

SCENE THREE: SARA'S BEDROOM

Sara & Ermengarde remain on stage (???). bed is moved in???????

Girls exit

Sara: Let us go quietly and then perhaps we may catch Emily unawares.

Emily is sitting on bed

Sara: Oh, she got back to her seat before we could see her. Of course they always do. They are as quick as lightning.

Erm: Can – can she walk?

Sara: Yes. At least I believe she can. At least I PRETEND I believe she can. And that makes it seem as if it were true. Have you never pretended things?

Erm: No – never. Tell me about it.

Sara: Let us sit down, and I will tell you. It's so easy that when you begin you can't stop. You just go on and on doing it always. And it's beautiful. Emily, you must listen. This is Ermengarde St. John, Emily. Ermengarde, this is Emily. Would you like to hold her?

Erm: Oh may I, may I really?.. She is beautiful. Do you make up stories all the time Sara?

Sara: Of course. Anyone can make things up. (*pause*) Ermengarde, may I ask you something?

Erm: Of course.

Sara: Do you love your Papa more than anything else in the world?

Erm: I scarcely ever see him. He – he is always in the library reading things.

Sara: I love mine more than all the world ten times over. It causes me great pain. (*pause*) He has gone away. (*Sara is fighting back the tears and Ermengarde does not really know what to do. She hugs Emily*) I promised him I would bear it, and I will.

She pauses and looks away as if trying to remember ...

Sara: If I go on talking and talking and telling you things about pretending, I shall bear it better. You don't forget, but you bear it better. You have to bear things. Think what other poorer children have to bear with no Papa or Mamma. They would have to bear hunger or thirst or all kinds of cruelty.

Erm: Oh Sara!

Ermengarde puts Emily down and sits closer to Sara

Erm: Lavinia and Jessie are 'best friends'. I wish we could be 'best friends.' Would you have me for yours? You're clever, and I'm the stupidest child in the school, but I—oh, I do so like you!

Sara: I'm glad of that. It makes you thankful when you are liked. Yes. We will be friends. And I'll tell you what—I can help you with your French lessons.

Erm: Sara, you have made me so happy. I have never been really loved. My father thinks I am stupid and shows me no affection. I think he would have preferred that I had been a boy. My Mama keeps to her room and I never really see her. It was my Nanny who looked after me until I was old enough to be sent to school when I was 5 years old. And so here I am. The girls here ignore me, so until you arrived I had nobody in the world.

Sara: (*putting her arm around Ermengarde*). We shall be soldiers together and bear all our sorrows.

FREEZE

Lights dim