

Alice: Will you tell us more of the story another time Sara?

Isobel: Oh do please. I so want to know what happened to the Prince Merman who fell in love .. *(she sighs)*

Beatrice: Really, Isobel, you are so silly – it is only a story.

Isobel: Yes, but I want to meet a prince one day and be married and live in a palace and....

Beatrice: O come along Isobel .. *(she takes Isobel out, followed by Alice)*

Mariette, Sara's personal maid, enters.

Mariette: Sara, a new dress has arrived from your dear Papa, but I think it will need altering. He has not realised how quickly you are growing!

Sara: Mariette, who is the little girl who cleans in here? She seems so young and thin to be doing such hard work.

Mariette: Ah, that is Becky, Miss Sara. She is a scullery maid. She is worked so hard, poor little thing.

Erm: What does she have to do?

Mariette: What *doesn't* she have to do you mean! She blacks boots and grates. She carries heavy coal scuttles up and down stairs. She scrubs floors, and cleans all the windows...

Lottie: ALL the windows, but there must be about a thousand windows in this school.

Mariette: *(laughs)* Well not quite, but there are a LOT of windows.

Erm: How old is she? She doesn't look any older than we are.

Mariette: She is actually 14 years old, but she is so thin that she looks much younger. I don't think she is fed much. I try and give her some little treats whenever I can, as long as Miss Minchin or Cook doesn't catch me.

Sara: Poor Becky. We are lucky that we do not have to live a life like that.

Mariette: Ah Miss Sara, you will never have to do what Becky does. I feel so sorry for her. Everyone is always ordering her about – Becky do this...Becky run and do that... and frequently I hear cook shouting at her, which is generally followed by a beating.

Sara: Surely that is not allowed?

Mariette: If only that were true. There is no-one to look after anyone who becomes an orphan. These young children are either thrown into the workhouse, or they beg on the streets, or they end up working in a place like this. I expect Becky feels she is one of the lucky ones.

Lottie: LUCKY! O my. Where does she sleep?

Mariette: In one of the attics right at the top of the building.

Erm Oh I've seen those stairs. One day when I was escaping from Lavinia and her taunts, I ran off to hide and found myself at the bottom of these really creepy stairs. Miss Amelia found me and told me never to go there again, unless I wanted to meet rats and mice andUGH!!

Mariette: Yes, I'm afraid that is where Becky lives.

Sara: Poor Becky. We must make sure we ask her to clean my room as often as possible, then we can look after her a little. I think I might go and find her Mariette.

Sara crosses.... ??? finds Becky sitting on "the attic stairs" crying... she doesn't see Sara who sits beside her. Becky jumps up in fright.

Becky: Oh miss ..sorry.. I didn't see yer... *(she hurries to pick up her bucket etc and starts to leave)*

Sara: *(grabbing her wrist)* Becky, please don't go. Come sit beside me a moment.

Becky: Aint yer angry, miss? Aint yer goin' to tell on me miss for listin' to yer stories?

Sara: No of course I'm not. Why shouldn't you listen to the stories? We are just the same - I am a young girl like you. We both love stories. It's just an accident that I am not you and you are not me!

Becky: *(looking completely puzzled)* A'accident, miss?

Sara: Yes. *(she was realising that Becky didn't really understand what she was saying)* Have you done your work? No one is anywhere about. If your bedrooms are finished, perhaps you might like to come back to my room - I thought perhaps you might like a piece of cake.

Becky looks astounded

Becky: I..I well ..*(she stops and Sara laughs)*
They leave together happily chatting.