

SCENE TWO: SARA'S ATTIC

Lights up

*Sara is sitting on a bench. There are 2 broken wooden chairs, a blanket etc..
She holds Emily in her arms*

Sara: Well Emily, we must bear everything as bravely as the soldiers have to when they go off to war.

Ermengarde enters. At first, Sara does not notice her.. But then she turns and jumps up in horror.

Sara: Ermengarde! You will get into trouble.

Erm: I know I shall, if I'm found out. But I don't care. I don't care a bit. Oh Sara, why don't you like me any more?

Sara: I do like you.. everything is different now. I thought you – were different. And I am different, though not in the way you think.

Erm: *(she starts to cry)* I didn't know what to do.

They stay as they are - Ermengarde crying and Sara just looking away. Gradually Ermengarde stops crying and realises it is she who needs to comfort Sara. She goes over to her and hugs her.

Erm: We are afraid Sara. Miss Minchin does not want us talking to you.

Sara: And she won't allow me to talk to you. Most of the girls don't *want* to talk to me, so I thought - perhaps – *you* didn't. So I tried to keep out of your way.

Erm: Oh Sara! I couldn't live without you. I was *dead!*

Sara: Oh Ermengarde. I have been so lonely. But now that my trials have come, perhaps I will become a better child. There might be some good in all of this. There *might* be good in Miss Minchin.

Erm: *(laughs and then starts to explore the attic)* Sara, do you think you can bear living here – it's so cold and dusty.

Sara: If I pretend it's somewhere quite different I can – a place in a story.
(She gets up and starts to move the chairs) Think of the Count of Monte Cristo in the dungeons of the Chateau D'If, or Marie Antoinette, in the Bastille.

Erm: *(Follows Sara)* I LOVE stories about the Bastille.

Sara: *(she hides behind one of the broken chairs)* I am a prisoner in the Bastille. I have been here for years and years. Miss Minchin is the jailer, and Becky is the prisoner in the next cell.

Sara & Ermengarde are acting this out

Sara: I shall pretend that and it will be a great comfort.

Erm: May I come up and you can tell me more stories?

Sara Of course, but you will have to be very careful..

Erm: *(interrupting)*...of the stern jailer.

Ermengarde leaves and Sara sits with Emily.

Becky enters, almost bumping into Ermengarde

Becky: Oh miss! Would you allow me to come in?

Sara: You know you are a great comfort to me. When I am sleeping in this cold, miserable attic, I think of you next door to me and I take such comfort in knowing that you are there and that you are my friend.

Becky: Oh miss, calling me yer friend is the best thing in the world.

Sara: We are soldiers together Becky, or fellow prisoners. You see, we are just the same – two young girls. There's no difference between us. I'm not who I was any more. I'm poor just like you!

Becky: Yes I know miss. *(crying a little and rushing over to Sara)* Whats'ever 'appened to yer, yer know you'll always be a princess to me .

There is a noise and Lottie enters.

Sara: Lottie! What on earth are you doing here?

Lottie: O Sara – I miss you so much.. Ermengarde told me to come and I slipped past Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia because they were having a row with Cook, so they didn't notice me.

Sara: That means we will be called soon Becky.

Lottie: Are you very poor Sara? Are you as poor as a beggar? *(she's looking around and suddenly cries out)* I s-s-aw a r-r-at?!

Becky and Sara look at each other and laugh

Becky: No need to worry yerself over the rat miss. That's Melchisedec. 'e's our friend isn't he Sara?

Sara: Poor Lottie! I don't expect you ever expected *me* to make a friend of a rat. And no, I'm not quite as poor as a beggar – at least I have somewhere to live. *(she glances at Becky who smiles and then quickly squeezes Sara's hand – there is now an understanding between them)*

Lottie: I don't like it here Sara.

Sara: It's not *such* a bad room, Lottie. You can see all sorts of things that you can't see downstairs.

She gets up and looks out of the "window" - over the audience.

Sara: Chimneys - quite close to us - with smoke curling up in wreaths and clouds going up into the sky. And sparrows and other attic windows where heads bob up - as if another world.

Lottie: Oh do let me see.
(they look out ...over the audience... they're eyes scanning and pointing things out)

Sara: But look at that attic across the narrow street. I am the girl in **this** attic. Perhaps there might be someone like me in that one too. We could reach out to each other as if we were not afraid of falling.

Becky has been standing nearby watching Lottie and Sara.

Becky: She makes it sound so excitin' don' yer Miss?

There is a lot of noise and commotion heard off stage, and Miss Minchin's voice is heard calling out for Becky & Sara.

Sara: Quickly, Lottie, you must go.. quickly.

Miss M (offstage) Sara, Becky, where on earth are you?

Sara & Becky: *(shouting)* Coming Miss Minchin..