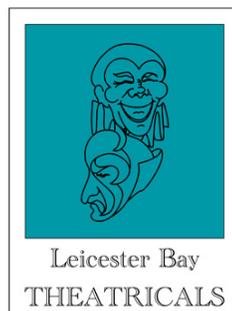


**PERUSAL SCRIPT**

**WINDING SHEET**

by  
Eric Samuelson



Newport, Maine

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## **WINDING SHEET**

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“The harlot’s curse, from street to street  
Shall weave old England’s winding sheet.”

--William Blake

“Whilst we conventional Social Democrats were wasting our time on education, agitation, and organization, some independent genius has taken the matter in hand...”

--George Bernard Shaw

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS -- (8f, 5m)**

Josephine Butler

The Rev. Dr. George Butler

Liz

Rose

May

Walter

Carver

Bentinck

Smith-Bentley

Mary Jeffries

Mrs. Smith-Bentley

Little Liz

Margie

(Little Liz and Margie may be played by the same actress)

## **Historical Note**

*Winding Sheet* is a historical play, in the sense that it deals with people who really lived and with events that actually occurred. My use of these materials is very loose, however. In fact, Josephine Butler's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts essentially began in 1869, and concluded with the repeal of the Acts in 1886. But her larger campaign, against the practice of prostitution and for the education, rehabilitation and recovery of the young women trapped in it, was one that lasted her entire life. And much of the progress she achieved in that larger campaign came after the Whitechapel murders--the "Jack the Ripper" killings of 1890. As I worked on the play, it seemed to me that a day by day, blow by blow account of a seventeen year political campaign might be less interesting than an exploration of her larger life-long fight, and the cost of it. And Jack the Ripper seemed to put the issues she was dealing with into such stark relief that I thought he might be worth including.

The events of *Winding Sheet* deal very loosely with time, place and character. The characters of Josephine Butler, George Butler and Mary Jeffries are based on historical personages. The other characters are fictional, except 'Walter'/Jack, about whom almost nothing is known. "Liz Stride" was the name of one of Jack the Ripper's prostitute victims, but my Liz bears no resemblance to her. Bentinck, Carver and Smith-Bentley are not really characters but types, and could as easily have been named more generically (Victorian Gentleman #1, #2 and so on). The same might be said of Liz, Rose and May, who are more specifically characterized, but who also represent types more than individuals.

I have also played theatrical games with time. Although Josephine's campaign lasted seventeen years, Liz, Rose and May do not age, and Liz's daughter remains nine throughout. This is merely meant to show the agelessness of the problems with which Josephine struggled, and is not meant to be confusing.

At the same time, I have tried to stay true to the historicity of the issues of the day. Many of Josephine's lines come from her collected writings and speeches, and the descriptions of the horrors of Victorian prostitution are all based on the best research available to me.

## Glossary of Terms

The criminal classes in London spoke a very peculiar jargon, which they called the “voker romeny.” At times, it made communication with outsiders quite difficult. I have tried to communicate a sense of this jargon in my play. The following glossary of terms may be helpful to actors and directors. I am indebted to Kellow Chesney’s excellent Victorian Underworld for much of this.

Blood--A young man-about-town, a prostitute’s customer.  
Bloody flummut--Completely impossible, totally wrong.  
Chancre--Syphilis or other sexually transmitted diseases.  
Chavy--A street urchin, a child of the slums.  
Coopered--Blown, impossible, a bad mistake, at the end of your rope.  
Crushers--Policemen.  
Daffy--A shot of liquor.  
Dewskitch--A thrashing. A sado-masochistic sexual encounter.  
Dolly mop--A prostitute.  
Doss--A night’s sleep in a boarding house.  
Dub lay--Easy job.  
Fair--Money. Especially “a bit of fair” I.e. A tidy sum of money  
Flash pull--A job with a really spectacular payoff.  
Flash house--An exclusive, expensive house of prostitution.  
Flat--A fool. Slow.  
Flat dabeno--Completely crazy.  
Flop--A sexual encounter with a prostitute.  
French malady--Sometimes called ‘The malady.’ Syphilis. Sex with an underage virgin was thought to cure it.  
Fresh--A virgin.  
Gammy cockum--Fancy tricks. “Don’t give me no gammy cockum”=“Don’t try to trick me.”  
Glocky--Stupid.  
Good natured--Interested in a sexual encounter.  
Granny--To figure something out.  
Gull--Money.  
Happy Powder--Drugs, usually cocaine.  
Hykey--Sharp, smart.  
Judy--Prostitute.  
Kinchin--Easy. All-purpose word for a good experience, or at least an experience that wasn’t as bad as you expected.  
Lay--A job, a task. Generally, the word was not used in a sexual context.  
Lills to the ground--Keep a sharp lookout.  
Lushington--Alcoholic  
Mouth--A talker, someone who turns in other criminals to the police.  
Nancy--A girl, a prostitute.  
Netherskans--Landlord. Particularly a bad landlord.  
Newgate--Newgate prison, for particularly hardened criminals.  
Peeler--A constable.  
Prissy--Innocent, a well-bred woman outside the criminal culture.  
Puckering--Senseless, useless talk.  
Quim--Vagina, particularly vulgar slang for prostitute.  
Ream--Very, genuine. All-purpose adjective for ‘good.’  
Rookery--A slum. Most famous were St. Giles, Seven Dials, Whitechapel.  
Ruck--Empty, poor, broke. All purpose adjective for ‘bad.’  
Soak--A drunk.  
Soft--Counterfeit money.  
Tickle--Sex.  
Uncle--A pawnbroker  
Voker--Ill timed chatter.  
Voker flams--Shut up.

Voker Romeny--The jargon itself.

1. Winding sheet - a sheet in which a corpse is wrapped for burial; a shroud. (The meaning inferred by William Blake in his poem, *Auguries of Innocence*, 1803)
2. *Like a Winding Sheet* (a short story by Ann Petry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century) — This winding sheet describes the emotions and the buildup of anger over time—winding and winding until it was time to release it all.
3. The other meaning of winding describes something with twists and turns, like a winding country road or a little winding mountain stream. A path through the woods that has plenty of bends and curves in it is winding, and a river that curls and meanders down to the sea is also winding

**WINDING SHEET** by *Eric Samuelsen* (8 f, 5 m) Several settings can be fluid. Costumes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This story is based on true characters and events about the Victorian social reformer, Josephine Butler, in her crusade to end prostitution. Whitechapel. The Seven Dials, Fleet Street. The murders by Jack...the Ripper. The slums of late Victorian London set the scene for this drama about social reform opposed by the hypocrites of British Peerage and government, for they were the major partakers of the services offered. The Contagious Diseases Acts of 1869 become a focus of the campaign waged by Josephine Butler, which was successful in 1886 with the repeal of those acts. But her larger campaign, against the practice of prostitution and for the education, rehabilitation and recovery of the young women trapped in it, was one that lasted her entire life. SLAC staged reading, Dec. 1998. **ORDER #3293**

**Eric Samuelsen** taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## ACT ONE

*(Enter WALTER in spot. American accent.)*

**WALTER:** Gentlemen. Ladies. Pimps and prosties, bloods and judies, johns and men-about-town. Welcome!

*(With a grand gesture, he indicates the stage)*

I am a magician, able to change space into a time, and time into a place. I freeze some moments for your delectation, let others play themselves out, and then I vanish, as if into ether, leaving only traces behind. I go by many names, but for tonight, you may call me Walter...

*(Bowing deeply.)*

... your most humble and obedient servant.

*(With an extravagant gesture.)*

The time: England in the latter years of the reign of Queen Victoria. The locations: London and Oxford, Cheltenham and Liverpool, The Seven Dials and Whitechapel, Leicester Square and Fleet Street.

*(He gestures, lights up on Mrs. Jeffries' door.)*

Flash houses, where dolly mops ply their trade.

*(Another gesture, lights up on the street area.)*

Narrow streets, choked with coal dust and the filth from horses and overflowing dustbins.

*(Another gesture, lights up on the Salon area.)*

Upper class salons and drawing rooms, men's clubs and meeting halls.

*(Another gesture, lights up on the BUTLER home.)*

The home of our heroine, Mrs. George Butler. Josephine Butler. And now, my friends, the ladies of the night!

*(A final gesture, and enter ROSE, LIZ, and MAY. ROSE, young and attractive, independent.*

*LIZ, older, hard, no longer handsome, heavily painted. MAY appears a bit slow-witted and thick, though in fact, she's a good deal brighter than she seems.)*

Lurking in every shadow, crawling out from every crack and fissure, the great unspoken, one of every six women in society—

**LIZ:** Are you good-natured?

**WALTER:** Harlots.

**LIZ:** Taken a fancy, 'ave you?

**MAY:** Cost you five shillings.

**ROSE:** Seven for me.

**LIZ:** You can 'ave the benefit of my vast experience for a mere five shillings.

*(He starts to move away.)*

Or four.

*(He turns his back to her.)*

Well, then, three and sixpence, the night being cold.

**MAY:** I charges five. You don't pay me. You pay the milliner.

**WALTER:** (*British accent.*) I'm more in the market for fresh fish, myself.

**ROSE:** If it's fresh you want then, look no further.

**WALTER:** Freshly caught, not freshly savored.

**MAY:** I'm not much to look at, I know, but I'll give you what you want and no monkey business.

**WALTER:** Maybe later.

*(Starts to exit.)*

**LIZ:** I can 'elp you.

*(He turns back to her.)*

To a bit of fresh, I mean.

**WALTER:** An acquaintance?

**LIZ:** A friend.

**WALTER:** A relation?

**LIZ:** It might be so.

*(He smiles at this.)*

Unless you're looking for a cure. Are you? It'll be 'er first, and I don't want 'er getting the malady.

**WALTER:** I'm free of the chancre. Personal taste, that's all.

**LIZ:** We can do business, then.

*(Enter CARVER, a constable. WALTER hides.)*

**CARVER:** Evenin' ladies.

**LIZ:** Evenin', constable.

**CARVER:** Off to Covent Garden? A night at the opera?

**ROSE:** Oh, yes, constable. But we need an escort to be on the streets so late.

**CARVER:** Later, perhaps.

*(He exits. WALTER reemerges.)*

**LIZ:** (*Amused.*) Lurking from the crushers, is it?

**WALTER:** What?

**ROSE:** A bit of shyness around the constabulary?

**WALTER:** I have a position to maintain.

**MAY:** 'e's an old friend, 'e is. We gives 'im a flop once a fortnight.

**LIZ:** 'e takes us in when 'e 'as to. For the inspection.

**ROSE:** So what's your pleasure, Mr. Shyness?

**WALTER:** *(To LIZ)* As I say, I'm in the market for a bit of fresh.

*(To ROSE)*

But that sort of arrangement takes time. Meanwhile, for tonight. I have two pounds.

**ROSE:** Two pounds?

**WALTER:** But of course, I'll expect extraordinary service.

**LIZ:** 'ow extraordinary? I'll give it out, but I won't take it.

**WALTER:** Do I look like a schoolboy? I'll want my turn.

**ROSE:** Not for me, then.

**LIZ:** I've done before, but my netherskans don't like it. Says 'e don't fancy cleanin' bloodstains off the linens.

**WALTER:** You can doss elsewhere. For two pounds, you can wait to heal.

**LIZ:** I doss with me Mum. No, I'm not interested.

**ROSE:** I was out two days, last time I was done to. Not for me, thanks.

**WALTER:** *(To MAY)* How about you?

**MAY:** Right. I'll do it.

*(We hear the piano from JOSEPHINE's home, Brahms.)*

**LIZ:** No, May.

**MAY:** It's two pounds, Liz.

**LIZ:** It's not for you.

**MAY:** It's two pounds. I'll do it.

**WALTER:** Come along then. And you...

*(indicates LIZ)*

I'll keep in touch. Is this your corner?

**LIZ:** Most nights.

**WALTER:** If she's truly fresh, you can name your price.

*(He crosses with MAY to MRS. JEFFRIES: ' door, enters.)*

**LIZ:** *(Watches him carefully.)* I'll ask a 'undred.

*(MRS. JEFFRIES' door closes. Enter BUTLER and JOSEPHINE to their home.)*

**BUTLER:** Lovely.

**JOSEPHINE:** Brahms.

**BUTLER:** You'll play that tonight, then?

**JOSEPHINE:** Hardly. Mrs. Smith-Bentley gets the vapors at the thought of anything romantic.

**BUTLER:** Ah. So what then? Haydn I suppose.

**JOSEPHINE:** Or Schubert. Something uncomplicated.

*(She stops playing, puts away music.)*

**BUTLER:** You'll play it beautifully, at any rate.

**JOSEPHINE:** I shan't play at all, George, unless you promise not to roll your eyes at Mrs. Smith-Bentley's playing.

**BUTLER:** No one sees me but you.

**JOSEPHINE:** You must especially not ask me to play the same piece as hers immediately after.

**BUTLER:** I like showing you off.

**JOSEPHINE:** It's not a contest, George, merely entertainment.

**BUTLER:** Nonsense, we're all showing off our wives.

**JOSEPHINE:** Not tonight. I'm not up to competing.

*(Wearily shuts the piano.)*

I shan't be able to look him in the face.

**BUTLER:** Pettigrew again?

**JOSEPHINE:** It makes my blood boil. I shouldn't wonder if God were to shake down the foundations of Exeter College, collapse it into rubble around him.

**BUTLER:** *(Profoundly embarrassed.)* Of course it's scandalous.

**JOSEPHINE:** Do not leave me alone with him, George, or believe me, I shall tell him so to his face.

**BUTLER:** Nonsense, Josephine. Of course you will do nothing of the kind.

*(Enter SMITH-BENTLEY and BENTINCK to the Salon. JOSEPHINE stands aside and watches.)*

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** His housekeeper!

*(General laughter. GEORGE crosses to them.)*

**BENTINCK:** And she actually demanded marriage? To a fellow of Exeter College?

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** He had made advances, she said. Leading to a certain delicacy of condition. And it was imperative, she said, that he marry her at once.

**BENTINCK:** Can you just imagine the faculty teas? This red-faced matron, dropping her aitches and using, like as not, the sugar tongs to stir with!

**BUTLER:** What will become of the poor girl?

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** Poor girl? A woman of forty. Discharged without references, of course.

**BENTINCK:** If he had left it at that, it would have been all right. But he settled some fifty pounds on her, soft-hearted old fool.

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** Not a wise course. Merely set tongues to wagging.

**JOSEPHINE:** It is mortal sin!

*(BUTLER looks over at her, profoundly embarrassed. She vigorously nods her head at the men.)*

**BUTLER:** We must say, mustn't we, that a ... sin has been committed?

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** A sin, Butler? Surely you're not equating his sin with hers?

**BENTINCK:** Preposterous.

**BUTLER:** No. No, I suppose not.

*(SMITH-BENTLEY and BENTINCK exit.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Monstrous.

**BUTLER:** I do work with them, Josephine. They are my colleagues. Friends, if it comes to that.

**JOSEPHINE:** What do they expect will become of her?

**BUTLER:** He gave her money, she'll be all right.

**JOSEPHINE:** Fifty pounds. With no references, a child to care for, she'll never find employment. She'll run through her money by Easter.

**BUTLER:** It's a bad show all around, Josephine.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(Indignantly)* A bad show!

**BUTLER:** But you musn't think of old Pettigrew as some kind of heartless libertine. Perhaps he is a seducer, perhaps even that. But it's not as though he made a practice of it, with no one's wife or daughter safe in his sight.

**JOSEPHINE:** Someone's daughter wasn't very safe, was she?

**BUTLER:** A woman of forty, a grandmother...

**JOSEPHINE:** Someone's daughter nonetheless. Scandalous.

**BUTLER:** My position at Oxford is tenuous enough, Josephine. We don't come to London often. Let's make the best of this evening.

**JOSEPHINE:** I suppose so. Yes, I suppose you're right.

*(As she stands, she sways slightly.)*

**BUTLER:** Josephine?

**JOSEPHINE:** It's all right, George. Let's go.

*(She and BUTLER cross away from their home. Enter BENTINCK, SMITH-BENTLEY, MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY and CARVER to the Salon. They turn the piano so it faces out, MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY sits at the piano bench. JOSEPHINE and GEORGE enter and greet the others. MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY plays. As she plays, we see MAY stumble out of MRS. JEFFRIES,' collapse on the street. WALTER watches her complacently. Tosses money in front of her.)*

**WALTER:** *(British accent)* Find a surgeon for your back. One who washes his hands, if you can. You'll be right enough in a day or two.

*(He crosses to the Salon, joins the others. MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY: 's piece concludes, polite*

*applause from all.*)

**BENTINCK:** *(A little drunk)* Lovely. Exquisitely played, Mrs. Smith-Bentley.

*(JOSEPHINE discreetly elbows BUTLER in the side.)*

**BUTLER:** Yes, indeed.

**CARVER:** Mrs. Butler, your reputation precedes you. Perhaps you would be so good... ?

**JOSEPHINE:** Perhaps in a moment, Mr. Carver. I find the room a bit close.

**BENTINCK:** Of course.

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** Butler, have you met my friend, Dr. Walter? He's an American, come to join the Royal College of Surgeons.

**WALTER:** *(American accent)* Solely on a temporary basis, Mr. Smith-Bentley. Mr. Butler.

*(They shake hands.)*

**BENTINCK:** Butler's at Oxford. He's our local geographer.

**WALTER:** Oxford, really. Which college?

**BUTLER:** Exeter.

**WALTER:** And you teach geography? I didn't know that was part of the Oxford curriculum.

**BUTLER:** I've campaigned to make it one.

**BENTINCK:** Butler finds us all lacking in cartographic skills. Don't you Butler?

**BUTLER:** Since we find ourselves running an empire, I think it prudent of us to know something of the world we administer.

**WALTER:** I couldn't agree more.

**CARVER:** You agree, Dr. Walter?

**WALTER:** Very much so. It amazes me when my colleagues in the States can't find Cairo on a map, or tell whether Istanbul is north or south of the equator.

**BUTLER:** Quite so.

**CARVER:** It's north, isn't it?

*(Looks around at them.)*

Or south, then.

**BUTLER:** My students at Oxford could answer that for you, Carver.

**BENTINCK:** And Mrs. Butler has her own claim to notoriety. Dr. Walter, I present to you Mrs. George Butler, the first woman ...

*(and this is a great joke)*

... to have been issued a reading ticket to the Bodleian Library!

**WALTER:** Your servant, madame.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** I never did understand that, Josephine. Why on earth did you want such an item?

**JOSEPHINE:** Because there were books I wished to read.

*(An awkward pause.)*

**BENTINCK:** You see, Dr. Walter, that's our Mrs. Butler for you. Books she wished to read!

**WALTER:** Your wife is a charming lady, Professor Butler.

**BUTLER:** *(Bluntly, a bit defensively.)* I find her so.

*(An awkward pause.)*

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** I believe we are ready to dine. Gentlemen, if you will each escort one of the ladies...

*(They exit, turning the piano back around as they go. BUTLER and JOSEPHINE step into the street.)*

**BUTLER:** You see, that wasn't so very painful. A bit of awkwardness at the start, but soon forgotten.

**JOSEPHINE:** Amanda Smith-Bentley's playing has improved, I'll say that.

**BUTLER:** There you are. And Bentinck no drunker than usual.

**JOSEPHINE:** Someone should talk with him, George. Those ... lapses in good breeding are becoming more and more difficult politely to pass over.

**BUTLER:** Quite so. You could see that young Dr. Whatshisname, the American, was finding it most embarrassing.

**JOSEPHINE:** At least he had the taste to let it go.

*(She sees MAY on the street. BUTLER passes by her.)*

George, stop.

**BUTLER:** What?

**JOSEPHINE:** Help me pick her up.

**BUTLER:** Oh. Certainly.

*(They help MAY to a seating position.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Are you all right?

**MAY:** Yes.

**JOSEPHINE:** Look at her back, George.

*(To MAY.)*

You've been very badly beaten.

*(To GEORGE.)*

Look, the back of her dress is soaked.

**BUTLER:** Are you in domestic service?

**MAY:** I'm all right.

*(She tries to stand, can't.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Who did this to you?

**BUTLER:** Are you in service?

*(To JOSEPHINE.)*

It may be her master, punishment for petty thievery or some such.

**JOSEPHINE:** Look at her back, George. What sort of brute...?

**MAY:** I'm all right!

*(She forces herself to her feet, starts to fall.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** George, call a carriage.

**BUTLER:** Josephine...

**JOSEPHINE:** If you won't call a carriage, I will.

**BUTLER:** Don't be preposterous.

**JOSEPHINE:** We've got to get help.

**BUTLER:** We shouldn't interfere. She stole the silverware, likely enough.

**MAY:** Not bloody likely!

**BUTLER:** Keep a decent tongue in your mouth, young lady! Who's your master?

**MAY:** I'm not in service.

**BUTLER:** Not in service?

*(Really sees her back for the first time.)*

Good heavens. Who did this to you?

*(Enter LIZ and ROSE.)*

**LIZ:** We'll take care of her, sir.

*(She starts to help MAY.)*

**BUTLER:** Right, then, carry on.

*(See who he's talking to.)*

Oh.

**JOSEPHINE:** Are you her friends?

**BUTLER:** Josephine, let's go.

**JOSEPHINE:** Not now. Are you friends with this young lady?

**LIZ:** Yes, ma'am.

**JOSEPHINE:** Have you a place where you can take her?

**MAY:** I can go to the milliner's.

**BUTLER:** You work at a milliner's?

**ROSE:** (*Finds this humorous.*) You might say that.

**JOSEPHINE:** What's your name, young lady?

**ROSE:** (*Quickly.*) Voker flams.

**MAY:** What's the 'arm? My name is...

**ROSE:** Shut it, I said!

**LIZ:** (*Intervening.*) We'll take care of 'er, ma'am, don't you worry about a thing.

**JOSEPHINE:** I believe she requires medical attention. Can you pay for it?

**MAY:** I'm all right. It were just a little birching.

**JOSEPHINE:** Those welts are raw and open, and you have cloth sticking in the wound.

**ROSE:** We'll see to it, ma'am.

**JOSEPHINE:** Have you money?

**MAY:** I've got two pounds.

**JOSEPHINE:** That helps.

**MAY:** I need it! Two pounds, I'm not paying some soak of a doctor...

**LIZ:** I've got a place close by...

**JOSEPHINE:** You live in this neighborhood.

**ROSE:** (*Defiantly.*) We work this neighborhood. Do you granny?

**JOSEPHINE:** I'm sorry, I...

**ROSE:** We gives your friends and neighbors the odd tickle? At seven shillings a pull.

**MAY:** (*Automatically*) I charges five. You don't pay me, you pay the milliner.

**JOSEPHINE:** I understand.

**ROSE:** All I'm saying is, we know our way in and out.

**LIZ:** So leave us to it.

**JOSEPHINE:** I don't think I can do ...

**ROSE:** (*To herself*) Bloody flummut puckering. Like talking to the wall.

**LIZ:** Never mind, Rose.

*(Back to JOSEPHINE.)*

Look, we're taking 'er now, all right? There's a rookery near, she'll be with friends.

**BUTLER:** I don't believe...

*(He clears his throat nervously.)*

I don't believe that we can allow you to do that.

*(They all stare at him in astonishment.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** George?

**BUTLER:** This young lady has been very badly injured, and we are, I believe, better equipped than you to provide for her needs.

*(He offers her his arm.)*

Young lady, if you would be so good...

*(He leads MAY into their home.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** *(To herself.)* Good for you, George.

**ROSE:** Did you see that?

**LIZ:** Like she was the Grand Duchess 'erself.

**ROSE:** Right where all the neighbors can see.

**LIZ:** I hope she remembers her manners. Gives 'im a tickle for free.

*(They both laugh, and exit. Enter WALTER.)*

**WALTER:** *(American accent.)* Drains and sewers.

*(JOSEPHINE's piano begins again.)*

You've met our heroine, Mrs. Butler. Born Josephine Grey, in 1828, first cousin to the Prime Minister, Lord Grey. A child of sewers; count them: a lady, a family in politics, a country estate. Sewers and drains. Her father's closest friend was Sir Edward Chadwick, author of Chadwick on Drains, a pioneering account of Victorian sanitation, which led to the passing of the first Public Health Bill. That was Josephine's childhood reading. Chadwick on Drains. Josephine's interest was in another type of sewer altogether.

*(JOSEPHINE enters. She goes to the street. ROSE and LIZ are standing at their corner.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Hello.

*(They look her over.)*

Excuse me. I would like to have a word with you, if I may.

**ROSE:** Right.

**JOSEPHINE:** Weren't you the women I saw earlier? With the friend, who was so badly beaten?

**ROSE:** That's us.

**JOSEPHINE:** You should know that she's recovered completely. We sent her home this morning.

**ROSE:** I 'eard. Saw 'er at the rookery.

**JOSEPHINE:** Can you tell me ...?

*(Hesitates.)*

I've never seen such welts before.

**ROSE:** It were a blood that did 'er.

**JOSEPHINE:** A ... a blood?

**LIZ:** Are you flat? Voker flams.

**ROSE:** There's no 'arm.

**LIZ:** There's no pull 'ere.

**ROSE:** I'll talk if I please!

**LIZ:** You're flat dabeno. Puckering like a three day soak.

*(She moves away down the street.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** What did she say? Why did she move away?

**ROSE:** Liz don't like me puckering away like this.

**JOSEPHINE:** Liz, then. And your name... ?

*(ROSE does not respond.)*

Puckering ... that's another one.

**ROSE:** Another what?

**JOSEPHINE:** The way you talk. I'm sorry, you employ words and phrases unfamiliar to me.

**ROSE:** Voker romeny.

**JOSEPHINE:** Voker romeny.

**ROSE:** It's the way we talk. In the rookery, like. The Dials, Whitechapel.

**JOSEPHINE:** You speak a sort of dialect, then?

**ROSE:** A what?

**JOSEPHINE:** Never mind. So your friend thinks we shouldn't talk?

**ROSE:** That's right.

**JOSEPHINE:** Puckering, then. Some sort of foolish talk with outsiders. I understand that. Sensible of her.

**ROSE:** *(A bit miffed.)* So I'm flat, is it?

**JOSEPHINE:** No! At least I ... flat, not a place where people live. An adjective ... stupid?

**ROSE:** *(Deeply offended.)* Right, I'm off.

*(Heads off, stands by LIZ.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** No, look, I'm not ... I didn't mean to insult you.

*(Following them.)*

**ROSE:** Call me glocky, will you?

**JOSEPHINE:** Not at all. I don't think you're in the least ... glocky. Look, I'm Mrs. Butler, Mrs. George Butler.

*(They stare at her with unrelieved hostility.)*

I merely wanted to ask ... have either of you any domestic experience?

**ROSE:** What?

**JOSEPHINE:** My parlor maid just gave notice. I would be happy to take you on. Either of you. Without references. I'd like very much to give you a chance. The pay, of course, would be comparable to the prevailing rate...

**LIZ:** You're offering a position? As a maid?

**JOSEPHINE:** In domestic service, that's right. For both of you, and your friend as well--I offered her the position this morning. Unfortunately, she left before ... well, before—

**ROSE:** Well, Liz, I don't hardly see 'ow we can pass up a flash pull like this!

**LIZ:** Parlor maid, and to the grand Mrs. Butler as well.

**ROSE:** Pinch me, Liz, I must be dreaming.

**LIZ:** Lugging up coal buckets...

**ROSE:** Stoking fireplaces until your fingers blister...

**LIZ:** Dusting from dusk to dawn...

**ROSE:** A jolly ream lay if I ever saw one...

**LIZ:** And for that, we gets what?

**ROSE:** Six shillings a week and half days off Sunday.

**LIZ:** A ream flash lay...

**JOSEPHINE:** I thought you might see it as an improvement over your present situation.

**LIZ:** My present situation!

*(Confrontational.)*

What is my present situation, may I ask?

**JOSEPHINE:** You know perfectly well...

**LIZ:** Maybe I don't! Say it! What am I!

**JOSEPHINE:** You know...

**LIZ:** Say it!

**JOSEPHINE:** Well. You're a harlot. Aren't you?

**ROSE:** *(She snickers at this.)* An 'arlot.

**LIZ:** That's right. A prostie...

**ROSE:** A gay girl...

**LIZ:** A judy, a dolly mop quim. And I've made sixteen shillings tonight and it's still early!

**ROSE:** Not a bad bit of fair, for work that's done lying down.

**JOSEPHINE:** I understand.

**LIZ:** Oh, I'm so glad.

*(Enter BENTINCK, quite drunk.)*

**ROSE:** Lills to the ground.

**JOSEPHINE:** What?

**LIZ:** Voker flams!

**ROSE:** *(To BENTINCK)* Are you good natured?

**BENTINCK:** I'm sorry?

**ROSE:** Come on, Charlie, don't be shy. Just one little tickle, eh? Brace you up for the missus.

**LIZ:** I think 'e prefers the mature type, Rose. Isn't that right?

**ROSE:** A mere seven shillings.

**BENTINCK:** Get away from me!

*(He exits.)*

**ROSE:** I know you! Last week you weren't so flat!

**LIZ:** Voker flams a bit, Rose, the peelers.

**ROSE:** You saw 'im slum me?

*(Turns on JOSEPHINE.)*

It were your fault!

**JOSEPHINE:** I'm sorry, I...

**ROSE:** You cost me seven shillings!

**LIZ:** Rose...

**ROSE:** I want my money.

**JOSEPHINE:** I don't have...

**ROSE:** Ream dress like that one, don't give me your gammy cockum. I want my money!

*(LIZ holds her back.)*

Seven shillings!

*(Fighting LIZ, trying to reach JOSEPHINE.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** I can't help you if...

**ROSE:** Seven shillings!

*(LIZ wrestles her off-stage. BUTLER appears at their home. JOSEPHINE crosses to him.)*

**BUTLER:** But why, Josephine?

**JOSEPHINE:** I don't know.

**BUTLER:** We helped that one poor creature, I know. It was the only thing to do under the circumstances.

**JOSEPHINE:** There are many others in as desperate need.

**BUTLER:** Perhaps so.

**JOSEPHINE:** And with no protection, in constant danger...

**BUTLER:** Yes, quite, but isn't it true that these women choose their ... occupation, with all its attendant difficulties? They admitted as much to you.

**JOSEPHINE:** I don't know that, George.

**BUTLER:** You offered them a respectable position. They turned you down.

**JOSEPHINE:** I know.

**BUTLER:** You've made a jolly good effort on their behalf. More than anyone on this earth would do.

**JOSEPHINE:** Yes, I made an effort.

**BUTLER:** Well, then.

**JOSEPHINE:** It's not enough.

**BUTLER:** Why, my dear?

**JOSEPHINE:** I don't know. Eva, perhaps, is leading me this way. Or God, through Eva.

**BUTLER:** Eva is dead, Josephine.

**JOSEPHINE:** Oh, no, George. She's not dead to me. She is as alive today as when I could hold her in my arms.

**BUTLER:** I know you see her so.

**JOSEPHINE:** And you do not. I know.

**BUTLER:** I know I laid her in the ground, Josephine. I only *hope* to see her rise out of it.

**JOSEPHINE:** You *hope*, George, but I *know*. She visits me. She tells me things.

**BUTLER:** I suppose ... she might.

**JOSEPHINE:** Do you remember that evening, George, that awful evening?

**BUTLER:** How could I ever forget it?

**JOSEPHINE:** My darling little girl. Racing to greet us. The staircase. That horrid tumbling down.

**BUTLER:** As I say. I remember it.

**JOSEPHINE:** I would have been content to devote my life to my children. To spend my days ... domestically engaged. But Eva's death has driven me an entirely new direction, George. God has driven me.

**BUTLER:** I know you feel driven.

**JOSEPHINE:** I feel ... possessed, by a desire to find some pain keener than my own, to meet with people more unhappy than myself.

**BUTLER:** There are many thousands such.

**JOSEPHINE:** My heart aches, George, night and day it aches. And my only solace must be to find other hearts that ache, night and day. And offer what comfort I can.

*(She suddenly falters.)*

Oh.

**BUTLER:** Josephine?

*(Helps her sit.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** It's nothing, George. I mustn't become so agitated.

**BUTLER:** No, you mustn't.

**JOSEPHINE:** I think about these matters, and then I can't sleep nights. It makes me faint.

**BUTLER:** Yet another reason why this campaign...

**JOSEPHINE:** Is essential, George. I'm worse when I'm not engaged like this.

**BUTLER:** But these women, Josephine? This campaign?

**JOSEPHINE:** This campaign seems to have found me out. I think I should pursue it.

**BUTLER:** *(Distastefully.)* Pursue it. And how do you propose to ... pursue it.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(Lightly, a change of tone.)* Well, like Stanley pursued Livingstone, I think. As a scientist, making notes all the while.

**BUTLER:** The science of prostitutes.

**JOSEPHINE:** Why not? Sir Edward Chadwick became a scientist of sewers.

**BUTLER:** Chadwick on Drains. Your favorite childhood reading.

**JOSEPHINE:** Sir Edward spent months crawling through London drains. I only propose to spend a few weeks talking to harlots. Harmless enough, don't you think?

**BUTLER:** Here in London, I suppose?

**JOSEPHINE:** I think so.

**BUTLER:** I must say, I oppose this. I think it a very questionable undertaking.

**JOSEPHINE:** I know you do, George.

**BUTLER:** My position is a precarious one. I have already been asked why I cannot control my wife. And that was over nothing more substantial than your reading ticket.

**JOSEPHINE:** I understand.

**BUTLER:** If you must have a ... campaign, why cannot you find one closer to home? Chadwick on Drains notwithstanding. Remember the oakum sheds?

**JOSEPHINE:** I do indeed.

**BUTLER:** Girls at the workhouse tearing the flesh off their fingers stripping oakum, for a loaf of bread and a night's lodging. Women in need, and at least a somewhat more respectable campaign for a woman of breeding.

**JOSEPHINE:** We sang hymns together, in those oakum sheds. We spoke of privation and disease, and

God's mercy and of God's justice.

**BUTLER:** Quite so.

**JOSEPHINE:** And for all my hymn singing, the girls, one by one, found their way out of the oakum sheds, and found far easier and more lucrative occupations on the streets. And are today as lost as if I never met them.

**BUTLER:** Yes, all right. But what do you expect to do about it? Men will always be men. And will always find women who are willing to ... who can be persuaded to ...

*(He pauses in embarrassment and frustration.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** If you insist that drop this idea, return with you to Oxford, I will do so.

**BUTLER:** I know you will.

**JOSEPHINE:** If you insist.

**BUTLER:** *(An exasperated pause)* Hang it all, Josephine, of course I don't insist. I'm not that sort of husband, nor you that sort of wife.

**JOSEPHINE:** No.

**BUTLER:** I must return home, at any rate. I have students to attend to.

**JOSEPHINE:** Then I'll stay here, in London. Tell the children that I shall come home in a few weeks. I have instructions for Anna; I'll write them down.

**BUTLER:** Very well.

**JOSEPHINE:** I shan't be long. I'll see to your packing, George, you can leave in the morning.

**BUTLER:** *(Stopping her)* Write to me, Josephine.

**JOSEPHINE:** Of course I shall write to you, George.

**BUTLER:** I mean ... about this. Your campaign. All this talk of harlots and women in the streets. It's not a decent subject for conversation. Write to me. Tell me what you find.

**JOSEPHINE:** And then you will support me, George?

**BUTLER:** Then I will decide if I can support you.

*(He crosses to the Salon. She crosses to the streets. ROSE and LIZ.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** *(To herself.)* The oakum sheds  
*(To ROSE, LIZ, and MAY.)*

Hello.

**ROSE:** Bloody flummut. 'ere she comes again.

**LIZ:** Look, you've coopered our corner.

**JOSEPHINE:** I do apologize.

*(She crosses to them.)*

**LIZ:** (*Seriously angry.*) I don't know what sort of pull you're after, but I won't 'ave it. This is our corner.

**JOSEPHINE:** There are no customers about at present.

**LIZ:** Go, then, before we see any.

**JOSEPHINE:** No. I want to talk with you.

**LIZ:** We don't want to talk with you.

**JOSEPHINE:** I'm not leaving.

*(She stands right by LIZ.)*

**LIZ:** You don't belong 'ere.

**JOSEPHINE:** I'll determine that.

**LIZ:** Look. You see this?

*(She reaches inside the folds of her dress, pulls out a weapon, a cosh at the end of leather line.)*

You know what this is?

**JOSEPHINE:** (*Steadily.*) It appears to be some sort of weapon.

**LIZ:** It's a whippler. Ten feet away, I can knock you flat. Do you granny?

**JOSEPHINE:** You would attack me?

**LIZ:** Drive you off. That I would.

**JOSEPHINE:** Why?

**LIZ:** Never mind why. Go.

*(She raises it.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** (*Backs away.*) Yes. All right.

*(She starts to move away. LIZ puts away the weapon. JOSEPHINE stops, turns back. Warily.)*

Look.

*(LIZ turns angrily.)*

Stay back.

**LIZ:** You said you were leaving.

**JOSEPHINE:** It's just... See, I know you and I know your corner.

**LIZ:** Not my name.

**JOSEPHINE:** It's Liz, I think, isn't it?

**LIZ:** (*Stares angrily at ROSE.*) No.

**JOSEPHINE:** I believe it is. And that will be enough. For the authorities.

**LIZ:** You'll mouth on me.

**JOSEPHINE:** Not if I don't have to. I just think... you'd be easy enough to find. If they were looking. And the authorities would look, I think. An assault on a woman of my station would mean Newgate prison.

**LIZ:** Only if you're around to mouth.

**JOSEPHINE:** (*A little more confidently.*) Then you shall be forced to kill me, and I do not believe that would do that. The stakes are too high and the return too low.

**LIZ:** (*Pulling the cosh out again.*) You think so, do you?

**ROSE:** She's right, Liz. There's no pull 'ere.

**JOSEPHINE:** And, to show a measure of good will, I'm prepared to pay.

*(They stare each other down. LIZ backs down.)*

**LIZ:** 'ow much?

**JOSEPHINE:** I've three shillings for you each.

*(They stare at her in disgust.)*

**LIZ:** Three shillings.

**ROSE:** A dub ream lay, this one.

**LIZ:** I charges five.

**JOSEPHINE:** I'm not asking for your cooperation in any way. Consider it ... rent money. To share your corner. To talk.

**LIZ:** You'd spoil my corner either way.

**JOSEPHINE:** Then I'll pay you for that spoilage.

*(Hands her money.)*

**LIZ:** Why?

**JOSEPHINE:** Because I'm interested. In what you do. I want to learn about it.

**LIZ:** Why?

**JOSEPHINE:** I just am. That's all.

**ROSE:** You want to learn about us?

**JOSEPHINE:** Just talk. That's all.

**LIZ:** (*Takes the money.*) You're hykey. More than you look. I'll give you that.

**ROSE:** What are you?

**JOSEPHINE:** A woman, like you. A friend.

**ROSE:** A crusher's mouth, more like.

**JOSEPHINE:** Let's start there. What does that mean? A crusher's mouth?

**LIZ:** Let's start where? Doing what?

**JOSEPHINE:** (*Pulls out paper and a pencil.*) Talking?

**LIZ:** No writing!

**JOSEPHINE:** (Puts the paper away.) If you prefer.

*(Enter MAY from MRS. JEFFRIES'. BENTINCK exits with her.)*

**BENTINCK:** Four and six, is it?

**MAY:** Five.

*(He starts to hand her money.)*

Not to me. To the milliner.

**BENTINCK:** Right.

*(He pulls bills out from a wallet, sees JOSEPHINE, freezes. Quickly dashes inside MRS. JEFFRIES.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Hello, May.

**MAY:** *(Indifferently)* 'ello.

**JOSEPHINE:** You seem to have healed up.

**MAY:** Back's a bit stiff.

**JOSEPHINE:** I see. And it handicaps you in your... work?

*(MAY contemptuously looks at BENTINCK, who has reemerged from MRS. JEFFRIES.)*

**MAY:** *(sprints furtively off.)* Still ream enough for the likes of 'im.

**LIZ:** You see that? You've coopered him for fair.

**JOSEPHINE:** I see your point.

**ROSE:** Liz, I'm off. This corner's bloody flummut.

**JOSEPHINE:** I paid you for this...

**ROSE:** I'm off!

**JOSEPHINE:** Don't go.

**MAY:** They see you. Dressed so flash.

**LIZ:** You granny?

**JOSEPHINE:** *(looks down, as though seeing herself for the first time.)* My dress?

**ROSE:** There may be trade down by the Princesses.'

**LIZ:** Right.

*(They all start to exit.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Wait!

*(They stop, look suspiciously at her.)*

If I were to ... alter my look, would that change things for you?

**ROSE:** What, look like one of us?

*(They all laugh at the thought, start to exit again.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Wait!

*(They stop again.)*

**LIZ:** What?

**JOSEPHINE:** *(To herself. A little prayer.)* I just pray no one sees me.

*(She reaches down, pulls up her dress and petticoats to reveal her ankles. She unbuttons a button on her blouse.)*

Have you any paint?

**ROSE:** Bloody ‘ell.

**LIZ:** Are you flat?

**JOSEPHINE:** Better?

*(Loudly.)*

Are you good natured, Charlie?

*(The women whip around.)*

**ROSE:** Lills up!

**LIZ:** Where is ‘e?

**JOSEPHINE:** Practicing. I asked if you had paint.

**MAY:** I've got a bit a' rouge.

**JOSEPHINE:** Hand it over.

**LIZ:** May, don't be glocky.

**MAY:** She's not leaving. She might as well look like us.

**ROSE:** You don't need it.

**JOSEPHINE:** I have no wish to frighten your clientele.

*(Applying rouge.)*

If I must wear paint, I shall. If I must expose my ankles in public, I'll do that too.

*(Intensely.)*

Do you understand me? I want to talk to you.

*(To ROSE.)*

Oh yes. I'd quite forgotten.

*(Hands her more money.)*

The seven shillings I owe you. From last time.

**ROSE:** Right.

**MAY:** A little ‘igher on the cheekbone.

**JOSEPHINE:** Ah, good. Like this.

**LIZ:** You're flat dabeno.

**JOSEPHINE:** Do I pass?

**ROSE:** You'll get more blood than all of us.

**JOSEPHINE:** What do you mean?

**ROSE:** I'd ask ten shillings, if I were you. They like that flash judy look.

**JOSEPHINE:** Oh!

*(She realizes what she's done, briefly her hand covers her face and bosom.)*

I hadn't thought of that.

**ROSE:** You can use my flop if you like. Right 'round the corner; he takes three, you'll still keep seven.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(Faintly.)* Thank you.

**LIZ:** Never mind. Tell 'im it's your curse.

**JOSEPHINE:** My what?

**LIZ:** Your monthlies.

**MAY:** Though there's some that likes that, actually.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(In shock.)* Yes.

*(Enter CARVER, dressed, this time, as a constable.)*

**LIZ:** Rose, May, Peeler Ned.

*(They all start off.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Wait, where are you going?

**MAY:** Shut it!

**CARVER:** Don't move.

**JOSEPHINE:** Why should I?

**CARVER:** You're a funny one, aren't you? Let's go.

**JOSEPHINE:** Go? Where?

**CARVER:** Where? That's rich.

*(Grabs her.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** How dare you touch a lady, sir!

**CARVER:** A lady!

**LIZ:** She'd ream prissy, Ned. She really don't know.

**CARVER:** Right, prissy is it? At her age? Bloody likely.

**JOSEPHINE:** Your conduct, sir, is as offensive as your language. Your superiors...

**CARVER:** If I have to give you a clout and drag you in by the heels, I'll do it.

**LIZ:** Do as 'e says, ma'am. It's just an inspection.

**JOSEPHINE:** An inspection?

**LIZ:** For the malady. The french pox, ma'am, now are you clear?

**JOSEPHINE:** But how will they inspect... Oh no. No, sir, that I do not consent to.

**CARVER:** You don't consent?

**JOSEPHINE:** To have some foul physician of your selection, put his filthy hands ...

**MAY:** I'll do it.

**CARVER:** Look, what is this?

**MAY:** Let 'er go. I'll do the inspection.

**JOSEPHINE:** May, I can't...

**MAY:** You took me in. Now we're quits.

**CARVER:** You were inspected last month, May. I want this one.

**LIZ:** Ned, you don't want to take this prissy mop, really you don't. Take May; she's better all around.

**CARVER:** Why should I?

**ROSE:** I'll make it worth your time.

**CARVER:** Will you, Rose?

**ROSE:** Yes.

*(Muttering.)*

I must be flat dabeno.

**LIZ:** She really is prissy, Ned. Not a chance of the chancre.

**JOSEPHINE:** I can't allow this.

**LIZ:** You can and you will.

**JOSEPHINE:** Rose, May...

**LIZ:** Voker flams!

*(JOSEPHINE, not understanding, shuts up.)*

**MAY:** We're quits, it's all right. I'm going.

**ROSE:** And I'm staying. Right here, Ned... ?

**CARVER:** Right then. You say she's prissy?

**LIZ:** Ream prissy, Ned.

**CARVER:** Right then. Come along.

*(He exits with MAY.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Inspections.

*(Turns to LIZ.)*

Tell me about these inspections.

*(The women stand warily by. BUTLER, in the PARLOR, opens a letter.)*

**BUTLER:** No due process of law is required for these inspections. Habeas corpus utterly suspended. Apparently any unescorted woman ...

**JOSEPHINE:** ... can be taken to police headquarters at any time and subjected to a forcible internal examination for disease.

**ROSE:** They're not so bad, really. If you just relax a bit, it's soon over. Wash up with a bit of vinegar and back on the streets.

**LIZ:** Not always.

**JOSEPHINE:** So at times this examination is painful?

**LIZ:** They can be. If he's a soak what does it.

**JOSEPHINE:** You've been inspected by doctors who were drunk?

**LIZ:** It's hardly a ream pull for surgeons, now, is it? At two shillings a judy?

**ROSE:** You just don't fight them, that's all. Kinchin. Even if he coopers the lay, you bleed for two days and then its over.

*(MAY enters.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** How was it?

**MAY:** Kinchin.

*(CARVER appears. ROSE sees him.)*

**ROSE:** Right.

*(To herself.)*

Flat dabeno.

*(She exits with CARVER into MRS. JEFFRIES.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Kinchin?

**LIZ:** She means it was an easy one. A sober doctor and no sign of the chancre.

**JOSEPHINE:** Is that the usual process?

**MAY:** Not always. I know one dolly mop, it killed her.

**JOSEPHINE:** Really?

**LIZ:** We don't know that, May.

**MAY:** I know what Peeler Ned told me. Mary Norton, her name was, you can write it down.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(Taking notes.)* Mary Norton?

**LIZ:** She was a fresh little nancy, glocky as a chavy can be.

**JOSEPHINE:** Do you have any idea how old she may have been?

**LIZ:** She were ream fresh. Fourteen, perhaps.

**BUTLER:** (*Reading. Incredulously.*) Fourteen.

(*ROSE enters from MRS. JEFFRIES. CARVER exit.*)

**JOSEPHINE:** And she was killed as a result of these inspections?

**LIZ:** I know what ‘appened. She fought it, that’s all.

**MAY:** She came back to the rookery, I saw ‘er. Bleeding like a butchered hog. Died two days later.

**JOSEPHINE:** Because she fought.

**LIZ:** Ream glocky, she was.

**JOSEPHINE:** But don’t you fight? I would, that sort of invasion.

**LIZ:** It don’t do no good. When you fight, they ‘ave to pull tighter on the ropes to open your legs up.

**MAY:** You’re too wide open. If the doctor’s a soak...

(*BENTINCK enters.*)

Are you good natured?

(*He and she negotiate a price.*)

**LIZ:** It can go wrong. May is right, fighting’s no good.

**JOSEPHINE:** And these inspections are legal?

(*MAY exits to MRS. JEFFRIES with BENTINCK.*)

**BUTLER:** (*Reading.*) The law is entitled the Contagious Diseases Act of 1857, amended 1862...

**JOSEPHINE:** ... Subtitled Domestic Animals.

**LIZ:** Domestic Animals?

**BUTLER:** They had to call it that to sneak it past the Queen. At that, they waited ...

**JOSEPHINE:** ...until Prince Albert died, and slipped it into a stack of other legislation awaiting her signature. They were hoping, I suppose, that while she was in mourning...

(*ROSE has entered from MRS. JEFFRIES.*)

**LIZ:** You ‘ear that, Rose? We’re domestic animals.

**JOSEPHINE:** What happens if you are found to be diseased? Are you treated?

**LIZ:** They treats us, all right. Treats us to the work’ouse.

**JOSEPHINE:** The workhouse? You receive no medical attention?

**ROSE:** There’s some that do.

**LIZ:** There’s more that don’t.

**BUTLER:** But why on earth have ...

**JOSEPHINE:** ... these odious inspections, then, if not to provide you with some form of...

**LIZ:** Do you think they care what ‘appens to the likes of us? They just want us off the streets. It’s the

bloods they're protecting. Shut us in a room and let us die of the malady, just so long they don't get the chancre, that's all that matters.

*(Enter MAY from MRS. JEFFRIES')*

Took you long enough.

**MAY:** Old flat couldn't get started.

**JOSEPHINE:** Does that happen often?

**ROSE:** Often enough.

**JOSEPHINE:** What do you do?

**ROSE:** You really want to know?

**JOSEPHINE:** I want to know everything.

**ROSE:** I never would have thought it. Your old man's ruck too, is he?

**JOSEPHINE:** *(Flustered.)* No, that's actually not...

**ROSE:** There's things you can do. When you've been at it long as I 'ave. To start, you take 'old of—

**LIZ:** *(Noting JOSEPHINE's embarrassment with amusement.)* Never mind, Rose.

*(BUTLER reads his letter. SMITH-BENTLEY and CARVER are sharing a newspaper, giggling like schoolboys.)*

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** I say, Butler, have you seen this?

**BUTLER:** I beg your pardon?

**CARVER:** The latest number of the Pearl.

**BUTLER:** I don't know it.

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** They've serialized the most extraordinary novel.

**CARVER:** You really must see this.

*(They hand it to him. He reads.)*

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** The bathhouse scene, with all the girls...

**CARVER:** And then when they see that young fellow, Jeremy was it? And invite him to join them?

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** I must say, I wish my cousins had been so accommodating when I was a schoolboy.

**CARVER:** Or my chambermaids as open to a good spanking.

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** Quite!

**BUTLER:** *(Utterly horrified and appalled by what he's reading.)* God forgive me.

**CARVER:** So what do you think, Butler? Quite the story, what?

**BUTLER:** *(Voice shaking from the effort to remain polite)* Gentlemen, I will thank you ... I will thank you not to share such materials with me again. I ...I ...

*(he can't finish.)*

I wish you both good day.

*(Crosses away from them, tries to compose himself.)*

**CARVER:** What's wrong, Butler? Don't you like a good story?

**JOSEPHINE:** How long have you ... been in this ... profession?

**ROSE:** Don't rightly know.

**JOSEPHINE:** When did you start?

**ROSE:** I weren't but a chavy. 'ad my first at twelve, fresh fish for a malady. Went on the street, must be, seven or eight years ago now.

**BUTLER:** *(Reading.)* The age of consent was established at twelve in the Contagious Diseases Act. From what I'm told by these women ...

**JOSEPHINE:** ... most of them begin at that age. Apparently, their first experience, as a child, is highly prized, and brings a very large price. It apparently also is regarded as an efficacious remedy for disease.

**BUTLER:** *(Deeply shaken.)* God have mercy on us all. A child of twelve.  
*(A new thought.)*

They were just children in that story.

**JOSEPHINE:** George, Eva was twelve when she...

**BUTLER:** I remember.

*(Looks at SMITH-BENTLEY and CARVER, who are laughing over The Pearl.)*

Who are we?

**LIZ:** *(To JOSEPHINE.)* Do you 'ave children, Mrs. Butler?

**JOSEPHINE:** I have five children. Well, six, actually, five of whom are living.

**MAY:** Then you 'ave five. Just five.

**JOSEPHINE:** Five living. Eva, my daughter, died in an accident. But I shall see her again as alive...

**MAY:** It don't 'appen. When they're dead, they're dead.

**JOSEPHINE:** No, May. I don't believe that.

**MAY:** When they're dead, they're dead!

**LIZ:** *(Quickly changing the subject.)* I've a daughter too.

**JOSEPHINE:** Really? What's her name?

**LIZ:** Elizabeth. Same as me. And a sister just a bit older than her.

**JOSEPHINE:** So your mother was also...

**LIZ:** My first blood, there she was, 'olding me legs apart. And a daffy apiece for the rookery after. A party they'll never forget.

**ROSE:** Mrs. Lushington Stride.

**LIZ:** Shut it, Rose.

**ROSE:** She's well known, she is.

**LIZ:** I said, voker flams.

**JOSEPHINE:** I'm so sorry. Liz, you poor woman. The whole thing seems just ... incomprehensibly ... wrong, and...

*(LIZ shrugs. JOSEPHINE realizes she's not getting through.)*

And so you have a child. What do you do with her?

**LIZ:** She's home. With me mum.

**JOSEPHINE:** You must worry about her.

**LIZ:** There's neighbors that can take 'er when me mum's too soaked. It won't be like this forever.

**ROSE:** No, Liz has dreams, she does. She's too hykey for the likes of us.

**LIZ:** Shut it, I said!

**JOSEPHINE:** You have dreams, a plan of some kind?

**LIZ:** Little Liz won't work the streets.

**ROSE:** No, not 'er, not 'ardly.

**LIZ:** She won't. I've money saved.

**JOSEPHINE:** For what?

**LIZ:** Tobacconist's shop. I've forty pounds saved towards it.

**JOSEPHINE:** You plan to open a shop.

**LIZ:** That's right.

*(ROSE laughs derisively.)*

I will!

**JOSEPHINE:** It takes a great deal of capital. A good location...

**LIZ:** I've found a ream little spot. By the Whitehall steps. They want a 'undred and twenty quid for it.

**JOSEPHINE:** You're a third way there, then. Very good.

**LIZ:** There's flash 'ouses and grog shops all down the river. Sailors and the like, they'll be my trade. A plug of pigtail, or some good Virginia leaf, that'll suit them ream. Margie and little Liz, they'll grow up tradesman, outside the rookery.

**BUTLER:** Not with my money, she won't.

**JOSEPHINE:** And many of them have such dreams.

**BUTLER:** *(Reading.)* But what chance do they have. No education...

**JOSEPHINE:** ...no capital, every law against them, cheap gin a constant temptation.

*(To LIZ.)*

What about your husband?

*(A pause.)*

**LIZ:** I've no 'usband.

*(Shrugs.)*

'er father was dark-'aired, that's all I know.

**JOSEPHINE:** Actually, given your ... profession, I'm surprised ... you know.

**LIZ:** What?

**JOSEPHINE:** That you haven't more children.

**LIZ:** (Amused.) Surprising, isn't it? How few of us gets in a family way.

**JOSEPHINE:** Well, it is, a bit.

*(ROSE, LIZ and MAY share a knowing chuckle.)*

**ROSE:** Anyway, the real money is in extraordinary service.

**JOSEPHINE:** Extraordinary service, how do you mean?

**ROSE:** For the ream naughty boys.

**LIZ:** Do you granny?

**JOSEPHINE:** I'm still not...

**ROSE:** Like what 'appened to May, first time you met us.

**JOSEPHINE:** I see.

**LIZ:** The real flash houses, Mrs. Jeffries, Mrs. Sefton's, charges five quid a turn. Padded walls, chains and clamps and the lot. I don't fancy it, but it's a ream flash life for those who do.

**JOSEPHINE:** And the names again, of those establishments?

**BUTLER:** What sort of beastly, appalling...

*(SMITH-BENTLEY has joined him.)*

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** What is it, Butler?

**BUTLER:** Nothing.

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** Come now. Something beastly and appalling.

**BUTLER:** Never mind.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(To MAY.)* When did you begin? Also at twelve?

**MAY:** I was in domestic service. Upstairs maid for Sir Henry Storks.

**JOSEPHINE:** I believe I know him. A member of Parliament, is he not?

**MAY:** That's Sir 'enry. And if there's a 'ell on earth outside Newgate, I hope I'll see 'im in it.

**JOSEPHINE:** Why did you leave?

**MAY:** I were made to leave.

**JOSEPHINE:** On what grounds?

**MAY:** Don't want to talk about it.

*(She starts to leave.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** What is it, May? What happened?

**MAY:** Don't want to talk about it.

**ROSE:** Sir Henry had another job for our May.

**JOSEPHINE:** Another job? May?

**MAY:** Mopping the floor with me backside.

**JOSEPHINE:** He seduced you.

*(MAY shrugs indifferently.)*

He seduced you, and ... then what?

*(MAY shrugs again.)*

Your condition became ... delicate.

**MAY:** I was out on the street.

**BUTLER:** *(Reading.)* No references, no possibility of further employment.

**JOSEPHINE:** Did you find a poorhouse, a charitable institution... ?

**MAY:** I found the Dials. I found friends in the rookery. I found a way I can feed myself. I charges five shillings, you don't pay me, you pay...

**JOSEPHINE:** May.

**MAY:** ... the milliner. You pay the milliner...

**JOSEPHINE:** May.

*(Gently.)*

You were not alone, were you? You had a child?

*(MAY nods, her eyes filling with tears.)*

What became of your child?

**MAY:** I did what I 'ad to.

**JOSEPHINE:** *(Not understanding.)* You gave the child up, you...

**MAY:** I did what I 'ad to.

**JOSEPHINE:** All right.

*(Another tack.)*

A little boy or a ...

**MAY:** I don't know. I never looked.

**JOSEPHINE:** I don't understand.

**MAY:** I did what I had to. I closed my eyes, and I wrapped the cord around its neck, and I pulled it tight. I

didn't want to see what it was.

**JOSEPHINE:** Oh, May.

**MAY:** I didn't want to see. I don't know what it was.

**JOSEPHINE:** My God.

**MAY:** I 'ad no choice. I 'ad no money, and I 'adn't eaten in two days.

**LIZ:** You could 'ave asked, May. We would 'ave 'elped you.

**MAY:** I didn't know you then, did I?

**LIZ:** We were friends.

**MAY:** No.

**LIZ:** I took care of it for you, May.

**MAY:** Oh, yes, we're all friends at Whitechapel, we are. I always 'ave a 'ome in the rookery. Right? As good a chance to get me throat slit as 'elp.

**LIZ:** There's friends in the rookery.

**MAY:** Friends so long you're not short three and sixpence for a daffy or a doss. Friends, if you can see their 'ands are empty.

**LIZ:** I'm your friend.

**MAY:** Well, I didn't know you, then, did I?

*(To JOSEPHINE.)*

That's what I did. Do you granny? That's where I went from Sir 'enry's.

**JOSEPHINE:** May. Would you like to get out of this life?

**MAY:** I don't know.

**JOSEPHINE:** You could, you know.

**MAY:** I don't know.

**JOSEPHINE:** Would you like to return to domestic service?

**MAY:** I've no references.

**JOSEPHINE:** I'll take you on, May.

**ROSE:** Working for the grand Mrs. Butler?

**JOSEPHINE:** That's right. What do you say, May?

**BUTLER:** *(Throws the letter to the ground.)* No! I'll be damned if I will!

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** *(Urbanely reading at the next chair.)* What is it, Butler?

**BUTLER:** My wife wants to hire a murderess and a prostitute as chamber maid!

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** Oh. Tell her she can't.

**BUTLER:** I will.

**JOSEPHINE:** Then it's settled.

*(Embraces MAY.)*

You poor child.

*(She leads MAY to her home. BUTLER looks at them, torn. Crosses to JOSEPHINE, holds the door open for MAY. Enter CARVER and BENTINCK to join SMITH-BENTLEY and BUTLER.)*

**BENTINCK:** Butler. Could we have a word with you?

*(They converse. Enter WALTER, and MRS JEFFRIES. WALTER talks with LIZ, while MRS. JEFFRIES talks with ROSE.)*

**WALTER:** *(British accent.)* We talked, remember? You had a bit of fresh?

**LIZ:** I remember.

**WALTER:** Well then. Shall we open negotiations?

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Good 'eavens, child, you'll catch your death, on the streets on a night like this.

**ROSE:** Mrs. Jeffries.

**WALTER:** A hundred pounds? A bit too flash for me.

**LIZ:** It's her first. No gammy cockum.

**WALTER:** I hope not. I can feel the work of a stitcher; it's ream fresh I'm after.

**LIZ:** She's a good girl, she is.

**WALTER:** You can prove that?

**LIZ:** She's my sister.

**WALTER:** A relation, then. Delectable.

**LIZ:** Any trouble with her, you can take it out on me.

**WALTER:** You'll be there?

**LIZ:** *(A pause.)* For an extra ten.

**ROSE:** Every nancy on the streets knows Mrs. Jeffries.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Quite so. And Mrs. Jeffries returns the favor.

**ROSE:** You know me?

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** I keep my lills to the ground. I'm a product of the rookery, like you.

**WALTER:** Sixty.

**LIZ:** Seventy five.

**BENTINCK:** Damn it, Butler, what would you have us do?

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** We have the good name of the college to consider.

**CARVER:** These decisions are never easy.

**BENTINCK:** There are institutional considerations...

**ROSE:** What do you want?

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** What you want. Crushers away, a flash pull, a kinchin lay.

**ROSE:** And dewskitch from the bloods. No thank you.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** The bloods at Mrs. Jeffries' make it worth your skin.

**ROSE:** Do they?

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Oh yes. Indeed yes. And the rates are the same. Not all require extraordinary service.  
And those that don't pay like those who do.

**ROSE:** I've 'eard that.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** It's true.

**BENTINCK:** (*Continuing.*) That certain standards of ... appropriateness be observed.

**LIZ:** Sixty five, then. And nothing soft.

**WALTER:** Sixty five, and nothing soft.

**ROSE:** Why me?

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** How can you ask such a thing? An attractive little nancy like you?

**ROSE:** No, really. Why me?

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** I get my girls from the streets, Rosalie. I'm always on the lookout for talent.

**ROSE:** Rose. The name is Rose.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Your name, my dear, is one of the many tedious details I consider my responsibility.

**WALTER:** We'll meet here, in a fortnight.

**LIZ:** I'll bring little Margie.

**BENTINCK:** It isn't as though you hadn't ample warning, Butler.

**SMITH-BENTLEY:** And you see where it began. Her demanding a reading ticket. And now look where she is.

**ROSE:** My name is Rose.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Rosalie, my dear, is such a charming name, and one better suited to your look.

**LIZ:** A fortnight then.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Think about it, Rosalie. A fortnight's time, and I'll expect a decision.

**LIZ:** Where?

**WALTER and ROSE:** Mrs. Jeffries'.

*(Exit WALTER, MRS. JEFFRIES, BENTINCK, CARVER and SMITH-BENTLEY. BUTLER)*

*crosses to JOSEPHINE.*)

**JOSEPHINE:** George. I'm so sorry.

**BUTLER:** It doesn't matter. There's a school in Liverpool, actually, looking for a headmaster.

**JOSEPHINE:** Liverpool!

**BUTLER:** Not exactly Oxford.

**JOSEPHINE:** No.

**BUTLER:** It should be all right.

**JOSEPHINE:** But Liverpool, George.

**BUTLER:** May well be a happier situation. Cartographically speaking. It is a seaport. I never could get boys from Eton or Harrow to take their geographic studies seriously.

**JOSEPHINE:** I will quit the campaign, George.

**BUTLER:** Why?

**JOSEPHINE:** Evidence, for the dons at Oxford, that you have succeeded in controlling your wife.

**BUTLER:** The dons at Oxford have insulted my wife, and my marriage. I would not return to Exeter college now at gunpoint.

**JOSEPHINE:** That's my George.

**BUTLER:** Wage your campaign, Josephine. But quietly, if you can.

**JOSEPHINE:** You can't fight quietly.

**BUTLER:** Try.

*(Looks at her.)*

You're so pale.

**JOSEPHINE:** Another poor night.

**BUTLER:** I heard you up and about.

**JOSEPHINE:** I wasn't able to sleep until well past midnight.

**BUTLER:** And even then, you needed help to sleep, didn't you? You took that ... medication.

**JOSEPHINE:** Only the draught recommended me by the doctor.

**BUTLER:** I don't like it.

**JOSEPHINE:** I don't either. But it does help.

**BUTLER:** All the more reason to wage a quiet fight. For all our sakes.

**JOSEPHINE:** Very well, George. I'll fight quietly.

*(Enter WALTER.)*

**WALTER:** *(American accent.)* Quietly. And so, in 1870, Josephine Butler founded a newsheet, called The Shield. Dedicated to the Parliamentary overthrow of the Contagious Diseases Acts. It was not, I regret to

say, a particularly quiet publication.

*(Enter MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY and MAY.)*

**JOSEPHINE:** Our aims, then, in this first number of *The Shield*, are four-fold.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Five fold.

**JOSEPHINE:** We've talked of this, Amanda. This our first ... venture. We need to clarify our intentions from the outset.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** And our intentions are five in number.

**JOSEPHINE:** May I continue? Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, raising the age of consent from twelve to eighteen, close down known fancy houses, systematic programme of education for those women wishing to leave the trade. Four aims.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Prosecute those trading in white slavery.

**JOSEPHINE:** We have no evidence.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Young English girls, kidnapped from their homes and made to work in houses of ill repute all across Belgium, Bavaria. It's a marvelous issue, the most dramatic issue we have.

**JOSEPHINE:** And, I repeat, one for which no evidence exists.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Evidence, Josephine, we have evidence. You yourself showed me those accounts in the *Daily Ledger*.

**JOSEPHINE:** As examples of the sort of article we're *not* interested in publishing. Anonymous accounts, anonymously published. "Lillian" and "Ruthie," no last names. Moustache twirling dark haired Frenchmen luring our young innocents with promises of wealth and marriage. Utter rubbish.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** They were exciting.

**JOSEPHINE:** And unconvincing. Ultimately.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Why do you invite me here from London if you weren't going to listen to me?

**JOSEPHINE:** I'm sorry, Amanda. I do appreciate the effort you've made.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Very well, then. I think we should give greater thought to making an impression.

**JOSEPHINE:** A persuasive impression. Look, let's go through the whole draft, then we can quarrel about specific items. May I continue?

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** I suppose.

**JOSEPHINE:** "Our aims, then, in this first number of *The Shield*, are four-fold."

**MAY:** *(Who has been dusting.)* It's confusing.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** I do beg pardon?

**MAY:** I don't like it. It's confusing.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Mind your place, young lady.

**JOSEPHINE:** No, it's all right.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Josephine, seriously, you allow your chamber maid to ...

**JOSEPHINE:** She's my secretary, I've promoted her.

**MAY:** Promoted?

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Rubbish.

**JOSEPHINE:** My secretary is speaking. What is it, May?

**MAY:** It won't do no good.

**JOSEPHINE:** What do you mean, May?

**MAY:** It won't do no good. We're just prosties, dolly mop nancies with the chancre who need the inspection to keep it from spreading. They don't care.

**JOSEPHINE:** (*Intensely.*) Then we'll make them care.

**MAY:** You're just you, alone. You're by yourself.

**JOSEPHINE:** We'll grab them by the lapels, then, and shout in their faces until they do care.

**BUTLER:** Quietly.

**JOSEPHINE:** I may be alone, as you say, but they will learn that one woman and God make a majority. And God is with us, May, I feel His strength in this fight.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** And that's why we need to get this statement right. Now what I think is...

**MAY:** It's got too many commas.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** What do you know of commas?

**JOSEPHINE:** Quite a lot, actually, George has been teaching all the staff. You dislike my commas, May?

**MAY:** Look at it.

*(Takes the sheet they're working from.)*

"Our aims comma then comma in this first number of the Shield comma are four-fold full stop. Why not just say "we want to stop the inspections"?"

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** They won't know of the inspections until they read the article.

**MAY:** It's confusing.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Our readership won't find it so.

**JOSEPHINE:** Perhaps not, Amanda, but we could state things more straightforwardly. "The Shield intends to accomplish four great purposes."

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Five.

**JOSEPHINE:** Four or five, then, and not a comma in sight.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** It's also too political.

**JOSEPHINE:** Our aims are political.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Our aims are moral and political. It's our first issue. A becoming feminine modesty...

**JOSEPHINE:** Won't get noticed, Amanda.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** So now you do want to get noticed?

**JOSEPHINE:** Noticed, by men, who vote, and might be persuaded. By facts. And evidence.

**MAY:** And not as many commas.

**JOSEPHINE:** They will vote our way if they're made sufficiently uncomfortable.

**BUTLER:** *(An echo.)* Quietly.

**JOSEPHINE:** And so, I must speak out.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** *(Uncomfortably.)* Speak out? In what way.

**JOSEPHINE:** I've been in correspondence with Sir James Stansfield. He believes that he can arrange quite a number of speaking engagements for me. Political clubs and so on.

**BUTLER:** *(An echo)* Quietly.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** And so you're going to speak. To men, to gatherings of men, on this subject?

**JOSEPHINE:** I am.

*(Nervously.)*

Yes.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** I shan't be with you, Josephine. You know that I can only involve myself in a wholly private capacity.

**JOSEPHINE:** I understand.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** Speaking in public, Josephine. They won't like it.

**JOSEPHINE:** Nor shall I like it, Amanda. But how else to persuade them?

**MAY:** I'll come. If you want me.

**JOSEPHINE:** I want you along, May. Indeed, I'll expect you to speak on occasion.

**MAY:** Me?

**JOSEPHINE:** Who better to describe the reality of the inspections?

**MAY:** In public?

**JOSEPHINE:** In public.

**MAY:** Speaking? In front of men?

**JOSEPHINE:** Yes.

**MAY:** *(Terrified, thinks a moment.)* Right. I'll do it. If you need me to.

**JOSEPHINE:** Good for you, May.

*(After a moment, MAY laughs.)*

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** And just what do you find so amusing?

**MAY:** (*Amused.*) It's funny.

**JOSEPHINE:** What?

**MAY:** I may be speaking to men who've 'ad me.

**JOSEPHINE:** (*Chuckling at the thought.*) You're right, May, that would be amusing.

**MRS. SMITH-BENTLEY:** (*Disgusted.*) Oh really.

*(They laugh as they exit. Enter ROSE and MARGIE, a terrified twelve year old. WALTER waits at the door of MRS. JEFFRIES.)*

**WALTER:** (*British accent.*) Hello. Liz, is it? And this must be little Margie.

**LIZ:** No names, if you please.

**WALTER:** However you prefer it.

*(MRS. JEFFRIES comes to the door. ROSE: is with her.)*

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Welcome all. Your room is waiting. Liz, Rosalie has told me all about you.

**LIZ:** Rosalie has, has she?

**ROSE:** How are you, Liz?

*(LIZ pointedly ignores her.)*

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** A lovely child. Do I detect a family resemblance?

**LIZ:** My sister.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Lovely.

*(To WALTER.)*

I've chloroform, if you need it.

**WALTER:** I hope not. I'd have to ask for my money back.

**LIZ:** I haven't seen any money yet.

**WALTER:** Right you are. Sixty five pounds, I believe is the price.

**LIZ:** That's right.

*(He hands over the money. MARGIE stares at it in horrified fascination. She reaches out to touch it.)*

Don't touch it!

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** The child's merely curious.

**LIZ:** She knows what's expected of her. But I don't want her to touch the money.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** As you prefer.

**WALTER:** Upstairs, then, Mrs. Jeffries, and to the left, I believe?

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** You know your way, sir.

**WALTER:** *(Takes MARGIE's hand.)* Margie, is it? Lovely name. Lovely girl.

*(He, MARGIE and LIZ exit into the MRS. JEFFRIES area. ROSE watches them in disgust, then starts to go to the Street.)*

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Where are you going, my dear?

**ROSE:** Out.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Are you?

**ROSE:** If you don't 'ave no objections.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Why Rosalie, you are at perfect liberty, you know that. Have a pleasant stroll. Where shall I send your clothes?

**ROSE:** I'm coming back.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** That all depends on the manner with which you leave.

**ROSE:** I just want some air.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** My dear, our clients have needs, most inconvenient needs, that arise on the most inopportune occasions. Some warmth and affection, the company of a handsome young woman, power and domination. We provide a service, like, and serve at their pleasure, not our own. The reputation of that inventive young thing with the red hair is spreading. What would I say, do you suppose, if while you are taking the air, we were visited by ... need I say more than Clarence?

**ROSE:** Clarence. The Prince...

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** But if you find our company tedious, nothing can be done, I suppose.

**ROSE:** I don't like being owned.

**MRS. JEFFRIES:** Not owned, my dear. Never owned. Rented.

*(She leads ROSE inside. End ACT ONE.)*

**42 pages to the end of the script (AND A SURPRISING ENDING)**