

SCENE FIVE: THE SCHOOLROOM

Students enter with books etc. They are closely followed by Miss Minchin.

Miss M: There you are Sara. What took you so long? There are a number of chores that you still have not completed.

Lavinia: Including cleaning my fire grate, which was left in a disgusting state yesterday.

Victoria: And my clothes need altering, and hanging up – IF you remember how to hang proper clothes.

She and Lavinia laugh

Miss M: Enough Lavinia, Victoria. I am sure Sara knows her place. Well get along girl – don't just stand there.

Sara has been watching Miss Minchin with a proud expression of defiance. She suddenly lets out a little laugh.

Miss M: What are you laughing at, you bold impudent child?

Sara: I was thinking.

Miss M: Beg my pardon immediately.

Sara: I will beg your pardon for laughing, if it was rude, but I won't beg your pardon for thinking.

During this first exchange, many of the girls have begun to gather around to watch the encounter. Ermengarde and Lottie are looking a little scared and stand away from the rest of the girls.

Miss Minchin goes towards Sara and slaps her hard across her face

Miss M. What were you thinking? How *dare* you think? **What** were you thinking?

Several of the girls start to giggle.

Sara: I was thinking that you did not know what you were doing.

Miss M: *(her face is close to Sara's)* That - I - did - not - know - what - I - was - *doing*? *(she hits her again - the girls gasp)*

Sara: Yes! And I was thinking what would happen if you suddenly found out that I was rich and NOT the Girl in the Attic. You would never dare hit me again and I would be able to do anything I liked..

Miss M: *(almost screaming with rage)* Go to your room. Go to the attic where you belong in your rags and filth and pride.

Sara: *(she remains staring at Miss M)* Excuse me for laughing if it was impolite.

There are collective gasps from the girls, who look absolutely shocked at Sara's bravery.

Lavinia: She has some nerve. How dare she answer Miss Minchin in such a fashion.

Jessie: Well by the look on Miss Minchin's face, she's going to regret it.

The girls start to giggle

Miss M: SILENCE!

Again, she moves towards Sara threateningly. She does not want to beat the child in front of the girls. She grabs her at the top of her arm and moves her to the exit.

Miss M: You are an insolent child, and you will regret ever crossing me and humiliating me in front of the other young ladies. You will have no food for the rest of the day and tomorrow. You may have water and nothing more. Perhaps that will help to curb that tongue of yours.

Sara exits. Miss Minchin looks on and turns back to the girls.