss McCarten herds the women as they line up behind Nellie. Tillie is next in line behind her.

MISS GRUPE (CONT'D)

Brown, undress.

NELLIE BLY

I think I shall not. I have never bathed in this manner in front of others. And it is too cold for a bath tonight. Why can we not take a bath in the daytime when it is warm.

Nellie shivers, makes no move to comply.

MISS GRADY

Miss Grupe, Miss McCarten.

The women are on Nellie and drag her to the tub. They begin to undress her, and one by one they pull off her clothes. At last everything is gone except one garment. They begin to remove it and Nellie struggles with them.

NELLIE BLY

(vehemently)

I will not remove it.

In spite of her attempts to protect her modesty, Nellie's undergarment is removed. Nellie, glances at the other patients watching the scene and jumps into the bathtub with more energy than grace.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

The water is ice cold. I cannot stand it. It is so cold.

MISS GRUPE

Shut up.

The crazy woman begins to furiously scrub her. From a small tin pan she takes some soft soap and rubs it all over Nellie, even all over her face. Rub, rub, rub, goes the old woman, chattering to herself. Nellie's teeth chatter and her limbs are goose-fleshed and blue with cold. The woman begins to scrub the soap into Nellie's Scalp.

NELLIE BLY

Oh on. Not my hair! Please leave my hair untouched. Please not my hair.

(CONTINUED)

MISS GRUPE

Shut up!

In spite of her protests, soap is forced through her hair, drenching it thoroughly. Nellie is at last past seeing or speaking as suddenly she gets, one after the other, three buckets of water over her head - ice cold water, into her eyes, her ears, her nose and her mouth. Nellie experiences some of the sensations of a drowning person as they drag her, gasping, shivering and quaking, from the tub.

For once Nellie does look insane. Nellie catches a glance of the indescribable look on the faces of her companions, who are witnessing her fate and know theirs is surely following. Unable to control herself at the absurd picture she presents, she bursts into roars of laughter.

They put her, dripping wet, into a short cotton flannel slip, labeled across the extreme end in large black letters, "Lunatic Asylum, B. I., H. 6." The letters mean Blackwell's Island, Hall 6. Nellie is moved to the far side of the room.

MISS GRUPE (CONT'D)

Wait here.

This time without asking, the nurses grab Tillie and roughly undress her.

TILLIE MAYARD

I am ill. I have been sick with a cough  
in my chest. I cannot get into cold  
water.

Tillie is forced to the tub and against her struggling, lifted and plunged into the water. She reacts violently as she tries to climb out and they force her back in. Pushing her down into the water again and again.

TILLIE MAYARD (CONT'D)

Please, I cannot withstand this  
treatment.

Anne, from her side of the room, and Nellie from hers are angered and deeply concerned for Tillie. Mrs. Fox is so disturbed she looks away. The mad woman begins scrubbing Tillie's hair.

TILLIE MAYARD (CONT'D)

Please. Please be gentle. My head is  
still sore from my illness. My hair has  
been falling out.

MISS GRUPE

There isn't much fear of hurting you.  
Shut up, or you'll get it worse.

A bucket of ice water is poured over Tillie's head.

TILLIE MAYARD

Oh no. Stop this. You must stop this at  
once. I cannot take it. I tell you I am  
ill.

Nellie can't take it. She steps forward.

NELLIE BLY

Can no one hear her? She is ill. She is  
not well enough for ice cold water.

Anne and some other patients begin to move forward to support  
Nellie's protest. Miss Grady sees it and nods to Miss  
McCarten, who takes Nellie by her arm and leads her out of  
the room.

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - ROOM 28 - NIGHT

Nellie is roughly pulled into room 28. There is absolutely  
nothing in the room but a bed.

NELLIE BLY

I am still wet from the bath. Could I not  
have a nightgown?

MISS GRUPE

We have not such things in this  
institution.

NELLIE BLY

I do not like to sleep without it.

MISS GRUPE

Well, I don't care about that. You are in  
a public institution now, and you can't  
expect to get anything. This is charity.  
And you should be thankful for what you  
get.

NELLIE BLY

But the city pays to keep these places up  
-- And pays people to be kind to the  
unfortunates brought here.

MISS GRUPE

Well, you don't need to expect any  
kindness here, for you won't get it.

(CONTINUED)

Miss Grupe shoves Nellie toward the bed and before she finishes stumbling, the door is slammed and locked. Nellie turns back as the keys finish clanking in the tumbler, then turns to her bed. It is worse than the one at Bellevue. The bed is clearly uneven, high in the center and sloping on either side. Nellie lays down, trying to form her body around the lumpy center. At the first touch her head floods the pillow with water, and her wet slip transfers some of its dampness to the sheet.

Nellie sits up and wrings her hair. Water pours out of it.

Nellie lies back down and pulls the rough wool blanket around her. It is too short and doesn't cover her legs and feet. She pulls her feet up making a fetal position to be covered by the blanket. Nellie tries to rest.

71 INT. DREAM/FLASHBACK - MARY JANE'S HOUSE 1878 - NIGHT 71

Nellie's back in her childhood at the table with her mother Mary Jane, her siblings and her stepfather, Jack Ford.

PINK

You ain't my papa. He was a good man.

Ford lashes out, grabs Pink by the wrist. Disgusted, terrified, Pink lunges to her feet, pulling Ford across his hot bowl of stew. In a sharp reaction, he violently flips the table over, sending the dinner fixings flying everywhere. The children scream. Mary Jane does her best to pull them out of the way of the now raging Ford as he lunges at Pink.

MARY JANE

No Jack. Pink's just a child.

Mary Jane catches him around the waist. The two topple over into a chair, breaking it into kindling.

As Ford and Mary Jane struggle on the floor, Pink rounds up the horrified children, quickly ushers them to the stair case.

PINK

Go on upstairs. Go to your room now.

72 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - ROOM 28 - LATER - NIGHT 72

Nellie awakens, listening to the nighttime cries and moans of insane patients.

A CRYING WOMAN'S voice punches out above the rest bringing horror to Nellie's soul. Her agony is like a glimpse of the inferno.

CRYING WOMAN

I am damned! I am damned for all eternity!

Nellie hears the sound of the heavy tread of two women down the hall. They stop at every door, loudly unlock it, and in a few moments Nellie can hear them re-lock it without the least attempt at quietness down the whole length of the opposite side of the hall and up to her room.

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - BATHROOM - DAY

Nellie and patients enter the bathroom. An orderly brings a bench in. Miss Grupe and Miss McCarten come in with combs.

MISS GRADY

Sit on the benches.

Amongst the first group are women with sores on the heads. The nurses roughly and quickly comb through the women's hair and send them off. Each time calling out --

MISS GRADY (CONT'D)

Next.

Miss Tillie approaches with her own comb - tortoise shell.

TILLIE MAYARD

I have my own comb.

MISS GRADY

Let me have it.

Tillie hands the comb to Miss Grady.

TILLIE MAYARD

It belonged to my grandmother.

Without a word about the comb, Miss Grady pockets it.

MISS GRADY

Sit down.

TILLIE MAYARD

Excuse me, but that comb was given to me as a girl. My mother used to give me a combing with it.

MISS GRADY

I'll give you a combing. Now sit down.

Tillie sits. Miss Grady roughly combs through Tillie's hair.

MISS MCCARTEN

Next.

Nellie's turn. She sits. Miss McCarten starts in on Nellie's hair all matted and wet from the night previous as it is pulled and jerked. Thick strands of hair come out with each pass.

NELLIE BLY

Ow. Ow.

MISS MCCARTEN

Shut up.

Nellie sets her teeth and endures the pain.

NELLIE BLY

May I have hairpins?

MISS MCCARTEN

No.

Miss McCarten arranges Nellie's hair in one plait and ties it with a red cotton rag. Nellie's curly bangs refuse to stay back, so that at least is left of her former glory.

NELLIE BLY

Might we be given additional clothing?

MISS MCCARTEN

Shut up.

NELLIE BLY

At least as much as custom says women shall wear? It is so very cold here.

MISS GRADY

You have as much as we intend to give you.

Nellie, Anne, Louise, and Mrs. Cotter are waiting quietly on benches as Dr. Dent enters with a small group of dignitaries.

DR. DENT

And here gentlemen, patient wait in transfer areas such as these until the staff can be allocated to move them on to their daily activities. Anne scoffs. Dent's eyes dart to here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Nellie subtly signals to Anne with her eyes to be careful.

CITY OFFICIAL 1

When was Blackwell's first opened?

DR. DENT

The facility was opened in 1839 and was quickly overrun with patients. It has been in continuous operation since then. Blackwell's was designed by the famed architect, Alexander Jackson Davis. The facility is constructed of granite reflecting feudal-style architecture with its fortress-like appearance. It stands six hundred feet long. With the proper funding and guidance, the facility will one day be a utopian example of the most advanced treatment of the insane.

A large rat scurries across in front of Dr. Dent's tour. A nurse chases the rat, the dignitaries squeal, and one of them faints.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

We have worked miracles with the limited funding available to us but now you can see why we need additional funding. Please, Come this way. As they leave, Dr. Dent looks back around a corner, we see a smiling janitor standing there.

ANGLE ON

The janitor's hands behind his back. He has another rat in a small cage.

Dr. Dent smiles at the janitor and walks on.

Nellie is brought to the sitting-room. She looks for her companions. She recognizes Miss and sits next to her. Anne sits on a bench opposite them. MATILDA talks at her lawyers in the steam-heater.

NELLIE BLY

How did you sleep after your cold bath?

TILLIE MAYARD

I almost froze, and then the noise kept me awake. It's dreadful!

(MORE)

TILLIE MAYARD (CONT'D)

My nerves were so unstrung before I came here, and I fear I shall not be able to stand the strain.

NELLIE BLY

You must keep your spirits up. You never know what is to come and if you give up, the good may arrive and you will not know it.

TILLIE MAYARD

You are right, of course. Before I lost my health, I was always the one to rally everyone.

NELLIE BLY

That is precisely who you are. Illness cannot not take away your essential nature.

Miss Grupe places her focus on Matilda talking into the steam-heater.

MISS GRUPE

Matilda. Matilda. I know who really took your money.

MATILDA

Get on.

MISS GRADY

I tell you I know who has taken your money.

MATILDA

Who then? Who do you say has my money?

MISS GRADY

Come close and I will tell you.

MATILDA

Who then? Who? Please tell me so I can collect my money and pay my way out of this place.

MISS GRADY

It is Nurse McCarten. You must go to her and tell her she is a thieving whore and you want your money or you will gouge her eyes out. Go now and tell her.

Miss Grady pushes Matilda toward Miss McCarten.

MATILDA

Miss McCarten?

MISS MCCARTEN

Yes, Matilda?

MATILDA

I cannot tell you. It is private.

MISS MCCARTEN

Nothing is private here, Matilda.

MATILDA

Very well then. Nurse Grady says that she is a thieving whore.

Nurses and patients in earshot laugh, including Miss Grupe. Miss Grady's eye's flash repressed rage.

MISS GRADY

Matilda! Come here to me at once.

Matilda, pleased with herself proudly returns to Miss Grady. Miss Grady leans over close to whisper, instead spits in her ear. Matilda quietly wipes her ear and says nothing.

MISS GRADY (CONT'D)

Now return to your radiator. The lawyers who stole your estate are in there waiting for you to give them a piece of your mind.

An attendant enters, hands McCarten a note. She reads it.

MISS MCCARTEN

Nellie Brown. Come with me.

Nellie rises and follows Miss McCarten.

NELLIE BLY

Where am being taken?

MISS MCCARTEN

A judge has sent reporters here asking questions about you. So you have caught the eye of Dr. Ingram. He wishes to speak with you.

Anne hears this and looks puzzled at Nellie.

76 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALLWAY - DAY\*

76

Nellie is being marched down the hall by Miss McCarten. They pass Dr. Dent and Dr. Kinier who stand close together talking in whispers. Both stare at Nellie as she passes. Their gaze makes her uneasy.

DR. DENT

What do you know about her?

DR. KINIER

Not much. She's arrogant and a trouble maker.

DR. DENT

Is she responding to treatment?

DR. KINIER

We have her on Laudanum.

DR. DENT

Increase the dosage.

DR. KINIER

Is that wise? Remember Arena Pugh?

DR. DENT

(ironic)

She's a patient here. We have to take care of her. We should give her the best treatment the state can afford.

DR. KINIER

(getting his drift)

Yes superintendent.

77 INT. BLACKWELL'S - DR. INGRAM'S OFFICE - DAY

77

Nellie sits before DR. INGRAM, a handsome kindly looking man.

DR. INGRAM

Hello, Miss Brown. I am Dr. Ingram.

NELLIE BLY

Do you wish me to stick out my tongue and hold out my hands?

DR. INGRAM

No. That will not be necessary this time. How are you sleeping?

NELLIE BLY

How would you sleep locked in here?

(CONTINUED)

Dr. Ingram nods and writes something in a book.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

What is expected of me?

DR. INGRAM

Nothing. I am here to help you.

NELLIE BLY

Help me?

DR. INGRAM

Yes. Is there something troubling you that you would like to talk about?

NELLIE BLY

Yes. There is actually. In case a fire should break out in the asylum. Every door is locked separately and the windows are heavily barred, so that escape is impossible. How many patients are in my building?

DR. INGRAM

Some three hundred.

NELLIE BLY

And they are locked, one to ten to a room. It is impossible to get out unless these doors are unlocked. A fire is not improbable, but one of the most likely occurrences.

DR. INGRAM

The nurses are expected to open the doors.

NELLIE BLY

But you know positively that they would not wait to do that. Should the building burn, the jailers or nurses would never think of releasing their crazy patients. Not a dozen women could escape. These women will be left to roast to death.

He sits silent, unable to contradict her assertion.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

Why don't you have it changed?

DR. INGRAM

What can I do? I offer suggestions until my brain is tired. What good does it do?

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

Unless there is a change there will some day be a tale of horror never equaled.

DR. INGRAM

What would you do -- a proclaimed insane girl.

NELLIE BLY

Well, I should insist on them having locks put in, as I have seen in some places, that by turning a crank at the end of the hall you can lock or unlock every door on the one side. Then there would be some chance of escape. Now, every door being locked separately, there is absolutely none.

Dr. Ingram turns to her with an anxious look on his kind face as he asks, slowly --

DR. INGRAM

Nellie Brown, what institution have you been an inmate of before you came here?

NELLIE BLY

None. I never was confined in any institution, except boarding-school, in my life.

DR. INGRAM

Where then did you see the locks you have described?

NELLIE BLY

Oh, I have seen them in a place I was in-- I mean as a visitor.

DR. INGRAM

There is only one place I know of where they have those locks -- and that is at Sing Sing. And the only ones entering Sing Sing besides inmates are guards, lawyers and reporters.

NELLIE BLY

(laughing)

I assure you that I had never, up to date, been an inmate of Sing Sing or even ever visited it.

78

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - DAY

78

Nellie re-enters the sitting room and sits next to Tillie again as MARGARET MCCARTNEY, a nice looking girl immaculately dressed, is brought in by orderlies. Miss Grady meets them and signs papers. The orderlies leave.

MISS GRADY

Wait there on the bench while we get you set up with a room and a proper gown.

Margaret sits next to Nellie and Tillie, looks around. The other patients are whispering and curious about her perfect dress, hair and form. Miss Grady leaves.

NELLIE BLY

I am Nellie Brown.

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

Margaret.

TILLIE MAYARD

Tillie Mayard.

NELLIE BLY

Why were you brought here?

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

I was a cook. I am extremely clean like my mama always taught me. One day, after I had scrubbed the kitchen floor, the chambermaids came down and deliberately soiled it. My temper was aroused and I began to quarrel with them. A police officer was called and I was taken to an asylum. I had been there some time before they transferred me here.

NELLIE BLY

Were you given a chance to plead your case?

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

No. How can they say I am insane, merely because I allowed my temper to run away with me? Other people are not shut up for crazy when they get angry.

Miss Grady returns with a gown. Miss Grupe is with her.

MISS GRUPE

Brown, Mayard, leave us.

(CONTINUED)

Nellie and Tillie stand and walk away as told. Anne remains on the nearby bench and watches.

MISS GRADY

Put this on.

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

What? Here?

When Nellie and Tillie get out of their line of vision, they turn back. There is tension in the air.

MISS GRADY

You left modesty in the outside world. In Blackwell's we have nothing to hide.

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

I will not. It is not dignified. And that rag is soiled. I will not let that dirty thing near me.

Without another word, Miss Grady, Miss Grupe and Miss McCarten forcefully begin removing Margaret's clothing. Margaret fights back, struggling for all she is worth. Anne comes to her feet and Nellie is suddenly at her side clutching her arm to stop her as two large orderlies rush to assist the nurses.

Miss Grady punches Margaret squarely in the eye and the poor girl goes limp as they finish ripping away her clothing and place the dirty gown on her. Margaret doesn't fight back as they force her to her feet. She looks broken, confused. Miss Grupe scoops up Margaret's torn clothing as the patients look away.

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - ROOM 28 - NIGHT

Nellie lies in her bed awake as keys jingle in the lock. The door swings open. Miss Grupe enters, accompanied by a large orderly. She is carrying a large glass of clear liquid.

MISS GRUPE

Brown, sit up.

Nellie sits up, places her feet on the floor. Miss Grupe holds out the glass.

MISS GRUPE (CONT'D)

Drink this.

Nellie doesn't take the glass.

NELLIE BLY

What is it?

MISS GRUPE

Something to help you sleep.

NELLIE BLY

What's in it?

MISS GRUPE

It is laudanum.

NELLIE BLY

Is that not a an opium mixture?

MISS GRUPE

Yes. It will help you sleep.

NELLIE BLY

I am not going to drink opium.

MISS GRUPE

It has been ordered by the doctor. You must drink it.

NELLIE BLY

I will do nothing of the sort.

Dr. Kinier enters.

DR. KINIER

Hello, Miss Brown. I understand you are refusing your medication.

NELLIE BLY

It is opium. I do not wish to take opium.

DR. KINIER

Nearly all the patients take it. It will help you sleep at night.

NELLIE BLY

I am not going to take it. I do not intend to lose my wits even for a few hours.

Dr. Kinier takes the glass from Miss Grupe and holds in front of Nellie's face.

DR. KINIER

You have wasted too much time already. If you do not take it I will put it into your arm with a needle.

(CONTINUED)

Nellie thinks a hard moment, then takes the glass. smells it.

NELLIE BLY  
It smells horrible.

DR. KINIER  
It may be so. But I insist you drink it  
all the same.

Nellie drinks the glass down as quickly as she can and hands it back to him. He in turn hands it to Miss Grupe.

DR. KINIER (CONT'D)  
Now that wasn't so bad, was it?

Nellie belches and daintily puts her hand to her mouth. The doctor and his entourage exit and lock the door. No sooner are they gone, but that Nellie drops to floor, flat on her stomach. She positions her face over the drain. Without hesitation, she sticks her finger down her throat as far as it will go and vomits the liquid down the drain. When she is finished, she rolls onto her back, falls asleep.

80 INT. DREAM/FLASHBACK - MARY JANE'S HOUSE 1878 - NIGHT 80

Ford and Mary Jane have half come their feet. Ford is out of control, slapping her repeatedly. Pink takes up the broken back of the chair, jabs it as hard as she can into Fords kidneys. He cries out, throwing Mary Jane to the floor, turns his focus on Pink.

He makes one drunken lunge at Pink who steps out of his way. He plows forward into the writing desk. The lock pops and the roll top flips open with a powerful crack, revealing Ford's revolver. Mary Jane sees it, sees Ford's focus on it, races toward him. He takes up his pistol, spins around. Mary Jane stops mid-stride as he points the gun at her face.

81 EXT. BLACKWELL'S - PATIENT YARD - DAY 81

The doors open. Out-pour the patients of hall 6. Some have shawls. Nellie sees Anne. They gravitate together.

ANNE NEVILLE  
We look like bathers at Coney Island.

Miss Grupe, Miss McCarten form the patients into lines.

MISS GRUPE  
Form a line - two by two. Stay on the  
walks. Stay off the grass.

(CONTINUED)

As they begin their walk Nellie notices Bridget McGuinness walking in front of her.

NELLIE BLY

Why did you come here?

BRIDGET MCGUINESS

I was sick.

NELLIE BLY

Are you sick mentally?

BRIDGET MCGUINESS

Oh, no. What gave you such an idea? I had been overworking myself, and I broke down. Having some family trouble, and being penniless and nowhere to go, I applied to the commissioners to be sent to the poorhouse until I would be able to go to work.

NELLIE BLY

But they do not send poor people here unless they are insane. Don't you know there are only insane women, or those supposed to be so, sent here?

BRIDGET MCGUINESS

I knew after I got here that the majority of these women were insane, but then I believed them when they told me this was the place they sent all the poor who applied for aid as I had done.

NELLIE BLY

How have you been treated?

BRIDGET MCGUINESS

Well, so far I have escaped a beating. Although I have been sickened at the sight of many.

Coming down the walk are a group of fearfully dirty patients tied together by a long cable rope fastened to wide leather belts. Vacant eyes and meaningless faces, their tongues utter nonsense. One woman has on a straightjacket, and the other women have to drag her along. Some are yelling, some are cursing, others are praying. They make up the most miserable collection of humanity.

NELLIE BLY

Who are they?

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

They are the women on the rope. They are considered the most violent on the island. They are from the Lodge, the first building with the high steps.

One woman, nursing a sore foot, screams out at a nurse.

SCREAMING WOMAN

You beat me and I shall not forget it.  
You want to kill me.

One woman turns, looking right at Anne and Nellie, talking and smiling, with a terrible, horrifying look of absolute insanity stamped on her. The horror of the sight is something unspeakable.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

There are many more like that. There are 1600 insane women on Blackwell's Island.

MISS GRADY

Stay off the lawns.

A patient picks up a multi-colored leaf and looks at it pleasantly.

MISS GRUPE

Throw that down. Throw it away. Do not pick things up. Stay off the grass.

NELLIE BLY

What good is the comfort of the grass and leaves to the poor creatures confined here on the island?

Nellie, Bridget and Mrs. Cotter wait in the transfer area. Mrs. Cotter searches the figures out the window.

MRS. COTTER

Is that my husband, Benny, I see?

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

No, Mrs. Cotter. I'm sure it is not your husband.

MRS. COTTER

He's coming to take me out of here.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

I'm sure he is, but that is not him.

83 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - MESS HALL - EVENING

83

Nellie is seated at the table next to Anne and Tillie. The bowls are filled with soup, and on a plate is one cold boiled potato and a chunk of beef. There are no knives or forks. The patients take the tough beef in their fingers and pull against their teeth. A tablespoon is given for the soup.

Nellie investigates the beef. It is blue colored. She brings it close to her nose but quickly places the spoiled meat back on the plate. Urena Little-Page doesn't even ask, just moves it to her plate and begins to eat it. Tillie cannot eat. She is dizzy and turns away in disgust.

ANNE NEVILLE

Eat the bread.

TILLIE MAYARD

I cannot. I'm going to be sick.

Nellie, weak with hunger, heeds Anne's advice and pulling away the outer moldy crust, takes a bite of the inner portion. After the first few bites hunger asserts itself, and she is able to eat all but the crusts of the one slice.

84 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HOLDING AREA - EVENING\*

84

The patients are quiet, near motionless as Miss Grupe and Miss McCarten keep watch over them from the doorway. Nellie casually studies the others. Superintendent Dent enters and passes through amongst the patients.

DR. DENT

(to patients as he passes,  
cold as the hall)

How do you do? I am superintendent  
Dent. How are you today?

Louise Schanz, staring off, suddenly topples over backward and falls, smacking her head on the hard floor. Dr. Dent and the nurses rush to her. He examines her, places his hand on her forehead.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

She has a fever. What is this  
patient's name?

Nurse Grupe is about to answer when --

NELLIE BLY

Her name is Louise Schanz. She  
doesn't belong in here. They took  
her baby away at Bellevue hospital.

Dent studies Nellie an intense moment. Then turns back to the  
other patient.

DR. DENT

Louise. Can you hear me Louise?  
You're alive?

LOUISE SCHANZ

I have been praying for death. The  
spirits of my dead parents are with  
me.

NELLIE BLY

She is suffering from the cold and  
insufficient clothing.

MRS. COTTER

(quietly)  
The nurses will beat you.

DR. DENT

(to the nurses)  
Take her to her room.

The nurses lift Louise to her feet and walk her away. Dent  
turns to Nellie.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

What do you know of Louise Schanz?  
And why do you care?

NELLIE BLY

I know that she is sane and does  
not belong in this place. I know  
that her English is poor and she  
has no way to speak her case to any  
justice.

DR. DENT

I see. And how did you get here?

NELLIE BLY

I have been committed as an insane  
woman in this asylum. I am here  
without hope of release.

(CONTINUED)

DR. DENT

And do you believe you are insane,  
Miss -

NELLIE BLY

Brown, Nellie Brown. No I am not  
insane.

DR. DENT

Of course everyone here says that.  
And you think Mrs. Schanz is being  
persecuted?

NELLIE BLY

No not persecuted, but -

DR. DENT

You said she is wrongfully  
committed here.

NELLIE BLY

Yes, but -

DR. DENT

So you're not insane. Mrs Schanz is  
not insane, is everyone wrongfully  
committed here, Miss Brown?

NELLIE BLY

I can see these patients need help.

DR. DENT

And you, Florence Nightingale, are  
going to help them all? Is that it?

Nellie knows he's trapped her to reveal what she's doing at  
the facility. Nellie stays silent and looks away from Dent.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Delusions such as these can be  
cured with medication. Are they  
dosing you with Laudanum at night?

NELLIE BLY

Yes they force me to drink it every  
night. It's not right.

DR. DENT

(Dent smiles, takes his  
time)

Oh so, now it's not the right  
medication...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

I don't recall seeing a medical degree on your admission papers. Did I miss something? Are you a doctor Miss Brown?

Nellie shakes her head sadly. She dare not answer, lest she dig herself deeper.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

You really must trust me Miss Brown. We will give you what you need for your recovery, we're the doctors here, not you.

(to Miss Grupe)

Tell Dr. Kinier I wish Miss Brown's nightly dose of Laudanum to be increased to one fifty parts per thousand.

MISS GRUPE

Yes doctor.

DR. DENT

(to Nellie)

That should put your mind at rest.

Dr. Dent exits. Miss Grupe looks around the room. The patients all stare at her.

MISS GRUPE

Go on. Mind your business.

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

The patients watch as Dr. Kinier, and THREE OTHER DOCTORS amuse themselves by dancing with the patients as Nellie Bly plays the piano. Clearly she has been compelled to do so. Sarah Fishbaum is lost in the fantasy as she dances with a young doctor. The nurses are enjoying the show. The patients are distressed and on guard. The song finishes and Nellie closes the piano lid.

DR. KINIER

Don't stop Miss Brown. Play another.

Nellie begins another song and the doctors choose patients to dance with. Dr. Kinier approaches Louise Schanz and holds out his hand.

LOUISE SCHANZ

I never learned to dance.

DR. KINIER

It's not that difficult.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE SCHANZ

I said no.

She gets up, moves to another bench. Dr. Kinier turns to Mrs. Fox. She is frightened as he takes her to her feet and dances her around the room. As she passes Nellie, her eyes helplessly plead for relief. Nellie stops playing.

NELLIE BLY

I can do no more. My hands have stove up.

Dr. Kinier, however does not stop dancing with Mrs. Fox.

DR. KINIER

No matter when there is music in one's spirit.

Mrs. Fox looks absolutely terrified as Dr. Kinier dances her silently out of the room. The patients are helpless.

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - ROOM 28 - NIGHT

Miss Grupe and the orderly watch as Nellie downs her Laudanum drink. She hands the glass back to them and they exit and lock the door. Nellie drops to the drain. With her finger she throws up the mixture. The experience takes her strength and she lies a moment over the drain. Suddenly, she hears a weak little cry in the basement. She tries to make sense of the sound. It is still there. She turns her head and listens intently. It is not long until she knows there is a baby down there.

NELLIE BLY

(silently to herself)

A baby!

She listens a moment longer as her senses must be deceiving her. The baby cries again. Nellie throws herself up onto her bed as if hit with electricity. Nellie then crawls into bed. She lies awake, listening to a woman near by crying about the cold.

LOUISE SCHANZ

(crying)

It's so cold -- So cold.

Nellie recognizes the accent and voice.

NELLIE BLY

Louise? Louise Schanz?

LOUISE SCHANZ

Is that Nellie Brown?

NELLIE BLY

Yes. I'm here.

LOUISE SCHANZ

Oh God, it's so cold -- God, let me die,  
please God let me die -- it's so cold.

More distantly a woman screams --

DISTANT SCREAMING WOMAN

Murder! Murder!

LOUISE SCHANZ

(crying)

It's so cold -- Oh God, take me home --

Nellie's flesh feels creepy, she rolls over, drifts off to sleep.

87 INT. DREAM/FLASHBACK - MARY JANE'S HOUSE 1878 - NIGHT 87

Ford and Mary Jane have half come their feet. Ford is out of control, slapping Mary Jane repeatedly. Pink takes up the broken back of the chair, jabs it as hard as she can into Ford's kidneys. He cries out, throwing Mary Jane to the floor, turns his focus on Pink.

He makes one drunken lunge at Pink who steps out of his way. He plows forward into the writing desk. The lock pops and the roll top flips open with a powerful crack, revealing Ford's revolver.

88 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - DAY 88

The patients are back in the sitting room. Nellie enters with Tillie, and Anne. Nellie comes in and sees Miss Grady, standing by the piano with Nellie's note-book.

NELLIE BLY

(anxious)

I want my book. It helps me remember things.

MISS GRADY

You can't have it, so shut up.

NELLIE BLY

Give it back or I shall tell Dr. Ingram.

Miss Grady puts the notebook and pencil in her apron.

MISS GRADY

You had no book and pencil.

NELLIE BLY

I just watched you place it in your apron.

Miss McCarten enters, sees the tension on Nellie's face and comes to Miss Grady's side.

MISS GRADY

I advise you to fight against the imaginations of your brain.

Nellie, sitting on a bench, is surprised to see Miss Grupe and Miss McCarten bring Louise Schanz into the room. Louise is frail and ill. They move her toward a bench. Several patients quickly move away from her.

LOUISE SCHANZ

Oh, what are you doing with me? I am cold, so cold. Why can't I stay in bed or have a shawl?

ANNE NEVILLE

She obviously has fever. They should give her more clothing.

As Miss Grupe and the nurses walk away the cold woman gets up and begins to feebly leave the room. Miss Grupe sees it, walks back and jerks her back to the bench. After a few moments, the shivering Louise gets up again and starts toward the hall. Miss Grupe puts her foot on a bench and slides it in front of Louise, who, shivering, falls over it to the floor, crying out in pain. Miss Grupe and Miss McCarten burst out in laughter. Nellie moves to assist the shivering woman. Miss Grupe stands in her way. Nellie stops, knowing she'll be overpowered. Louise gets up without assistance, and again makes her way. After a few steps, she falls. This time she sits sobbing on the floor.

LOUISE SCHANZ

It is so cold. Please help me.

MISS GRUPE

Get up. Get up off the floor.

Miss Grupe jerks Louise into an upright position, stands above her. Louise sits motionless, sobs to herself.

LOUISE SCHANZ  
 (pitiful)  
 Oh, give me a pillow and pull the  
 covers over me. I am so cold.

Miss Grupe laughs, as do the other nurses. Suddenly, Louise faints dead away. Nurse Grupe attempts to drag her up into a sitting position again, but the woman is unresponsive.

MISS GRUPE  
 (to the other nurses)  
 Come. Take her to the Retreat.

The nurses and orderlies carry Louise away. Nellie glares at Miss Grupe. Miss Grupe exits with the rest.

INT. BLACKWELL'S - DR. DENT'S OFFICE - EVENING\*

Dr. Dent is laboring over budget sheets as Miss Grupe appears at his door with a mischievous smile on her face.

DR. DENT  
 What is it now, Miss Grupe. Miss  
 Grupe pulls Nellie's small notebook  
 from her apron pocket.

MISS GRUPE  
 Two days ago, one of the nurses  
 took this from the patient, Nellie  
 Brown.

DR. DENT  
 Nellie Brown? Let me have it.

Dent stands as Miss Grupe hands the book to him. He studies the pages. Grupe is pleased with herself.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)  
 Has anyone seen this?

MISS GRUPE  
 No, Doctor.

DR. DENT  
 It is very organized and articulate  
 for a mental patient.

MISS GRUPE  
 There is something else, Doctor.

DR. DENT  
 Well?

MISS GRUPE

A Reporter is here asking to speak with Nellie Brown.

DR. DENT

A reporter? It's the fault of that meddling judge who sent her here. Dent points to a copy of The World Newspaper lying on his desk.

CLOSE ON

An article headline reads; The mystery of the girl with amnesia.

DR. DENT

Well, we can't deny him access to her. That would only create a sensational story. Let him meet with her, but make sure they are never out of close sight of the nursing staff.

MISS GRUPE

Yes doctor.

DR. DENT

And if she should say anything - anything that might be harmful to this institution, see that she is cut off.

MISS GRUPE

But of course, doctor.

DR. DENT

Also, tell Dr. Ingram to come see me.

MISS GRUPE

Yes, doctor.

Miss Grupe exits. Dr. Dent returns to Nellie's book.

The HEAD COOK enters with a tray of raisins, grapes, apples, crackers, jams and sweet meats. She carries the tray to the Nurse's table where Miss Grady, Miss Grupe and Miss McCarten sit in coats. The nurses begin eating a dream of luxury. Tillie sits on a bench next to Nellie and is livid with the cold. Her limbs shake and her teeth chatter.

NELLIE BLY

You must keep your spirits up.

Tillie looks at Nellie and does her best to smile. Nellie gets up and approaches Miss Grady, Miss Grupe and Miss McCarten.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

It is cruel to lock people up and then freeze them.

MISS GRUPE

She has as much as any of the rest.  
She'll get no more.

Just then Miss Mayard takes a fit. Every patient looks frightened. Anne catches her in her arms and holds her.

MISS GRUPE (CONT'D)

Let her fall on the floor and it will teach her a lesson.

ANNE NEVILLE

You are monstrous and cruel to treat her this way. Can you not see she is suffering and in need of care?

Just then a man appears at the doorway.

ASYLUM CLERK

Miss Nellie Brown?

The nurses rush to help Tillie, as if intending to all along.

ASYLUM CLERK (CONT'D)

Is there a Miss Nellie Brown in this ward?

NELLIE BLY

I am Nellie Brown.

ASYLUM CLERK

I have orders to escort you to the Assistant Superintendent's office.

NELLIE BLY

She needs medical help.

Nellie Angrily leaves Tillie's side, storms to the man.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

Take me then.

As Nellie reaches the office, Dr. Ingram stands.

NELLIE BLY

You must send help for a patient, Miss Tillie Mayard. She is having a fit from the cold and the nurses are not calling for a doctor. They are doing nothing to help her.

DR. INGRAM

Please calm yourself Miss Brown.

(to the assistant)

See that Dr. Kinier is dispatched to Miss Tillie Mayard at once.

ASYLUM CLERK

Yes sir.

The assistant exits.

DR. INGRAM

There. See. She will be helped. Now please calm yourself.

NELLIE BLY

(nearly incoherent anger)

I will not. We are all suffering from the cold. The cold is so bad it sent Miss Mayard into a fit. The poor woman is recovering from a recent fever and she should not be subjected to such conditions. I fear she will not survive for the food is inedible and rancid, the nurses are cruel and inhumane, especially Miss Grupe. They taunt and harass the most vulnerable. They refuse to give us more clothing or blankets against the cold. It is the most deplorable conditions imaginable.

DR. INGRAM

I will look into these things at once. Tell me, do you need medical aid, Miss Brown?

NELLIE BLY

No, I do not. But there are others who do. Miss Mayard --

DR. INGRAM

Is being seen to, as you requested. But right now I'm concerned about you.

NELLIE BLY

(it hits her)

Why? Why am I being given special treatment? Why is the assistant Superintendent interested in my well being in particular?

DR. INGRAM

We are concerned about all the patients at Blackwell's Insane Asylum. And a Judge Duffy has been sending reporters to ask about you.

Nellie nods with a sense of satisfaction.

DR. INGRAM (CONT'D)

Tell me. Do you think you are insane?

NELLIE BLY

Insane? Yes, insane. I have watched the insanity slowly creep over minds that had appeared to be all right.

(forgetting herself)

Miss Mayard was as sane as you or I when she entered these walls.

DR. INGRAM

As sane as you or I --

NELLIE BLY

I curse the doctors, the nurses and all public institutions for their treatment of people who have no advocacy. Yes, Tillie Mayard was sane when she entered here. All she was in need of was just convalescing. Was this the proper place to send her? To be given cold baths, deprived of sufficient clothing and fed with horrible wretched food?

DR. INGRAM

I will order Miss Grady to see that more clothing is given to the patients. Now there is someone in the hall 6 waiting room who wants to meet you.

Nellie is concerned.

The door opens. Nellie is pushed into her room by Miss Grady, who is holding a clean patient gown.

MISS GRADY

Here.

(throwing her the gown)

Put this on, quickly.

Nellie examines the clothing -- clean, new, without stains.

94

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - HALLWAY - EVENING

94

Miss Grady walks with Nellie.

MISS GRADY

If you make a practice of telling it will  
be a serious thing for you.

95

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - WAITING ROOM - EVENING

95

Nellie enters the waiting room. There sits a gentleman who has known her intimately for years. She sees by the sudden blanching of his face and his inability to speak that the sight of her is wholly unexpected and has shocked him terribly.

ERUSMUS WILSON

Pink!

Nellie approaches him quickly, out racing Miss Grady.

NELLIE BLY

(whispering hurriedly)

Don't give me away.

By his expression, Nellie knows that he understands.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

I do not know this man.

MISS GRADY

Do you know her?

ERUSMUS WILSON

(in a strained voice)

No. This is not the young lady I came in  
search of.

MISS GRADY

(suspicious)

Why did you call her, "Pink?"

ERUSMUS WILSON

I was mistaken. I thought she was  
somebody else. Somebody I knew a long  
time ago.

(CONTINUED)

MISS GRADY

If you do not know her you cannot stay here.

Miss Grady takes him to the door. When Miss Grady has the door unlocked and is holding it open, Nellie sees her chance.

NELLIE BLY

One moment, senor.

He returns to Nellie. Miss Grady cannot leave the door unattended.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

(asking aloud)

Do you speak Spanish, senor?

ERUSMUS WILSON

No.

(in a whisper)

Pink, what the blazes are you doing in here.

NELLIE BLY

(whisper)

It's all right. I'm after an item. Keep still.

ERUSMUS WILSON

(with a peculiar emphasis)

I'm afraid I do not speak a word of Spanish.

He ever so slightly acknowledges what she has said. She knows that he will keep her secret. He exits with Miss Grady, who locks Nellie in.

Miss Grupe and McCarten watch the patient as the wait in the transfer area. A pack of rats run out of a hole in the wall and scurry under the feet of the patients, re-entering through another hole on the opposite side.

Mrs. Cotter focuses out the window, on a man in the distance.

MRS. COTTER

Benny? Is that my husband Benny?

TILLIE MAYARD

I'm sure you are mistaken.

MRS. COTTER

It's Benny. Benny my husband has come to take me out of here.

(shouting)

Benny! Benny!

The man in the distance pays no mind to her shouts as he keeps walking. Miss Grupe takes Mrs. Cotter's other arm.

MISS GRUPE

Stop it. That is not your husband.

Mrs. Cotter pays her no mind.

MRS. COTTER

Benny! Benny! I'm here. He's come to free me.

TILLIE MAYARD

No dear.

MRS. COTTER

He's going to take me home. Benny, I'm here!

ANNE NEVILLE

Just leave her alone.

Suddenly Mrs. Cotter breaks free of Miss Grupe's grasp and charges out into the hallway. The nurses charge after her.

MRS. COTTER

Benny! Benny I'm here!

The nurses catch her. She struggles as they carry her kicking and screaming.

MRS. COTTER (CONT'D)

(in despair)

Benny. Benny -- Benny. Take me out of here.

(sobbing)

Take me out of here. Take me out of here Benny.

Nellie and the other patients share her unbelievable grief.

MISS GRUPE

Take her to the quiet room.

MRS. COTTER

Not the closet. No. Please -- Benny. Take me home.

The patients look on, powerless as the nurses carry Mrs. Cotter away to a certain beating.

98 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - DAY\* 98

Miss Grupe comes in, walks firmly to her locked cupboard and pulls out a broom handle. Anne turns away in anger, hugs Nellie close. Nellie has a look of unbelievable sorrow. The patients are restless but repressed.

99 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - QUIET ROOM - DAY\* 99

Miss Grupe enters with the broom handle. Miss McCarten and the orderlies are just finishing fastening the restraints that hold Mrs. Cotter with arms spread.

MISS GRUPE

Inmates running the asylum? I don't think so. You have brought this particular lesson on yourself.

Miss Grupe takes hold of Mrs. Cotter's ear to hold her head and swings the broom handle, striking her in the face.

100 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - DAY\* 100

The patients all hear Mrs. Cotter's beating and her cries. The tension is dense in the room. A few patients begin weeping and some begin to howl in agony. Anne is lost in a dark abyss. Nellie and Tillie hold each other in a tight grip as the beating proceeds.

101 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - HALLWAY - DAY\* 101

Mrs. Cotter, her face bruised and swollen, is brought out of the quiet room as Dr. Dent, passing by, sees what's going on and approaches Miss Grupe.

DR. DENT

What happened to this patient?

MISS GRUPE

She was trying to escape Doctor. She has the delusion that her husband is coming to take her out of Blackwell's.

He looks at her face.

DR. DENT

How did she get those black eyes?

MISS GRUPE

She had them bruises when she was brought in.

Dent takes a hold of Mrs. Cotters face and turns it from side to side. Mrs. Cotter is silent, complacent tot the examination.

DR. DENT

They look fresh. Are you sure she had it when she came in?

MISS GRUPE

I will have a good talking with the orderlies. Get to the bottom of this.

DR. DENT

(glancing back toward  
Nellie and Anne)

See that you do. We don't want our new patients getting the wrong idea about Blackwell's.

Anne cannot help but let out a loud sarcastic laugh. Dent looks at her. Nellie squeezes her arm.

MISS GRUPE

Yes doctor.

Dr. Dent exits.

The room is somber as the patients sit quietly, lost inside.

Mrs. Cotter is at the entrance way, her face horribly bruised. In broken steps, she finds her way to a bench. Nobody says anything. Nobody makes eye contact with her. Nellie is disgusted, shocked and in pain as the rest. Anne focuses on a tear in her frock. Even Tillie seems lost. Her usual cheer dampened to darkness. The nurses enter and take their place at the nurse's table and begin eating.

Margaret is the only one who makes eye contact with Mrs. Cotter. More so she stares at Mrs. Cotter, touching her own face, touching her hair in mirror of where Mrs. Cotter's hair has been pulled out. She looks down at her ragged gown, examines the moth holes and stains.

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

How can we let them treat us like this?  
Before they are done they will kill us  
all.

Mrs. Cotter sees something in Margaret's face that scares her.

MRS. COTTER

(calming)

My treatment was not as bad as I have  
seen others get in here, It has ruined my  
health. And if I do get out of here I  
will be a wreck. But by the grace of God  
I will survive. Benny will come for me.

Something crystallizes in Margaret -- Something hard and dark. Margaret stands, walks determinedly up to Miss Grady, who turns just as Margaret picks up Miss Grady's tea. Margaret flings the scalding hot liquid in Miss Grady's face, who screams and crumples over. Pandemonium. The patients erupt in cheer. Margaret charges to the exit. Miss McCarten rushes to Miss Grady to assist her.

MISS MCCARTEN

Shut up! Everyone shut up!

The hall is all a chatter. Miss Grupe, two large orderlies are on Margaret before she can reach the door. Miss Grady comes to her feet, flashes rage.

MISS GRADY

Take her to the bathroom.

Margaret struggles and screams as they drag her away.

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

Let me go! Let me go you animals. Nooo!  
Take your hands off of me!

As soon as they are out of the room, Nellie, Anne and several of the patients rise and run to the doorway where they can get a glimpse of the bathroom.

Miss Grupe, Miss McCarten and the orderlies hold Margaret as Miss Grady beats her. Then Miss Grady rips her clothing off and drags her to the tub.

MISS GRADY

Grab her legs. Grab her legs.

MARGARET MCCARTNEY

Noooo!

They lift Margaret and plunge her into stale, ice-cold water that had been left standing. Margaret struggles fiercely as they dunk her head under water and hold it. When she comes up for air, she gasps and coughs violently. Before she can regain her breath they dunk her again. When she comes up she can't breath, is struggling to clear the water from her throat. She is dunked - over and over. Her struggling decreases, Miss Grady does not let up. Margaret is dunked and held under until finally, all struggling ceases when she is under water. She is pulled out, limp and listless. Her coughing is weak. Her breathing is shallow.

MISS GRADY

Help me put her in her room.

They drag Margaret's naked body to her room. She no longer struggles against them and hangs like a doll.

104 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - MARGARET'S ROOM - NIGHT 104

Her door is opened and she is tossed on her bed. She doesn't move. Only stares off into empty space, her breathing short and ragged as they slam and lock the door.

FADE OUT.

105 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - MARGARET'S ROOM - DAWN 105

Grupe unlocks Margaret's door. Margaret is lying in the same position they left her in the night before. It is clear Margaret is dead. Grupe, swiftly, unceremoniously, exits. Grady and Grupe return with Dr. Kinier. Dr. Kinier examines Margaret, listens to her chest with his stethoscope.

DR. KINIER

She is dead. How was she last night?

These bruises on her face -- It looks as though she had been in a fight.

MISS GRADY

She was agitated doctor.

The doctor looks at the bandage on Miss Grady.

DR. KINIER

I see. Well she has obviously died of convulsions. I will make out her death certificate. I am finished here. You may take her to the crematorium now.

106

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - DAY

106

The patient's sit quietly, motionless. Nellie and Tillie sit, alone in their own thoughts. Bridget McGuinness, half hiding in a corner, reads from a small book. Miss McCarten approaches her.

MISS MCCARTEN

Hand it over. You know the rules. No Reading.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

It is only a book of Psalms.

MISS MCCARTEN

Reading agitates the mind.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

How can a book of Psalms be bad for the mind?

MISS MCCARTEN

Hand me the book.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

Margaret McCartney had been sick. She fought against being put in this dirty place. How can you lock people up in this dirty place.

Miss McCarten looks to Miss Grupe, who, in turn looks to the two orderlies. They all descend on Bridget together.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS (CONT'D)

I grow so tired of sitting on benches. We are always told to sit up straight. If we talk we are scolded and told to shut up. If we want to walk around in order to take the stiffness out, we are told to sit down and be still.

MISS GRUPE

Bridget, you know the rules. And you know we cannot let you have this book, so make it easy for yourself and give it to Miss McCarten.

MISS GRUPE (CONT'D)

Do it now, Bridget.

(CONTINUED)

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

What, excepting torture, would produce insanity quicker than this treatment? These women are sent to be cured.

MISS GRUPE

You have been warned.

Miss Grupe moves to take the book and Bridget holds it away from her. Instantly the nurses and orderlies pounce, take the book and restrain her.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

The expert physicians who are condemning me, take perfectly sane and healthy woman, shut us up and make us sit from 6 AM until 8 PM on straight-back benches --

MISS GRUPE

Take her to the quiet room until we can decide what must be done with her.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS

-- do not allow us to talk or move during these hours, give us no reading and let us know nothing of the world or its doings --

The Nurses and orderlies bring Bridget to her feet, begin dragging her away.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS (CONT'D)

-- give us bad food and harsh treatment. See how long it will take to make us insane --

They drag Bridget from the room. Her voice trails off as she continues to protest loudly.

BRIDGET MCGUINNESS (CONT'D)

- to make us a mental and physical wreck. You are not human.

The women are lined up for their bath. Bridget McGuinness is up. Nurse Grupe takes her arm and begins undressing her.

BRIDGET MCUINESS

I cannot take a bath in that water. The very disease for which I need doctoring and from which I am suffering makes it necessary that I should not bathe in cold water.

MISS GRUPE

Shut up.

Bridget is stripped, forced toward the thick, dirty water.

BRIDGET MCGUINESS

No it is not clean. I do not want to get into that water.

Miss McCarten and Miss Grupe plunge Bridget into the water.

BRIDGET MCGUINESS (CONT'D)

No. It is filthy and filled with human excrement and the burst eruptions of sick patient's skin.

Tillie, standing in front of Nellie and Anne, is coughing in a bad way.

TILLIE MAYARD

I don't think I am going to survive it today.

Anne and Nellie are very concerned for Tillie.

ANNE NEVILLE

Don't fight them. They will move you through faster.

Bridget is pulled from the water and Tillie is brought forward. She doesn't resist as they undress her and plunge her into the water. Nellie and Anne watch as she bounces around like a rag doll as they scrub her. They have to lift her out and she collapses to her knees when they attempt to dry her with one of the two towels used on all the patients.

MISS GRADY

(to orderlies)

Carry her to her room.

MISS GRUPE

You are next Brown.

Matilda, only partly dressed, comes staggering in like a drunken person, with a knife in hand, yelling. She is covered in blood.

(CONTINUED)

MATILDA  
Hurrah! Three cheers! Lucifer, Lucifer,  
Lucifer.

She then pulls a handful of hair out.

MATILDA (CONT'D)  
How I deceived the divils. They always  
said God made hell, but he didn't.

MISS GRADY  
Matilda, where did you get the knife?

MATILDA  
From the cook. I have killed the divil  
who took my money!

MISS GRADY  
Matilda, did you cut somebody?

The large orderlies jump her from behind and wrest the knife  
out of her hand. Matilda barely struggles.

MISS GRADY (CONT'D)  
Take her to the Retreat.

They take Matilda away. Miss Grady picks up the knife. Miss  
Grupe moves to undress Nellie but she pulls away.

NELLIE BLY  
I can do it.

108 INT. BLACKWELL'S HOLDING AREA - DAY\* 108

Nellie, Anne and Mrs. Cotter are seated on a bench. Other  
patients stand nearby. Miss. Grupe enters.

MISS GRUPE  
Brown, you are to come to the kitchen,  
get a meal and take it to Mrs. Schanz  
room.

Nellie stands as Anne Grabs her hand. Nellie looks at her.

ANNE NEVILLE  
Careful of her fever.

109 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - KITCHEN - MORNING\* 109

Nellie is standing in the kitchen. She sees cooks preparing  
melons, grapes, all kinds of fruits, beautiful white bread  
and nice meats. A tray of moldy bread, rancid meat and tepid  
copper tea is placed in front of her.

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY  
Mrs. Schanz is ill. What about that?

COOK  
That's for the doctors and nurses.

110 INT. BLACKWELL'S - RETREAT - LOUISE'S ROOM - MORNING\* 110

Nellie comes to the door with the tray. Miss Grupe and McCarten are with Louise, who's in bed, heavily perspiring with fever. She is restrained to the bed with leather straps. Miss McCarten is taking her temperature with a thermometer. Nellie waits at the door. Miss McCarten takes the thermometer out and looks at it.

MISS MCCARTEN  
150 degrees. I think.

Nellie smiles at the report. Miss Grupe sees Nellie's response.

MISS GRUPE  
How high has your temperature ever run?

NELLIE BLY  
Perhaps 101 degrees.

Miss Grupe takes the thermometer and after a few moments of concentration sharply declares --

MISS GRUPE  
It is 99 degrees. With that the nurses exit.

Nellie approaches and sits on the bed beside Louise with the tray in her lap. She looks at Louise closer and can see the nurses and orderlies have beaten her.

NELLIE BLY  
I brought you some food.

LOUISE SCHANZ  
I do not want it. I am unable to eat the horrible food they give us.

NELLIE BLY  
I know how you feel, but you need your strength -- Did they hit you?

LOUISE SCHANZ  
I have gotten beatings from Miss Grupe. I am so cold at nights.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE SCHANZ (CONT'D)

I ought not to be compelled to  
freeze for want of proper clothing.  
Oh! I will never see my son again.  
I pray nightly that I may be taken  
to my papa and mamma. If I could  
only die and go to papa!

Louise takes a bite of food and bursts into a coughing fit. Nellie attempts to gently brushes back her hair from her forehead as Miss Grupe enters with Miss McCarten and push Nellie back. A moment later, doctor Kinier enters with his bag. Louise sees him, begins thrashing violently.

LOUISE SCHANZ (CONT'D)

No. Nooo. No.

Miss McCarten, expressionless, dabs Louise's brow with a cloth. MISS GRUPE helps hold her in place.

LOUISE

Let me up... Please!

Kinier comes in and sits on a stool next to the bed. He rummages through his bag, pulls out the large loop style syringe and the bottle of orange liquid we have seen before. Nellie sees it.

NELLIE BLY

She doesn't need an injection. She  
just needs rest.

MISS GRUPE

The doctor will decide.

LOUISE

(fast pleading)

No. Please. There's nothing wrong  
with me.

DR. KINIER

Dear Miss Schanz, I am here to help  
you.

Dr. Kinier fills the syringe with orange liquid.

LOUISE SCHANZ

(sobbing)

Please don't do it.

Dr. Kinier leans over Louise, syringe ready. Nellie rushes to stop him. Nurse McCarten blocks her, catching her around the waist. Dr Kinier is holding up the needle, waiting.

NELLIE BLY

No. You cannot. She only had a mild coughing fit. Do not inject her!  
Dr. Dent arrives.

DR. DENT

If you cannot restrain your violent outburst, Miss Bly, I will have to give you an injection to calm you down as well.

Nellie stops fighting Miss McCarten, is outraged, but frightened.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

(to the nurses,  
commanding)

Hold her still.

The nurses pounce on Louise's, hold her as she struggles for her life, trying to buck them off. Dr. Kinier injects her with precision.

LOUISE

Please god! Save me!

Louise's struggles slowly fade and she starts to dribble and mumble.

DR. DENT

There. Isn't that better?

Louise stops her eyes stare back vacantly.

NELLIE BLY

What have you done?

DR. DENT

(to Dr. Kinier)

Not again.

Dr. Kinier rummages through his briefcase for the bottle of green liquid. He starts to hook up the loop needle to it. Dr. Dent examines Louise.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

No need.

Dr. Kinier nods and begins putting the bottle and syringe away.

NELLIE BLY  
You have killed her. You have  
killed her!

DR. DENT  
Nonsense. Such a low dose of opium  
would not cause her death. It was  
the progress of the disease that  
killed her. Take Miss Brown back  
to her cell. Send Mrs. Schanz to  
the crematorium.

The two nurses glance at one another with a conspiratorial  
look. Nellie sees it.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)  
I will make out the papers.

NELLIE  
(to Dr. Dent)  
You are a cruel and inhuman man,  
experimenting on the patients.

Dr. Dent, casts his eyes on Nellie. She's become a real  
problem, and a witness.

DR. DENT  
Take Miss Brown back to her cell.

WIDE LOW ANGLE - the lifeless Louise in ECU FG on the bed,  
Dr. Kinier in BG, gathers up his bag and shooting Louise on  
last look of disappointment, exits. Miss Grupe and Miss  
McCarten look toward Louise, both empty, compassionless.

MISS GRUPE  
She brought this on herself.

111 INT. BLACKWELL'S - DR. INGRAM'S OFFICE - DAY 111

Nellie is defiant.

NELLIE BLY  
What are you doctors here for?

DR. INGRAM  
To take care of the patients and test  
their sanity.

NELLIE BLY  
Very well. There are sixteen doctors on  
this island, and excepting two, I have  
never seen them pay any attention to the  
patients.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

How can a doctor judge a woman's sanity by merely bidding her good morning and refusing to hear her pleas for release? Even the sick ones know it is useless to say anything, for the answer will be that it is their imagination. Try every test on me, and tell me am I sane or insane? Try my pulse, my heart, my eyes -- ask me to stretch out my arm, to work my fingers, as Dr. Field did at Bellevue, and then tell me if I am sane.

DR. INGRAM

It is unnecessary at this time.

NELLIE BLY

You will not heed me, for you think I rave. You have no right to keep sane people here. I am sane, have always been so and I must insist on a thorough examination or be released. Several of the women here are also sane. Why can't they be free?

DR. INGRAM

They are insane, and suffering from delusions.

(after a thoughtful moment)

I will transfer you to a quieter ward.

Miss Grupe brings Tillie out into the yard. She is pale, sunken and shivering. Nellie, who was talking with Mrs. Fox, turns and sees her. Tillie looks through them.

NELLIE BLY

Tillie.

TILLIE MAYARD

I dreamed of my mother last night. I think she may come today and take me home. I am cold.

Nellie moves to put her arm around Tillie to warm her, but Tillie violently pushes her away.

TILLIE MAYARD (CONT'D)

No. Don't touch me.

NELLIE BLY

I am trying to warm you.

TILLIE MAYARD

You. You are a traitor. They are doing this to me because of you.

NELLIE BLY

What?

TILLIE MAYARD

You are trying to pass yourself off as me.

NELLIE BLY

Tillie, what do you mean?

TILLIE MAYARD

The reporters and doctors that have called to see Nellie Brown are friends in search of me. But you are, by some means, trying to deceive them into the belief that you are me.

NELLIE BLY

No Tillie. I am your friend.

Nellie looks to Anne. They are both in shock.

TILLIE MAYARD

You are not my friend. It is me they want to see. You are the reason I am being held here.

Nellie notices bruises on Tillie's forehead and neck and then she sees the track marks of injections on Tillie's arms. She looks to Anne, who also sees the marks.

NELLIE BLY

Tillie, what have they done to you? They have been injecting you with opium.

TILLIE MAYARD

It is your fault. You trick me into singing to steal my voice. I cannot stay in this place another day.

(Tillie laughs maniacally,  
frighteningly)

My God, you are evil trying to pass yourself off as me.

Miss Grupe stands over them.

MISS GRUPE

Tillie, shut up or we will help you shut up.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

Miss Grupe begins leading Tillie away.

TILLIE MAYARD  
(at Nellie)  
Get her away from me. She is stealing my  
name and my person.

113 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - HALLWAY - NIGHT 113

As Miss Grady walks with Nellie and Anne, she addresses  
Nellie, quietly, firmly.

MISS GRADY  
You little whore. It is a lucky thing for  
your hide that you are transferred, or  
else I would pay you for remembering so  
well to tell Dr. Ingram everything. You  
damn hussy, you forget all about  
yourself, but you never forget anything  
to tell the doctor.

114 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 7 - WAITING AREA - NIGHT 114

Miss Grady brings Nellie and Anne to a waiting area.

MISS GRADY  
Wait here.

Nellie and Anne realize they can see New York from the  
window. Anne gazes longingly toward lights faintly glimmering  
in city.

NELLIE BLY  
Liberty and life.

ANNE NEVILLE  
It seems so near. Yet heaven is not  
further from hell.

DISSOLVE TO:

115 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 7 - NELLIE/ANNE ROOM - LATER NIGHT 115

Nellie and Anne, in their nightgowns, lay on their bare beds.  
The other patients are asleep, save for Matilda who is up  
talking into the radiator, but oddly much more quietly than  
ever before -- almost inaudible. Every so often she mentions  
killing Lucifer.

NELLIE BLY  
I'm not sure I will be able to sleep with  
Matilda up creeping around.

(CONTINUED)

ANNE NEVILLE

She's probably up searching for some one she wants to kill. -- I heard the nurses talking about you.

NELLIE BLY

What did they say?

ANNE NEVILLE

The talk is you were to be shut off from all visitors because you talk to much out of turn. Up here we will only be seen by nurses and doctors. I think they took me as well because we are confidants.

Nellie turns on her side, contemplating this.

ANNE NEVILLE (CONT'D)

I heard the only way we leave here is through the crematorium in lead canisters. We have been put in a prison for life through no fault of our own. How much easier it would be to walk to the gallows than to remain in this tomb of living horrors!

Nellie says nothing.

ANNE NEVILLE (CONT'D)

It was fortunate that I met you though.

NELLIE BLY

It is I who is fortunate for our friendship.

ANNE NEVILLE

I don't think I could survive in this place without your companionship.

Nellie thinks of what Anne said.

116 INT. BLACKWELL'S - DR. CALDWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

116

Nellie is seated in front of young DR. CALDWELL.

DR. CALDWELL

Put out your tongue.

NELLIE BLY

What can you tell from my tongue?

DR. CALDWELL

Put out your tongue.

(CONTINUED)

Nellie complies and Dr. Caldwell examines it.

DR. CALDWELL (CONT'D)  
Hold out your wrist.

NELLIE BLY  
I do not see the need for this. I have  
done all this many times.

DR. CALDWELL  
It is not for you to decide. Now hold out  
your wrist.

Nellie complies. He feels her pulse, then places a  
stethoscope to her chest in several places. He holds a hand  
in front of her face.

DR. CALDWELL (CONT'D)  
Look at my hand.

NELLIE BLY  
I have done this again and again.

DR. CALDWELL  
Look at my hand.

She does so and he pulls it away several times.

DR. CALDWELL (CONT'D)  
Stretch out your arms and work your  
fingers.

NELLIE BLY  
Surely by now you have the result of such  
tests written down somewh--

Dr. Caldwell lashes out and clips her on the chin with a  
light jab, but hard enough to hurt. Nellie is stunned.

DR. CALDWELL  
I grow tired of your resistance. Now do  
as I say or I shall use force to compel  
you to comply. Now, stretch out your arms  
and work your fingers.

Nellie complies, red faced, working soreness from her jaw.

FADE OUT/IN:

117 INT. DREAM/FLASHBACK - MARY JANE'S HOUSE 1878 - NIGHT 117

Ford and Mary Jane have half come their feet. Ford is out of control, slapping Mary Jane repeatedly. Pink takes up the broken back of the chair, jabs it as hard as she can into Ford's kidneys. He cries out, throwing Mary Jane to the floor, turns his focus on Pink.

He makes one drunken lunge at Pink who steps out of his way. He plows forward into the writing desk. The lock pops and the roll top flips open with a powerful crack, revealing Ford's revolver.

Mary Jane sees it, sees Ford's focus on it, races toward him. He takes up his pistol, spins around. Mary Jane stops mid-stride as he points the gun at her face.

As he begins to squeeze the trigger, without a second thought, Pink steps in front of her mother, standing between her and the barrel of Ford's pistol. She looks at him defiantly, righteously, unafraid.

MARY JANE

Pink, what are you doing.

A brief moment of forever as Ford stares Pink in the eyes and she stairs back.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

(screaming)

Jack, she's a child.

A moment of grace or confusion overcomes him. He pulls the pistol away, shoves it in his belt. He can't look at either of them as he smashes, falls his way to the door. Pink stares at him with intense focus and contempt.

Mary Jane rushes to take Pink into her arms.

On his way through the doorway, Ford violently rips the door off its hinges shattering part of the frame as he storms back out into the night.

Mary Jane holds Pink close, petting, kissing her, crying.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

What possibly could you have been thinking, Pink? Did you think his bullet wouldn't fly right through you? You cannot do such a thing again. Do you hear me?

(CONTINUED)

Pink's expression is still in a state confrontation with Ford. She only half hears her mother.

PINK

He was going to shoot you, mother. I saw it in his eyes.

MARY JANE

Do you think you can't be harmed? If you do something like that again, you are going to be killed. Do you hear me? Pink? You can't stand up to people like that just because you are in the right. Do you understand? Don't you ever do such a thing again. Elisabeth Jane? Do you here me?

Mary Jane's words fade away as Pink realizes the children never ran upstairs but stopped and are crouched down together watching from the top of the steps. Her eyes catch theirs. She sees their fear. In return she shows them courage as her mother's voice continues to grow more distant and fades to silence.

The cold room is devoid of furniture. Nellie sits huddled on the floor. Nellie looks up as the door swings open. Standing with Miss Grupe is Miss McCarten and Dr. Dent. Nellie comes to her feet.

NELLIE BLY

Why have I been put in here?

MISS MCCARTEN

Shut up.

DR. DENT

I understand you have been having continuing troubles with fevered thinking and hallucinations.

NELLIE BLY

I have had nothing of the sort. I am as clear headed as anyone.

Dent kneels and opens the medical bag in his hand, he begins preparing something within.

DR. DENT

You have demonstrated delusions of persecution - that the orderlies and nurses are against you - that they wish to cause you harm instead of help you. And that we, your doctors, are murderers.

NELLIE BLY

(hard look to the nurses.)

The things I have seen, the things I have told to Dr. Ingram are all the truth. Do not be apart of it.

DR. DENT

There are many truths in Blackwell's, this is, after all, an asylum for the insane.

Dent pulls the filled loop syringe from his bag. Nellie focuses on it.

NELLIE BLY

I do not need an injection. I am perfectly sane.

DR. DENT

Nearly all the patients here deny their insanity.

NELLIE BLY

Besides you nightly medicate me with an opium drink.

DR. DENT

It is clear in your case that you need something stronger. Hold her still.

The nurses grab Nellie and push her up against the wall. Nellie struggles intensely.

NELLIE BLY

Nooo. Nooo.

Miss Grupe holds Nellie's arm out to allow Dent access. He quickly injects her. Close on The orange liquid going from the loop syringe into her body. Nellie grits her teeth, her eyes roll back, and she slumps into unconsciousness. The nurses slip her to a sitting position against the wall. He motionless form is hunched over.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

DR. DENT

Let her be for a bit. Check back on her  
in an hour.

Dent exits. Miss Grupe repositions Nellie's body, examines  
her.

MISS GRUPE

You better alert the crematorium

119 INT. DR. DENT'S OFFICE - NIGHT\* 119

Dent enters his office to find attorney PETER A. HENDRICKS  
waiting, hat in hand. Hendricks rises.

120 PETER A. HENDRICKS 120

Superintendent Dent?

DR. DENT

Yes?

PETER A. HENDRICKS

I am Peter A. Hendricks, esquire. I am an  
attorney representing a family willing to  
take care of the patient known as Nellie  
Brown.

DR. DENT

Nellie Brown. Nellie Brown. Oh yes, she  
was the amnesia case. Nellie Brown is a  
very sick girl. I cannot vouch for the  
safety of her health if she were released  
at this time.

Hendricks pulls papers from his inner pocket, hands them to  
Dent, who, trembling, reads them. His eyes dart across the  
pages.

PETER A. HENDRICKS

A judge Duffy has signed the orders for her transfer into my  
custody. As you can see it is official and everything is in  
order. Dent eyes land on the initials and name stamped into  
the leather of Hendricks' satchel.

FLASH CU: P. A. HENDRICKS.

FLASHBACK TO: Dent meeting with Miss Grupe. Dent is pointing  
at the World Newspaper on his desk as he glances at the  
article about the mysterious girls with amnesia. Below the  
story about Nellie.

(CONTINUED)

Is an article about the World Newspaper's attorney defending Joseph Pulitzer's actions in witting about a corrupt politician. The attorney's name in print is, P. A. Hendricks.

FLASH JUMP IN TO CLOSE ON THE NAME IN PRINT - P. A. HENDRICKS

Dent is light headed. He looks hard at the attorney who looks back with innocence to his discovery. Dent regains his composure.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Please have a seat. There are hundreds of patients at Blackwell's, it will take a little time to locate her. Hendricks sits.

PETER A. HENDRICKS

I am not going anywhere.

Clutching his bag, Dent calmly exits, closing the door behind him.

Outside his door Dent immediately breaks into a fast walk. Nurse Grupe is suddenly there at his side, fast walking with him.

DR. DENT

What is the condition of Nellie Brown?

MISS GRUPE

I left Miss McCarten to take her to the crematorium.

DR. DENT

Oh no. No, no, no, no, no.

MISS GRUPE

I did exactly as you asked Doctor.

DR. DENT

An attorney is here from the World Newspaper to fetch her. We have to revive her before it's too late.

MISS GRUPE

I don't understand Doctor. An attorney from a newspaper.

DR. DENT

She's a reporter for the World. A  
reporter for the most powerful newspaper  
on the Earth.

They break into a run.

122 INT. BLACKWELL'S WARD 7 - HOLDING CELL - NIGHT\*

122

Miss McCarten is standing over Nellie's slumped body as Dent and Miss Grupe arrive at the cell. Miss Grupe fumbles with the keys.

DR. DENT

(impatiently)

Open it. Open it.

Miss Grupe opens the lock and Dent pushed the door open and rushes past her to Nellie, where he lays her on the floor. Shaking, Dent pulls the loop syringe out of his bag and fills it with green liquid. He speedily jabs it into Nellie's arm. He then rubs his hands up and down the injection arm.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Come Miss Brown. Come back to us.

He slaps Nellie across the face several times, listens with his stethoscope.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Wake up. Come out of it.

Dent shakes her, slaps her again. No response.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Miss Brown, I need you to wake up.

Nellie's motionless body lies limp. He opens her eyes. They are empty. He pulls away from her and paces dejectedly. Nellie is still and motionless.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

We are ruined. Blackwell's will be  
ended. I won't have it...

Dr. Dent turns around and slams the needle into her chest.

DR. DENT (CONT'D)

Aaahhhhh!!!!

Suddenly Nellie sits up and gasps, then falls back to the table, breathing. Nurse Grupe runs to her.

(CONTINUED)

NURSE GRUPE  
Her heart is beating.

Dent lets out a deep sigh.

DR. DENT  
Watch over her tonight. Make sure  
she gets plenty of water. At  
sunrise send her into the yard.  
Have your nurses keep close watch  
over her till I call for her.

MISS GRUPE  
Yes doctor.

He carefully runs his hand over Nellie's face as examines her  
sleeping form.

SLOW DISSOLVE:

123 EXT. BLACKWELL'S - PATIENT YARD - DAY 123

Miss Conway, another nurse and an attendant watch over hall 7  
patients as they walk on the sidewalk. Nellie's in line next  
to Anne as the Rope gang is marched past by other nurses. The  
usual group of lost and distant souls.

MISS CONWAY  
Keep off of the lawn.

Suddenly, Nellie and Anne spot Bridget McGuinness shackled to  
the rope, the light gone from her eyes, patches of her hair  
missing. Her skin erupted. Bruises and fingerprint indents  
covering her neck. As she passes, Nellie speaks to her.

NELLIE BLY  
Bridget. What have they done to you?

Bridget, vacant, looks past Nellie, unaware she is being  
spoken to. She gives an equally vacuous stare to Anne.

ANNE NEVILLE  
God help her! It is so dreadful I cannot  
look.

Anne turns away as Bridget and the rope gang pass. Miss Grupe  
walks up to the patients.

MISS GRUPE  
Brown. You are to come with me.

NELLIE BLY  
Where am I going?

(CONTINUED)

MISS GRUPE

A lawyer named Hendricks has come to see you.

Nellie's eyes light up. She can barely contain her joy and enthusiasm. Anne sees Nellie's state, retreats emotionally. Nellie sees it, tempers her high spirit, takes Anne's hands solemnly.

NELLIE BLY

You are one of the strongest women I have ever met.

ANNE NEVILLE

(devastated)  
You are leaving.

NELLIE BLY

I will be back.

ANNE NEVILLE

No you won't. You'd have to be crazy to come back here.

This makes Nellie smile again. Anne smiles too.

ANNE NEVILLE (CONT'D)

(tender)  
I never want to see you back here.

Nellie hugs Anne.

MISS GRUPE

No hugging. Let's go Brown.

They part and Nellie looks into Anne's eyes as long as she can until she must turn and follow Miss Grupe.

Nellie is brought in. Hendricks is seated with Dr. Ingram.

DR. INGRAM

Have a seat, Nellie. This is Peter A. Hendricks, Esquire. He is an attorney.

NELLIE BLY

How do you do, Mr. Hendricks?

124 CONTINUED:

125 PETER A. HENDRICKS 125  
Very well, Miss Brown. Thank you. I represent friends of yours that are willing to take charge of you if you would rather be with them than in the asylum.

NELLIE BLY  
Yes.

DR. INGRAM  
Don't you want to know who they are?

NELLIE BLY  
(almost a shout)  
No.

There is an awkward pause, before Dr. Ingram stands, with documents in hand.

DR. INGRAM  
Very well, then. I will leave you two to chat while I prepare your release papers.

Dr. Ingram exits, closing the door behind him. The moment he does, Nellie flies at Hendricks and gives him a powerful, emotional hug. Unprepared for her outburst, he struggles to maintain decorum.

126 PETER A. HENDRICKS 126  
So Miss -- Brown -- I am instructed to provide you with anything you need on our journey back to the city.

NELLIE BLY  
Something to eat. Immediately.

She hugs him again, shedding tears. This time he takes pity and pats her back as appropriately as possible.

125 EXT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND INSANE ASYLUM - DAY 125  
Nellie, in her grey dress, sits with Hendricks in the back of a nice carriage as they are driven out of the receiving area. Nellie looks back, sees Miss Grady staring at her from behind barred windows. Miss Grady turns, disappears inside.

126 EXT. DECK OF PRIVATE BOAT - EAST RIVER - DAY 126  
Hendricks and Nellie Bly stand on the deck of a private boat hired to take her back to the city.

Blackwell's Island recedes. New York City grows. Nellie swoons. Hendricks takes her arm to steady her.

PETER A. HENDRICKS  
How are you Miss Bly?

NELLIE BLY  
I am fine, Mr. Hendricks. The bars are down and freedom is sweeter to me than ever. I have lost count. How long was I in the madhouse?

PETER A. HENDRICKS  
Ten days.

127 INT. HOTEL - NELLIE BLY'S ROOM - MORNING 127

Nellie sits, relaxing in her tub filled with hot water. Her mind is racing as she processes, catalogues, lets go.

128 INT. HOTEL - NELLIE BLY'S ROOM - LATER 128

Nellie Bly is at her writing desk. She looks in the mirror - How much she has changed. She dips her pen and begins her story.

CLOSE UP - Nellie's hand to paper as she writes:

"On the 22nd of September I was asked by the World if I could have myself committed to one of the asylums for the insane in New York -- "

129 INT. THE WORLD - PRINTING ROOM - DAY 129

Newspapers flying off the press with the headlines, "INSIDE THE MADHOUSE - Nellie Bly's Experience Inside The Blackwell' Asylum."

130 EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK - MONTAGE 130

Street corner PAPER SELLERS call out -

NEWSPAPER SELLER  
All about it. Remarkable story! Woman reporter impersonates insanity in Blackwell's Asylum! Exposes abuse! Nellie Bly too sharp for the doctors! Read all about it!

People are excitedly buying papers and reading on the spot. Up and down the Avenues, people are reading Nellie's expose.

131 INT. ESSEX MARKET POLICE COURT - JUDGE'S OFFICE - DAY 131

Judge Duffy reads Nellie's story in The World. He chuckles to himself, over and over.

132 EXT. PITTSBURGH UNION STATION - TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY 132

The train is stopped. Passengers off loading. Joseph Pulitzer steps off the train on the brief stopover to New York. He is mobbed by reporters asking questions about Nellie Bly.

DISPATCH REPORTER

How did you find Nellie Bly?

REPORTER 2

Did you know her story would become a world wide sensation?

REPORTER 3

Did you think she might not survive the madhouse?

REPORTER 4

What do you think of Nellie Bly as a journalist?

JOSEPH PULITZER

Suffice it to say I am pleased with the performance of my bright and plucky new staff member, whom I have rewarded with a very handsome check. She is well educated and understands the profession she has chosen. She has a great future before her.

133 INT. THE WORLD - JOHN COCKERILL'S OFFICE - DAY 133

Cockerill is at his desk. Bly, her back to him, gazes at the New York City skyline and Blackwell's Island beyond.

COCKERILL

The nation is in a fit over your story. The Mayor of New York has launched his own investigation as have several members of the city council.

Nellie says nothing, lost, far away in thought.

COCKERILL (CONT'D)

You know this will change everything for you.

NELLIE BLY

Yes.

COCKERILL

Nothing will ever be the same from here out.

NELLIE BLY

No. I expect not.

Holding out a check to her.

COCKERILL

Here. This is for you.

Nellie crosses to him, takes the check, studies it.

NELLIE BLY

It is a lot of money.

COCKERILL

It includes a bonus, authorized by Pulitzer himself.

She hands the check back.

NELLIE BLY

I only want the standard pay. The rest can go to the orphans.

Cockerill studies her, is reminded. He picks up a document from a stack of papers.

COCKERILL

Oh yes. You've been summoned to appear before the Grand Jury about the conditions at Blackwell's.

Nellie lights up as she takes the document.

NELLIE BLY

With pleasure.

Nellie comes out of the elevator to find the whole news floor reading her article. Caught off guard, she composes herself and walks across the room, lady-like. Before she can get halfway across, the newsroom erupts in applause and she is mobbed by the reporters with congratulations, praise, admiration and questions.

135 INT. COURT OF JUDGE HENRY GILDERSLEEVE - DAY

135

The Courtroom is in session. Nellie is being sworn in before the Grand Jury. JUDGE HENRY A. GILDERSLEEVE is presiding.

BAILIFF

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

NELLIE BLY

By the grace of God, I do.

Assistant District-Attorney VERNON M. DAVIS steps forward to conduct the examination.

VERNON M. DAVIS

Please state your name.

NELLIE BLY

Elizabeth Jane Cochrane.

There is quiet chatter in the courtroom.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

Nellie Bly is my pen name.

VERNON M. DAVIS

Can you tell us why your feigned insanity and entered Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum posing as a person with mental illness.

NELLIE BLY

I am a reporter for Mr. Pulitzer's Newspaper, The World. I entered Blackwell's Island with the intent to write about and expose corruption and abuse therein.

VERNON M. DAVIS

So this was a paid job to sell Newspapers.

NELLIE BLY

The job of a reporter is to tell the truth to the people. Truth that would otherwise not be known. At first, I took this assignment with the notion of telling the people what goes on behind the bars and locked doors of the island.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

But it was not long before I realized I had deeper reasons.

VERNON M. DAVIS

Deeper reasons? Would you care to elaborate?

NELLIE BLY

The insane asylum on Blackwell's Island is a human rat-trap. It is easy to get in, but once there it is impossible to get out. I longed to help those of God's most unfortunate children whom I had left prisoners behind me. How my heart aches for them. I am determined that I will try by every means to make my mission of benefit to my suffering sisters. Amongst other things, I will show how they are committed without ample trial. If I can not bring them liberty, I hope at least to influence others to make life more bearable for them. On the 22d of September I was asked by the World if I could have myself committed to one of the asylums for the insane in New York --

DISSOLVE TO:

136 INT. COURT OF JUDGE HENRY GILDERSLEEVE - MOMENTS LATER 136

NELLIE BLY

Here were woman taken without their own consent from the free world to an asylum and given no chance to prove their sanity. Confined most probably for life behind asylum bars, without even being told in their own language the why and wherefore. Compare this with a criminal, who is given every chance to prove his innocence. Who would not rather be a murderer and take the chance for life than be declared insane, without hope of escape.

DISSOLVE TO:

137 INT. COURT OF JUDGE HENRY GILDERSLEEVE - MONTAGE 137

A series of DISSOLVES as Nellie tells her experiences at Blackwell's. With each account, the Grand Jury grows more emotionally upset, many fighting back tears or anger.

(CONTINUED)

NELLIE BLY

The water was ice-cold. Imagine plunging that sick girl into a cold bath.

DISSOLVE TO:

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

The nurses would beat them if they told.

DISSOLVE TO:

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

The nurses had on heavy undergarments and coats, but they refused to give us shawls.

DISSOLVE TO:

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

When morning came the girl was dead. The doctors said she died of convulsions, and that was all that was done about it.

DISSOLVE TO:

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

Soon I was crossing the river and nearing New York. Once again I was a free girl after ten days in the mad-house on Blackwell's Island.

Your honor, I move that the Grand Jury be taken on a tour of Blackwell's Island Asylum by Miss Cochrane and see these events first hand.

JUDGE GILDERSLEEVE

Granted. It is so ordered that the Grand Jury will conduct a field investigation of Blackwell's Asylum.

The judge bangs his gavel and wipes away tears with his handkerchief.

DISSOLVE TO:

Nellie stands at the rail next to Vernon M. Davis. This time on a clean new boat.

139 CONTINUED:

139

157 VERNON M. DAVIS 157

I inquired about the boat you had traveled to Blackwell's in. They said it was laid up for repairs. And I thought you should know, one of the jurors told me that in conversation with a man about the asylum, he heard that they were notified of our coming. This must have been done while we were examining the insane pavilion at Bellevue.

140 EXT. BLACKWELL'S ISLAND INSANE ASYLUM - RECEIVING - NIGHT 140

The official wagons stop. Armed police climb out first, followed by the Grand Jury, Vernon Davis and Nellie Bly. The police flank the group as they climb the narrow, stone steps with intent purpose. Vernon Davis rings the bell. After a moment an eye level peephole slides open. Miss Grupe appears and looks out and masks surprise to see Nellie standing with the group of men.

MIS GRUPE

How can I help you?

141 VERNON M. DAVIS 141

This is a Grand Jury investigation. You are directed by the State of New York to comply and assist. Any obstruction will be subject to prosecution.

MISS GRUPE

By all means. I am at your service.

142 VERNON M. DAVIS 142

Unlock this door.

Locks rattle and Miss Grupe swings the door open.

WIPE:

141 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - SITTING ROOM - DAY 141

Upon entry with the Grand Jury entourage, Nellie immediately sees a different place than she left. The room is clean. New fancy tables and chairs have been added. Flowers have been placed throughout the room. The nurses stand quietly.

NELLIE BLY

This is not how it was when I was last here. Where is Miss Tillie Mayard?

(CONTINUED)

MISS MCCARTEN

She has been transferred to the lodge,  
due to her illness.

NELLIE BLY

Bridget McGuinness?

MISS MCCARTEN

She has been transferred to other  
quarters.

NELLIE BLY

And Anne Neville? Where is Anne Neville.

MISS MCCARTEN

She has been transferred to isolation in  
hall 7 after some trouble.

VERNON M. DAVIS

See that she is brought to us.

Miss Grupe exits.

INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 7 - FOYER - DAY

The Grand Jury enters the hall 7 foyer to find Tillie, thin  
and pale, seated with Miss Conway.

MISS CONWAY

You will have to keep questions short as  
her health will not allow more.

Nellie cautiously approaches Tillie.

NELLIE BLY

Miss Mayard. It's me Nellie. Tillie, do  
you know me?

Tillie looks at Nellie with no recognition.

TILLIE MAYARD

No. I do not know you. Should I? Why do  
they keep moving me from room to room?

Nellie shudders, struggles to hold back sadness. Tillie  
stares blankly. Miss Conway takes her by the arm, ushers her  
from the room. Nellie then turns to see Mrs. Cotter, in a  
beautiful dress passing by in the hallway.

NELLIE BLY

Excuse me, please.

143 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 6 - HALLWAY - DAY\*

143

Nellie steps into the hall. Mrs. Cotter is with an attendant and a man in a finely tailored business suit, BENNY COTTER.

NELLIE BLY

Mrs. Cotter. You look better than when I saw you last.

MRS. COTTER

Nellie Bly, I'd like to introduce you to my husband Benny.

BENNY COTTER

A pleasure to meet you Miss Bly.

NELLIE BLY

The pleasure is mine.

MRS. COTTER

Benny has come to take me home. It is because of your news stories. When my husband heard of the treatment given me he has started a case in the courts against Blackwell's. I am well mentally now. All that old fear has left me.

NELLIE BLY

Good luck to you.

Mrs. Cotter, her husband, attendant exit. Miss Grupe enters.

MISS GRUPE

Miss Anne Neville has been brought down. She is in the hallway.

VERNON M. DAVIS

Send her in.

144 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALL 7 - FOYER - DAY

144

Nellie goes back into the foyer as Miss Grupe re-enters with Anne. Nellie is surprised how much she has deteriorated in such short time. Anne enters, guarded, suspicious, shaking with fear. Upon seeing Nellie, a light grows in her eyes. Nellie rushes to Anne, takes her hands.

ANNE NEVILLE

You said you would come back.

NELLIE BLY

Have they been giving you medicine?

(CONTINUED)

ANNE NEVILLE

Yes -- I must admit I was frightened when they came for me just now. They told me I was going to be examined by a crowd of men.

NELLIE BLY

It is a Grand Jury, here to investigate Blackwell's and the way they treat us.

A smile forces up through Anne's features.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

All I want you to do is tell the jury all we have done since I was brought with you to the asylum.

VERNON M. DAVIS

Please, Miss Neville, tell us of your experiences here.

ANNE NEVILLE

When Miss Brown and I were brought here the nurses were cruel and the food was too bad to eat. We did not have enough clothing, and Miss Brown asked for more all the time. I thought she was very kind, for when a doctor promised her some clothing she said she would give it to me. Strange to say, ever since Miss Brown has been taken away everything is different. The nurses are very kind and we are given plenty to wear. The doctors come to see us often and the food is greatly improved.

DISSOLVE TO:

BAILIFF

All rise for the honorable Judge Henry A. Gildersleeve.

Nellie and the packed courtroom stand. The Judge enters. John Cockerill is in the back.

JUDGE GILDERSLEEVE

Has the grand Jury reached a decision?  
We have your honor.

## GRAND JURY FOREMAN

We find that Miss Elisabeth Cochran, writer who goes by the pen name Nellie Bly, is telling the truth about all she has testified before the Grand Jury and find her testimony to be credible. We find that the committee of appropriation shall be provided one million dollars for the benefit of the insane.

Pandemonium. A roar from the crowd. Nellie's stunned by the award money. The judge bangs his gavel and calls for unheeded order. Cockerill smiles to himself, exits through the crowd.

146

INT. BLACKWELL'S - DR. DENT'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON\*

146

Dent seated at his desk, looks up to see Nellie Bly, smartly dressed in gray tweed, standing before him, confident, powerful. Dent stands.

DR. DENT

My dear girl, you have no idea what you have done.

NELLIE BLY

Oh I know exactly what I have done. Blackwell's is not a place of healing. It is a rat infested human death trap.

DR. DENT

It is due to the lack of means to secure good medical help. Funding has been so poor that Blackwell's Asylum has been forced to chose amongst convicted prisoners from the nearby penitentiary to fill out its staff. But I have been laboring to make it better.

Nellie is stunned at this news.

NELLIE BLY

You stood by as the nurses inflicted unspeakable cruelty upon the patients.

DR. DENT

If nurses were cruel to their patients, I had no positive means of ascertaining it?

NELLIE BLY

And what about the baths? How could you allow patient after patient to be put in the same cold ice water?

DR. DENT

I have no means by which to tell positively if the baths were cold and of the number of women put into the same water.

NELLIE BLY

But you knew. You knew that clothing meant for the patients was being stolen, you knew that women were being murdered in here.

DR. DENT

Miss Bly, Had I known your purpose, I would have aided you. We both had the same goal in mind.

NELLIE BLY

How can you say that?

DR. DENT

We both wanted a better Blackwell's. We both wanted a better system to treat the insane.

NELLIE BLY

No my goal was to expose what went on in here. And once I found the deplorable conditions and unimaginably inhuman treatment of the poor inmates, my goal was to end Blackwell's.

DR. DENT

By allowing a few mistakes to pass by I have been able to keep this facility running and improve. Knowing that one day Blackwell's would become a model of ideal treatment of the insane.

NELLIE BLY

Then you have not heard the news.

Dent flinches, represses a rage to physically lash out at Nellie.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

The state is taking control of Blackwell's Asylum. One of the conditions is that the facility be closed and torn down.

DR. DENT

You fool. With Blackwell's Asylum I had a chance to make a true difference to the city of New York.

NELLIE BLY

Dr. Dent, you have made a very old mistake. Throughout history there have been those who have allowed atrocities with a higher ideal as an end goal.

DR. DENT

History is written by the successful.

NELLIE BLY

I can see that I cannot convince you of the insanity of your thinking, but I can stop you.

Nellie steps aside and behind her a marshal holding a document enters, with two police officers. Dent sees handcuffs open and ready in the front police officer's hands. Dent is suddenly white as a ghost. They cuff him.

NELLIE BLY (CONT'D)

Good by Dr. Dent.

147 INT. BLACKWELL'S - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON\* 147

SLOW MOTION - Surrounded by the police officers, Dr. Dent comes around the corner in handcuffs. Flanking him are Miss Grupe, Miss McCarten and Doctor Kinier, also in handcuffs. Next accompanied by the marshal, Nellie Bly marches past, her irrepressible smile fixed across her features.

CROSSFADE:

148 EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY 148

The sun shines brightly. Nellie Bly walks along with a lively step. Suddenly, she spots Anne Neville, dressed in fine fashion coming down the street toward her. Anne sees Nellie. They approach each other and hug.

(CONTINUED)

CAMERA CRANES UP as the two women walk arm in arm, chatting animatedly together. CAMERA rises to Blackwell's Island in the distance. The color fades to sepia tone.

SUPER TITLE PLATE:

As result of the publication of Nellie Bly's story, Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum was torn down and a new light was shown on the treatment of society's most vulnerable.

SUPER 2ND TITLE PLATE:

Nellie Bly, the creator of investigative journalism, went on to expose corruption, injustice and brought down shady politicians throughout her career. She held the world record of traveling around the globe faster than any human being, was the first woman to report from the war zone in World War I and as the first woman industrialist, invented the 55 gallon drum used by all oil companies today.

SUPER 3RD TITLE PLATE:

Elisabeth Jane Cochrane (Nellie Bly) died at the age of 57 in 1922. She was the acknowledged, "Greatest reporter in America."

SUPER 4TH TITLE PLATE:

Nellie Bly was nearly penniless at the time of her death. Throughout her life she gave her fortunes away to orphans and the poor.

FADE TO BLACK.