

Spaces of empowerment:
from children's hospital
to women's shelter



A new home



Empowerment



*You are not
alone*

Help from people for people

**A lot of women are
afraid for their lives'**

Local Women's **LAURA HEATHER MAC** meets the Women's Aid
in Belfast and Lisburn who provide a safe refuge for
and children fleeing domestic abuse



WOMEN OF THE YEAR

**GISELE
PELICOT**

"I wanted all women victims
of rape—not just when
they have been drugged, rape
exists at all levels—I want those
women to say, 'Madame Pelicot
did it, we can do it too'"

from children's hospital to women's shelter

The Women's shelter

Jubilee (1978) by Derek Jarman is a dystopian punk film that portrays a violent future England. The story follows a gang of women who wander through London, create chaos, and encounter various characters. Violence becomes a way to illustrate the collapse of social structures. The gang directs this violence at authorities, random victims, and ultimately at society as a whole.

The film also features several vulnerable female characters who, despite their outwardly rebellious punk attitude, reveal inner insecurities. Rebellion alone does not protect them from vulnerability. Amyl, Crabs, and the other punk women may appear strong, but they are often internally directionless. They compensate for their insecurities through provocative behavior and acts of violence. Other women, such as Chaos and the waitress, are deliberately portrayed as vulnerable, and they are even subjected to physical violence.

When looking at old archival photographs, one can see that only women worked as caregivers for the children. In the 1960s, the children's hospital had its own school that trained these caregivers. Many of them were unmarried because they had to spend so much time at the hospital. To give something back to these women, and to provide a counterpoint to the violence shown in the film, we designed a women's shelter. It is not only a safe place, but also one that offers activities inspired by the film, empowering the women so they can leave the shelter strengthened.

Our script focuses on five deliberately selected side characters from the film Jubilee. They were chosen either for their vulnerability or for their encouraging presence within the film. A day in the women's shelter becomes the medium through which our project unfolds, offering insight into the ways of living, caring, and rebuilding within its walls.

A Day Inside a Women's Shelter

Cast



Chaos

The silent French
au pair

The abused survivor



Bingo Lady 1

The elderly gambler
clinging to
routine

The energiser



Waitress

The café server
attacked by the
girl-gang

The resilient person



Boy

The mute compani-
on drifting through
the dystopia

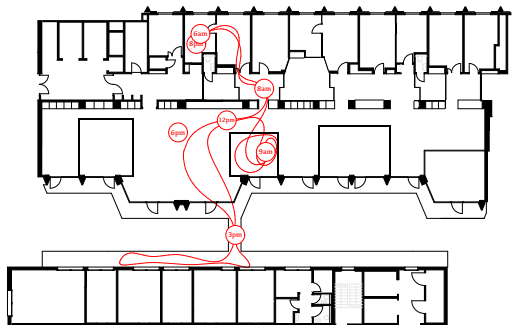
The kid



Bingo Lady 2

The elderly gambler
supporting her
friend

The staff



The Boy

06:00

The first rays of sunlight gently brush the child's cheek and wake them softly. Behind the semi-transparent curtains of a four-poster bed, the silhouette of their mother can be made out, still asleep.

The child gets up, climbs onto the bench beneath the window, gently pulls the curtain aside, and pauses to observe the large mural on the building across.

“It's beautiful, all these colors.
Who painted all this?
The shapes look like clouds. Or animals...
Oh, an elephant!
It looks like it's watching over me.”

After a brief moment of wandering dreams, the child moves closer to their mother's bed. A large diamond resting on the bedside table reflects the morning light. The child had never seen this jewel anywhere other than on their mother's hand. Carefully, they pick it up, look through it, turn it between their fingers, and drop it by accident.

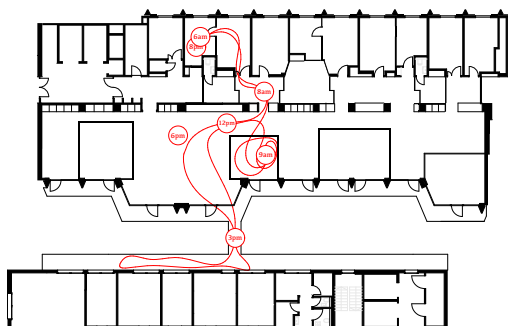
The mother wakes up, kisses her child, and without saying a word, puts the jewel away in a drawer.

07:00

The mother slips away to the bathroom and roughly tidies up their room. The child, meanwhile, is still sitting on the bench beneath the window, marveling at the faces hidden within the large mural.

08:00

They finally leave their cocoon and head toward the small kitchen, which they share with a slightly older woman. The mother prepares slices of bread, orange juice, and coffee. They sit together at a small round table, and the child tells their mother about the silly, dreamlike adventures they had during the night.



The Boy

09:00

The child joins the other children at the center. They are all more or less the same age. A caregiver asks them to sit in a circle in the play area, in front of the large glass window. She suggests a few activities, and the children agree on a construction game.

“I want to build the tallest tower in the world!
I want my tower to touch the clouds.
It will be shaped like a fir tree and it will be blue and red.”

Between the wooden partitions and the semi-transparent curtains, the children move within their own universe. As if time itself had paused, they devote themselves to their game with absolute focus, forgetting everything around them. Sitting on a soft rug, they let themselves be wrapped in the gentleness of the fabrics that ripple around them and diffuse a tinted light, transforming their shelter into a world of dreams and imagination.

10:00

The children run between the wooden panels that divide the spaces. They create their own labyrinth and hide in the corners of the shared area.

12:00

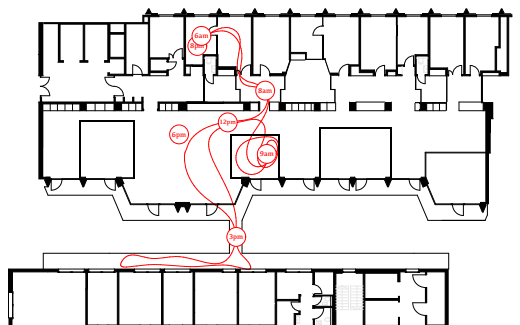
It is time to eat. The children are hungry and begin to grow irritable. A volunteer has prepared soup and cheese sandwiches for them. They rush toward the large table in the living room.

13:00

The mother reunites with her child and takes them for a short nap. The child falls asleep within five minutes and wakes up an hour later, more energetic than ever.

15:00

The children gather again in a small group. The sun is now high in the sky, and it is just warm enough for them to play on the balcony, among the trees and climbing plants. The child observes the plants and the insects that live among them when a woman approaches. She explains what kinds of plants they are: thyme for fish, rosemary and basil for tomato soup, coriander with avocado.



The Boy

“I don’t like fish.
It doesn’t smell good.”

18:00

He meets his mother again; she seems more relaxed than she did this morning. He tells her about his day with wide gestures, spinning around in every direction. His mother smiles.

“And tonight, with my friends,
we want to build a hidden hut
behind the curtains!
But it’s a secret.”

19:00

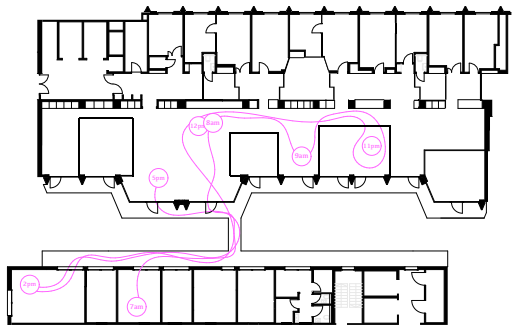
He starts to feel hungry, and his mother suggests that he sit down at the large table in the living room. Bingo Lady II has prepared a potato gratin. Everyone eats in silence; the children quietly giggle among themselves.

20:00

The child closes his eyes, too tired to build his hut.



v



The Waitress

07:00

She wakes up gently, long before the building comes to life. In the half-light of her room, she listens for a few seconds to the silence of the place — a rare silence she is learning to appreciate. Since her arrival, waking up is no longer a source of stress. She knows that here, no one shouts, no one forces a door open, no one asks her to justify herself. She stretches, pulls on a sweater, and quietly leaves her room.

08:00

The inner courtyard is still calm. The cold gives her a burst of energy. She gently runs her hand along the wooden railing, then the metal one, and makes her way to the shared kitchen. There, she finds the faint smell of coffee prepared by Bingo Lady I. They exchange a few words — often small talk, sometimes a knowing smile.

“Did you make porridge?
That’s very kind — I’d love a small bowl!”

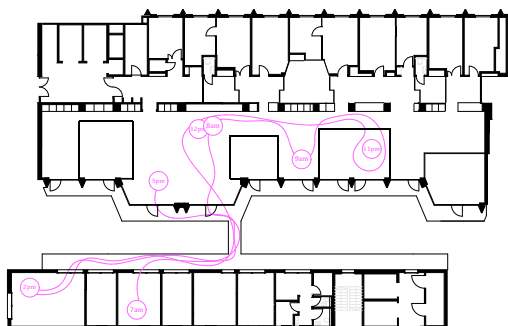
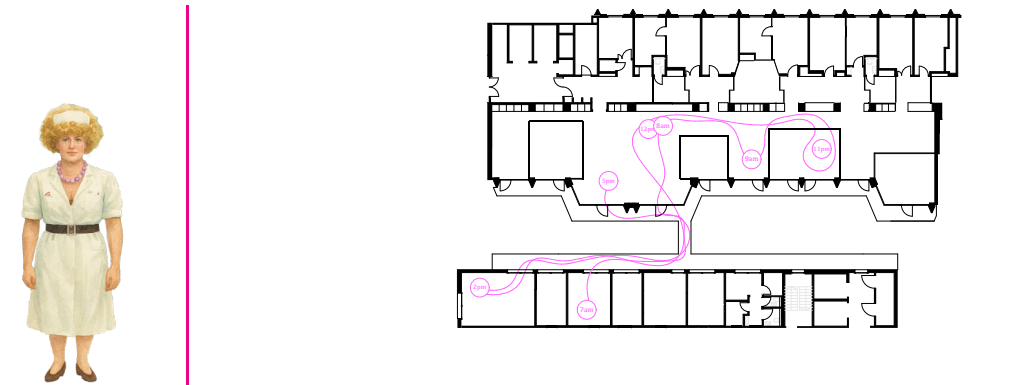
She enjoys the breakfast prepared by Bingo Lady I and goes to sit on the balcony. Outside, the inner courtyard is waking up too: leaves move in the morning air, and insects are becoming more numerous.

09:00

She meets her social worker at one of the tables in a small alcove between two wooden walls. They review her steps forward: administrative paperwork, job searching, medical appointments. The social worker listens without judgment, rephrases when she loses her way, and helps her set realistic goals. For the first time in a long while, she does not feel alone facing the outside world. After the meeting, she returns to her room to sort through her belongings and put things in order. She makes her bed, arranges her clothes by color in the built-in drawers under the bed, and cleans the small marks on the mirror.

11:00

Late in the morning, she takes part in a group workshop: today, it is a writing workshop. She sits around the round table with other women in the winter garden. They say that plants inspire us. The instructions are simple: write a few lines about a happy memory. She hesitates at first, then the words begin to flow.



The Waitress

She does not always read her text out loud, but listening to the others is already therapeutic. In those moments, she realizes that even though their stories differ, they share the same need for safety and the same desire to begin again

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12:00

After the workshop, she has lunch with a few of the residents. Mealtimes are an opportunity to build connections.

“The soup is delicious, thank you.
It reminds me of the one my mother used to make
when I was little.
It’s comforting.”

14:00

In the afternoon, she has an appointment with the psychologist. The session takes place in a small room next to hers. These sessions are exhausting but essential: she puts words to years of fear, to what she had to hide, to what she is still trying to understand. She leaves feeling lighter, sometimes more tired, but always relieved to have been heard.

17:00

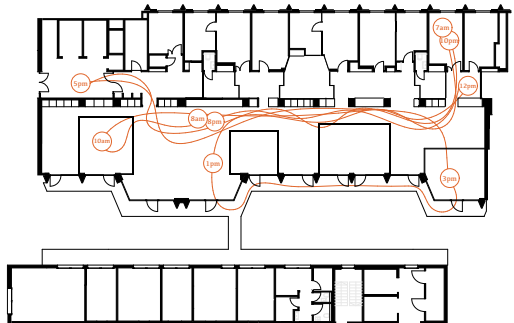
At the end of the day, she meets the other residents in the big living room. Some are watching a movie, others are knitting, and others are playing with the children.

20:00

In the evening, she prepares her dinner in her small kitchen and settles into a quiet corner, away from the others. She needs time for herself, time to think. She writes a few lines in her notebook — a habit she developed here, to keep track of her progress.

23:00

As night falls over the inner courtyard, she returns to her room. Before going to bed, she leaves the soft light on for a few minutes. She feels safe. For the first time in a long while, she falls asleep without fearing what tomorrow might impose on her.



The Bingo Lady I

08:00

She wakes up at almost the same time every morning and heads straight to the large shared kitchen. There, she prepares coffee in a big Italian stovetop coffee maker. She does this every morning — simply to make daily life a little easier for the women who live there.

The smell of hot coffee wakes a few of them. Soon, the three of them gather in the kitchen, chatting warmly about this and that.

“Help yourselves to coffee,
there’s enough for everyone.
I’m going to make some porridge —
would you like some too?”

10:00

After taking a shower, she steps away from the group and settles into a large armchair in the library area. She devoured her favorite book in three days, but the library is overflowing; she always finds something she enjoys.

Today, she starts a book about managing finances. Having lost her job in a tragic way, she is living off her savings and must learn how to rebuild her life.

12:00

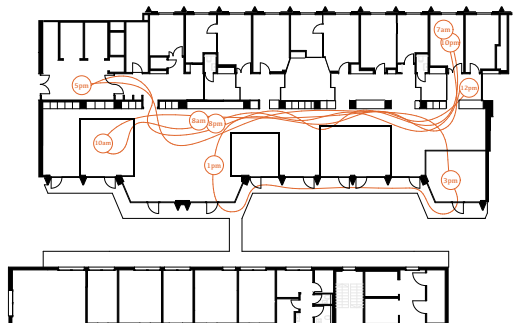
When she starts to feel hungry, she slowly gets up and meets Chaos in their small kitchen. There, they each make themselves a plate from the leftovers of the day before and sit down together at their usual table.

“How was your morning?
Did your workout go well?”

13:00

Once they are finished, she gathers her balls of yarn, takes her knitting needles, and settles comfortably in the large shared living room. She likes talking while she knits. She likes hearing the lively sounds of all these women living together.

Waitress finishes her soup, takes care of the dishes, and exchanges a few friendly words with her before slipping away to her daily session with the psychologist.



The Bingo Lady I

15:00

She is almost finished with the knitted slippers she is making for her grandson. She decides to take care of the herbs on the balcony.

The children run between the trees, shouting with joy, and one of them is closely examining the plants and their new leaves. She approaches him.

“See these? They are herbs.
We use them for cooking.
You can put them in soup,
in the gratin, on fish.
Rub them between your hands —
you’ll see, they smell wonderful!”

17:00

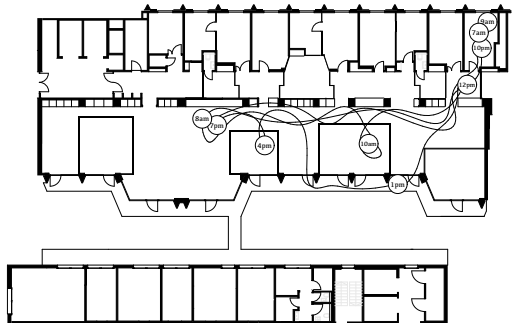
The women at the center are all busy with different activities, so she takes the opportunity to leave and do some shopping at her usual supermarket. Her budget is very tight, so she always chooses the store with the least expensive products. It’s not very close to the center, but she enjoys walking through the city when it isn’t dark yet.

20:00

She eats with a large group in the big common area. Someone has put on a jazz vinyl; candles warmly light the space, and all the women seem relaxed. Even the children are now silent.

22:00

She greets all the women and goes to her room, puts on her pajamas, and falls asleep peacefully in a large four-poster bed.



Chaos

07:00

She wakes up gently, still marked by nights that are sometimes restless, when memories resurface despite herself. To start the day with a minimum of stability, she unrolls her yoga mat in the room dedicated to sport. Slow, controlled movements help her release the tensions that have built up in her body over months — perhaps years. This routine, which she began at the center a few weeks ago, gives her an intimate moment where she can breathe freely, away from the fear that once ruled her mornings.

08:00

She goes to have breakfast in the common room, still a little reserved. Only a month has passed since her arrival at the center, and even though she feels safe there, she has not yet regained the ease to interact with others. Bingo Lady I, always welcoming, spontaneously comes over to talk to her. She listens politely, but part of her remains cautious: light conversations are still a fragile territory for her. Yet this human contact reminds her that kindness exists.

09:00

The conversation tires her more quickly than she would like. She feels the need to be alone, a need that has become almost vital since her escape. Back in her room, she sits on her bench and opens a book. Reading allows her to escape, slow her heartbeat, and feel once again in control of her space. She knows she is in the process of rebuilding herself, and these chosen moments of solitude, rather than imposed ones, are a new form of freedom.

12:00

For lunch, she goes to her small kitchen. This simple space represents a refuge: a place where she can do things at her own pace, without fear of being watched or judged. Her roommate joins her — a woman with a very different past, from a healthy relationship, who always tries to bring comfort to those around her. Their exchange is gentle and pressure-free. Her roommate never asks intrusive questions; she simply offers a stable presence, which helps her relearn how to trust.

Chaos

15:00

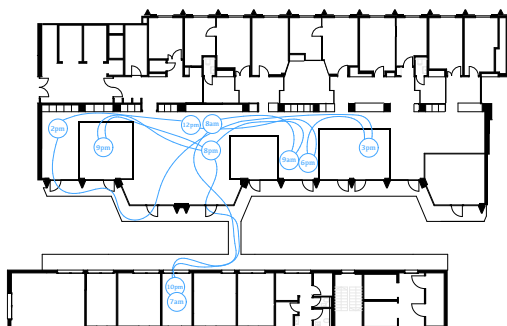
In the afternoon, she settles alone on the balcony with her journal. The fresh air soothes her thoughts, and the rustling of the leaves in the garden below gives her the illusion of a larger space, almost like a park. On this balcony, she gradually discovers a form of serenity she would not have believed possible just a month ago.

17:00

Late in the afternoon, the children from the center come to play near her. Among them, “Boy,” a tender and lively little boy, seems to have grown attached to her. Their innocent energy helps her reconnect with a part of herself that violence had stifled: lightness. With them, she sometimes laughs without even realizing it. Their presence gives her a strange kind of strength, as if their spontaneous joy reminds her that a gentler future is possible.

19:00

For dinner, she returns to the common room. After eating, she joins the other women and their children for music night. Slouched in the living room, enveloped in this collective warmth, they listen to a woman playing the piano. She doesn’t speak much, but she appreciates this quiet closeness.



The Bingo Lady II

06:00

She opens her eyes to the soft sound of the heating pipes. Her room is tiny, but she feels useful there, anchored at the heart of the center. She stretches slowly — her shoulders crack like old floorboards — and slips on her wool cardigan. She runs her hand through her gray hair and steps into the still-cold inner courtyard.

08:00

The common room begins to stir timidly. She cuts some fruit, warms up bread, and greets Bingo Lady I, who is making coffee as she does every morning. The women enter one by one, some exhausted, some already stressed about the day ahead. She recognizes each expression. She approaches a young woman slumped near the window.

“Eat a little, just one bit
There’s porridge and fruit.”

She hands out a few plates, eats at the large table, and tidies up a bit in the common room.

09:00

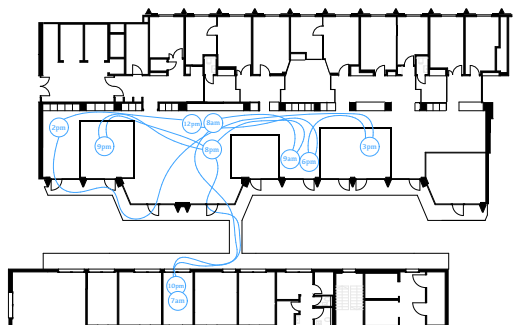
Sitting at her little desk by her window, she sorts through files, calls social services, and fills out endless forms.

10:00

A woman comes knocking at her door, seeking support. She accompanies her to an appointment outside. Along the way, they walk side by side, without speaking. She knows that sometimes, presence alone is enough.

12:00

Back at the center, she busies herself in the kitchen, joking about the vegetables taking too long to cook and her knees creaking louder than old floorboards. The women and children settle in. The children’s lightness allows the women to forget, for a moment, what they are going through. She watches attentively.



The Bingo Lady II

14:00

The center quiets down a bit: some women isolate themselves, others go out. She tidies up, cleans, and does the laundry. She comes across an old sweater and laughs, thinking it must have passed through a thousand hands.

15:00

It's time for a creative workshop. She doesn't really lead it, but she encourages. Shaky hands learning to rest. She sits next to a silent woman and observes her drawing without commenting.

17:00

Some return from exhausting appointments. She opens her arms if needed. Sometimes, she simply makes tea. Sometimes, she listens for long minutes.

18:00

She sits at an empty table in a work space and dives back into files, calls, and emails. She feels as if she is in a small bubble, between wooden partitions. Her pen flies across the forms. She sometimes grumbles against the procedures, the delays, against everything that makes these women's paths heavier.

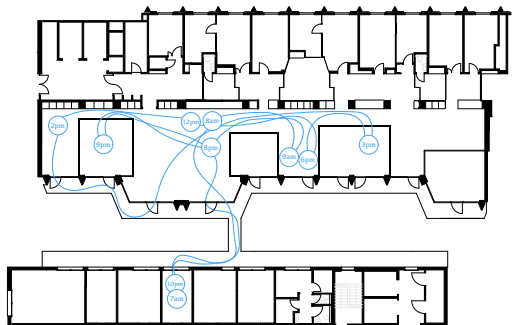
20:00

In the large room, she serves the plates and checks in with everyone. Conversations pick up a little. Some joke, others remain silent. She knows not to force anyone. She moves around, listening to a young woman proudly recount her day.

“See? You're doing better than you think.”

21:00

In the evening, the women often show more vulnerability. After doing the dishes for everyone, she sits in the living room with a book in her hands. One woman settles beside her, then another. Confidences flow — sometimes awkward, sometimes painful. She speaks little, but when she does, her words are powerful.



The Bingo Lady II

22:00

She helps tidy up, walks through the rooms, and turns off a few forgotten lights. The corridors grow quiet. She walks slowly, hands clasped behind her back, checking everything.

She sits on her bed and sighs. She savors this fragile silence, a precious reward before starting again tomorrow.